What is SOTL?

“an approach to college and university teaching that views classrooms (and other learning spaces) as sites for inquiry, innovation, and knowledge-building. In SoTL, you, the educator, look closely and critically at your students’ learning to improve your own courses and programs. You also go public with insights, experiences and results that colleagues can evaluate and build on.” (Huber, 2013)

“evidence based critical reflection on practice aimed at improving practice”
“about improving our students learning, using evidence based approaches” (Prosser, 2008)

“involves engagement with research into teaching and learning, critical reflection of practice, and communication and dissemination about the practice of one’s subject.” (Healey, 2000)
Good practice principles for SOTL

- Focused on student learning
- Grounded in context
- Methodologically sound
- Conducted in partnership with students
- Appropriately public

(Felten, 2013)
Students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education

Healey, Flint and Harrington (2014)
Is “fundamentally about a relationship in which all involved – students, academics, professional services staff, senior managers, students’ unions, and so on – are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together. Partnership is essentially a process of engagement, not a product. It is a way of doing things, rather than an outcome in itself.” (Healey, Flint and Harrington, 2014: 12)
Partnership values

**Authenticity** – all parties have a meaningful rationale for investing in partnership, and are honest about what they can contribute and the parameters of partnership.

**Inclusivity** – partnership embraces the different talents, opinions and experiences that all parties bring, and there are no barriers (structural or cultural) that prevent potential partners getting involved.

**Reciprocity** – all parties have in interest in, and stand to benefit from working and/or learning in partnership.

**Empowerment** – power is distributed appropriately and all parties are encouraged to constructively challenge ways of working and learning that may reinforce existing inequalities.

**Trust** – all parties take time to get to know one-another, engage in open and honest dialogue and are confident they will be treated with respect and fairness.

**Challenge** – all parties are encouraged to constructively critique and challenge practices, structures and approaches that undermine partnership, and are enabled to take risks to develop new ways of working and learning.

**Community** – all parties feel a sense of belonging and are valued fully for the unique contribution they make.

**Responsibility** – all parties share collective responsibility for the aims of the partnership, and individual responsibility for the contribution they make.
Selecting the SOTL focus

“Staff and students are invited to propose educational development projects in which students can work in an academic employment setting in a paid post at the University, on an equal footing with their staff partner. Students negotiate their own roles with staff and are paid for up to 125 hours of work.”
Birmingham City University’s Student Academic Partners Scheme

“SALTs will work on projects relevant to their Faculty or the institution, in a flexible way that can fit around their timetable. Each SALT team is given a project brief – they then work together, in partnership with staff, to shape and deliver their project“
University of Sheffield, Student Ambassadors for Learning and Teaching Scheme
Purposes of SOTL work

• “What works?”: These are questions that seek “evidence about the relative effectiveness of different teaching approaches.”

• “What is?”: These are questions that seek to describe, but not evaluate the effectiveness of, different teaching approaches. These are also questions that seek to describe how students learn.

• “Visions of the possible”: These are questions related to goals for teaching and learning that have yet to be met or are new to the faculty member asking the questions.

• “Theory building” questions: These are questions designed to build theoretical frameworks for SoTL similar to frameworks used in other disciplines.

https://my.vanderbilt.edu/sotl/
What do we mean by Going Public?

• Which publics?
• Students as ‘public intellectuals’?

Why not…?

• Start a project radio station on SoundCloud (https://soundcloud.com/)?
• Instead of a conference, run a Café SoTL (www.cafescientifique.org)?
• Blog and a produce a monthly round-up via Paperli (http://paper.li)?
• Make a documentary/show-reel and upload to YouTube (https://www.youtube.com)
Transforming existing opportunities

Internal

- Professional development and CPD programmes
- Formal committee and reporting processes
- Events and publications

External

- Academic publication (e.g. Journal of Educational Innovation, Partnership and Change)
- Conferences (e.g. RAISE, ISSOTL)
Transforming existing opportunities

Part 1: What opportunities already exist in your institution to share the outcomes of SOTL work?
Generate as many ideas as possible (1 per post-it note) then group them.

Part 2: Pick one of the opportunities and discuss how can we build on and add to these opportunities to:
(a) better reflect a partnership ethos
(b) use exciting ideas and best aspects of the ‘going public’ examples?

Present your ideas on the flipchart paper.
Additional resources


Journal of Educational Innovation, partnership and change [https://journals.gre.ac.uk/index.php/studentchangeagents](https://journals.gre.ac.uk/index.php/studentchangeagents)

HEA learning and teaching blog: [https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/blog](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/blog)

Academic literacy model: Lillis, T (2003) An ‘academic literacies’ approach to student writing: drawing on Bakhtin to move from critique to design’ Language and Education 17 (3), 192-207


Engaging research: [http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/per/](http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/per/)

National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE): [http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/do-it/techniquesapproaches](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/do-it/techniquesapproaches)
Publications


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E-mail: StudentsasPartners@heacademy.ac.uk

Twitter: @HEA_SaP

Mailing list – sign up at https://my.heacademy.ac.uk/

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