Editorial: The difference in practice papers and scholarship: We publish the latter

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Abstract

The differences between regularly published practice papers and evidence-based Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) manuscripts as preferred publications are outlined and discussed in this editorial. By examining the literature and backstory of SoTL, clear guidelines for well-designed research studies supported by evidence provide compelling reasons for SoTL papers to contribute to international knowledge, change thinking, advance practice in higher education and meet the aims of scholarly academic journal. The types of evidence that can be used are described, and a practical checklist for authors to benchmark their manuscript against SoTL principles is also offered as a hands-on tool for improving manuscript submissions. Studies based on evidence and scholarship establish credible, valid, and current knowledge through defensible theoretical frameworks and systematic methodology. Scholarly studies not only contribute to knowledge, improve practice, advance pedagogy, and inform policy but also drive significant change in international higher education contexts.

Copyright

Practitioner notes

1. Evidence-based scholarship papers demonstrate credibility, validity and contribute to knowledge in higher education teaching and learning practice.
2. Evidence ensures a more reliable foundation to advance pedagogy, inform policy and drive change in teaching and learning practice in higher education.
3. Our checklist can be used by authors and reviewers to evaluate how well a manuscript aligns with the quality standards for evidence-based SoTL as published by JUTLP.

Keywords

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Introduction

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL/SoLT) is a mechanism to share practice and inform future practice using a clear and foundational evidence-base and a generally scientific method. The lesser understood but regularly published 'practice paper' is often conflated with evidence-based SoTL research. This conceptual overlap is a genuine challenge for higher education, with many experienced academics struggling to publish practice papers they term SoTL into highly ranked education journals, and more junior scholars confused as to why their scholarship paper has editors asking for its evidence base. A practice paper generally describes an author's own practice on a small scale with few links to current literature. It may have a localised focus and aim to reflect on a current experience void of an extensive theoretical framing. Such a method has a limited contribution to an international teaching and learning knowledge base but may serve an important component for an educator immersing themselves in their own learning and teaching experiences. Increasingly, practice papers do not meet the quality principles of JUTLP in providing new conceptual and theoretical contributions for a global readership, changing thinking, or advancing pedagogy and practice. This Editorial offers a discussion on the expectations for manuscripts that are evidence-based SoTL studies.

The *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice* (JUTLP) is experiencing a similar challenge in its mission to publish "well-designed and executed research and theory that changes how people think, provides evidence-based theories, methods and findings to improve higher education learning and teaching practices" and encourages "evidence-based practice research situated in the local context and the broader international literature" (JUTLP, 2024). As an Australian peer reviewed publication, most manuscript submissions come from Australia (44 percent between 2020-2024: Crawford, 2025), the United Kingdom and the United States of America, with a smaller number of papers from all over the world. In 2024, JUTLP accepted 11 percent of submissions with an 89 percent rejection rate according to statistics. This means that most articles submitted to JUTLP are desk rejected before the article is ever sent out for peer review. One of the primary reasons for desk rejection is because many practice papers make for interesting reading but are not substantiated with evidence or scholarship and often emanate from a localised narrative with little practical application for international contexts and readers; and critically, often in conflict with broader scholarship.

Sound evidence informs higher education so that administrators, policymakers, and practitioners can focus on greater efficiency and effectiveness in educational practice. With increasing attention placed on outcomes and what education delivers in the immediate term, such as student retention and achievement, as well as in the longer term, such as career and employment results (Burns, 2023), scholarship provides strong, defensible evidence linking academic literature and theory. International studies with evidence-based practice build a cumulative knowledge base to inform policy and better teaching practice. Evidence-informed practice also provides resources for practitioners to improve teaching and learning in different contexts around the globe. In these ways, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) impacts higher education and benefits the student experience.

SoTL has steadily grown in credibility and its role as an integral part of academic life in higher education after Boyer's (1990) call to recognise teaching as a form of scholarship which underpins

all aspects of academic work. SoTL can be defined as a critically reflective practice based on evidence in teaching and learning (Brew & Ginns 2008; Flavell et al., 2018, Martensson et al. 2011; Vardi 2011). By using evidence, SoTL provides a framework for instructors to evaluate student learning and determine the effectiveness of pedagogical changes in the classroom (Gurung & Wilson, 2014; Karcher et al., 2022). SoTL helps to advance scholarly research on teaching and learning through theoretical substance, measurability, accountability and statistical models for demonstrating impact (Molinaro et al., 2020). Karcher et al. (2022) claim that SoTL provides documentation and dissemination of findings through publication and Felten (2013) asserts that SOTL contributes to the body of knowledge guiding teaching practices both regionally and globally. These attributes of SoTL align well with the mission of JUTLP to change how people think and improve higher education learning and teaching practices.

The aim of this Editorial is to clarify the difference between practice papers and evidence-based SoTL studies in order to improve the submission statistics for would-be authors with well-founded advice on how to craft your manuscripts. The editorial will review literature on the importance of evidence-based scholarship, discuss the types of evidence that can be used, and point to some examples of effective studies underpinned by evidence-based practice. We also offer a practical checklist for potential authors with some basic principles for authors to document "the pinnacle of effortful teaching" (Gurung & Wilson, 2014, p.1) as evidence-based practice.

Literature

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) developed from Boyer's belief that faculty apply their knowledge and expertise to the critical needs of society by "making knowledge useful" and the "professionalism to teach well" (Boyer, 1996, p. 28). Shulman added a transformative aspect by suggesting SoTL contributes to "community property" (1999, p. 16) and is available for others to build on. Trigwell et al. (2000) concur that university teachers must be "informed of the theoretical perspectives and literature of the teaching and learning in their discipline" (p. 156) and be able to gather and demonstrate rigorous evidence of that effectiveness. On a national level, the Australian Government's *Tertiary Education and Quality Standards Agency* (TEQSA), requires academic staff to be active in scholarship to inform quality in their teaching and keep "up to date in the field" (TEQSA, 2024). Similar policies are evident in Australian state teacher registration authorities such as Queensland College of Teachers which aligns with Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and requires a minimum of 20 hours of continuing professional development for 20 days of teaching per annum (Qld College of Teachers, 2024). In the United Kingdom, *AdvanceHE* encourages Fellows to maintain professional practice by engaging "in appropriate activities to remain up to date with knowledge of learning and teaching, subject matter and assessment" (2025). Likewise, in Canada, the Ontario College of Teachers advocates their members "strive to be current in their professional knowledge and recognise its relationship to practice" and "reflect on student development, learning theory, pedagogy, curriculum, ethics, educational research and related policies and legislation to inform professional judgment in practice" (2025). These international teaching standard policies in Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada resonate and value the quality of scholarship in higher education.

Flavell et al. (2018) claim the definition of quality may vary and has changed from fit for purpose (Biggs, 2001) to an increasing recognition of indicators or standards of quality (Baird, 2013) such

as regional and world university rankings (Times Higher Education, 2024). These influences are reshaping academic work towards greater efficiency and effectiveness in what Capano and Malandrino (2022) call "new public management" (p. 400) or "new managerialism" (Flavell et al., 2018, p. 180) across Australian higher education. Scholarship is increasingly tied to the need for academic staff to prove value, publish and gain promotion.

The significance of evidence-based and evidence-informed practice is already a commonly accepted standard in clinical fields such as speech-language pathology and audiology. The focus of the evidence is education and best current practice in disciplinary teaching methods to optimise student learning (Boult et al., 2024; Ginsberg et al., 2012; Powell & Pannbacher, 2007). Ernest Boyer, who first coined the term SoTL, was an audiologist and believed that discipline-specific SoTL is necessary (Boult et al., 2024). Biomedical science studies have found that traditional didactic approaches to teaching fall short of meeting twenty-first century student competencies and socioeconomic demands (Goradia et al., 2023). These science educators conclude that evidence-based teaching practices using active learning have a significant impact on students' academic performance and learning experiences by enhancing higher order thinking skills and self-directed learning despite variations in the education setting. Because the evidence supports the case story with conclusive proof, the traditional passive, didactic instructional approaches were found less effective. Likewise, evidence-based studies have led to cultural safety practices in healthcare, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (McMurray, 2024, Moore & French, 2023) and improved nursing education (Breytenbach et al., 2017). Evidence-informed SoTL has improved clinical practice, culturally safe healthcare, nursing education and biomedical science studies across the sector, thus making knowledge useful to meet the critical needs of society as Boyer (1996) originally intended.

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning integrates evidence-based studies to better meet learning needs, produce positive outcomes, enhance the impact on student learning, and provide continuous professional development and peer discussion for informing better practice. These studies demonstrate the impact of scholarship in healthcare, nursing, and biomedical science education. The teaching standard policies across international countries such as United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, as well as Australian national and state standards for teaching, value scholarship through professional development, adding to the quantum of knowledge and integrating evidence for improving competent practice. Scholarly evidence offers a far more compelling verification to change how people think and improve higher education learning and teaching practice than a narrative with little or no substantiation.

Difference between narrative and scholarly papers

The key distinction between narrative reports about teaching and learning and SoTL is that scholarship papers make use of evidence to support claims made about the value or utility of a teaching practice. Scholarship papers do not simply describe a teaching and learning practice. Instead, evidence is used to justify how and why the practice supports quality learning and teaching in higher education, providing readers with surety that the claims about the practice are credible (Billot et al., 2017). By using evidence, it is also possible to replicate a study in another context and determine if pedagogical innovations are beneficial in similar ways as the original study. Table 1 below lists the general differences between SoTL and practice papers.

Since the audience of JUTLP includes the spectrum of higher education practitioners, such as teachers, educational designers, policymakers, and administrators (JUTLP, 2024), the research published in this journal informs decisions about teaching and learning in institutions across the globe. As editors of JUTLP, we are committed to publishing only quality research about higher education teaching and learning, and this research must be rigorously supported by compelling and valid evidence. Besides the key use of credible evidence, other differences are apparent when comparing these two types of papers as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

General differences between practice papers and SoTL

Elements	Practice papers	SoTL papers
Content	Anecdotal or experiential description	Grounded in rigorous research
Purpose	Narrative accounts to share teaching practice, strategy or innovation	Focus on examining effectiveness, outcomes and principles of practice based on evidence
Literature	Relies on personal reflection or case study	Current studies and theoretical underpinning
Structure	Shares teaching technique or framework for insight	Structured with clear research question and evidence from data
Methodology	Focus on 'how to' of practical teaching experience	Defensible, scientific research methodology
Ethical approval	Little or no ethics discussion	Provides institutional ethics approval
Data Collection	Minimal or no data collected	Gathers data and analyses impact
Evidence	Evidence not always central; may include informal observations from students	Empirical evidence to substantiate claims; evidence from theory and literature; links established
Application	Localised or context-specific with little application for international readers	Generates new knowledge in field of education that can be applied and adapted to international contexts
Audience	Audience of educators or practitioners	Audience includes scholars, researchers, administrators, policymakers and educators
Impact	Shares technique or practice for insight	Generates new knowledge in field of education; demonstrates relevance and impact of student learning, engagement and/or outcomes

SoTL papers are grounded in rigorous research, defensible methodology and theoretical underpinning while practice papers can often be more anecdotal or experiential description. SoTL papers are structured with a clear research question and gather data as evidence to analyse the impact while evidence is not always central to practice papers. SoTL studies focus on examining the effectiveness, outcomes and principles of practice based on empirical evidence while many practice papers collect minimal or no data and rely more on personal reflection or case study. SoTL papers aim to contribute new knowledge to the field of education and demonstrate the impact of student learning outcomes. The goal of practice papers is to share insight on a teaching technique or innovation and often use informal evidence such as student observations. Ethical approval from an institution is required for human research and this approval is clearly articulated in a SoTL study. The audience for practice papers is often other teachers or practitioners while SoTL papers have an audience of scholars, educators, administrators and researchers. Although generalised, these differences highlight the credibility, rigor and validity of SoTL papers grounded in research methodology, theoretical concepts, current literature, data analysis, ethical approval, and empirical evidence. These SoTL studies present well-designed research with thought-provoking findings arising from solid evidence.

Types of evidence

The types of evidence SoTL authors use to support their claims will vary depending on the research question/s underpinning their work, the aims of the research, the chosen research paradigm, and the theoretical framing of the research (Miller-Young & Yeo, 2015). As a form of education research, SoTL authors make use of quantitative and qualitative research methods to collect evidence about teaching and learning (Hubball & Clarke, 2010). In this editorial, we highlight the types of research evidence commonly used by SoTL researchers publishing in JUTLP, drawing a distinction between evidence-based research that is published and 'practice papers' that are not. In doing so, we emphasise that such evidence should come from well-designed research studies with relevant theoretical grounding and appropriate research methodology(ies). The main types of evidence used by SoTL authors published in JUTLP are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Commonly used types of SoTL evidence

Method	Types	Example
Quantitative	Surveys/questionnaires/pre-post tests	Nguyen et al. (2023)
	Learning analytics	Gonzalez-Torres and Salano (2024)
	Assessment data /student	Lewis et al. (2024)
	performance data	Elbashir & Hamza (2022)
Qualitative	Interviews/focus groups	Turner et al. (2024)
	Observations	Kavenuke & Muthanna (2021)
	Reflection and autoethnography	Valiente-Riedl et al. (2024)
	Students as partners	Donnelly & Sherlock (2023)

Quantitative evidence about a teaching and learning practice could include the results of surveys/questionnaires soliciting students' perspectives and experiences of a practice; pre-and-

post-tests measuring changes in students' learning before and after the implementation of a teaching and learning practice; or an analysis of the impact of the teaching and learning practice on students' performance (e.g. assessment results, grades, etc). Qualitative evidence could include interviews with individuals or with focus groups that interrogate students' opinions and experiences of a teaching and learning practice; formal observations of teaching and/or student engagement and participation with a teaching and learning practice; and/or teacher-researcher fieldnotes and/or autoethnographic critical reflection about a teaching and learning practice.

SoTL is demonstrated in a number of evidence-based Students as Partners (SaP) studies which provide support for innovations involving students in emerging agentic roles in higher education (Ashton-Hay, 2025). In these examples, SoTL is used to support the innovations with theory and evidential support rather than a narrative description. Some examples include decolonising reading lists (Crilly et al., 2020), marketing case competitions prepared by faculty and students (Donnelly & Sherlock, 2023), co-design of rubrics (Morton et al., 2021), and co-creators of curriculum (Wilson et al., 2020). Diverse types of evidence are represented with faculty collaborating with students in recent studies (Keeling et al., 2021, Peseta et al., 2021, Wright et al., 2021) as well as co-creators of knowledge (Billett & Martin, 2018, Wisker, 2018). Case studies of student-faculty partnership through academic work is also evident in Kaur and Norman (2020) where partnering met basic needs for student connection. These studies demonstrate a move from the use of student surveys and student teaching evaluations as a passive data source related to practice. The evidence from these SoTL studies confirms an emerging trend related to the agentic and relational role students are enacting in higher education (see Ashton-Hay, 2025).

Many SoTL authors employ a combination of quantitative and qualitative evidence in their research (Divan et al., 2017). There are benefits to mixing research methods and combining quantitative and qualitative evidence, including the capacity to show a more complete picture (Lund, 2011) of the teaching and learning context and the outcomes of the researched practice. As described by Lund (2011), the mixing quantitative and qualitative research evidence can uncover both convergent and divergent findings, leading SoTL researchers to further reflect and refine their teaching practices and their research. Student evaluation data, such as course-level qualitative feedback, has often been used by researchers as evidence in SoTL papers. Yet, as Ali and colleagues (2021) note, data obtained from student evaluations can be unreliable and marred by problems relating to bias and validity. As JUTLP editors, we caution the use of student evaluation data as evidence in SoTL research and encourage prospective authors to be aware of the limitations of tools and processes used to collect student evaluation data.

SoTL papers are grounded in rigorous research, defensible methodology and theoretical underpinning while practice papers can often be more anecdotal or experiential description. SoTL papers are structured with a clear research question and gather data as evidence to analyse the impact while evidence is not always central to practice papers. SoTL studies focus on examining the effectiveness, outcomes and principles of practice based on empirical evidence while many practice papers collect minimal or no data and rely more on personal reflection or case study. SoTL papers aim to contribute new knowledge to the field of education and demonstrate the impact of student learning outcomes linked to current literature. The goal of practice papers is to share insight on a teaching technique or innovation and often use informal evidence such as student observations. Ethical approval from an institution is required for human research and this

approval is clearly articulated in a SoTL study. The audience for practice papers is often other teachers or practitioners while SoTL papers have an audience of scholars, educators, and researchers. Although generalised, these differences highlight the credibility, rigor and validity of SoTL papers grounded in research methodology, theoretical concepts, current literature, data analysis, ethical approval, and empirical evidence. These studies present well-designed research with thought-provoking findings from solid evidence.

Principles of evidence-based SoTL

Manuscripts are scrutinised in accordance with common publication practice outlined in literature and informed by JUTLP's quality principles. Seven recent desk-rejected or 'major revisions required' manuscripts were analysed for common reasons why these papers were rejected, and the reasons are listed in Table 3. This section will discuss how these manuscripts were caught in the web of practice papers rather than JUTLP's required scholarship papers and thus raised red flags for editors. JUTLP's quality principles require robust empirical or philosophical evidence that is grounded in a context-specific problem but has international implications for teaching and learning. The reasons why each paper was returned to authors are analysed in the following discussion. The following examples are recent SoTL publications in JUTLP that exemplify evidence-based studies responding to a research question with a theoretical framework, evidence to support the findings and clear implications for changing thinking and practice in higher education. Kaeedi et al. (2023) examine problem-based learning. While there is an overabundance of literature on this topic thoroughly reviewed by the authors, there is a clear demonstration of how their study fills a gap in applying problem-based learning to teaching research methods. A particular strength of this study is in using triangulation between quantitative exam performance and qualitative interviews with students. The qualitative results look beyond the obvious themes of improved learning and consider students' increased autonomy and motivation to do research. This research involved a small and relatively homogenous group of postgraduate students in Iran but is broadly relevant to anyone teaching research skills or considering using problem-based learning.

Benson et al.'s (2023) paper explores a targeted intervention for new students who fail their assessment. The authors clearly position their approach in relation to a theoretical framework, including theories such as growth mindset and planned behaviour. Despite a small sample size, they use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to deeply explore the impact of the intervention in students. Equity is an important focus of this paper, particularly exploring the role of support in student's home lives. Although this study occurred in a specific Australian university, it has broader implications for providing targeted support to transitioning and at-risk students which can be replicated or adapted to other contexts.

Stronger support for research problems

The research question(s) of the papers is not in accordance with evidence-based questions. For example, we receive manuscripts where questions are too general, vague or even non-existent. Some manuscripts also have many claims for the hopes of the study in the introduction, but those studies do not outline the research problems or issues under investigation. Another issue with some papers is the introduction or literature review does not reflect the research problem, purpose, or issue the authors need to address. In that sense, the body of the paper, thereby, has

many propositions that are mismatched with the results, and are difficult to follow in the results and discussion section. There are papers that do not identify the scientific gaps in the introduction or only state a geographical gap. Purvis and colleagues' (2024) IDEA-ARC (or identify, draft, explore, agree, apply, reflect, and communicate) offer a useful typology for ensuring strong support for a question. However, a geographical or context-specific gap has its merit, not because no study has been conducted in that context, but because this geographical gap justifies an international or communal concern or problem that requires a scientific solution for that specific locale. As an example, stating Kyiv, Ukraine as a geographical scientific gap is justifiable because it is in a poly crisis, hence, studying students' remote education is justifiable in this area.

Table 3
Reasons for rejection in the sample manuscripts after editorial and peer reviews

Rejection because…	Post-Reviewer Rejections (Seven manuscripts)						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Problem/aim mismatch	x	x		x		x	x
Significance unclear	x			x			
Literature-based claims			x			x	x
Framework logic	x	x	x		x	x	x
Method validity	x			x	x		
Discussion robustness		x				x	x

It is interesting to note that in Table 3, research problems and inadequate frameworks constitute the majority of errors among rejected manuscripts. In fact, some manuscripts had up to four major shortcomings across different areas including the research problem or aim, the framework, literature review, methods and discussion of implications. Editors and reviewers both strongly seek the reflection of the problem, issue, or research questions as a compass of the entire paper, and a theoretical underpinning as a binding force or skeletal system of the research paper.

Cohesive literature-based claims

There were articles with theoretical or conceptual frameworks that do not support the results. When authors write their articles, they need to discuss their findings with reference to the framework and current literature. For example, if a framework details five concepts, the authors need to discuss results or provide explanations that support all concepts of that framework or clearly explain why the results do not directly support the other remaining concepts. Sometimes narratives are vague and do not link to the framework or the literature review. Likewise, a limited literature review hinders the foundation of arguments and support of the framework. A lack of theoretical underpinning results in weak, indefensible theoretical implications. A literature review needs to have currency with up-to-date knowledge, citations and practice which are linked across the study. JUTLP requires that the literature review sufficiently identifies scientific gaps, offers contrasting evidence of hypothesis, and provides discussion of the frameworks.

Transparent research methods, distinct from curriculum methods

The methods section contributes to the accuracy of the study when authors give relevant details and ample discussion of the research design, sampling technique, selection of participants, data collection and instruments, ethical procedures, and data trustworthiness. Some manuscripts, however, do not clearly address all this information, nor do they discuss ethical protocol and approval. The process of data collection is also difficult to follow in some papers because it does not effectively utilise the visualisation of figures or tables. Authors also neglect to discuss the reason for the selection of the sampling technique such as justifying the use of convenience sampling.

Strong evidence

Some manuscripts do not provide sufficient narratives, or the findings show an unequal distribution of evidence which is another pitfall of rejected articles. Insufficient evidence is a cause for the discussion section to be overpromising and under-deliver on the claims. The implications should align with the findings and be supported by sufficient evidence. Evidence comprised of 'thick descriptions' (Geertz, 2008) in the findings is welcome. Hence, we ask authors to provide sufficient narratives and evidence that equate the voices based on the diversity of the participants.

A critical focus, not overuse of narrative or descriptive analysis

Some manuscripts submitted to JUTLP rely more on anecdotal evidence rather than rigorous documentation or objective evaluation of the data. The results section places more emphasis on personal beliefs or professional experience than what the data purports. This signifies that the innovation or practice lacks rigorous design of methodology when research was carried out due to overly descriptive writing about the innovative practice.

Alignment between results and implications

A major issue occurs when authors mismatch the discussion and implications of the results against the actual findings. The results section of some manuscripts has promising outcomes, but either overperforms or under-delivers the implications of the findings. Some authors also tend to provide the 'significance of the study' based on localised findings rather than offering deep and focused technological, pedagogical, academic, social, or policy-related research implications from the results. Authors need to highlight global implications for JUTLP's international readers, which is one of our quality principles for publication. A minor issue found in the results section of a few papers is the misalignment of the research question when visually presented through a figure in the results section. This means the authors will have to find a more visually effective and logical presentation of the results that aligns to the order of the research questions when there are more than one. Authors should also discuss the comparison or argumentation of the results from previous studies.

Checklist for authors

To sum up our discussion on moving to better evidence-based SoTL, the following Table 4 illustrates a checklist for authors to critically review their manuscripts prior to submission to

JUTLP. The checklist outlines key points and offers advice for improving and ensuring manuscripts are scholarly and evidence-based to meet publication requirements. By ensuring your manuscript best meets JUTLP publishing criteria and satisfies scholarship requirements prior to submission, your work is more likely to be considered for publication. If the checklist is followed, your manuscript is not only more worthy of publication, supported and informed by evidence, but also likely to merit being sent out for peer review. Authors take note of the following Table 4 checklist and list with elaboration and explanation.

Table 4

Checklist for authors

Criteria	Explanation	Reference
Ethical research	Authors are required to have full and informed consent from participants and evidence of approval from an Institutional Review Board, such as a university ethics committee.	Purvis and Crawford (2024)
Justified research methods	There should be a strong, defensible reason for the selection of the chosen research methodology, including research questions and data collection methods.	Purvis et al. (2024)
Scholarly engagement	Ensure the research links to existing frameworks, conceptual models and pedagogies. Demonstrate how the research adds to the existing literature.	Crawford (2021)
Evidence-based	Research findings should be supported by data collected using quantitative and/or qualitative research methods.	Divan et al. (2017) Huisman (2023)
Relevance	Papers should be of relevance to an international audience of scholars, researchers and educators.	JULTP (2024)
Alignment of evidence, implications and impact	Evidence should support the research question/problem using an 'impact mindset' with interrogated implications and impact analysis.	Minocha (2024)

1. *Do you have ethics approval?*

Teaching practice and internal evaluations of teaching are often conducted informally or as an internal review, without ethics approval. However, to be publishable, authors are required to have full and informed consent from participants and will normally be required to have approval from an Institutional Review Board. Purvis and Crawford (2024) expand on ethics expectations for JUTLP publications.

2. *Can you justify your methods of data collection?*

Papers should have evidence that addresses a specific research question or problem, rather than just describing teaching practice. As discussed above, we are looking for papers that have a clear evidence base and follow qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods with a supporting rationale.

3. *Can you evidence the impact of your practice?*

Be clear about what you are measuring – are you measuring students' actual learning or perceived learning? Or are you measuring something else entirely, such as attitudes or behavioural change? Your evidence of impact will be stronger and more credible if you are able to collect multiple sources of data or repeat data collection at multiple time points (Sweeney & Shnurr, 2023).

4. *Have you fully interrogated your result?*

As an author, it can sometimes be difficult to see the forest for the trees. With qualitative data, try to ensure your themes reflect shared meanings, rather than literal topics (Braun & Clarke, 2019). With quantitative data, ensure surprising or unexpected results are fully discussed. Almost all published teaching interventions have a positive impact, particularly if compared to not implementing anything (Hattie, 2015). How are your changes meaningful compared to other interventions?

5. *Is your practice reliable?*

Through research design, much student data collection automatically excludes certain voices, for example, through recruiting high achievers or on-campus students (Felten et al., 2013). Ensure you recruit diverse voices where possible, acknowledge the limitations of your methods, and include minority or conflicting views in your results.

6. *Have you linked back to relevant scholarship?*

SoTL is often undertaken by researchers who are primarily based in another discipline, so they may not be familiar with the current and seminal scholarship. However, student learning does not exist in a theoretical vacuum and authors need to ensure their paper links to existing frameworks, conceptual models and pedagogies, and establishes how their research adds to the existing literature. Ensure you link back to the scholarship in your discussion as well – often authors provide an excellent literature review at the start of the paper but fail to close the loop at the end.

7. *What should readers take away from your study?*

SoTL projects normally take place in specific disciplinary, cultural and university contexts. However, their lessons should be applicable by readers more generally. What broader truths do your results suggest? For example, what does it tell us about students' ways of working, the usefulness of a new methodology to measure student learning, or practical strategies that can be implemented in our practice internationally? Ensure there is a clear take-home message for all readers and members of JUTLP's international audience.

Notes for reviewers and editors

JUTLP reviewers and editors of other publications may wish to take note of our preference for evidence-based SoTL manuscripts over practice papers. Reviewers and editors can check alignment of potential manuscripts against the author checklist and insist on compliance. Editors of other journals may wish to initiate similar guidelines in their academic journal to ensure systematic methodology, transparency and data-driven evidence of impact. Such studies contribute to the broader knowledge base, advance improvements in higher education practice and enhance the student experience.

Conclusion

The differentiation between practice papers and evidence-based scholarship of teaching and learning manuscripts can be summed up in credibility, validity, and contribution to knowledge in higher education teaching and learning practices. Evidence ensures greater credibility, validity is corroborated through scholarship, current literature and systematic methodology and theoretical frameworks. A study based in evidence, theory and defensible methodology has a strong potential to meaningfully contribute to education knowledge and practice through a well-organised, thoroughly cited and academically rigorous paper. Although practice papers may offer contextual and anecdotal insights, the evidence-base provided in SoTL manuscripts ensures a more reliable foundation for advancing pedagogy, informing policy and driving significant change in higher education practice. By publishing such research, academic journals such as JUTLP can fulfil their mission to enhance the contribution of quality research, knowledge and impact in teaching and learning across a diverse readership in international settings throughout the world.

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