



## *Introduction to the 2023 ICWG Collection*

# Context Matters—Advancing SoTL through Collaborative Inquiry

### KEYWORDS

context, collaboration, transformation

This special section brings together a curated collection of scholarly articles developed through the 2023 International Collaborative Writing Groups (ICWGs), in alignment with the ISSOTL conference theme *Context Matters*. Drawing on Felten et al.'s (2016) articulation of core SoTL commitments—student learning, engagement, evidence, shared purpose, and context—the articles in this section address the complexities of today's educational landscape. Rather than foregrounding context simply as background, the authors position it as central to meaning-making within teaching and learning. Collectively, the contributions move beyond disciplinary boundaries and geographic borders in order to demonstrate how context functions as both a site of inquiry and a catalyst for transformation in SoTL.

At the heart of this section is the recognition that SoTL is deeply relational and inherently situated. These articles affirm that learning does not occur in abstraction; it is shaped by institutional cultures, pedagogical relationships, historical legacies, and technological change. In line with the theme *Context Matters*, contributors interrogate how educational practices are informed by the spaces in which they are enacted and how those spaces are themselves shifting. Whether examining co-created pedagogies, the role of vulnerability in critical reflection, or the inclusive articulation of expectations, the authors surface the nuanced ways that teaching and learning are entangled with context. In doing so, they honour SoTL's commitment to being grounded in the lived realities of both students and educators.

Each article in this collection foregrounds diverse facets of this contextual entanglement. Mills et al. reframe SoTL for the age of generative AI, urging us to consider the diffracted and human dimensions of scholarship in an era of technological transformation. Kelley et al. traverse the borderlands of SoTL as a transdisciplinary and transnational practice, while Moron-Garcia et al. explore how SoTL emerges as visible agency rather than positional vulnerability. Hamilton et al. contextualise leadership in SoTL as an interplay between theory and lived experience, whereas Arcellana-Panlilio advances a holistic construct of affective learning that acknowledges the integral role of emotion in teaching and scholarship. Finally, Rahman et al. ground the theme of context in interpersonal relationship building within higher education, underscoring the centrality of connection in shaping learning environments. Collectively, these contributions enrich our understanding of how context shapes, challenges, and inspires the work of SoTL.

Emphasis on context as a defining characteristic of SoTL is visible throughout the collection. Several contributions explore how alignment between institutional policy, student voice, and disciplinary practice must be contextually navigated in order to achieve coherence and equity. Others

reconceptualise the idea of leadership as a contextual act—one that requires attunement to both the formal structures and informal networks that shape scholarly identity and influence. In each case, context is not framed as a static variable to be controlled or generalised, but as a dynamic condition that shapes inquiry, interpretation, and action. This commitment to contextual awareness opens possibilities for more ethical, inclusive, and responsive forms of scholarship.

What unites these articles is not a shared methodology or disciplinary lens but a common purpose: to examine what matters most in SoTL when we centre context as a guiding principle. Rather than seeking universal solutions, the authors offer situated, context rich insights that reflect the diversity of educational environments and the need for SoTL to remain scholarly, reflective, and grounded in real-world challenges. The products of these writing groups are more than collaborative exercises; they are scholarly contributions that enrich the field by challenging us to think differently about where we are, who we teach, and how we learn together.

Collectively, the articles extend ISSOTL's core commitments by illustrating how they take shape within and across different contexts. They provide powerful testimony to the value of collaborative scholarship in creating knowledge that is rigorous, relevant, and anchored in practice. In doing so, they reaffirm that in SoTL, context matters.

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#### REFERENCE

Felten, Peter, John N. Gardner, Charles C. Schroeder, Leo M. Lambert, Betsy O. Barefoot, and Freeman A. Hrabowski. 2016. *The Undergraduate Experience: Focusing Institutions on What Matters Most*. John Wiley & Sons.



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