



Defining and supporting the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL): A sector-wide study

Survey report

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1. Introduction

1.2. Overview and aims

The main objectives of this project were to explore the definition of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) in the higher education (HE) sector and in the literature and to identify the main challenges related to the support and implementation of SoTL in UK institutions to inform career recognition and promotion pathways for academics.

In this element of the study we surveyed UK higher education providers (HEPs) targeting educational/staff development and HR departments via an online survey to explore how and where SoTL is defined institutionally and how SoTL operates within existing frameworks for promotion. The survey yielded findings based on responses related to institution types, resources available to support SoTL, and qualitative responses to questions on the role of SoTL in institutions. Based on the survey, eight heads of educational development units then volunteered to be interviewed by staff from the University of Brighton in another strand of the project. The majority of survey respondents were heads of educational development in a UK institution.

1.2. Findings

The main findings emerging from the survey data, in relation to definition and challenges were:

- > **SoTL definitions:** A wide spectrum of definitions of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning exist among institutions, which raises the question of whether there is need for a universal definition.
- > **Institutional practice and tensions between disciplinary and pedagogic research:** There is evidence of disconnect in SoTL implementation between various institutional functions in relation to the implementation of SOTL and reward and recognition for engaging with SoTL.
- > **Advocacy:** Despite the challenges laid out by survey respondents, the benefits of SoTL identified by respondents' calls for optimism around what SoTL or scholarship affords despite the tensions that exist for staff.

1.3. Nations represented

All UK nations were represented in the survey except for Northern Ireland. However, one of the interviews in the other strand of the data collection captured the Northern Ireland perspective. HEPs in England were overwhelmingly represented in this sample. The survey also asked respondents to identify themselves by mission group. Among the survey respondents there is balanced representation of HEP mission groups (as categorised by the HEA).

Figure 1: Overview of responses from HEPs from three nations

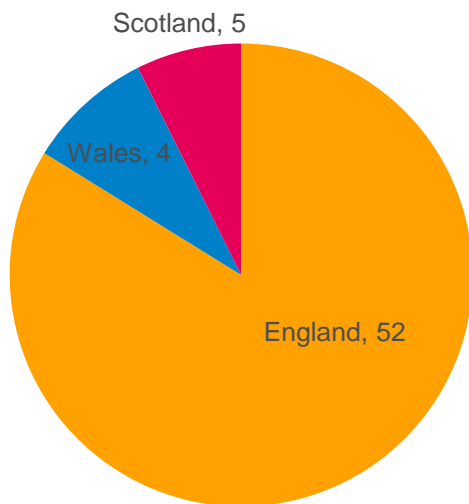


Table 1: Types of HEP

England	Scotland	Wales
9 Post-92	3 Post-92	2 Non-aligned HEP
8 Russell Group	1 Russell Group	1 Post-92
8 Non-aligned HEPs	1 Non-aligned HEP	1 University Alliance
7 Cathedral Group		
7 FE College		
5 Small Specialist		
4 University Alliance		
1 Guild		

1.4. Respondents' status in their institution

Fifty-two respondents were heads or managers of educational development units although their titles varied (e.g. Director of Quality and Educational Development; Head of Academic Development, Director of Curriculum). Eleven respondents represented other university Vice-Chancellors' office and human resources department roles.

2. Methodology

2.1. Sample and data collection

The project team designed the survey around the main aim of determining how SoTL is defined and recognised within UK institutions. The project team distributed the online survey using Bristol Online Survey (BOS) system to elicit specific information about SoTL related to the overall project research goals: how SoTL is defined, where it is defined in institutional policy, and who supports SoTL. Members of the Heads of

Educational Development Group (HEDG) and the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) received invitations to participate in the online survey via listservs and the HEA subscribers email list; in addition the team invited contribution from all on the HEDG list via personal email communications.

The study's intention was to contact at least 277 UK HEPs (the number of institutional subscribers to the HEA). We received 68 responses, which included duplicate responses from five universities and a triplicate response from one university (in the qualitative questions the responses from Heads of Educational Development Group were prioritised; duplicates were merged when responses were the same making all percentages in these findings based on 61, instead of 68 responses).

2.2. Survey questions

The survey question protocol consisted of 12 questions:

1. Survey protocol: standard question of consent to participate in the survey.
2. Please indicate which HEP you are answering for from the drop down list.
3. What is your job title in your organisation?
4. Please identify the type of Higher Education Provider you work for
 - a. Please indicate where your HEP is located (nation).
5. Is there a definition, description or other substantive reference to SoTL (see more information) or a similar approach to SoTL in your HEP?
 - a. If yes, is it in HEP-wide documents?
 - b. Please provide any links to resources that show how your HEP engages with SoTL.
6. Does your HEP have criteria that help your institution recognise SoTL (see more information) for:
 - a. Possible answers: teaching grants; teaching awards; promotions; none of the above; other.
 - b. Do publications in teaching and learning have the same weighting as those in discipline-based research when reviewing promotion claims?
7. Who in your HEP directly or indirectly supports the SoTL for staff?
8. These questions are about what 'activities' you have in your HEP and then what activities both from within and outside your HEP you 'count' in teaching awards, promotions criteria etc.
 - a. What 'activities' do you have in your HEP to support SoTL activities?
 - b. Which activities 'count' for promotion claims?
9. Please indicate what percentage of your total academic staff (as identified by your HEP) are in the following roles: teaching-focused/only; research-focused/only; teaching and research.
10. If you have staff that are teaching-focused/only staff are they: 1) Staff with specific professional/industry expertise; 2) Staff who have not maintained their research profiles and move to teaching positions; 3) Staff who are experts in education (i.e. selected on account of their scholarship in teaching); 4) Other
 - a. Do teaching-focused/only appointments tend to be sessional, fixed-term, eligible for promotion, leading up to professorial positions, not applicable, other?
 - b. Do your teaching-focused roles have a requirement to engage with SoTL?
11. What 'activities' does your HEP involve students in?
12. Please identify one challenge and one opportunity that your HEP faces with SoTL-based activities?

2.3. Data analysis

The data were analysed using an online mixed-methods research software program called Dedoose. The use of this software served to establish multiple 'data displays' (Miles and Huberman 1994) through which the project team manipulated the codes of the qualitative responses with the demographic data. We were able to triangulate multiple data points against the demographic data and mission group data to determine possible trends. In addition, the project team conducted a question-by-question analysis to determine salient points emerging from the responses.

2.4. Limitations of this study

This survey constitutes a baseline gathering of data on SoTL across the UK within a short timeframe during 2015. The small number of respondents (roughly 22%) represents the collective voice of heads of educational development with only one response from human resources. The heads of educational development units will potentially present a different perspective to that of other staff in their institution. However their input is invaluable as they often are championing learning and teaching developments and have a key role in supporting SoTL within their institutions. Furthermore, the lack of participation from Northern Ireland in the survey does not account for the complete picture of SoTL across the four nations. Further surveys coming out of this research should allow for more time to target intended participants in addition to a separate survey to ascertain heads of human resources' views on the role of SoTL in reward and recognition processes. There was some ambiguity about what the reading was of Question 9 (re. percentages of staff on teaching-focused, research-focused staff etc. within an HEP) and in future this would be better explored through a more qualitative approach to allow unpacking of how different providers classify their staff groups and how this, in turn, relates to HESA categories.

3. Survey findings

For the purposes of this report, the demographic data can be found in the introduction. The analysis will focus on Questions 5-12 that address SoTL definitions, criteria, activities, and staff involvement with SoTL.

3.1. SoTL Definitions

Survey outcomes indicate there is a wide spectrum of examples of SoTL in the institutions represented; this is a characteristic well-documented in the literature on SoTL (see Literature Review). All respondents reported staff engagement in 'SoTL-like' activities as defined by the project whether it is an explicit emphasis on teaching, reflection, inquiry, or quality enhancement, or publishing in teaching-related journals. However, four responses indicated a refusal to described teaching quality enhancement programmes as SoTL. From the results, it is not possible to associate particular definitions and implementations of SoTL with specific mission groups or institutional types.

From the survey data, academics disseminate work mainly through publications. Two extensive qualitative responses from research-intensive universities indicated that these respondents do not categorise reflective work or inquiry projects as SoTL mainly because they do not believe these projects should lead to publication. One respondent stated that the time taken to publish on a SoTL-type project would take away from discipline-based research publications. Further discussion of the influence of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) related to promotion criteria related to teaching is discussed below (pp. 13-15). Despite the emphasis on publishing, one respondent wrote that the educational development unit:

supports reflection on teaching practice and practitioner inquiry into student learning toward completion of portfolios for HEA Fellowship recognition.

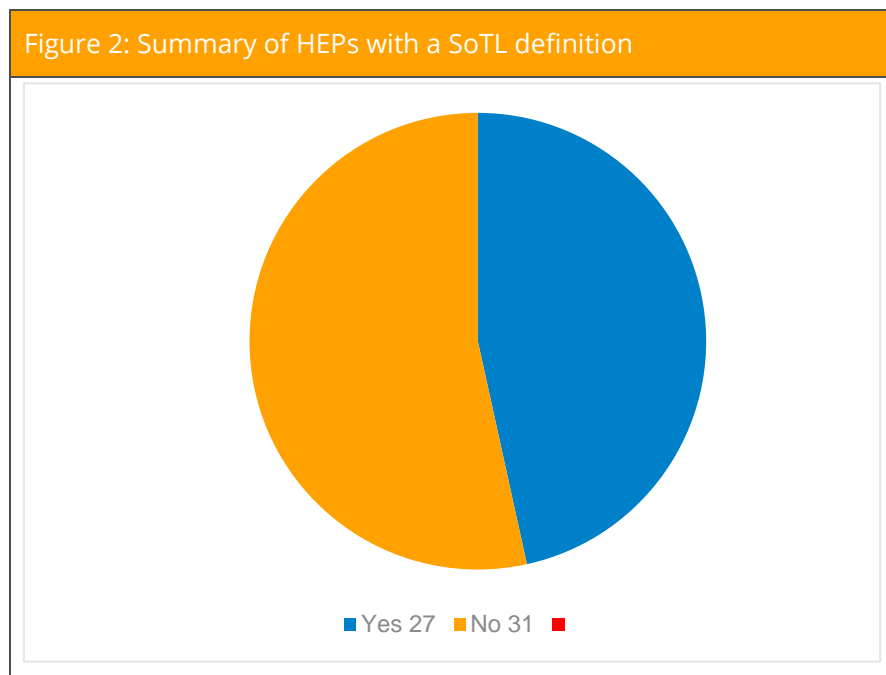
And:

[...] find[s] that engaging participants with a small study in which they interview their students and analyse the results through a theoretical framework is a powerful learning experience for participants and that engaging in this inquiry project helps them understand how best to use existing educational theories.

These responses show that staff are engaged in SoTL projects, and yet there is reticence to define the inquiry process as SoTL. In a SoTL workshop delivered by project team members at the EuroSoTL 2015 conference in University College Cork, one participant described the biggest challenge at her European university was to do SoTL without calling it SoTL. This particular conundrum around how to define inquiry processes to improve student learning poses a provocative challenge for this very project to define SoTL within the UK. This will be discussed in the recommendations stemming from the project.

Forty-six percent of universities stated they do define SoTL within their institutions.

[Note: Three universities' duplicate entries contradicted one another so those have been removed from this particular chart. The other three universities with duplicate/triplicate responses were combined into one response.]



For those universities that stated that they do define SoTL institutionally said their definitions exist in HEP-wide documents. Eighteen universities provided URL links to the pages they thought provided a definition of SoTL at their institution.

1. HEP-wide learning and teaching strategies (17);
2. HEP strategic plans (7);
3. Other responses indicated that respondents believe SoTL exists in some institutional form albeit 'obliquely' or 'implied' or 'widely embedded' as described by respondents.

The variation of SoTL definitions can be seen in the titles of the links provided:

1. 'Defining the Scholarship of Teaching';
2. 'Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Strategies';
3. 'Teaching Excellence';
4. 'Learning, Teaching and Assessment';
5. 'Learning, Teaching and Assessment for Student Engagement';
6. 'Education and Scholarship';
7. 'Fellowship Schemes';
8. 'Research-based Education'.

Not only is there a wide spectrum in which to define SoTL and its potential as a vehicle for teaching enhancement, there exist vast perceptions of SoTL that oscillate between complete scepticism (particularly around the issue of public dissemination of scholarship) and hopeful optimism related to benefits towards student learning. Even though definitions vary widely, one respondent saw SoTL as a “common language” about teaching, learning, and assessment. This particular finding about the wide variety of definitions and perspectives related to SoTL corresponds to the literature in that there are many ‘guises’ under which SoTL operates in the UK (Healey 2012; Healey *et al.* 2014a; Healey *et al.* 2014b; Marquis *et al.* 2014). Further definitions of SoTL were identified in the interviews.

3.2. Institutional practice and tensions between disciplinary and SoTL

Analysis of the survey data indicates some divisions among three main institutional activities: 1) establishing the promotion criteria (and who is involved with this process), 2) implementing the criteria, and 3) activities and departments supporting SoTL. These divisions may be leading to some discord regarding rewarding and recognising teaching (educational) excellence within institutions and nationally.

These divisions could be considered as emerging “fault lines or fractures” (Rowland 2002) between local institutional practices for recognising and rewarding SoTL. Fault lines/fractures can be viewed as an opportunity for educational developers (and aligned roles) to reflect and review practices through promotions criteria for conversational points (acts) for repairing and progressing policy development and should not be considered as just problematic. The divisions or fractures are illustrated by two areas within this theme of the survey analysis:

1. Criteria for promotion – what actually counts and who determines the criteria and how it is interpreted (if it is applied) during promotions decisions (taken from Literature review, p. 19):

While the inclusion of criteria related to teaching and scholarship is a positive step, there remain issues about how these are locally defined particularly in respect of weighting SoTL against discipline-based research - which remains the benchmark. The suggestion that teaching excellence should be read in connection with other facets of the role, and research excellence (Gunn and Fisk 2013) is pertinent.

2. Teaching/research tensions and the role of the REF.

3.2.1. *Criteria for promotion*

The survey respondents demonstrate a scale from scepticism to optimism about the value and role of SoTL-type activities and engagements that count for promotion for staff in their HEPs. No clear link can be established between types of institutions and where SoTL counts more (or less) as a promotion criterion. The literature review pointed to a lack of transparency of criteria and processes (Chalmers 2011; Skelton 2007; Gunn and Fisk 2013). In the survey, we asked three questions specifically around issues in promotion:

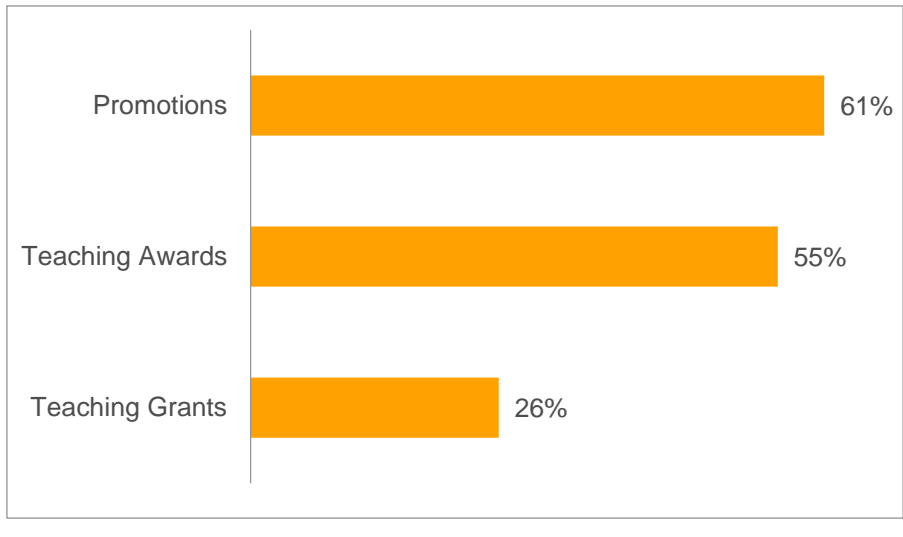
Question 6: Does your HEP have criteria that help your institution recognise SoTL?

Question 6.a. Please add links to any documents that indicate the criteria for the selections above e.g. awards criteria, promotions criteria.

Question 6b: Do publications in teaching and learning have the same weighting as those in discipline-based research when reviewing promotion claims?

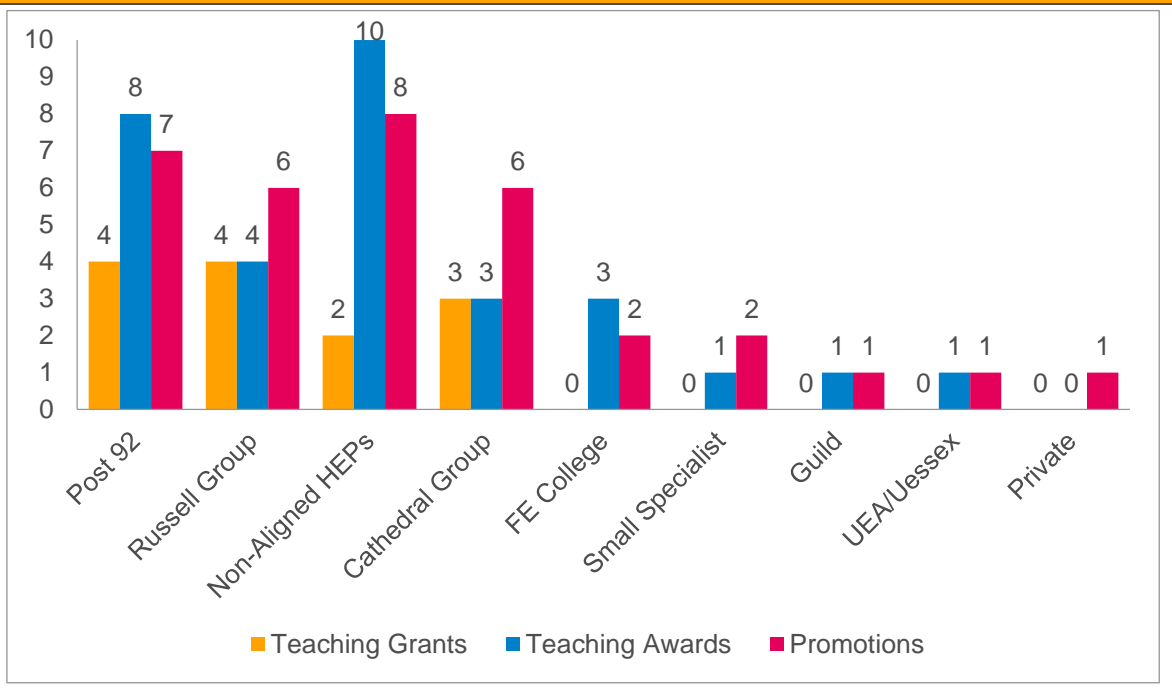
The first investigated selection criteria at institutional level in relation to teaching awards, teaching grants, or promotions.

Figure 3: Summary of activities that have criteria which recognise SoTL



Each respondent ticked at least one of the options to this question with six respondents answering 'none of the above' (3 Post-92, one small specialist, one FE College, and one University Alliance.)

Figure 4: Summary of responses to different activities that have criteria that recognise SoTL in relation to HEP mission groups



In addition to ticking these options, respondents provided the qualifying statements grouped to explain further the nature of their award and promotion schemes (See Table 2).

Table 2: Summary of survey responses in relation to SoTL in reward and recognition aligned to HEP mission groups

Post-92	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Nothing explicit but an HEA Strategic Enhancement Project is underway in this very area.
Russell Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > We are rewriting promotion criteria to align with UKPSF. > Fellowships. > We don't use the term 'scholarship of teaching and learning' as such. We prefer 'scholarship' as a general term, which in some contexts would be explicitly relating to education and in others would relate to wider dimensions of academic practice, such as research or leadership. New promotions criteria are currently being developed, in which we will draw out definitions, but these are not yet available. > Not SOTL explicitly (for teaching grants or promotions).
Non-aligned HEPs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Support for FHEA and SFHEA. > Student-led Teaching Awards Internal. > Option for staff to have a Teaching and Scholarship contract. > This is an area we are working on. With new PVC (Student Experience) and new VC there is now a growing focus on the importance of pedagogic research.
Cathedral Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > PG Cert.
FE Colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > We support HE teaching staff in their HEA applications. > Inclusion in performance ratings Advanced Practitioner posts requiring scholarship. > We do operate a role that can be applied for annually with a salary enhancement called 'Enhancement Practitioner' that supports scholarly activity developments.
Small Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Annual teaching and learning conference. Paying for experienced teachers to achieve HEA accreditation. > Through Staff Development programmes and Annual HE Symposium.
University Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Promotion to Principal Lecturer Student Experience asks for 'contributions to scholarship and research in aspects of teaching and learning and the student experience'. There is a teaching and learning route to professor.

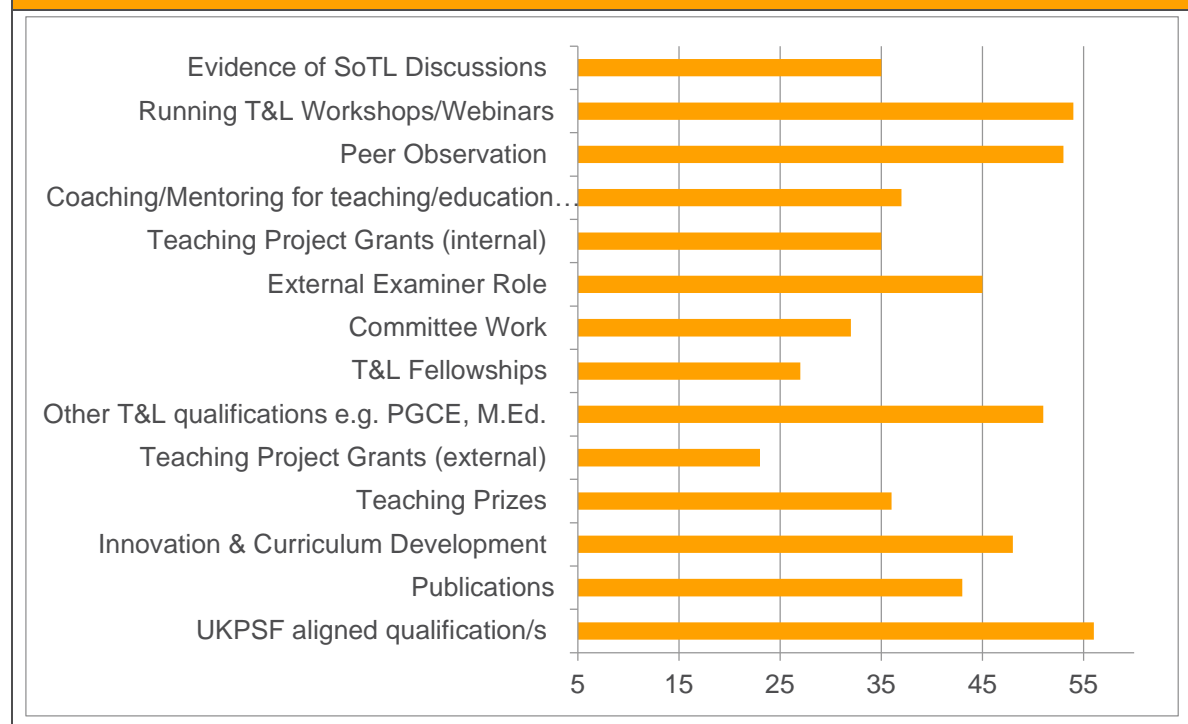
According to these data, there seem to be three positions when looking at whether or not SoTL-type activities are found in criteria documents: some do have it included, some have SoTL included but do not call it that; and thirdly there is evidence in the free responses to this question that criteria related to SoTL is in development. Part of the development is the 'hope' attached to new senior level management positions who might embed SoTL in criteria. One statement indicated: "With new PVC (Student Experience) and new VC there is now a growing focus on the importance of pedagogic research." Among the FE colleges represented in the sample there appeared to be a range of activity, from none to citing schemes that are in development. It appears that SoTL (and all the processes of enquiry inherent in it) serves as a tangible framework to support, define, and shape some of the promotion or guidelines for academics at these institutions. There is scope to look at the different aspects of SoTL activities (see the SoTL Framework proposed in the Executive Summary) and to align these activities to different stages of reward and recognition for staff.

Following this question, we asked respondents to supply links to criteria. The links that counted as criteria fell into three categories: two universities provided links to teaching award schemes that specifically describe providing evidence of student learning; links to teaching award criteria; and finally academic promotion links.

3.3. Activities supporting SoTL and recognition of SoTL

Question 8 drilled deeper to ask about the specific activities available to staff at institutions in addition to which of those activities count towards promotion. Participants were asked to tick off all responses that apply to their context.

Figure 5: Summary of activities recognised as supporting SoTL

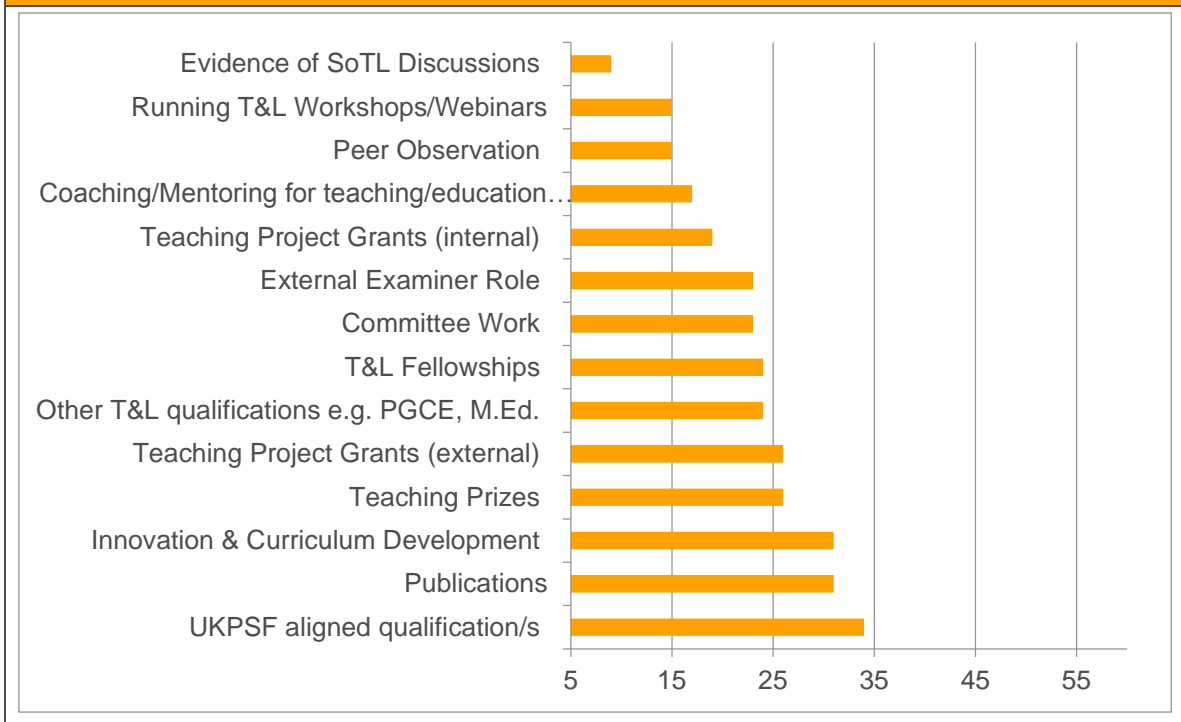


The top four responses were UKPSF qualifications, workshops, peer observations, and innovation and curriculum development. Among the respondents, there is a perceived connection between the UKPSF qualifications and SoTL activity despite the lack of an explicit connection between the UKPSF and SoTL literature. As indicated by Veronica Bamber (2015) at the recent Euro-SoTL 2015 conference, it may be that the UKPSF qualifications provide a broad enough framework to allow aspiring fellows to define their own scholarship within the areas of value, knowledge, and practice.

Additional responses to activities that support SoTL related to student partnership projects in academic research, reading groups around SoTL literature, informal peer networks for sharing good practices, and supporting virtual networks for staff around pedagogic research.

The activities listed here give a good indication of what is available to university academics. The next question asked which of these activities are actually counted towards promotion.

Figure 6: Summary of activities recognised as SoTL in promotions claims



The top four responses in this chart are **UKPSF qualifications; publications; innovation and curriculum development; and external teaching project grants**. The difference between the two charts indicated that external esteem through qualifications, grant money, and publications factored more importantly for promotion than **collaborative** SoTL activities. The one exception is the UKPSF that continues to function as a national marker of teaching excellence and enhancement. At present it is unclear what the scholarship is referring to in the UKPSF and some unpacking of this perceived connection could serve to strengthen the links between SoTL and the UKPSF. It would be helpful to know to what degree gaining Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy status is needed for early career academic staff for promotions higher up the career ladder.

Other entries identifying what counted towards promotion showed a tendency to privilege *how* activities are evidenced rather than *which* activities might be favored more than others. Responses included:

Evidence of engagement with such initiatives would count for promotion claims.

Any of those [activities] that can be evidenced.

All activities have an implicit impact on promotion opportunities.

The criteria for promotion are fairly broad. Each application is viewed holistically with many examples of practice, e.g., those listed here, being considered. Some could be described as 'necessary but not sufficient' e.g. UKPSF.

Because criteria are under radical review, it's not possible to say accurately. It's likely that any of these could count, as long as they are backed up with evidence of impact for good upon education.

There were also references to including students in scholarship projects. While the student partnership section of this SoTL project is in the form of case studies, respondents to the survey were asked to list the student engagement activities available at their institutions in Question 11, with the following outcomes:

Table 3: Overview of student engagement activities across HEPs

Student engagement activity	% of all respondents who ticked this activity
Feedback on teaching	82%
Teaching prizes	65%
Internal/external learning and teaching events	65%
Disciplinary-based research	60%
L&T research	58%
Curriculum design	58%
UG publications	34%

Based on the literature review conducted by the project team, there appears to be a distinction between **student engagement** (where students participate in providing feedback on teaching and learning and conducting disciplinary research) and student partnership (where students participate in SoTL-type research projects to improve curricular practices). There were only four instances in the survey where respondents described students engaged in staff educational development or students engaged in assisting researchers on pedagogic projects or quality enhancement processes.

3.3.1. *Influence of the REF and publications*

The influence of the REF framework and its emphasis on publications as the sole output of scholarly activity was evident in the final question related to promotion criteria. Survey respondents highlighted some factors that were contributing to or inhibiting reward and recognition of SoTL in their HEP. These questions concerned the REF, promotional links between UKPSF and levels of seniority, and the larger question of recognition as a whole.

The final question related to promotion criteria asked how SoTL publications factor into promotions. The respondents drew attention to the influence and importance of the REF – this manifested itself in an emphasis on publications to assess SoTL. From the literature review for the project, there continues to be a bias towards research achievements in promotion decisions, particularly at the higher levels of readership (or equivalent) and professorship (Cashmore and Ramsden 2009; Copeland 2014; Greenbank 2006; HEA 2009; Jenkins and Healey 2005; Parker 2008; Trigwell 2013). Evidence of this bias was identified in the responses to this question around publications when respondents marked 'yes' to the question and then qualified their 'yes' responses further with the following statements:

> Yes (17)

> Yes AND (6):

Yes: if the academic is from the education discipline field. i.e. the output might be included in a REF submission.

Yes, promotion from lecturer to senior lecturer asks for 'engaged in significant subject, professional and/or pedagogic research'.

Yes, in the case of academic promotions (Professor, Associate Professor, Reader) in relation to contributions to pedagogy/L&T development.

Yes, if they have a similarly high-impact factor.

We have an explicit Learning and Teaching route to reader and professor which includes SoTL as one of the elements.

There was no REF2014 submission to panel 25C Education as many research outputs linked to educational research have been submitted to alternative panels.

> No (14)

> No AND (2):

Impact factor is usually lower so they don't 'weigh' as much.

The question misses the point for us - it's difficult to get recognition of evidence OTHER than publications.

> Don't know (13)

Some respondents chose not to tick 'yes' or 'no' and opted instead to provide further explanation about the institutions. Those comments were:

Only if REF-able.

We have an L&T promotions route, through to Chair, so publications in L&T do have some weight, although not necessarily the same weight!

[It] varies, Teaching Fellow and lecturer promotions are treated separately.

The college doesn't really have a research agenda to inform promotion; sometimes the aim is that they should depend on the discipline probably slightly less weighting than research.

Practice will vary on post.

Not relevant at the current time to our pay structures.

It depends upon the type of post (that is, research-focused or education-focused), but traditionally discipline-based research has been more highly regarded. We're working to correct that, which is why we talk about scholarship of and leadership in education rather than 'teaching and learning', which seems to colleagues to carry less weight of conviction.

I cannot answer this question with any authority because I am not involved in the Promotions panels for academic staff. However, there is a growing emphasis on the importance of promotion for high quality Teaching through to Prof - in part driven by combination of factors, including growth of marketisation of (teaching) in HE, growth in rhetoric if not reality of students-as-discerning customers; UKPSF Fellowship, publication of HESA stats etc.

I believe that peer-reviewed research publications would be viewed on the same basis whether they had a pedagogical or disciplinary basis. However, if the promotion was for a readership, for example, I would expect disciplinary research to be given more significance. For a Senior University Teaching Fellowship, pedagogic research would be more highly regarded.

The range of responses represented here exhibit the stark reality ('only if REF-able') of an inclination to rely on high quality publications for promotion, e.g. "peer-reviewed research publications would be viewed on the same basis whether they had a pedagogical or disciplinary basis". One institution viewed 'evidence' of any research solely through publications. Others had a more encompassing view of how staff might go public with their work through conference presentations, online portfolios, departmental colloquia, etc. These responses point towards the importance placed on publications by all institutional types. The survey responses showed that across the different HEPs from the different mission groups the impact of REF-able returns was of equal importance. This is perhaps counter to what one may have expected to see with more teaching-focused institutions not feeling so REF-bound in their outputs. This does suggest that valuing SoTL

(in HEPS where REF is a key institutional priority) would be aided by seeing SoTL publications being consistently recognised across all the discipline-based categories and not just in some categories.

Survey respondents pointed to the influence and impact of the REF and disciplinary research biases that influence promotions criteria development and enactment. These were expressed in the survey responses as tensions between institutional promotion criteria and the REF; determining what counts as impact and evidence (e.g. publishable accounts of SoTL with impact evidence); and not wanting to restrict SoTL to being only about publications of pedagogic research.

Even within an institution, the fracture between SoTL as a broad range of activities and SoTL as REF-able activities emerged. In some cases, the REF-able promotion of SoTL activity (pedagogic research or scholarship) was deemed only acceptable for academic staff already in educational roles and with education backgrounds. One possible inference from this is that SoTL is still for educationalists and not for the other disciplines. This is an indication that disciplinary practitioners immersed in SoTL-activity that might be deemed 'REF-able' if they had been in an education department or a teaching-only role would not be so in another disciplinary context.

Emerging from the survey is this fracture between what educational developers would like to see 'count' and the REF being used as the measure of excellence bearing in mind that REF criteria come from perceived long-standing (and accepted) conventions in the disciplines. The REF was cited as a factor in determining promotions criteria across a range of institutions beyond the usual research-intensive institutions. This suggests that the REF and funding implications for HEPs in the UK could be unconsciously keeping apart – or allowing to stay apart – the teaching and research components of HEPs, and their reward and recognition systems, both institutionally and nationally.

3.4. Advocacy

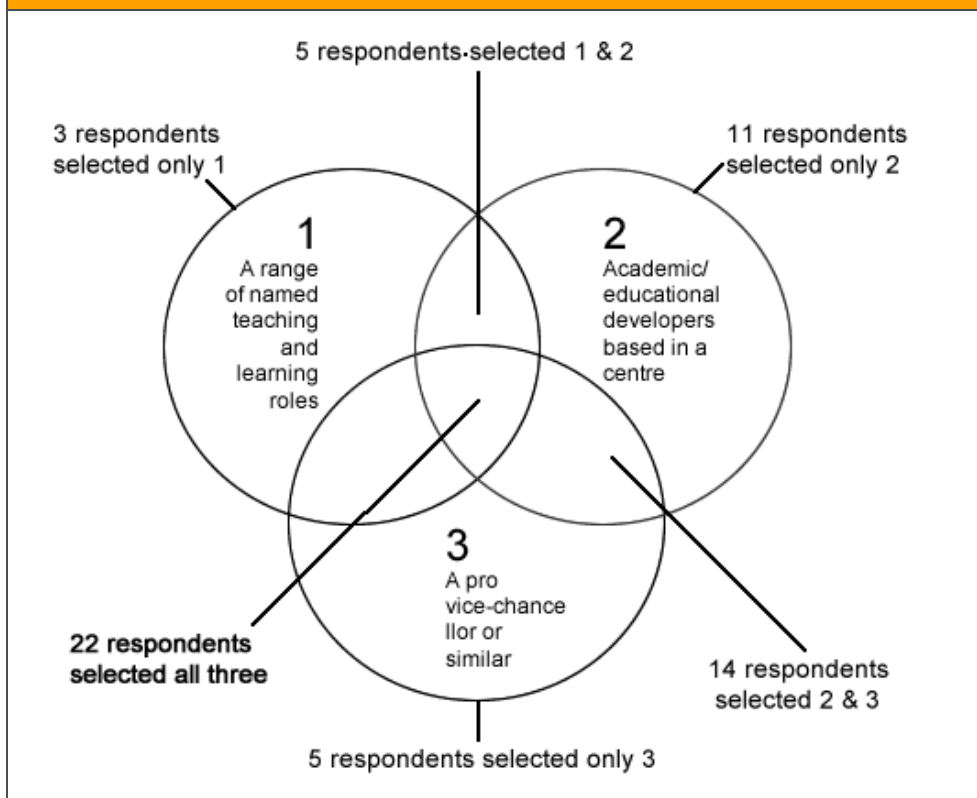
The last section of the survey investigated who is involved in supporting SoTL and support mechanisms to engage individuals, departments, and administrators in SoTL. The main issues raised were:

- > **having the appropriate staff to define and support SoTL** ("Getting the concept understood and accepted"; "knowledge of staff of how to do SoTL and then career options if they do");
- > **engaging academic staff effectively – particularly for universities that have more teaching-only roles** ("development time for staff to engage in SoTL activities");
- > **changing the institutional culture to embed the value of SoTL** ("institutional culture strongly focused on student experience and genuine desire to develop evidence-based approaches to continuously improve this"; "re-launch of our LTA strategy and new Deputy Provost Learning and Teaching could lead to a re-focus on SoTL-based activity").

In terms of the first challenge of having appropriate staff, Question 7 dealt with understanding who supports SoTL in institutions and offered four responses:

1. a range of named teaching and learning roles in the faculties/colleges/departments/schools;
2. academic/educational developers based in a centre/unit for teaching and learning
3. a Pro-Vice-Chancellor teaching and learning or similar
4. other.

Figure 7: Who in your HEP directly or indirectly supports the SoTL for staff?



Those who selected 'other' listed the following support roles:

Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

The Director of Organisation Development and Well-being is responsible for strategy and policy related to development of all kinds for all staff groups and a team of professional developers in the HR and OD Department provide advisory and administrative support for academic development of all kinds.

The educational development group promotes and supports reflection on teaching practice and practitioner inquiry into student learning toward completion of portfolios for HEA Fellowship recognition (at various descriptor levels). However, our emphasis is patently NOT on SoTL in that we do not structure assignments on our educational development programmes to lead to SoTL-type outputs, nor do we particularly encourage staff to prepare investigations of teaching for wider dissemination as described in the SoTL definition. We do not regard SoTL as a part of our institutional teaching enhancement strategy.

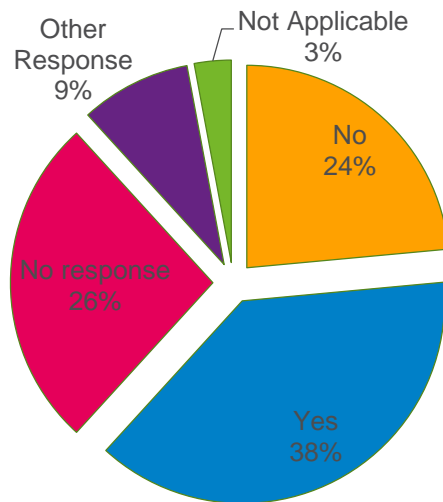
I cannot answer this question because I am not directly involved in promotions though I believe that each candidate brings forward a range of experiences and I imagine none would be overtly excluded from consideration.

The survey responses focused on educational development groups as the main supporters of SoTL. The last respondent's answer (who stated he/she could not answer that question) suggests that as Head of Educational Development, he/she was not in direct contact with the promotions process. This state of affairs is reflective of the need for an advocacy role/s for SoTL across all areas of HEPs. The apparent divides or 'fractures' that exist between staff that engage with SoTL, staff that support others to engage with SoTL and staff that develop and oversee policy and promotions criteria could be leading to use of the phrase 'it [SoTL] should count' even though the respondent is unsure in reality. Implementing criteria for teaching excellence (of which SoTL may have been a part) appears critical in considering how to truly embed and reward SoTL within an HEP.

3.5. SoTL and teaching-only/focused positions

The survey indicated that universities with teaching-only/focused roles tend to define those roles using SoTL-type terms. While respondents broke down the percentage of teaching-only, research-only, or teaching/research role percentages, we focus on the teaching-only roles (i.e. lecturers whose contract does not request that they engage in disciplinary research) and how it relates to SoTL. Question 10 asked if universities had such positions and if so did those job descriptions contain any reference to SoTL. The 38% of institutions who responded have teaching-only/focused staff who are required to engage in SoTL, consisting of 24 respondents (one duplicate university). The 24 respondents who answered this question represent all institutional types.

Figure 8: Teaching-only/focused position who are required to engage in SoTL



Of these 24 universities, 12 universities reported that this SoTL definition is located in HEP strategic plans or learning and teaching strategies. The institutions represented here include five FE colleges, three non-aligned HEPs, two Post-92, one Cathedrals Group, and one private institution. Despite having only one university (a Post-92) provide a link to the specific teaching and learning expectations for this particular role, these 12 institutions represent a large part of the sector who have 20-30% of academic staff as ‘teaching-only’. Specifically, workload appears to be an issue for small specialist institutions and FE colleges where one respondent reported that a “large proportion of academic staff are on fractional contracts – typically working 1-3 days a week – leaving little opportunity for SoTL”. An FE College respondent indicated that the main challenge was “time for staff to engage with this”. While this poses a challenge for this particular group of HEP, the issue of time and competing priorities between disciplinary research and pedagogic research remains a constant theme across all institutional types.

Finally, in Question 12, participants provided a list of challenges and opportunities related to embedding SoTL in their institution. One of the main challenges (in addition to competing priorities and tension between research and teaching) regarded the need to shift the prevailing institutional culture away from the REF as the sole measure of academic excellence. Some of the brief comments included:

This is not how things have been done around here.

Challenge visibility of SoTL given the REF.

One challenge is the lack of focus on the REF in the past.

To embed pedagogic research into the culture.

The [perceived] value of research in learning and teaching.

Challenge: making it central to teaching roles.

SoTL is not defined: as we are currently implementing new promotion procedures for teaching-track staff this might be problematic.

The influence of the REF in narrowing the definitions of research and scholarship is the challenge.”

The common denominator of these particular challenges points to having individuals as SoTL advocates in place who can define and articulate the value of SoTL (and its many definitions) and make strategic connections among the important departments (HR, Educational Development, academic departments) to locate student learning and engaged teaching at the centre of any strategic plan and promotion scheme. These types of advocates are needed at the senior management level but also there is a need to publicly recognise people who have achieved promotion through SoTL-type means. Repairing this type of institutional ‘fragmentation’ (See Literature Review, Section 5.3; Locke 2014), moves the focus for cultivating SoTL to the role of the institution and of key individuals at the administrative level (Chalmers 2011; see Literature Review Section 7.2).

4. Main summary points

There are two summary points that emerge from the survey. Firstly, how SoTL can be viewed as an opportunity and secondly, around the relations between staff that engage with SoTL and the policies in relation to rewarding and recognising for staff for their SoTL activities.

4.1. SoTL as an opportunity for institutions

In Question 12 respondents were asked to identify the challenges and opportunities of embedding SoTL. A first theme was the perception of SoTL as a mechanism or framework for supporting growth and innovation in focus on student learning and CPD:

To revisit the importance of scholarly activity as Continuous Professional Development and re-imagine how this fits with the demands of a modern-day academic role.

Staff realise that they need to understand more about student perspectives and prior educational experiences – coupled with evidence-based practice ideas to promote student engagement.

CPD scheme allows for professional recognition via experiential route.

Our new CPD scheme and a small group of teaching-focused roles who are asking about what is scholarship.

Creat[es] a structure that encourages sessional staff to take part in research into teaching and learning.

Another theme was to see SoTL’s role in relation to the institutional culture and as a mechanism for alleviating the existing tension between how teaching and research are valued in the area of promotions:

Harmonisation of role descriptors across the College enables the College to develop role specific staff development expectations and support.

Some moves towards professional recognition (HEA Fellowships) and changes in promotion policy to value teaching more directly.

Institutional culture strongly focused on student experience and genuine desire to develop evidence-based approaches to continuously improve this.

An institutional and individual commitment to research based learning and teaching at the centre of academic excellence.

Additional benefits of SoTL including – promotion of good practice and excellence and opportunities for staff and student research collaborations.

4.2. Coordination between educational development and policy development and implementation

One of the emergent themes from the survey was the relationship between educational development units who lead and support SoTL and the reward and recognition for staff in relation to SoTL. Responses to the survey indicated that educational development units play a minor role in the promotions and tenure process in addition to the writing of criteria around teaching enhancement or pedagogic scholarship. This potential misalignment between two crucial units that support teaching and research seems unconstructive as HEPs move forward. While many positive statements were made about the potential for SoTL, there is a need to empower those advocates to begin conversations with those in charge of institutional policy and implementation in relation to role profiles and promotions. This seems particularly pertinent as we move towards the Teaching Excellence Framework in the UK; proactively engaging and educators and institutions with the breadth of activities of SoTL might solidify meaningful and tangible rewards for staff at the same time. Based on the results of this survey, looking at the relationship between educational development units and human resources is an area for further research in the UK higher education sector.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

The survey results revealed a number of interesting pointers for the sector. Many results confirm what we may expect to see, for example that the rhetoric of commitment and value of SoTL-type activities does not always align to the reality of the promotions process and criteria for staff. The multiple activities that exist underneath the term (if not the explicit use of term) of SoTL are a valuable way of enhancing the teaching and learning experiences for all. However, from this survey, what was surprising and important for the sector is that we saw no influence of HEP mission group on the use and value assigned to practitioners engaging with SoTL. Thus we would encourage all HEPs to consider the following recommendations with equal emphasis as we move into the coming times of the Teaching Excellence Framework and not lose sight of the fact that SoTL provides a legitimate framework to enable staff (and students) to engage in scholarly endeavours around teaching and affect a positive and enhanced learning experience for all.

SoTL is a positive framework for enhancing learning and teaching even if the language of SoTL varies among universities. It is evident from the survey that respondents see SoTL as an opportunity for supporting and enhancing learning and teaching in their institutions.

The following recommendations are made to further embed SoTL for recognition and promotion:

1. SoTL needs coordinated actions across an institution: there exists a divide between those who “do SoTL and engage others with SoTL” and those who develop and oversee policy and promotions in relation to reward and recognition for academic staff. SoTL needs advocates across the institution from those who do and deliver SoTL initiatives to those who recognise and reward academic staff. They need to work together on embedding SoTL in HEP practices and not leave it to good intentions.
2. There is currently a lack of clarity around the use of the term scholarship in the UKPSF – as such if the intention is to refer to SoTL with the use of scholarship in the UKPSF then this should be explicitly termed.

3. The REF categories should ask for discipline-based SoTL outputs across all areas of the return and therefore it follows that institutions should include reference to SOTL in their research appointments.
4. Rather than add another definition of SoTL to the current rich and varied definitions available we recommend a definitional framework that HEPs can adapt to their context and practices.

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