

Plan for a SoTL Project

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Research Question

What are you curious about?

- I am curious about student engagement in the classroom (synchronously/asynchronously)

What would you like to know about strategies that might hinder and/or help students to learn, in your course?

- I think 'experiential learning' has always interested me, especially as a musician

Do you want to know if an activity, assignment, or teaching strategy "works?"

- Yes, I want to know if it works - I am open to experimentation and trial and error as well

Do you have a question about how to help your students learn a particular skill?

- I have always found teaching how to write challenging. I think it would be beneficial to try to incorporate experiential learning into practice writing activities

Identify challenge/outcome related to learning that is related to your question.

Describe the learning in a way that suggests how you might measure it using either qualitative or quantitative methods.

- I could use student feedback (qualitative or quantitative) as way to measure effectiveness of the exercise on the student learning experience

- I could use the students marks (quantitative) as a way to measure if providing experiential learning activities improved students' grades on writing assignments compared to previous years without it

Describe the instructional activity, assignment, or teaching strategy that will promote student learning on the outcome you identified.

SoTL projects might investigate the impact of a modification to an existing strategy or assignment. Describe how the new approach differs from the old approach and why this modification might change student learning on this outcome.

- I would like to use an experiential learning activity (reflective journaling) to help students improve their grades on papers and written assignments
- The 'old approach' in the course I TA in is to assign readings to students and expect them to pick up on how to do it by observation. I think it is more effective to allow students to practice the skill instead of just showing them examples and expecting them to 'get it'.
- If you let students practice this skill instead, they will feel more comfortable and confident when encountering written assignments. It will also allow them an informal and formative opportunity to have their work evaluated with feedback and then improve their work before they need to submit an assignment for grading.

Describe the evidence that would persuade an external audience that the new or modified teaching strategy improves student learning on the targeted learning outcome.

Describe the evidence you would need to collect to answer questions about the impact or value of this teaching strategy. How would you convince others that this approach is better than other approaches? What comparisons should you make? Examine students; skill before and after the assignment? Compare students who complete the learning activity to another group of students – what comparisons would be meaningful?

- I would need to show an improvement in the quality of written assignments (quantitative). This could include: ability to source correctly, essay structure, writing style, etc.
- I could also show evidence from student feedback (qualitative) that the experiential learning activities - reflective writing, had a positive impact on their ability to complete papers/essays.
- I think a good comparison for this is... can you learn to ride a bike by watching videos or reading books about it? or do you need to experience it in order to feel, understand and remember DOING the activity? In addition, learning to do something new takes PRACTICE, so if we do not allow students formative opportunities to practice skills, how can we expect them to get it perfect the first time?
- I think allowing students the opportunity to practice academic sourcing in reflective writing can be a really beneficial low stakes activity. They can not only express their subjective opinions and reflection, but also practice using appropriate sources and reference styles. This also gives students an opportunity to correct mistakes they may not realize they're making before final summative assignments need to be submitted.

- Comparisons of students with weekly reflection writing versus none, should provide a clear demonstration of the benefits of formative experiential learning opportunities on student performance in written assignments.

How and where would you publish, present, or disseminate this work?

- This could be published in educational journals, or music (fine arts) journals since I am working in the field of music.

- This could be published now since we are still currently in a lockdown, it could be written towards asynchronous classrooms. It could also be published at any point now or in the future, and could yield slightly different results if we are teaching synchronously again in the future.

- The results could be presented at a conference or colloquium at York University or abroad, in the fields of music or education (Teaching Commons)

- Digital photographs (or infographics) could also be used on social media to make the information more appealing and interesting

- This could also be published through social media outlets such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.

Ethical Concerns

- It would be best practice to request permission to quote or reference students' responses, but it is not mandatory as long as students' responses remain anonymous and they voluntarily filed a feedback form. If they do not want their information included, they have the right to request it be removed from the research project.

- As the teacher, I also have the right to express my own (autoethnographical) experience in the classroom as the instructor and therefore I am able to discuss and analyze what I have discovered during my teaching experience - even though at the same time this is also considered the students' learning experience. I can discuss my own experiences without outside permission.

Adapted from: C. J. Stanny, E. M. El-Sheikh, & H-M. Chung (2009) ***Getting Started with a SoTL Project***

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