What is Scholarship? The short read

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At the University of Manchester we define scholarship as:

"evidence based systematic practice that positively impacts student outcomes or experience and is disseminated for critical review and, where appropriate adoption by others. Scholarship can include the scholarship of teaching and learning, or discipline based educational or pedagogic research, as well as the development, application and synthesis of disciplinary knowledge to inform teaching (e.g. research-informed teaching)."

This broad definition has its roots in some of the classic literature on SoTL such as Hutchings and Shulman (1999), Shulman (2000) and Kern et al. (2015), which highlights that the core features of SoTL should be:

(1) Systematic and evidence based.
(2) Available for others to critically review.
(3) Able to be built upon by others. ("It's generative. It can be exchanged" Shulman 2000, 9).

But we also draw upon more recent work (such as Fung 2017; Godbold et al. 2024; Hulme 2022; ISSOTL 2024; Kern et al 2015) to argue that scholarship is contextual, nuanced and varied. This means it cannot be reduced to a simple tick list. You can read our long read (here) to understand the wider intellectual context for this definition, and on this page we outline what this means in practice.

What is the difference between Scholarly Teaching and Scholarship?

- **Scholarly teaching is …** teaching informed by the latest ideas in the field and ideas about teaching the field (Hutchings and Shulman 1999).
- **Scholarship is …** systematic, evidence based, and available to be reviewed, adopted or developed by others. It integrates practice with inquiry to generate new knowledge (Boshier 2009, 4).

A helpful starting point to identify scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL)

If you are undertaking SoTL, Kern et al.'s Dimensions of Activities Related to Teaching (DART) model (Kern et al. 2015, 5) is a helpful starting point to differentiate SoTL from other teaching and learning activities.
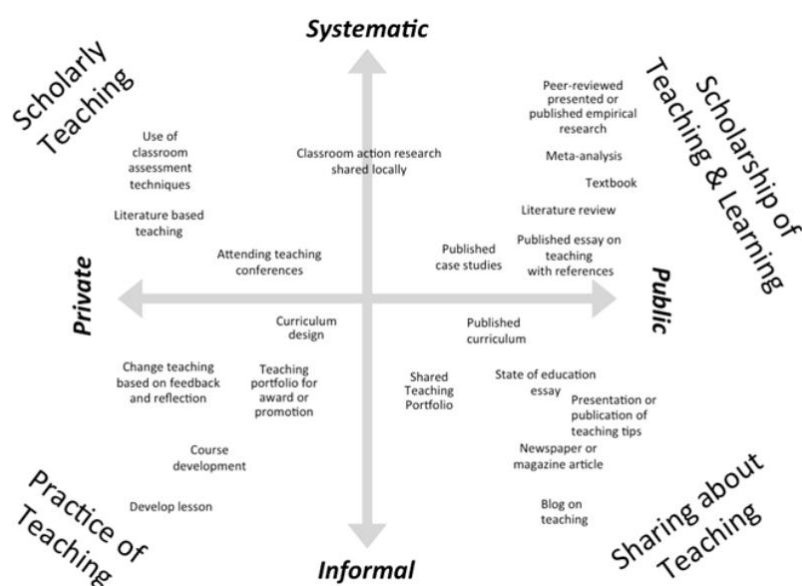
Whilst this model is helpful, the examples given cannot be taken simply as "fixed" in the quadrants that they are pictured, and many of the activities that do not fall into the SoTL quadrant can become SoTL if subject to the defining parameters of being systematic and public. For example, curriculum design is classed in the DART model under the "practice of teaching" quadrant. However, if the processes of curriculum design are informed by a systematic review of existing practice and literature, and then themselves are systematically evaluated during and after delivery, and the findings of the evaluation disseminated, this would become SoTL. Likewise, more informal forms of public dissemination, such as a blog on teaching, may present the systematic evaluation and analysis of their subject and thus can also be defined as SoTL.

This is NOT a simple tick list!

As we note above, scholarship cannot be reduced to a simple tick list but here are some suggested activities which, when correlated with the systematic and public parameters of the DART model, can be considered scholarship of teaching and learning:

- Scholarship of teaching and learning which informs and/or is tested through programme and module development – and the sharing of this (which could range from sharing with close colleagues, to dissemination beyond the institution in a seminar, workshop, conference, blog, or publication).
- Evidence of systematic development/design of an idea, approach, method, resource or technology which has impact on the learning and teaching culture and practices of others.
  - o Very clear scholarship if the outcomes of this are then further reviewed and/or adopted by others beyond the original context.
- Evidence of obtaining funding for learning and teaching developments, including to use/develop learning technologies or teaching-related equipment (the review of the application by others is key here).
  - o Very clear scholarship if the outcomes of this are then disseminated, and further reviewed or adopted by others.
- Gaining external funding or recognition for pedagogic or curriculum development (e.g. HEA/JISC grants).

- Involvement in learning and teaching at a subject/programme/school/faculty/university/national/ international level, for example running workshops or specialist courses (where this is informed by a systematic review of existing practice and literature, and/or the worshop itself maybe scholarship if it is then systematically evaluated during and after delivery, and the findings of the evaluation disseminated.)
- Presentations on pedagogy or teaching and learning at subject/programme/school/faculty/university/national and/ or international meetings/ conferences.
- Contributions (very broad, could be anything from publications to development of new learning platforms or open educational resources) that have shaped the way in which the subject is taught across subject/programme/school/faculty/university/nationally, or have been adopted internationally (e.g. textbook that has been nationally/ internationally published).
- (Evidence based, systematic) Contribution to a professional organisation or learned society or subject area.
- Collaboration – examples of teaching across subject and disciplinary boundaries that demonstrate a contribution to interdisciplinary/ professional education and are then disseminated.
- External examining experience – not just disciplinary, can also include teaching specific programmes such as PGCert/AdvanceHE accreditation programmes.
- External curriculum review or assessment of other HEIs.
- Contributions to national or international curriculum and pedagogy debate in the subject area.
- Contribution to school/faculty/university/national/international networks to support disciplinary and/ or generic improvements in quality of learning and teaching.
- Significant output relevant to the discipline or subject area: e.g. joint or sole authorship of books, text book in the discipline, publications in refereed journals or series; and other articles, papers and conference proceedings which have influenced the practice of teaching, or improved the student experience within the subject area.
- Significant disseminated research related to learning and teaching/ pedagogy.
- Contribution to the academic development of the discipline and research-led teaching (e.g. publications in refereed journals, teaching related activity within professional bodies or associations).
- Fellowship/ Senior Fellowship or equivalent of professional bodies or societies (especially relating T&L).
- Acting as editor of a journal or member of an editorial board (especially relating T&L).
- Lead, shape and influence teaching and learning policy at subject/programme/school/faculty/university national/ international level (e.g. contribution to QAA subject benchmarking statements).
- The award of significant prizes or accreditation or other formal recognition for T&L contribution.

Words of wisdom from experts on what constitutes scholarship

"'Scholarship' signifies the principled space that connects integrity, research, teaching, learning, personal development and contribution to the world" (Fung 2017, 105).

"Examples of activities that may be considered scholarship include evaluative work, sharing and dissemination of practice through events and reflective writing, digital scholarship including blogging and open educational practices, active participation in and leading of professional groups and networks, mentoring, and scholarly teaching. This can include both teaching of the discipline and the wider discipline of higher education academic practice" (Smith and Walker 2024, 194).

"...effective SOTL is disseminated, peer-reviewed, and applied and developed by others. This resonates with university promotions criteria that focus on reach (how far does the work travel within the Higher Education community?); impact (what difference did the work make to students and educators?); and leadership (to what extent is the scholar able to influence others to apply the work?). For example, it may be possible for someone to share an open educational resource, which is then widely adopted within their discipline community, and which genuinely contributes to student learning across the sector (as evidenced by rigorous evaluation). This shifts the narrative of value of scholarship away from traditional research metrics, and towards evidence that can be captured and measured objectively" (Hulme 2022, 110).