

Evaluation Toolkit

Supporting the Evaluation of Widening Access Fund Activities



University of Hertfordshire Evaluation Toolkit

This Evaluation Toolkit is designed to help you evaluate the impact of your Widening Access Fund Activities. Evaluation is important for providing evidence of the impact of an initiative or activity on its target audience. Knowing whether activities work is crucial for demonstrating the impact of your work and building an evidence base to inform others looking to do similar initiatives.

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Types of Evaluation

Impact Evaluation

Impact evaluation focuses on the impact of activities and understanding which approaches are most effective. This is different from other forms of evaluation, such as process evaluation (which focuses on how activities are implemented) or formative evaluation (which aims to strengthen the implementation of an activity).

The Office for Students categorises different types of evidence that can be produced as part of an impact evaluation:

- Type 1 – Narrative: there is a clear narrative for why we might expect your activity to be effective. This narrative is normally based on the findings of other research or evaluation. *(i.e. you expect your activity to be effective because of evaluation reports from other schools using the same programme. You may have some feedback from post activity evaluation to add to this.)*
- Type 2 – Empirical Enquiry: there is data which suggests that your activity is associated with better outcomes for students. *(i.e. you have conducted pre and post activity evaluation)*
- Type 3 – Causality: a method is used which demonstrates that your activity has a 'causal impact' on outcomes for students. *(i.e. you have conducted pre and post activity evaluation of participants and non-participants and can compare the findings of both.)*

We expect most WA Fund evaluations to produce Type 1 or Type 2 evidence. You can use this toolkit to help plan your activity evaluation. It contains examples and guidance for planning, for setting and measuring outcomes, tools for gathering evaluation data, and how to present your findings.

Process Evaluation

Process Evaluation, sometimes called Implementation and Process Evaluation, focuses on finding out what is working in an activity or initiative. While it can't show impact on learners, it can generate useful evidence for running an activity a certain way. Process evaluation is conducted primarily through post evaluation. For example, feedback forms given out after a session asking learners what they liked, what could be improved, and their rating of certain elements.

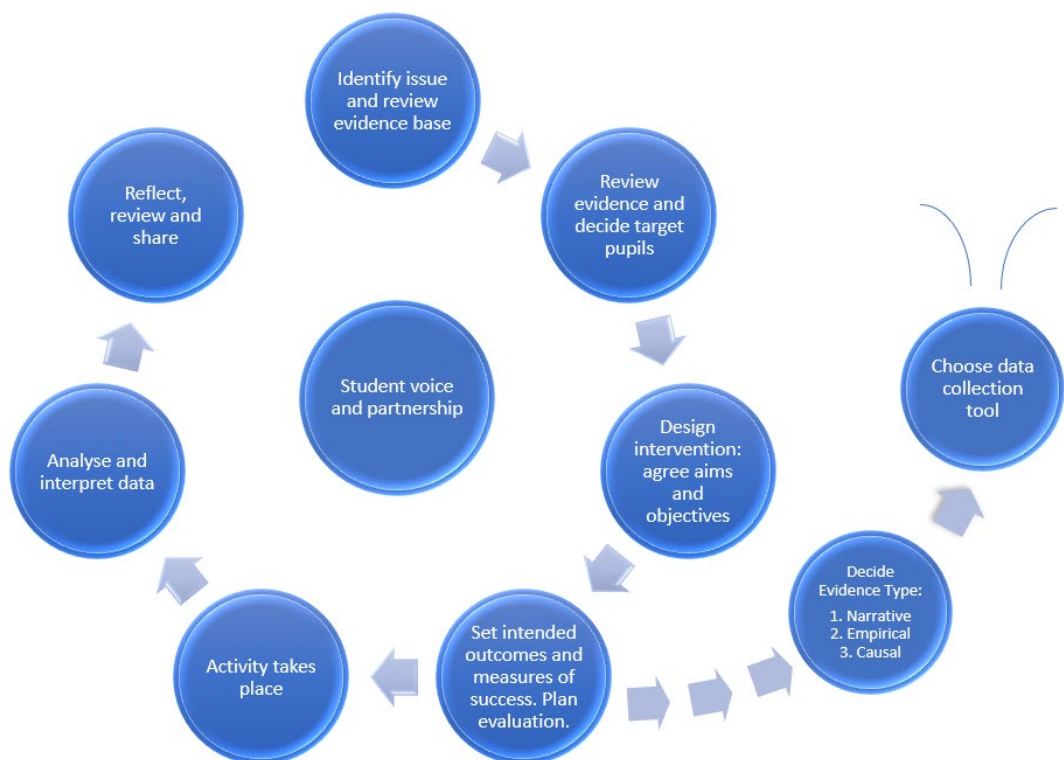
Once you have decided on which evaluation type you will conduct; you can use the [Evaluation Plan template](#) to plan your evaluation. Use the guidance in the sections below to help you complete the template.

Which type of evaluation will you be using?

Evaluation Planning

We have devised a simple visual aid (called the What Works Planning Model, or “the snail”) to help you plan your project or initiative successfully. Good planning, including deciding how you will evaluate your work, will ensure you make best use of time and resource, and increase your chances of a successful outcome.

Start at the top, 'Identify issue and review evidence base' then work your way round the model clockwise, not forgetting to take the mini detour to 'Decide evidence type' and “Choose Data Collection Tool”. Right in the centre of the 'What Works' model is a reminder that working in partnership with students is central to any good project.



Differences between Aims, Outputs, and Intended Outcomes

Below is a demonstration of the differences between aims, outputs, intended outcomes, and outcomes using a proposed mentoring project.

Aim: This is the overall change you are trying to achieve.

- Pupils taking part in mentoring project will be paired with a university student ambassador with the aim to provide information, advice, and guidance about post-16 options.

Intended Outcome: What you hope will change as a result of your activity. These should be measurable, which means they often include words like “increase” and “decrease”. Activities can have multiple intended outcomes.

- Pupils taking part in mentoring are more aware of options post-GCSEs.
- An increase in confidence about next steps for pupils taking part in mentoring.

Outcome: What changes or is learned as a result of your activity. These may reflect the intended outcomes you set in planning but could also be outcomes that you didn't anticipate.

- 90% of pupils can now identify the post-16 options available to them, compared to 50% at the beginning of the project.
- A decrease in pupils who are unsure of their next steps after Year 11.
- An increase in pupils indicating they plan to do A-Levels or Level 3 course at college.
- 70% of pupils who were part of the mentoring project saw an increase in confidence about upcoming GCSEs.
- Students were observed to be more engaged in classes.

Output: The things that are the direct result of your activity. Outputs are often numerical, and activities can have multiple outputs. They don't measure impact.

- 25 students took part in mentoring.
- New mentor training resources created.

What are the aims, outputs, and intended outcomes for your activity?

Decision Making Tool

The Decision-Making Tool is designed to help you find a suitable evaluation tool for your activity or initiative. In the left-hand column there are example activity types. Find the activity closest in description to the one you are working on, then read across the line to see example intended outcomes and of the kinds of tools you could use to support your evaluation of those outcomes.

The data collection tools listed are not the only tools available and there may be others that best suit your activity and evaluation plan. Use the Tool Selection Box in the next section to find out more about each data collection tool to decide what's best for your activity.

Activity	Aim	Intended Outcomes	Data Collection Tool
12 Week Mentoring Project	Pupils taking part in mentoring project will be paired with a university student ambassador with the aim to provide information, advice, and guidance about post-16 options.	Pupils taking part in mentoring will be more aware of options post-GCSEs. An increase in confidence about next steps for pupils taking part in mentoring.	Pre and post mentoring questionnaire Reflective diaries
UCAS Fair/Careers Fair	Pupils attending the UCAS Fair will meet with representatives from various universities to learn more about the institutions and course available to them.	Pupils attending the UCAS Fair will have increased knowledge of university options. Pupils attending the UCAS Fair will have increased confidence about their next steps.	A short Pre and Post questionnaire
Visit from Career Professional	A member from the business company will talk to pupils about their journey to inspire and challenge perceptions.	Pupils will be enthusiastic about possible future careers.	Observation Feedback cards or graffiti walls
Revision skills workshop	Pupils will attend a GCSEs revision skills workshop to improve revision skills and exam techniques.	An increase in pupil's confidence about their GCSEs. Increase knowledge and awareness of revision skills.	Blob tree – pre and post Pre and Post questionnaire

Tool Selection Box

Blob Tree

Blob Trees are a way to gather data on how pupils are feeling about a topic. It is an alternative to pupils filling out feedback cards. It can't be used to measure intended outcomes but can be used as a qualitative tool to demonstrate attitude, mood, or perception changes.

To use the [Blob Tree](#), give every pupil their own copy and coloured pen/pencil. Ask a question on a certain topic, such as "How do you feel about your English GCSE?" and ask students to colour in the "blob" that best represents how they feel. After the activity, in a different colour pen/pencil, pupils should colour in the blob that best represents how they feel now.

Tips

- Ask pupils to note on the page which colour is pre and post.
- For more detail, you can ask pupils to explain why they chose the blob and what it represents. This works best in smaller breakout groups.

Feedback Card

Feedback cards can be used to gather thoughts and reflections at the end of an activity. As the name suggests, it provides useful feedback (Type 1 evidence) rather than measuring impact (Type 2). Pupils can be asked a range of questions, from what they found useful, what they enjoyed, what would be useful next time, and any further questions they may have.

Tips

- Feedback cards can ask students multiple questions, but we don't recommend more than 3 per card.

Graffiti Walls

Graffiti Walls gather pupil voice. For physical Graffiti Walls, you can use a white board, flip chart, or post-it notes. For a digital Graffiti Wall, you can use Mentimeter or Padlet. Graffiti Walls have a question or statement for pupils to respond to. Pupils then write ('graffiti') their responses on the wall. Graffiti Walls can be used post activity, or pre and post activity for qualitative impact analysis.

Tips

- Physical Graffiti Walls are very engaging. You can take photos of them to help with your analysis, which will involve writing up the comments and looking for any themes.
- Digital Graffiti Walls make analysis a bit easier because the data is already written up.

Plickers

Plickers can be used to gather student responses to questions in real time. Each pupil has their own QR code and can hold it up to respond to questions. The activity deliverer then scans the room using a device with a camera (such as a phone or iPad) to collect the responses. Plickers can be a way to measure knowledge gain through quiz questions and pre and post questions.

Find out more: <https://get.plickers.com/>

Observations

As you are delivering or attending an activity and interacting with pupils in the weeks following, your observations are valuable evaluation data. Do you notice that pupils are generally more engaged? Are they excited to talk about, or revisit topics covered in the activity? Do they seem more confident in approaching their schoolwork?

This data can be included in your evaluation plans and reports.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires can be used for a number of different activity types and are a standard way of gathering impact evaluation data with pupils completing them before and after activities. Pre and Post questionnaires work best for activities that are longer in length, from half days to weeks long initiatives like mentoring.

Pre and Post questionnaires can also be used for shorter activities, but you will need to consider how much time it will take to conduct each questionnaire and how that fits in with your activity. For some activities, you may want to use only a post questionnaire. This will gather valuable data but won't measure impact.

Questionnaires should ask questions that help measure your intended outcomes. They should be as short as possible to prevent survey fatigue.

Writing Questions

- Make sure each question only asks about one thing at a time.
- Response scales should have five points: Strongly disagree – Strongly Disagree, Not useful at all - Very Useful, Very Unlikely - Very likely etc.
- The Aspire Higher Question Bank has a range of questions and answer scales for you to use and incorporate into your questionnaires: [Aspire Higher Question Bank](#)
- For more best practice on writing questionnaire, check out <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/education-research/evaluation/tools-and-resources-for-evaluation/questionnaires/>

Tips

- Keep questionnaires as short as possible.
- For pre and post questionnaires, make sure to ask pupils to write their name on the sheet!
- Use questions from the Aspire Higher Question Bank or take inspiration to write your own questions.
- Open ended questions for feedback, such as “what was your favourite part about today?” can be incorporated into post questionnaires.
- Ask a colleague or learner who won't be taking part in the activity to test your questionnaire for understanding and readability.

An example of a pre and post questionnaire can be found in the “Examples” section of this guide.

Reflective diary

Reflective diaries can be used to gather student voice for longer term activities, such as summer schools or mentoring. A reflective diary page can ask students:

- How would they describe this session/day?
- What is something they have learned?
- Here's what I found more challenging and why.
- Here's what I'm looking forward to and why.

Aspire Higher has an example of a [reflective diary template](#) that you can use as a starting point.

Tips

- If reflective diary pages aren't kept together, make sure students add their name to the page
- When using the diaries in evaluation, look at each entry for reoccurring themes that relate to your intended outcomes.

Some questions to keep in mind while choosing your data collection tool:

- Will you be doing pre and post activity evaluation?
- Do you want to collect quantitative or qualitative data? Or both?
- When and where will you collect the evaluation data? Location and time available can influence which tool you choose.

Writing Up Your Report

When writing up your report, you will need to bring together information from your activity plan, evaluation plan, and analysis from your evaluation data. The aim of an evaluation report is to share details of your activity, if it achieved your intended outcomes, and if there were any other unexpected outcomes.

If evaluation data suggests that an activity didn't achieve its intended outcomes, that's also important to know. It doesn't mean that the evaluation or activity were 'bad.' Instead, it adds valuable evidence to our understanding of What Works and provides you and others with data to use to support future activities.

Tips

- Analyse evaluation data and gather all activity information in one place before starting to write your report.
- Evaluation reports should show off impact and learning – what worked? How do you know? What didn't work? How do you know?
- Use the [Evaluation Report Template](#) as a guide when writing your report.

Don't forget pictures! Photos, if allowable, can make a great addition to showcasing the impact of your work.

Examples

In the section below you will find an example evaluation plan and example pre and post questionnaires. They show what evaluation might look like for an intervention that aims to increase confidence and knowledge about next steps for Year 12 students. You can find a downloadable the evaluation plan template [here](#).

Example Activity Evaluation Plan

What you are doing.	Title of activity	Attendance at Regional UCAS Fair
	Description of activity	<p>The school will be taking Year 12 students to an all-day regional UCAS Fair. To ensure all can attend, this is a cost-free activity for the students, as the coach and packed lunch have been paid for by the school (£300).</p> <p>Students have received pre-UCAS Fair sessions informing them of what to expect, how the day will work, and prepare questions for universities in attendance.</p>
Why you are doing it.	Evidence to support the activity	Feedback from last year's UCAS Fair showed that students found it beneficial. However, the take up of the opportunity from FSM pupils was very low.
	Aim	Pupils attending the UCAS Fair will meet with representatives from various universities to learn more about the institutions and course available to them. Pupils will be more confident about their next steps. All FSM eligible pupils will attend.
	Target students	All year 12 will be attending (45 students), including all those on Free School Meals (23 students).
How you will show it's made an impact.	Intended Outcomes	<p>Students attending the UCAS Fair have increased knowledge of their options after Year 13.</p> <p>Students attending the UCAS Fair have increased knowledge of the subjects available at university.</p> <p>Students attending the UCAS Fair feel more confident about making university decisions.</p>
	Outputs	<p>1 Coach</p> <p>45 students attending the whole day UCAS Fair. At least half of attendees from Free School Meal Population.</p>
	Data Collection Tools	<p>Pre and Post Questionnaire</p> <p>Pre-questionnaire to be completed by students during their pre-UCAS Fair sessions. Post-questionnaire to be completed by students before returning back to school.</p> <p>Impact will be measured by questions on decision making from the Aspire Higher Question Bank. Questionnaire responses will be looked at as a whole and with FSM pupils in contrast to non-FSM pupils.</p>

Example UCAS Fair Pre-Questionnaire

Name: _____

I know the differences between getting a degree, apprenticeship, studying at college, etc. (circle one)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not sure Agree Strongly Agree

How likely are you to apply to university in the future? (circle one)

Not very likely Unlikely Not sure Likely Very likely

If I were to go to university, I know what I would like to study. (circle one)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not sure Agree Strongly Agree

I believe that if I apply to university, I will get a place. (circle one)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not sure Agree Strongly Agree

I am confident that I would fit in at university. (circle one)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not sure Agree Strongly Agree

What's one thing you'd like to get from attending the UCAS Fair?

Example UCAS Fair Post-Questionnaire

Name: _____

I know the differences between getting a degree, apprenticeship, studying at college, etc. (circle one)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not sure Agree Strongly Agree

How likely are you to apply to university in the future? (circle one)

Not very likely Unlikely Not sure Likely Very likely

If I were to go to university, I know what I would like to study. (circle one)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not sure Agree Strongly Agree

I believe that if I apply to university, I will get a place. (circle one)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not sure Agree Strongly Agree

I am confident that I would fit in at university. (circle one)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not sure Agree Strongly Agree

What did you find useful about today?

What is something that could have been better?

What's one thing you're taking away from the UCAS Fair?

