

The SoTL Research Brief

SoTL Research Briefs present early findings or methodological innovations of ongoing teaching and learning /research projects in Canadian higher education (1,500–2,000 words, including references).

What is a research brief?

A research brief is a submission type that authors can opt for if they would like to share a compelling part of a research project in progress. The brief can include some or all of the following:

- The goals of the research
- A rationale for the project including contextual information about the topic and relevant previous research
- The research questions
- A statement on the methodological approach, with a description of the actual research steps
- A preview of the data analysis and the research findings

Authors will not be expected to provide the full scope of the literature reviewed or the research findings. Authors may choose to specify the group of people the research is focused on or who will benefit from the findings.

The brief can also be thought of as an expanded research proposal, with a glimpse into the significance of the teaching and learning project. Often, for research papers (5,000–8,000 words), SoTL scholars are expected to expand on the research findings, while methodological decisions and research processes are succinctly described. Research briefs provide an opportunity to elaborate on the research processes for a closer look at how teaching and learning can be appropriately and ethically conducted. The ideal brief should be 1,500–2,000 words with no more than 2 reference pages, and no more than one appendix.

Why should you choose a research brief?

The purpose of the brief can be to garner interest and engagement in the research project; to increase collaboration opportunities by promoting the project; and to provide timely insight on a project's progress. Whatever the reason you choose to publish a research brief, you can think of it as an opportunity to get multiple dissemination avenues for your project. In keeping with Felten's (2013) recommendation that good SoTL practice means going public, the research brief can help scholars fulfill that responsibility to the research community.

Are there examples of research briefs that I can consult?

Cossey, K., & Fischer, H. (2021). *COVID-19 impact research brief: Virtual exchanges at community colleges*. National Association for Foreign Student Affairs: Association of International Educators. <https://www.nafsa.org/sites/default/files/media/document/covid-19-impact-virtual-exchanges.pdf>

This brief provides insight into a mixed-methods study about virtual exchange programs at community colleges in the United States. This brief prioritized reporting on the findings, but the level of the reporting is at the summary level.

Felten, P. (2013). Principles of good practice in SoTL. *Teaching and Learning Inquiry*, 1(1), 121–125.

This essential reading for SoTL is not a research report and is more aligned with the essay format, but it provides a sense of the scope of a brief for a SoTL audience.

Lowes, S., & Montero, E. (2021). The legacy of colonial medicine in Central Africa. *American Economic Review*, 111(4), 1284–1314.

This brief describes a project that digitized 30 years of archival records that captured sleeping sickness medical campaigns administered by French colonial governments.

Contact Information

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