



## SPECIAL ISSUE – CALL FOR PAPERS

### Design-based research: Transforming higher education learning and teaching practice in response to rapid changes

For publication into the Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice.

#### Guest editors

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#### Background

This Special Issue creates a focal point for exploring how design-based research in higher education can address pedagogical problems faced by higher education in response to the impact of global changes (e.g., global pandemic and the explosion of generative artificial intelligence). Design-based research presents a pragmatic approach to addressing both pedagogical problems and innovations within a rigorous framework that aims to build transferable practice. Design-based research often adopts mixed-methodologies, iterative practices, and collaborative partnerships between researchers and educators to improve learning and teaching practice. Building upon recent discussions (Cochrane et al., 2024; Galvin & Cochrane, 2023) and design-based research project implementations (Cochrane et al., 2023; 2024) this Special Issue will explore examples of implementing design-based research in various higher education contexts and discussion of how design-based research can be applied to address identified pedagogical problems or innovations in other contexts.

The relevance of exploring the role of design-based research in higher education is to stimulate discussion for how this pragmatic research approach informs 'what works' in situated learning contexts to develop cutting edge design principles and theoretically informed practice that can be transferrable (Galvin & Cochrane, 2023; Hoadley & Campos, 2022). The methodological framework of design-based research invites students, teachers, and learning designers to collaborate from the conception of a design artefact or educational approach to solve a learning problem through to iterative stages of implementation and evaluation. Following a new normal in higher education where change is inevitable, and fast-paced, research design that does not shy away from the progressive and 'messy' elements of educational settings to respond to rapid change (Reeves & Lin, 2020). Finding a balance between naturalistic and interventionist research methods to explore this complexity is a way forward that design-based research can provide. Greater understanding for the value of design-based research and how to plan practical stages with multiple participants is needed for teachers, researchers, and leaders in higher education to confidently adopt this approach to transform practice (Haagen-Schützenhöfer et al., 2024; Hanghøj et al., 2022; Henriksen & Ejning-Duun, 2022; Mezirow, 2018).



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Article contributions are invited from a wide range of discipline contexts, with a special focus upon underrepresented implementation of design-based research (e.g., in STEMM: Hjalmarson & Parsons, 2021; McKenney & Reeves, 2020; Scott et al., 2020), as well as contributions from the various key streams of design-based research (Bakker, 2018; Herrington et al., 2007; McKenney & Reeves, 2019; Sandoval, 2014; Van den Akker et al., 2006). Some possible topics could include, but are not limited to:

- Sustained, expansive or adaptive design-based research in learning and teaching practice (Henriksen & Ejsing-Duun, 2022)
- Activity theory and design-based research (Penuel et al., 2016)
- Design-based research across disciplinary contexts (e.g., STEMM: Scott et al., 2020)
- Transformative learning and design-based research (Kardiyem et al., 2025).

## Types of publications accepted into this Special Issue

The types of publications that are eligible for acceptance into this Special Issue include:

- Original research articles drawing on robust SoTL rather than practice papers,
- Theoretical and position papers situated clearly for L&T practice impact, and
- Systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and bibliometric analyses.

## Developing a high-quality proposal

We recommend the creation of a single document (Word document preferably) that contains the following:

- Proposed article title
- Proposed authors names and affiliations
- A clear evidence-based rationale for the line of inquiry proposed
- Research question(s)
- Proposed method (for both theoretical and empirical manuscripts)
- Practice-based implications of the proposed research

The word limit for the proposal is 250 words (not including references) and is designed to give the Editorial Team a sense of the rigour of the manuscript proposed and the possible implications of such research. The Editorial Team may return with an invitation to combine similar manuscripts. Acceptance of proposals does not guarantee acceptance of final manuscripts.

## Timeline

- Proposals due: 1 December 2025
- Acceptance notifications: 16 December 2025
- Full articles due: 1 July 2026
- Final revised articles due: 1 November 2027
- Final publication: 1 February 2027

For further information, or to submit an abstract, please email Associate Professor Thomas Cochrane [Cochrane.t@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:Cochrane.t@unimelb.edu.au) or Dr Vickel Narayan [V.Narayan@massey.ac.nz](mailto:V.Narayan@massey.ac.nz).



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