

Getting Started with SoTL

A Quick Guide to Your First Steps in SoTL

Where practice meets inquiry



Teaching

Everyday practice of teaching.



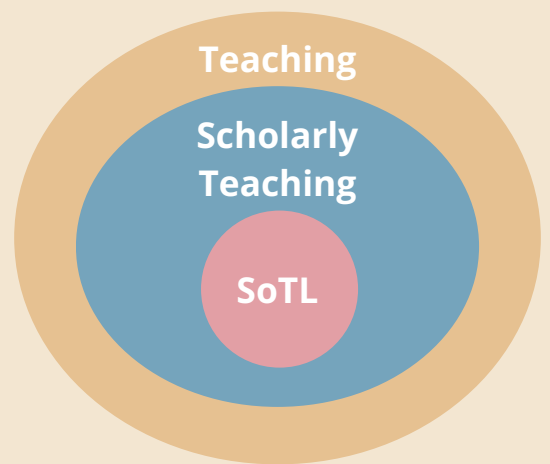
Scholarly Teaching

Applying insights from educational research to improve your own teaching.



SoTL

Systematic inquiry into your teaching and student learning, and sharing results.



What is SoTL?

Do you ever wonder how your students really learn — and how you could make your teaching even more effective? That's what the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is about.

SoTL means systematically exploring your own teaching and students' learning. You ask questions, gather small but meaningful evidence, and connect your findings to educational theory. It goes beyond intuition and reflection — it's inquiry into practice, done by teachers themselves, and sharing your insights so others can learn from them too.

SoTL goes beyond informed teaching: it is the systematic inquiry into student learning, shared so that colleagues can use, review, and build on the work."

(adapted from Hutchings & Shulman, 1999; Kreber, 2002)

How is SoTL different from...

- Pedagogical / didactic training: Training develops teaching skills and techniques. SoTL is not training you as a teacher – it is inquiry into your own teaching practice.
- Educational research: Often large-scale, theory-driven projects. SoTL starts small and local: “your students, your course, your context.”

“ Sounds nice, but why should I bother?”



Better Learning

Improves student learning and makes your teaching more effective.



Growth

Supports your own growth as a reflective, evidence-informed teacher.



Fun & curiosity

Makes teaching more fun by sparking curiosity and experimentation.



Interaction

Increases interaction with both colleagues (through sharing and collaboration) and students (as partners in learning).



Recognition

Strengthens recognition of teaching as part of your professional career.



Contribution

Builds collective knowledge about teaching and learning, helping to improve education more broadly.

(adapted from Felten, 2013; Hutchings et al., 2011; Meijerman et al., 2025)

*Curious to start? Try the 5 core questions on the next page –
a simple way to take your first SoTL step.*

Kickstart your own SoTL project

Not sure where to begin? These 5 questions can guide your first SoTL step.

What's on my mind in my teaching?

Something that puzzles you, frustrates you, or sparks your curiosity about how your students learn. Take a moment to reflect: what do you notice in class, in assignments, or in student engagement that you'd like to understand better?

What do I want to change or try out?

A small step: one assignment, one activity, one part of your course — not the whole curriculum. Pick something concrete and manageable. Even a small change (like redesigning a group task or feedback moment) can make a big difference.

Who can I talk to?

A colleague, an educational developer, or even your students — you don't need to do SoTL alone. Sharing your ideas early helps you refine them and get support. Many universities also have teaching & learning centres, SoTL networks, or small grants that can help you move forward.

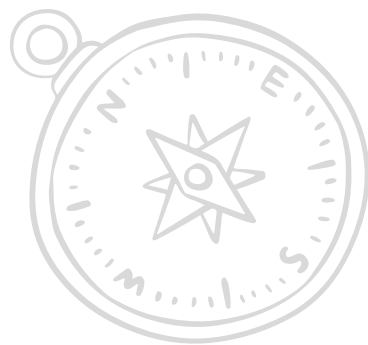
Why does it matter?

Why is this important for you and your students? What difference would it make if things got better? Try to connect it to your teaching goals: will it help students be more motivated, achieve deeper learning, or enjoy your course more?

What would success look like?

Imagine the outcome: more engaged students, deeper learning, better feedback. How would you notice it? Think about what evidence you might see: students asking better questions, more active discussions, improved assignment quality.

What's next? Continue your SoTL journey



1. Start with something practical

A good first step is to read an accessible resource on teaching and learning.

- How Learning Works (Lovett et al., 2023) is a practical book that connects research to everyday teaching.
- Even one chapter can give you inspiration.

2. Find inspiration in the literature

- Look for SoTL examples in educational journals from your own discipline.
- Explore SoTL specific journals like Teaching & Learning Inquiry or Transformative Dialogues
- Ask your university's teaching & learning centre for suggestions – they often know good entry points.

3. Use the Utrecht Roadmap for SoTL

The Utrecht Roadmap for SoTL helps you structure your project step by step.

It connects your first questions to evidence, methods, and sharing results – offering practical guidance for beginners. The framework has been published and described in detail, making it a reliable and easy starting point for new SoTL projects (Meijerman et al, 2024).

4. Keep it small and doable

- SoTL doesn't need to be a big research project.
- Start with one assignment, activity, or part of your course.
- Small steps can still lead to meaningful improvement.

Connect with the SoTL community

SoTL is more fun and rewarding when you connect with others.

- Join the international EuroSoTL or ISSOTL Conference — a great place to learn from peers and share your first steps. See more at: www.eurosotl.org and issotl.com
- Explore the EuroSoTL Special Interest Groups (SIGs), such as the Learning to Do SoTL SIG, which is designed especially for newcomers.
- Stay connected via the EuroSoTL [LinkedIn group](#) and other online communities to keep inspired and up to date.

SoTL works best when you just give it a try – no barriers, just curiosity and action. The best SoTL project is the one you actually start, so why not today?

And don't forget...

You don't have to do this alone. Through Irma Meijerman Consultancy & Training, you can find support, webinars, and workshops to help you take your SoTL further. Keep an eye out for news and upcoming webinar series — or feel free to contact me directly if you'd like to continue your SoTL journey together.



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