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Scholarship reimagined: creating the DARSHE, an inclusive and flexible framework for developing scholarship in higher education

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Abstract
The expansion and marketisation of Higher Education (HE) over recent years has prompted significant growth in the number and proportion of education-focused academics (EFAs) within the academy. Recognition and reward for these staff has however been a persistent challenge, in part because of debates around the nature of scholarship, variation in institutional criteria pertaining to scholarship, and lack of clarity around recognition of the work undertaken by EFAs. As part of our remit to develop scholarship in our own institution, we conducted workshops with academics from six departments within a post-1992 English university, capturing lived experiences of scholarship, understandings of what it comprised, and perspectives on how scholarship could be supported. We reflect on these discussions, on the literature defining scholarship, and on our own lived experiences as EFAs and supporting EFAs, to reimagine scholarship through an integrated framework, the DARSHE (Description of Activities Relating to Scholarship in Higher Education). The DARSHE framework offers a synthesis of some of the different approaches in the current literature, taking into account the development needs we have identified, and subsequent evaluations with wider stakeholders. The framework can be used by individuals to reflect on their scholarship, as a tool to support the development of an inclusive approach to scholarship by academic developers, and to enable reward and recognition for EFAs in university policy. We suggest that this will lead to a positive impact on colleagues seeking to develop their scholarship, the HE sector, and the students that study within it.

Keywords Scholarship · Higher education · SoTL · Education focused · Academic development

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Introduction

Modern universities exist in an increasingly complex and market-led environment. Their traditional core mission of research and teaching persists, alongside newer priorities such as widening participation, knowledge exchange, and civic contribution. Increasingly, university activities are the subject of metrics which contribute to university ranking systems (e.g. QS World University Rankings, 2024) and inform the relative status of institutions in the global HE market. This can influence student decisions about where to study and staff decisions about where to work.

Within this context, universities have developed strategies to optimise performance (Johnes, 2018). One such strategy involves creating different career pathways for academic staff with specific responsibilities. Productive researchers are placed on a research-focused pathway and thus counted towards research assessments (such as the Research Excellence Framework, REF, in the UK), whilst others are designated as education-focused, contributing to teaching quality, student experience, and teaching-associated metrics (such as the Teaching Excellence Framework, TEF, in the UK). The categorisation of staff according to their perceived primary function enables universities to return research outputs against a relatively smaller number of research-active staff, which results in higher institutional research metrics performance (Chalmers, 2011), which influences global university rankings.

According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, 2024), the numbers and proportions of education-focused academics (EFAs) in the UK have increased year-on-year since 2012; currently, of the UK's approximately 240,000 academic staff, 36% (around 84,000) are education focused. According to Graham (2025) and Foster et al. (2025), similar trends exist globally, with many of the world's top research-intensive universities now employing academics on such pathways for similar reasons to those reported in the UK.

Given the substantive numbers of EFAs, research has sought to understand their roles and their specific contributions to HE. To some extent, there has been a lingering perception that such staff are somehow 'second-class' in comparison to those who undertake research (Bennett et.al., 2018; Hulme, 2022; Loch et al., 2024). This is contested by those who argue that EFAs develop expertise in HE, contribute teaching innovation, drive interventions to enhance student experience and student success, and generate knowledge around effective educational practices (Hulme, 2022; Loch et al., 2024; Smith & Walker, 2021, 2024).

Often, the expertise that EFAs accrue results from their responsibilities within their roles, which can extend far beyond teaching. In our experience, although a minority of academic staff are employed only to teach, most are employed on contracts that include teaching and another activity. At our institution (a large post-1992 English university), career pathways encompass Teaching and Research, Teaching and Practice (for academics working as or with professional practitioners in industry or health care), and Teaching and Scholarship. Likewise, the University of Manchester has a Teaching and Scholarship career pathway. At Utrecht University, education has been explicitly embedded into the reward and recognition framework for all academics (Utrecht University, 2021), whilst at the University of New South Wales (UNSW, 2024), a 'pillar' of academic performance around education can form the basis for an application for promotion. The National University of Singapore (2015) has also created a distinct 'education-focused' career track. Globally, education-focused promotions usually require a combination of institutionally facing activities and externally facing practice (dissemination or leadership beyond the institution)

(Graham, 2025). However, both Reano et al. (2019) and Smith and Walker (2022) note that EFA understanding of scholarship is limited. Whilst improved promotions criteria are welcome and may have raised awareness of scholarship, there is still work to be done to communicate scholarship expectations to EFAs and those who manage them who are not from an EFA background themselves.

EFA roles not only include teaching but also require wider activity relating to the understanding of, practice of, and leadership of HE. Thus we adopt the terminology of EFAs, rather than 'teaching focused' (in common with Smith & Walker, 2021, 2024); whilst most EFAs teach, they are a heterogeneous group who also undertake specialised student support work, lead educational programmes, carry out academic development and training, specialise in specific pedagogies such as technology-enhanced learning, lead on HE policy or curriculum development, undertake quality assurance and quality enhancement work, and undertake scholarship of HE (Rawn & Fox, 2018). A review of the literature shows that such diverse EFA careers exist in the UK (Bull et al., 2024; Smith & Walker, 2021, 2024), Canada (Rawn & Fox, 2018), Australia (Godbold et al., 2023; Loch et al., 2024), and Southeast Asia (Graham, 2025).

EFAs can encounter challenges at entry level as they make their first steps into their careers and seek professional development (Geertsema, 2016; Reano et al., 2019) or later, when seeking progression and reward, despite the growth of EFA promotion pathways (Cashmore et al., 2013; McHanwell & Robson, 2018). A lack of consistency across the sector around EFA promotion criteria is also problematic (Chalmers, 2011; McHanwell & Robson, 2018). There is, however, recognition that 'You certainly don't get promoted for just teaching' (Bull et al., 2024), and that most universities have built their EFA promotion schemes to reflect educational expertise, including scholarship of HE (Hulme, 2022; Smith & Walker, 2021). That said, there is little consensus across different promotions criteria or in the international literature regarding what counts as 'scholarship' (Smith & Walker, 2021; Vardi & Quin, 2011), potentially limiting opportunities for mobility between institutions (within and between international contexts). The ongoing debate around the meaning of scholarship in HE thus impacts EFAs at all stages in their academic careers.

One of the most influential approaches to conceptualising scholarship, that of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), arose from Boyer (1990), when he called for the academy to reappraise the relationship between teaching and research, and to adopt an approach incorporating discovery (research), application (putting theory into practical use), integration (synthesising knowledge from different perspectives), and teaching and learning. For Boyer, these activities are essential parts of the academic role and core to the business of universities, yet the ways in which they are articulated within the SoTL movement have varied.

Others have attempted to capture the attributes of scholarship (Shulman, 1999), present models of scholarship (Kern et al., 2015; Simmons, 2020; Trigwell et al., 2000), identify principles of good practice (Felten, 2013), and describe levels of impact of SoTL (Fanghanel et al., 2016; Frake-Mistak et al., 2023; Simmons, 2020).

A different approach focuses on the content and rationale of scholarship activity, conceptualising it as educational or pedagogic research (PedR), comprising an 'evidence-based investigation into teaching practice, often with a specific aim or intent to improve the quality of education and the student learning experience' (Saunders, 2017). In this context, scholarship is conceptualised similarly to discipline-specific research, the distinction being that the focus of PedR relates to teaching and the underpinning theoretical frameworks (pedagogy) used in the process of delivering teaching and learning within HE, not the disciplines themselves. The danger here is that what 'counts' as scholarship is reduced

to published outputs that meet research criteria, reaffirming the priority of research over teaching (Geertsema, 2016).

Thus, diverse conceptualisations of scholarship across global HE contribute to the challenges for EFAs around reward and recognition. Smith and Walker (2021) argue that the lack of clarity around scholarship definitions is compounded by uncertainty within institutions around how to evaluate and assess such work, impeding EFA progression to senior roles. They argue that inconsistent definitions lead to EFAs experiencing their career progression as 'boundaried' by local understandings of scholarship via institutionally specific promotion criteria which are not transferable across the sector. Many institutions fall back into an (over)-reliance on peer-reviewed publications within EFA promotion criteria, further impacting upon poor EFA progression rates. The issue of defining and understanding scholarship is far from a semantic problem; it has an ongoing effect upon EFAs' professional development, upon the ability of universities to support career progression for their EFAs, and upon the ability of universities to set strategic goals around how scholarship might contribute to student experience and their wider mission.

Godbold et al. (2024) assert the need to shift to a *nuanced* understanding of SoTL which is cognisant of the lived experiences of EFAs and the multiple ways in which academics engage with SoTL in the super-complex context of HE (p1). In this paper, we offer a synthesised and nuanced conceptualisation, informed by the diverse perspectives discussed within the literature. We accept that it is neither possible nor desirable to produce a static definition of scholarship, nor to constrain understandings of scholarship to a particular tradition. We embrace an expansive understanding of scholarship, recognising the complexity of scholarship, and embracing diverse approaches to enable richness and opportunity. We propose a re-imagined, inclusive, and dynamic framework of scholarship that draws upon the work of Boyer (1990), Kern et al. (2015), and Frake-Mistral et al. (2023), and is informed by the lived experiences of colleagues undertaking or aspiring to undertake scholarship. Our aim is to provide a tool that will be useful across the global HE sector, enabling EFAs and those who support or employ them to reflect on, identify, and articulate scholarship activities in ways that will support their professional development. In providing a tool that recognises and synthesises diverse approaches to scholarship, we also intend that this will enable universities and increase the ability to recognise and reward scholarship in all its forms as appropriate to their specific contexts.

Methods for exploring and reflecting upon the scholarship landscape

We are two senior EFAs working within a large English university. We have both mentored other EFAs across disciplines, undertaken work to inform promotions policies and processes, and one of us has worked in academic development nationally and internationally. We are both engaged in ongoing reflection on the nature of scholarship and provide leadership to support its development within our institution. We share a vision where EFAs and their scholarship are valued, and mobility between institutions is facilitated.

Informed by our knowledge of the literature, and our reflections on our own lived experience and the experiences of our networks, we set out to discover how academic staff working in six departments (within a large School of Social Sciences, comprising over 400 staff and 7000 students) at our own institution understood and practiced scholarship. The project received institutional ethical approval in 2022.

To gather data on how academic staff engaged with scholarship, we facilitated a series of interactive workshops, using Padlet to present a range of theoretical scholarship models, definitions, and approaches (including Kern et al., 2015; Richlin, 2001; Felten, 2013; as well as our own institutional definitions and principles from the UK Professional Standards Framework, 2011), to prompt discussion and debate, and to capture the discussions anonymously. We ran the workshops at department level to enable us to identify department-specific examples of scholarship (noting that most departments also covered multiple disciplines). All staff were invited to elicit shared understandings of scholarship within and across the departments. Participants included staff on different pathways, and at all career stages, from very early career through to Professors and Heads of Department. Eighty colleagues attended a total of eight workshops. The anonymous Padlet discussions were saved as the data corpus for subsequent analysis.

A full reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) of our findings from this project will be published subsequently (Gann & Hulme, in prep.). In the preliminary analysis, we noted that Kern et al.'s Description of Activities Related to Teaching (DART) model (Fig. 1) resonated strongly with our participants, bringing out shared understandings and concerns around the conceptualisation of scholarship. Other preliminary themes broadly related to institutional policy and practice, to academic identities, and to disciplinary concerns, and as such are not relevant to this article, which focuses specifically on creating a conceptualisation that can be pragmatically useful and inclusive of different activities whilst remaining sensitive to different national and institutional contexts.

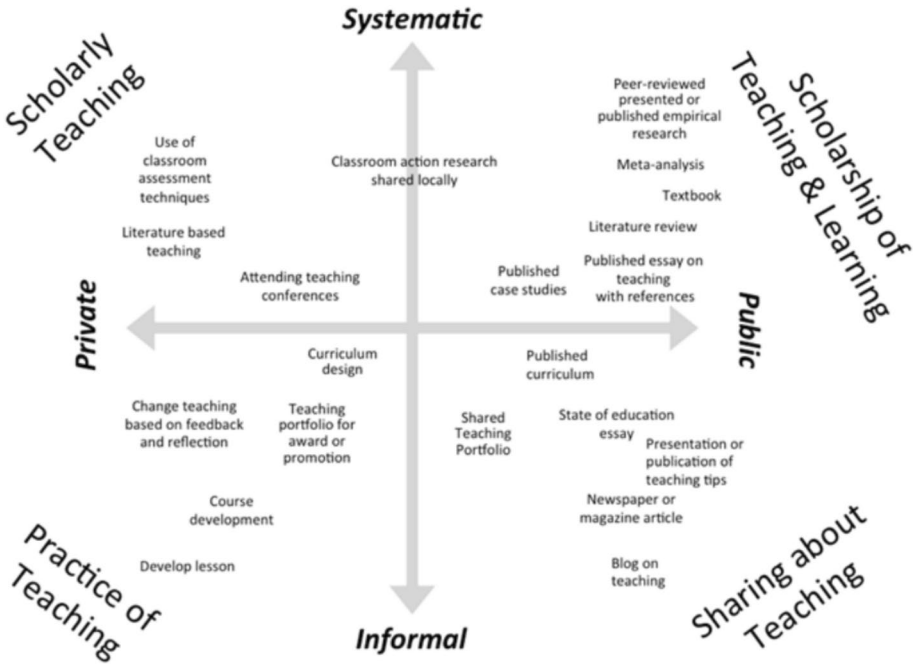

Fig. 1 Dimensions of activity related to teaching (DART) from Kern et al. (2015)

Reflections on the discussions

Discussions within the workshops were informed by disciplinary focus and the experience of the staff who attended, but some common topics arose in most workshops regardless of the disciplinary background or career stage. Kern et al.'s (2015) DART model (Fig. 1) provoked strong reactions across all workshops, and so is our focus here. All quotes are presented verbatim from the Padlets.

The DART offers a visual model which maps scholarship activities onto a pair of axes, with systematicity on the vertical axis and the move from private to public facing activities on the horizontal axis. Most attendees encountered DART for the first time at our workshops and reflected that much of their work at that time was private and relatively informal. However, many of them noted that, particularly for early career EFAs, DART provided an accessible way to understand how their activities related to scholarship. For example, one colleague wrote: 'This has been really helpful – I didn't have much of an idea what scholarship is. I certainly don't think of myself as a "proper" academic'. Another observed 'This diagram is great though, turns out I am doing scholarship all the time in some sense'. These insights into the relevance of scholarship to their own work provided reassurance for colleagues who felt that formal outputs (such as journal articles) were out of reach, despite perceiving them as a requirement for academic credibility. Having been unsure about whether they engaged in any form of scholarship at all, the DART model enabled them to recognise some scholarship-type activities, providing encouragement to pursue scholarship further, and a sense of validation.

Colleagues also noted that DART provided a guide to reflecting on where they were and identifying directions that they might take to develop their scholarship: 'Seems like a useful model as allows easy visualisation of one's own position, plus suggests ways in which you may want to move to achieve certain goals'. Thus, the DART model was recognised as having value for understanding the nature of scholarship, appreciating one's own activities as an aspect of scholarship, and directing colleagues towards increasingly public and systematic approaches to scholarship.

However, whilst the value of DART was appreciated, there was a sense that, in privileging SoTL (the top right quadrant) as the formal and systematic expression of scholarship, it did not allow full recognition of the breadth of scholarship activity undertaken by participants. They felt that it reinforced a view of scholarship as a form of research, governed by metrics more suited to traditional research, and that it emphasised the higher status of research over activities related to teaching. For example, one participant wrote: 'Private/informal seems "less good" than others, because others are more research [focused] which has a better understanding/higher regard'. Another noted:

> It is only one lens the "traditional academic lens". It is misleading to look at these domains as not having equal value or impact for teachers and students. Informal/private domain should be recognised and we should think about how we evidence that rather than driving everyone in one direction. Diversity is key.

The implicit privileging of SoTL was resented by some: 'I think the model suggests that academics should be driven towards one goal like a school of fish. It is a system to maintain "academia" as a closed elitist group'. That said, the value of SoTL was recognised; some people expressed an interest in pursuing SoTL further. They recognised that sometimes a temporary focus on the private was necessary in their context: 'Much of our/my scholarly activity is private and informal. This probably reflects where we are as a

department, setting up a course that is in no way "settled" yet. Our goal should be more formal and systematic and public'. In addition, development towards more SoTL-like activity was considered an aspect of career development, with colleagues starting out with relatively informal and private work, and gradually building confidence (in themselves and in their projects) to move towards systematic and public scholarship: 'From an early career perspective, it feels like a lot of the private stuff needs to be mastered/experienced before moving onto the public stuff'.

Some people disagreed with the location of some activities within DART: 'The one thing I do not understand is why curriculum design or course development should be on the informal side – these are often part of formalised internal procedures that require documentation and consideration of rules and regs'. Some noted activities that they felt were missing from the model, such as co-creation with students: 'Where are the students in all this, and the collaborative nature of work, development of curiosity, etc.?', partnership working with other stakeholders, and links to practitioner communities (including acknowledgement of the need to use different communication methods to disseminate effectively to non-academic audiences, who were unlikely to read journal articles). There was uncertainty about whether some activities counted as scholarship or not: 'Do textbooks for teaching and learning aimed at non-HE students count?'. Interestingly, the discussions tended to start out positively, with workshop participants identifying their own activities and locating them in the model, and then gradually becoming more critical, as they began to question the detail of the model.

A final critique from our participants was that DART failed to recognise that scholarship frequently involved people moving between the different quadrants of the model. One participant expressed this sense of dynamism like this: 'It's an ecology which shifts over time depending on focus and point in iterative cycles of development'. An activity could start out in one particular quadrant, but develop and evolve as the work developed, gradually leading them to move from private to public and back, and from informal to systematic and back.

Overall, Kern et al.'s DART model was considered a useful entry point into understanding scholarship, but was felt to be limited in that it did not fully recognise the range of activities undertaken under the umbrella of scholarship. Some participants felt that it promoted an elitist vision of scholarship that resembled research rather than fully appreciating the value of diverse activities for students and staff, and it failed to account for the dynamic movement between quadrants that our participants experienced as they progressed and their work developed. With all of this in mind, we decided to further develop the DART model to create a more inclusive approach that would resonate with EFAs across disciplines and career stages, and that would reflect the dynamic nature of scholarship in their lived experience.

Scholarship reimagined

Drawing on our data, our own lived experiences, and conceptualisations in the literature, we brought together diverse perspectives on scholarship into a constructive and inclusive framework to enable reflection. We began by reimagining the DART model. Our starting point was to focus on the two axes: the horizontal axis representing the public to private spectrum (right to left), and the vertical axis representing the systematic to informal spectrum (top to bottom).

The concept of public and private scholarship seemed important; many promotions criteria and awards relating to education (such as UK National Teaching Fellowships) emphasise 'reach' and 'impact', echoing Shulman's (1999) view that scholarship is public, evaluated, and implemented by others. Discussions around private and public activities within our workshops were lively, addressing the 'extent' to which something might be public. For example, participants described sharing their scholarship publicly in departmental meetings, which was 'less' public than sharing at international conferences. We therefore retained the horizontal axis (Fig. 2), as presented in Kern et al.'s (2015) DART model (Fig. 1), and incorporated the 4Ms (Friberg, 2016; Simmons, 2020), to facilitate thinking about relative positioning along the public/private axis.

Our reflections on the vertical axis (the degree of formality or systematicity) were more challenging. We were mindful of participants' comments that different communication methods were appropriate for different audiences, and that journal articles were only read by a privileged (academic) minority. We realised that communicating scholarship in relatively 'informal' outputs such as blogs did not reflect the formality or systematicity of the underpinning work. For example, one of us (JAH) reflected that her teaching of disabled students led to formal qualitative psychological research on inclusion (e.g. Hamilton et al., 2023) which was initially disseminated as a journal article, then was communicated to university policy makers through a WonkHE article (Lyons & Hulme, 2021), and a podcast for sixth form teachers (Hulme, 2021) to inform teaching and support of disabled students. According to the original DART, these latter outputs would be placed towards the bottom right-hand quadrant, being less formal than the journal article, yet the research underpinning them was formal and systematic. This raises questions as to the validity of the descriptions on the vertical axis of the original DART. We realised that it was not the project or activity itself that was less formal or systematic, but rather that dissemination via some media is usually less explicit about the underlying evidence base than papers presented in formal journals and conferences. In creating outputs that disseminate knowledge in simpler language, the underpinning literature, the previous research, and the rigour of

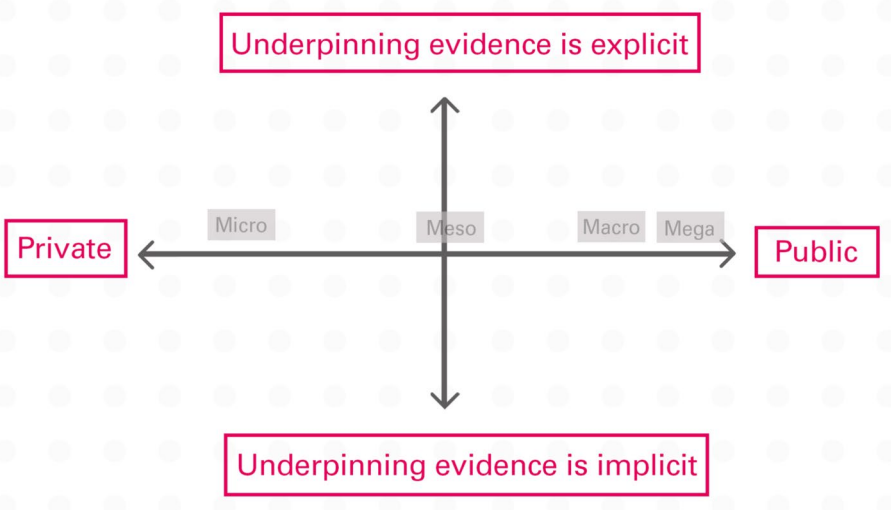

Fig. 2 Reimagined axes

the methodology can become hidden. We relabelled the vertical axis to reflect the extent to which the evidence-base underpinning the output was visible and made explicit to the audience.

Next, we considered appropriate labels to capture the activities falling into each of the four quadrants of our emerging framework (see Fig. 3). In the original DART, the bottom left quadrant, Practice of Teaching, is private and informal. We re-labelled this quadrant because 'teaching' did not sufficiently represent the range of activities that EFAs and others undertake. Feedback from our workshops and our desire to include all aspects of educational practice here (including teaching, assessment, curriculum development, and academic development work, for example) led us to propose a new label that reflects this broader set of educational activities and the implicit (rather than informal) nature of the evidence base: *Delivering Higher Education*. We note that Delivering Higher Education is not necessarily in itself scholarship but is an activity that is related to scholarship and, as will be discussed later, is of equal value.

Whilst there is likely to be some form of evidence base underpinning the delivery of HE, our participants reported that sometimes they prioritised gathering evidence to inform practices and decision making. They mentioned reviewing literature, attending conferences, and discussions with more experienced colleagues as sources of information that were useful in planning what Kern et al. referred to as Scholarly Teaching, the top left quadrant of the DART model. Wishing to include a wider range of activities again, we prefer the use of Education over Teaching. The evidence base is intrinsically necessary to the performance of the educational activity and can be made explicit to the audience, which may include quality assurance reviewers, student co-creators, and external examiners. We therefore renamed this quadrant *Evidence-Informed Higher Education*.

Moving to the upper right quadrant, formal and public activities were categorised originally as Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. As noted above, SoTL was perceived as elitist by some of our participants and was associated with a narrower set of activities

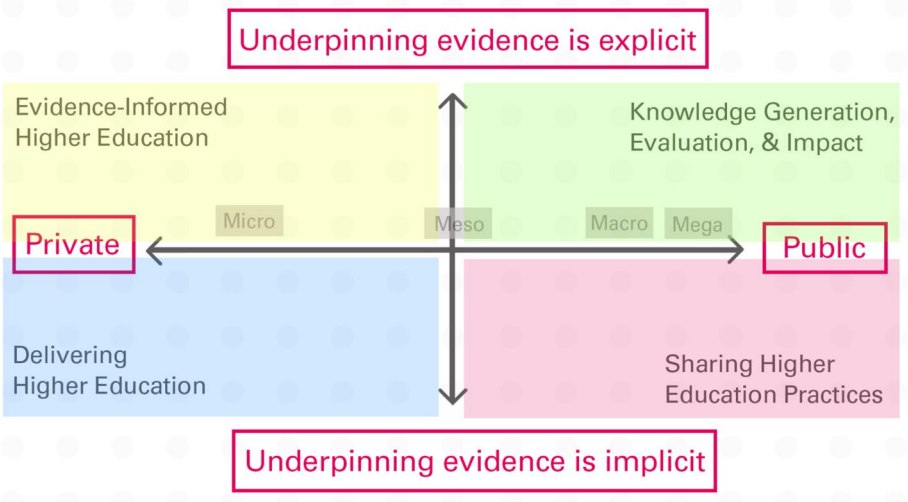

Fig. 3 Reimagined axis labels and quadrants for the description of activities related to scholarship of higher education (DARSHE) framework

than those typically encountered in universities. For example, a textbook for trainee HE teachers would rarely be described as SoTL, but it would be highly public and would make evidence explicit to the reader. We therefore suggest *Knowledge Generation, Evaluation, and Impact* as a new descriptor for this quadrant. This would incorporate activities traditionally considered as SoTL and PedR, but could include wider activities, such as policy work or informing quality assurance and accreditation frameworks. We note that whilst we have incorporated impact within this quadrant, we anticipate that all quadrants will impact on educational practice; we include it here as the quadrant where impact can be directly *measured*.

Finally, feedback from our workshops and our experiences of supporting scholarship suggest the lower right quadrant of DART, 'Sharing About Teaching', is too narrowly focused. We propose that this quadrant becomes *Sharing Higher Education Practices*. In our reimagined conceptualisation, this revised labelling recognises that skilful communication of knowledge to diverse audiences (beyond the world of SoTL practitioners) is both challenging and necessary to have genuine reach and impact. Sometimes, it is necessary to simplify the evidence, rather than to reveal the full complexity of the underpinning scholarship, and thus the evidence base becomes less explicit, despite being intrinsically present.

Our newly conceptualised framework, with revised axis labels and quadrant names, can be seen in Fig. 3. Given the shift of focus to scholarship rather than teaching activities, we have named our newly proposed framework DARSHE – Descriptions of Activities Related to Scholarship in Higher Education.

Our participants reflected, as did Frake-Mistak et al. (2023), that scholarship is dynamic and moves between quadrants through time and contexts. Our framework needed to recognise this flow. We could both describe ways in which our own work had moved between the different quadrants. We illustrate this dynamism between quadrants through permeable axes (now represented as dotted lines), and arrows indicating (some) possible directions of workflow (see Fig. 4).

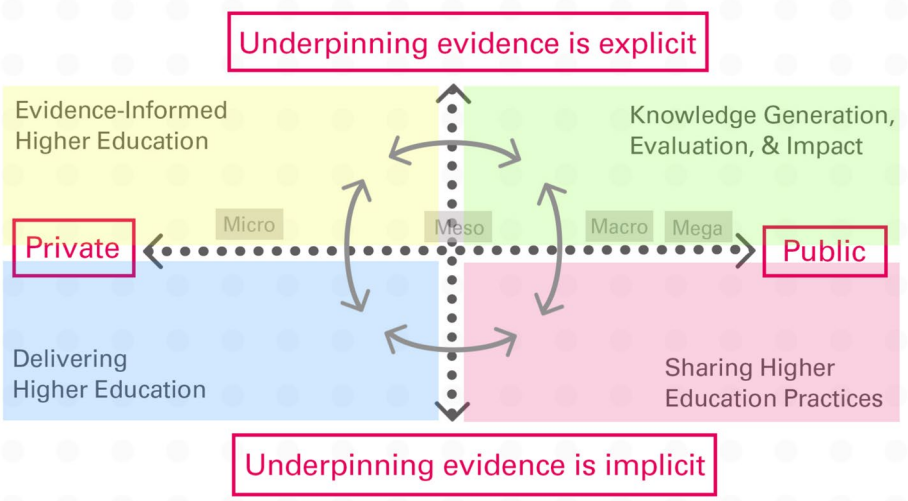

Fig. 4 Description of activities related to scholarship of higher education (DARSHE) framework, illustrating the possibility of dynamic flow between different quadrants through the evolution of a project

To illustrate how such flow might work in the DARSHE framework, RJG has mapped an example from her own work onto Fig. 5, explaining how her subject knowledge and expertise of delivering politics education (Delivering HE) led to her membership of the QAA's advisory group for the revision of the subject benchmark statement for Politics and International Relations (QAA, 2023). Revising and producing a new benchmark statement draws upon implicit evidence, whilst the resulting revised benchmark statement is made very public—putting it into the bottom right quadrant (Sharing HE Practices). RJG and others subsequently produced two peer-reviewed journal articles (Blair et al., 2024, 2025) on the subject benchmark review process, both located in the top right quadrant (Knowledge Generation, Evaluation and Impact). RJG's work on the advisory group informed revisions to her own teaching, located in the bottom left quadrant (Delivering HE), which prompted her to consult disciplinary-specific scholarship literature (on decolonising the curriculum) located in the top left quadrant (Evidence-Informed HE practices). RJG also co-presented papers on subject benchmark review at national and international conferences (Craig et al., 2023; Gann & Honeyman, 2024), activities within the bottom right quadrant (Sharing HE Practices) using feedback from conference presentations to inform benchmark review.

In addition to noting the tendency of scholarship activities to evolve and cover different quadrants of the DARSHE, in mapping different activities from our careers, we observed that activities that appeared superficially similar sometimes belonged in different quadrants. For example, consider the relatively ordinary task of creating teaching resources, such as handouts or guides for students. One might produce these quickly, perhaps borrowing from pre-existing resources; in this case, the activity would map onto the bottom left quadrant, Delivering HE, privately, and perhaps with relatively little deliberate attention to pedagogical evidence. Alternatively, one might conduct an extensive literature search, reflecting on the ways in which the content might best engage students. This explicit consideration of underpinning evidence would move the creation of these resources into the top left quadrant, Evidence-Informed Delivery of Higher Education. In this case, the act is

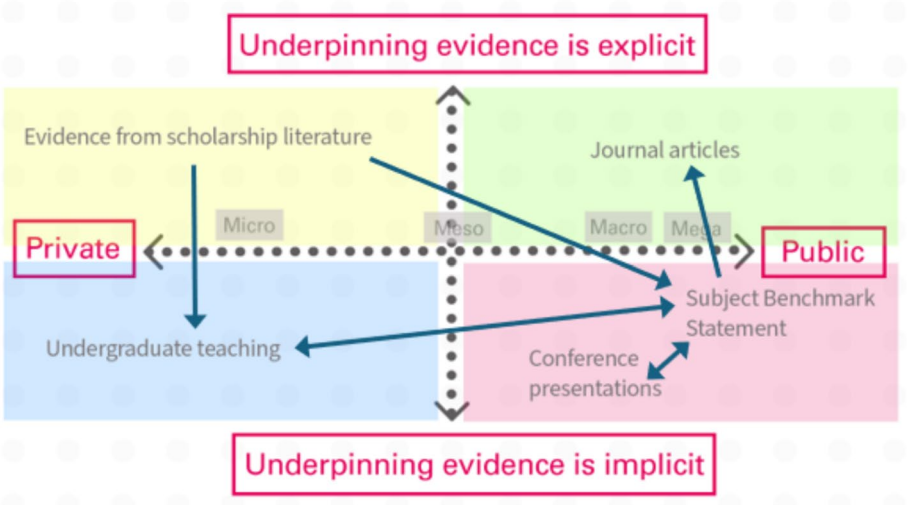

Fig. 5 Application of the DARSHE framework to show how scholarship activities flow through different quadrants as they develop and fulfil different purposes

still private, only shared with students, but the explicit focus on evidence changes the location of the activity on the vertical axis. If one were to then undertake a formal evaluation of these teaching resources, measuring their effectiveness in supporting student learning relative to an alternative resource, and making them public (through a journal article, a conference presentation, or an Open Educational Resource platform), then this activity becomes Knowledge Generation, located in the upper right quadrant. Finally, one might share a blog about how to use the resource, sharing practical tips rather than the detail of the evaluation, for use by other teachers of the same subject area, such that it can now be located in the bottom right quadrant, as the evidence-base becomes implicit, and the resource becomes more public.

Our attempts to map some of the scholarship activities with which we are familiar proved challenging for this reason, because we realised that, depending on the context, activities could be located in several quadrants. Mindful of the need to represent scholarship inclusively, our DARSHE example became too 'busy' to be truly useful. Figure 6 shows one attempt at this mapping; activities shown in pink font appear in more than one quadrant to reflect this complexity.

Clearly, Fig. 6 does not include every possible activity, nor should it. Instead, the DARSHE should be used by individuals considering the context in which they are working to map their own scholarship activities. Rather than prescribing that teaching resources 'fit' in the bottom left quadrant, we encourage colleagues to reflect on the extent to which their work is private or public to determine a position along the horizontal axis, and the extent to which they have drawn on and made explicit their use of evidence to inform their work to determine a position on the vertical axis. In this way, the DARSHE offers a tool to support critical reflection, which can inform further development and could be used independently or alongside academic developers.

The final stage of this reflection considers the ways in which activities related to scholarship can be purposefully developed to move between the quadrants. Where the DART model was perceived by our participants to privilege SoTL, we argue that good scholarship has a bidirectional relationship with the delivery of HE and that none of the quadrants

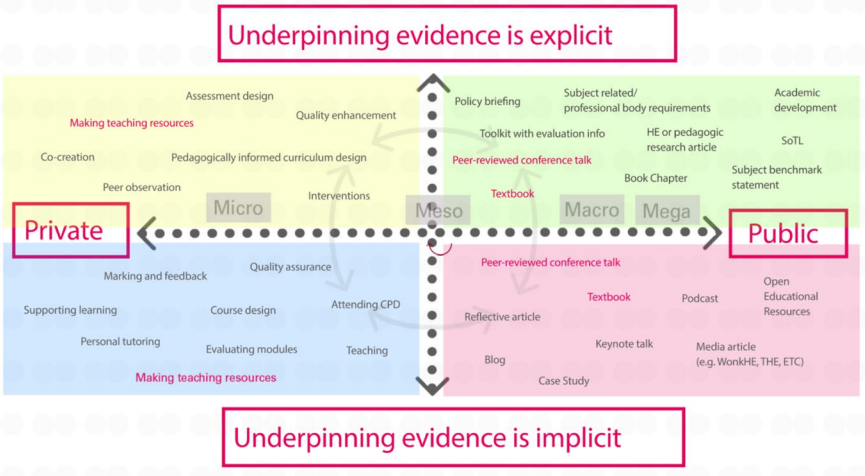

Fig. 6 Mapping some common activities onto the DARSHE

in the DARSHE framework are privileged over any other. Good scholarship, we argue, is always underpinned by evidence, and thus must necessarily be informed by activities such as literature reviews, continuing professional development, and consultation with experts. This evidence base then informs delivery and will also inform the approach taken to knowledge generation and evaluation. Finally, the dissemination of knowledge in a way that is accessible to a wider audience as well as the more specialist academic audience engaged with scholarship literature is also a responsibility of good scholarship; if we create evidence of effectiveness in higher education, then we should share that knowledge with others, so that they can implement it and adapt it to their own context (Shulman, 1999).

By encouraging flow between quadrants, the DARSHE supports individuals to develop evidence-based scholarship (top left quadrant), to generate new knowledge (top right quadrant), to be more immediately relevant in their own work with students (bottom left quadrant), and to be accessible to specialists and a wider audience (bottom right quadrant).

Evaluation of the DARSHE

Following our initial conceptualisation of the DARSHE, we evaluated it by seeking consultation with experts in academic development, scholarship, and those involved with the leadership of scholarship across a breadth of disciplines and institutional contexts. We presented the DARSHE at our annual internal conference (Hulme & Gann, 2024b) and two national annual conferences (Gann & Hulme, 2024*a*; Hulme & Gann, 2025), and sought feedback. We received valuable feedback relating to the idea of an 'explicit' evidence base, which helped us to refine our ideas (framing the vertical axis). At the 2025 conference, delegates used the DARSHE to map their own scholarship-related activities and to reflect on their development. They fed back that the framework worked effectively as a tool for professional development.

Finally, we hosted a one-day workshop for stakeholders, including academic developers and leading scholarship academics. We led delegates through the development of DARSHE, including activities we used in our first workshops, and then introduced them to the DARSHE as a tool for reflection, following a method similar to that used in Fig. 5. We asked them to consider how they might use it to support others' development or to inform team building and task allocation. Feedback included comments around the use of the word 'impact' within the top right quadrant (that it is relevant to other quadrants), which we have addressed above. Delegates fed back positively, and some requested permission to use DARSHE in their institutions, which will feed into further evaluation of the framework.

Discussion

We are aware that others have sought to use scholarship models such as Kern et al.'s (2015) DART model, to support EFAs (Geertsema, 2016; Reano et al., 2019) and to develop conceptualisations of scholarship that are flexible and nuanced (Frake-Mistak et al., 2023). In this article, our aim has been not to offer yet another definition of scholarship, but rather to draw on empirical findings alongside debates in the literature and our own reflections to synthesise competing perspectives and meet the needs of EFAs and others to capture broad and diverse approaches in a flexible manner. In this way, we propose that the DARSHE offers an inclusive, developmental framework that allows those who engage with

scholarship to leave behind the challenging narrative around 'competing definitions' (Trigwell, 2013) and instead to recognise the value of different forms of scholarship.

Reano et al. (2019), Geertsema (2106), and Frake-Mistak et al. (2023) all note limitations of Kern et al.'s DART model and its emphasis on SoTL over other forms of scholarship. Whilst recognising many merits of the DART model, we share their views on its limitations and have used it as a foundation to construct a framework that recognises the value of practice, the evidence-base upon which practice and scholarship can be built, the formal academic dissemination of scholarship, and more accessible dissemination of scholarship to a wider audience.

In this paper, we argue that whilst many theoretical conceptualisations of scholarship exist in the literature, there is an urgent need for a dynamic and inclusive approach that can support the development of diverse forms of scholarship across different contexts within the HE sector. With the growth in numbers of EFAs, we must move beyond the persistent narrative of a 'contested definition' of scholarship (Trigwell, 2013). This narrative of confusion hinders EFA development and presents obstacles to universities seeking to develop their staff and to create supportive promotions frameworks for EFAs. The lack of consensus around the nature of scholarship is in stark contrast to the relative certainty that exists around traditional research. According to the UK REF (2029), '…research is defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared'. In practical terms, the golden triangle of 'pounds, publications, and PhDs' offers a commonly shared set of metrics for the assessment of research performance. Such proxies of scholarship performance do not yet exist, and until we create consensus around 'what counts' as scholarship, we are unlikely to identify any. We argue that adapting and adopting research metrics for scholarship is inappropriate and fails to reward work that positively impacts student learning across the HE sector.

Our research in developing the DARSHE, alongside our evaluation of our framework in different institutions and at national conferences, as well as the literature, shows that many EFAs find themselves confused about the requirements of their roles beyond teaching, particularly in different institutional contexts. In creating the DARSHE, we offer a synthesised approach to conceptualising the scholarship of HE, which adds breadth to previous approaches and encompasses a more diverse range of activities. The DARSHE does not supplant SoTL, PedR, or any other approaches to scholarship but seeks to embrace them within a broad church, recognising that different contexts, disciplines, and institutions require different approaches. We argue that conceptualisations that privilege SoTL or PedR over other scholarship activities can exclude staff from scholarship and that we must avoid creating scholarship in the image of research. In capturing a diverse range of scholarship activities and perspectives, the DARSHE framework aligns with Boyer's (1990) expansive understanding of scholarship and addresses Godbold et al.'s (2024) 'interacting model that recognises and supports rhythms and connections between varied types of scholarship and the development of knowledge in the academy' (p3).

Whereas the implicit assumption of Kern et al.'s DART model (as identified by our participants) was that SoTL was the pinnacle of scholarship, the DARSHE framework suggests that all activities are *equally* valued, both public and private, and whether or not the evidence upon which they are built is expressed explicitly or is implicit. We assume that all good scholarship is built upon evidence. We suggest that scholarship often begins with teaching, and that in turn scholarship informs further teaching-related activity. In seeking to chase reach through public scholarship, we can fail to have impact on our own students' learning and experience, and on our immediate colleagues. In developing ideas and projects, small-scale trials can often improve the quality of our

scholarship, so that they can later be disseminated with confidence; working at the micro and meso level (Friberg, 2016; Simmons, 2020) contributes to these early 'pilot' stage projects and ideas.

We argue that good scholarship, in being made public, must be shared more widely than via academic journals. If we wish to apply scholarship to enhance HE, we need to communicate it to a wider audience than those who read journal articles. Policy makers, teachers, academic developers, employers, students themselves, and the many stakeholders in HE need to be able to access good scholarship, and that means it must be shared through channels such as blogs, newspapers, and podcasts. Good scholarship is rooted in activities that occur across *all* four quadrants of the DARSHE.

We acknowledge that not every individual may be able to work across all four quadrants. Some of our participants lacked confidence in making their scholarship public; others had limited opportunities to teach, especially those in strategic leadership positions. In encouraging colleagues to work across all four quadrants of the DARSHE, we encourage collaboration. Indeed, it is possible to map the activities of team members across the DARSHE framework, to allocate roles within projects based on areas of strength, and to identify skills gaps within a team to inform recruitment strategies. The DARSHE provides a tool through which EFAs and other staff can better understand and articulate their academic practice and strengths in a way that is accessible and transferable across the HE sector, facilitating their navigation within the super-complex HE environment (Godbold, 2024).

The appeal of Kern et al.'s (2015) DART model to our workshop participants lay in its ability to enable them to see their own work in relation to the components of the model. The DARSHE framework requires further evaluation to assess its accessibility as a reflective tool in different contexts, and colleagues may need support to understand how to map their own activities to the framework. We can see potential use (using Fig. 4 as a template) within HE teacher training programmes, and we are developing plans to evaluate applications of the DARSHE in different contexts. Preliminary feedback from presentations at conferences (e.g. Hulme & Gann, 2025) and institutional presentations suggests that the DARSHE framework is accessible with relatively minimal explanation and can be used to promote reflection and planning for further development.

In conclusion, the DARSHE framework brings together different perspectives on scholarship. It captures the lived experiences of diverse staff to identify key barriers and enablers that influence their ability to engage in scholarship. It harmonises different theoretical perspectives (Boyer, 1990; Friberg, 2016; Kern et al., 2015; Shulman, 1999; Trigwell, 2013) and enables collaboration. In reflecting on how scholarship activities fit within the DARSHE framework, institutions can create meaningful recognition pathways that help them to strategically prioritise the types of activities and approaches that best suit their needs at a particular point in time, whilst also recognising the value of diverse approaches within not only EFA staff groups, but also professional services and other third space staff groups. The DARSHE framework encourages the communication of scholarship work to different audiences, which in turn enables the democratisation of knowledge generated through the scholarship of HE. Making this knowledge accessible to students and their advisers, non-academic staff, policy makers, and employers will mean that we can fulfil the potential of scholarship to transform HE, making it inclusive, future proof, and transformative for the students who study it. In developing an inclusive approach to scholarship, we may also, ten years after Kern et al. (2015) and 35 years after Boyer (1990), see improved recognition for a more expansive understanding of scholarship and a step towards achieving parity of esteem for EFAs.

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Julie A. Hulme: conceptualisation, methodology, investigation, analysis, resources, and writing (original draft and review and editing).

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Data availability Data were collected with guaranteed confidentiality as part of the informed consent process, and thus are not available to others.

Declarations

Ethical approval Ethical approval for the empirical data collection discussed in this paper was provided by the Business, Law, and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at Nottingham Trent University in September 2022. This research was conducted in accordance with the British Psychological Society's code of human research ethics (2021).

Informed consent All participants provided informed consent prior to taking part.

Competing interests The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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