Higher Education Outreach to Widen Participation

Toolkits for practitioners

4

Evaluation

Third edition

About the toolkits

This suite of publications, the toolkits, are a distillation of the learning, methods and resources developed by Aimhigher and the Lifelong Learning Network programmes to support the effective strategy, management and delivery of outreach work to encourage progression to higher education for under-represented groups. The toolkits recontextualise the learning from these programmes to fit the current higher education environment. This is the third edition of the toolkits. They were first published in December 2012, then revised in December 2013 and again in June 2014 following revisions in June 2013, to take account of relevant changes in the field.

The toolkits are not meant to be prescriptive but are designed to promote discussion and development. They comprise the following:

- Overview
- Toolkit 1   Partnership
- Toolkit 2   Targeting
- Toolkit 3   Programmes
- **Toolkit 4   Evaluation**
- Resources and glossary

Who they are for

The toolkits are aimed at widening participation managers and those they work with. They provide:

- guidance, materials and ideas for the development of programmes
- materials that are useful for strategic leaders
- practical tools for those involved in delivery.

The guidance and resources in the toolkits are most effective when delivered as part of a comprehensive approach that fits within a whole-institution strategy: one that addresses the topics covered by each of the four toolkits: partnership, targeting, programmes and evaluation.

Structure and navigation

Each toolkit in the series has four sections. The header at the top of each page indicates where in the document the user is at any one time. For example, this document has the four stages shown below, and you are looking at the 'Data' section:

Understand ▶ **Plan** ▶ **Data** ▶ **Report**

> ### Authors
>
> The toolkits were prepared for the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) by the International Centre for Guidance Studies and The Progression Trust. They were written by **Phil Dent, Liz Garton, Tristram Hooley, Chris Leonard, John Marriott and Nicki Moore**.

Contents

Symbols used in this document

? **Key questions** provide prompts for things to be considered. Reflecting on these helps to develop programmes and activity more closely suited to each higher education provider's unique context.

🔧 **Tools** help to develop and deliver effective programmes and activities. Templates for use and development by practitioners are available on the Higher Education Academy's website.

eg **Examples** are actual practices or suggestions that can provide ideas and inspiration.

Links provide a signpost to other useful information and resources.

List of tools

The following tools are referred to throughout this document. They link to Microsoft® Word templates that practitioners can use and develop in their outreach work.

The tools are listed in the order that they appear in the toolkit.

- Why evaluate? template
- Engaging project stakeholders in evaluation template
- Evaluation checklist tool
- Evaluation risk register template
- RUFDATA evaluation framework
- RUFDATA evaluation plan template
- Sample information sheet and consent form
- Sample letter to parents
- Who to report to template

Aims of this toolkit

This toolkit:

- defines evaluation and its relationship to monitoring WP
- provides a check-list for evaluation activity
- assists with the selection of an evaluation model and methodology
- assists with the collection and analysis of data
- shows how evaluation can be reported to influence future action and effectiveness
- provides tools, references and resources to support the evaluation process.

Understand

It is easy to understand why it is important to evaluate WP activities. Evaluation offers an opportunity to reflect on what has been done, to consider its impact and to rethink how things are done in the future. However, despite a strong rationale existing for evaluation, in practice it can often end up as something that project teams never get round to. This toolkit sets out an approach to evaluation that is practical and achievable, and breaks it down into a series of steps that can be implemented easily.

Evaluation is left out of projects for two main reasons. Firstly, it can be difficult to find the time to add another set of activities to a project. Secondly, project teams can be unsure about the best way to go about evaluating. This toolkit will suggest that evaluation is best handled as an integrated part of a project or programme, and that this approach means that you need to evaluate little and often rather than doing it all at the end of a project. The toolkit also sets out a straightforward evaluation process and seeks to demystify some 'evaluation speak' along the way.

The toolkit begins by asking what evaluation is and why it is important. It then sets out a process of planning evaluations, which includes establishing what the evaluation should achieve, who should be involved and how it will be undertaken. The next section of the toolkit (Plan) explores different evaluation approaches and sets out how to explore the existing evidence and arrive at an evaluation design. The subsequent section (Data) explores the actual process of evaluation. The final section (Report) is perhaps the most important as it shows how findings from the evaluation can inform further practice and make a difference to the WP programme.

The drivers for evaluation

Evaluation is an integral part of all activities. Figure 1 represents the lifecycle of a project or activity.

Figure 1: The lifecycle of a project or activity

In other words, we think about what it is we want to do, we do it and then we consider how it went. This in turn leads to the formulation of further plans. If we neglect the evaluative aspects of a project we are doomed to continue to repeat mistakes and may never realise what our real successes are.

A report to HEFCE on The Uses and Impact of HEFCE Funding for Widening Participation stressed that although systematically tracking and evaluating the impact of WP interventions presents a number of challenges for institutions, there is a growing consensus about the need to enhance evaluative activity (Bowes et al., 2013a). A more recently updated report by Bowes et al. (2013b), looking at access agreements, found that small institutions tend to lack the specialist skills required to undertake evaluative work. In addition when there are multiple sources of WP funding to deliver WP activities, many institutions (small and large) find it difficult to disaggregate the impact of different WP funding sources upon outputs and outcome.

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS) (2014) National Strategy for Access and Student Success argued that evaluation and evidence-based practice are critical to understanding which WP activities have the greatest impact on access, student success and progression. They also called for the creation of a National Evaluation Framework which will be developed in 2014-2015. The Office for Fair Access has provided guidance (OFFA, 2014) suggesting that higher education providers should be increasing their focus on evidence and evaluation. The guidance suggests that the monitoring and evaluation approach should be set out and evidenced in the access agreement alongside a clear set of accountabilities for this area of activity. HEFCE has also stressed the importance of evaluating WP activity, arguing that it is essential for the effective development of institutions' strategies and practices in this area (HEFCE, 2010, Annex A). Evaluation should therefore be important to all HE providers, clearly acknowledged in WP strategies, and apparent in WP practice.

What is evaluation?

An evaluation can be one of two main types in relation to its purpose and timing: formative or summative.

When people seek to evaluate what they are doing as part of an attempt to learn and improve, they are usually undertaking a **formative evaluation**, so called because it is undertaken to inform what is done while the activity is still in progress. When people evaluate to make a judgement on the value of a particular activity and to draw out what has been learnt, it is usually a **summative evaluation**; so called because it attempts to create a summary of what has been achieved and what the impacts have been.

Many evaluations will be both formative and summative as they will be undertaken both as part of a process of continuous improvement and as a way of summarising what has happened (often for stakeholders or funders of the activity). It can be useful to think about the aims of any evaluation that is undertaken under the headings of formative and summative. The balance between these different objectives is likely to influence the approach that you take to evaluation.

eg Figure 2: Identifying formative and summative questions

We would like to find out how to do these things better	We would like to find out how well these things work
What do students enjoy about participating in our mentoring scheme and how does this help us to improve it?	Does participation in our mentoring scheme significantly increase students' confidence?
Would schools rather be sent information by letter or email and how can we respond to this?	Have our communications been reaching the overwhelming majority of young people that they are targeted at?
What activities would participants like to see in summer schools and how should we reshape our summer schools in the light of this?	Does attendance at a summer school increase aspirations in a measurable way?

Download a [Why evaluate? template](#) which will help you to identify formative and summative questions for your evaluation.

The questions in Figure 2 show that it is often difficult to differentiate between formative and summative aims for an evaluation. Asking questions about what you do will almost always provide formative feedback and provide ideas about how things could be better organised. Exploring how things work can also reveal bigger issues that can suggest the need for radical changes. Nonetheless, thinking about how far your evaluation is seeking to be formative and summative is a useful starting point.

Formality: formal and informal

At its most basic, evaluation is not a special activity that can only be undertaken by trained professionals. Rather it is simply an extension of asking the common sense questions 'Did that work?' and 'Could it work better?' However, a large number of tools and techniques are frequently used in evaluation which can increase the sophistication and accuracy of the answer to these questions. These tools include surveys, standardised questions, statistical analysis and the coding of qualitative data. Some of these are discussed below.

Evaluation is likely to operate on a spectrum between:

- **informal**, for example, individual reflection on 'how it went', and
- **formal**, for example, longitudinal tracking of individuals involved in WP programmes.

Both informal and formal approaches to evaluation have value. Excessive reliance on informal evaluation, however, can be problematic because it can overly rely on the subjective perspectives of people who have vested interests in what they are evaluating and may therefore find it easy to overlook problems and concerns. A greater degree of formality can therefore lead to transparency about how conclusions have been reached and a greater level of confidence in the way that the activity is summarised.

If evaluation is going to be reliable and convincing it is likely to need to move towards greater levels of formality. The following principles can be useful when developing evaluation projects.

Principles of evaluation

Evaluation should be:

- **purposeful** – seeking to achieve clear aims

- **objective** – examining what the evidence shows rather than what we would like it to show

- **transparent** – providing clarity on what has been done and how it has been done

- **credible** – undertaking evaluation in a way that all stakeholders can see is principled and appropriate

- **useful** – producing a result that helps to develop practice and understanding of the area

- **participatory** – recognising the knowledge and perspectives of all stakeholders

- **ethical** – ensuring that evaluation is conducted to high moral, ethical and legal standards.

Why evaluate?

Evaluation enables us to:

- examine what we do

- think about how we can improve it

- decide on whether it was worth doing

- provide others with a summary to help them to understand what was done.

It is possible to argue that evaluation should be an integral part of all educational activity. There is no point in spending time delivering programmes if it is not clear whether they work and if no thought is given to how they can be improved. Evaluation can provide information about short-term impacts but should also form evidence which supports judgements about whether or not WP activities have contributed to longer-term aims (HEFCE, 2010).

There are also reasons why it is important to evaluate WP activity in particular. WP of under-represented groups in HE is an activity which is still developing a robust evidence base for its effectiveness. Evaluation helps to increase the coherence of this evidence base and address criticisms about its perceived effectiveness. Furthermore, there are a range of different approaches to WP, and it is important that the HE sector continues with the process of distinguishing between those approaches that are most effective and those that are not.

The difference between monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are linked, but it is important to distinguish between them. At their best they should be separate yet complementary.

- **Monitoring** is the collection and analysis of data during a project and the comparison of this data against the targets and plans made for WP. Monitoring is part of project management, and helps to ensure cost-effectiveness and project progress.

- **Evaluation** is about making an assessment of the effectiveness and impact of what has been done. Data gathered for monitoring purposes is often utilised as part of evaluations, but the aims of the two activities are different.

HE providers are required to collect WP monitoring data and to submit a monitoring return for their access agreements and Widening Participation Strategic Statement to OFFA and HEFCE annually (OFFA and HEFCE, 2011). For more detailed information on access agreements and Widening Participation Strategic Statements visit the OFFA and HEFCE websites. These monitoring returns offer HE providers a structure for monitoring and for the reporting of monitoring. What is reported to external bodies will often drive what is routinely monitored, and the data supplied to external bodies is useful for making comparisons nationally. There is value in considering what is monitored from an institutional perspective so that monitoring can serve to enhance WP activities. For example, an HE provider may choose to use learner data to check the effectiveness of targeting (see **Toolkit 2: Targeting**).

The monitoring data collected for access agreements and Widening Participation Strategic Assessments provide a huge resource for an evaluation because they offer pre-existing data that are collected systematically around the activities that are being evaluated. The Widening Participation in Higher Education website provides an interactive tool which allows the interrogation of widening participation data from 2009-10 by institution, mission group and by mission group with location-adjusted benchmarks. An important early step in an evaluation is to look at what is being monitored and to consider how this information might be useful in an evaluation and whether anything else should be routinely monitored? HEFCE is in the process of rolling out the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT). This is a subscription service, which supports HEIs in England to track students who have taken part in outreach activities in schools and colleges, through their achievement in higher education and beyond.

> **?** **Reviewing monitoring**
>
> - What monitoring procedures exist within your institution around WP?
>
> - What format is the data held in? How easy is it to get hold of it and re-analyse it in relation to your evaluation questions?
>
> - What priorities or challenges are identified in your institution's annual OFFA/HEFCE monitoring return? How might these shape your evaluation questions?

When to evaluate

The cycle portrayed in Figure 1 demonstrates the key elements of evaluation, but planning, doing and evaluating phases of a project are not discrete activities. In practice, evaluation should be ongoing and should not be tacked onto the end of a project. Evaluation should be considered during initial project planning and seen as part of a cycle of continuous improvement. For example, if an evaluation includes observing practice or talking to participants this will need to be factored into initial project plans. Even summative evaluations may need to be carried out during a project.

Evaluation activities that can be taken at different stages of a project are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Timing evaluation activities

Project stage	Sample activities
Before the project	Developing an evaluation plan Identifying baseline data Developing evaluation tools
During the project	Conducting evaluation activity Refining the evaluation Producing formative reports of findings
After the project	Completing data collection Drawing together and analysing findings Producing summative reports of the findings

? Timing evaluation activities

- When do you need the outputs from your evaluation? At what point will you need to start evaluating to make this possible?

Whom to involve in an evaluation

Evaluation only has a purpose if it ultimately influences the way that WP activity is undertaken by confirming the approach that has been taken, by suggesting areas for development or both. It is vital that all project stakeholders or partners (both internal and external) are aware of any evaluation activity and understand what it is trying to achieve. People are only likely to change the way they operate if they respect the evaluation that has been undertaken and feel that its findings are legitimate. Furthermore, it is likely to be far easier to conduct an evaluation and gain access to participants and data if project stakeholders or partners are supportive.

A useful first stage can be to identify all project stakeholders or partners and think through how they might be involved in an evaluation. For example, schools or further education (FE) colleges are likely to be easier to engage in evaluation projects which explore the links between engagement in WP activity and improvements in learner attainment. An important way stakeholders might be involved is as recipients of the evaluation report. Thinking about who is involved in evaluation projects is also part of thinking about who the audiences for the project outputs are likely to be, and this in turn influences the nature of the project and the kinds of outputs that are produced (see Figure 4).

eg Figure 4: Engaging project stakeholders in evaluation

Project stakeholder	Involved in evaluation design and management?	Involved during the project?	How will the findings be communicated?
University senior management	Will approve the initial funding request for the evaluation.	Update through line management.	Invitation to dissemination event and copy of the report.
Internal partners	Will provide evaluation expertise and assistance with data sourcing, storage and control.	Participants in the initial design of the evaluation process.	Evaluation project progress meetings.
Partner schools	Representatives on project steering group.	Interviews with teachers and a survey of all pupil participants.	Copies of the report to all schools. Develop a workshop for teachers to pass on findings.
Local authority	Representative on project steering group.	Providing some data. Interviews with key staff.	Invitation to dissemination event and copy of the report.

Download an [Engaging project stakeholders in evaluation template](#)

Plan

Evaluation can take a variety of forms. The best approach to evaluation will be determined by decisions about:

- what is to be evaluated
- the purpose of the evaluation.

The previous section discussed the purpose of evaluation and when to undertake one, whom to involve and how to plan one as part of a broader project plan. This section moves on to identify evaluation aims and set out a process for designing an evaluation approach to meet those aims.

Evaluations form part of the overall delivery of a project or programme. Consequently they should be incorporated in the planning of the project and not as a separate activity. When drafting the evaluation of a project plan it is important to identify project objectives and deliverables, to assess the resources that are available, and to set out a schedule of evaluation tasks. This toolkit is designed to identify the key questions that might inform an evaluation. There is value in creating some kind of project planning document to help manage the project.

More information about planning and managing projects can be found in **Toolkit 1: Partnership**. There are many tools available to do this, including software packages like Microsoft® Project and established project planning formats like Gantt charts. The Evaluation checklist below also provides a useful basis for an evaluation project plan since it contains a number of suggested processes for effective evaluation.

Download the [Evaluation checklist tool](#)

A key element of thinking through an evaluation of a project is thinking about what the possible risks might be. One way to do this is through the creation of a risk register (see Figure 5). A risk register sets out the possible risks, what will happen if the risks occur, how likely they are to happen and what can be done to avoid the risk or manage it if it happens.

Figure 5: A sample risk register for an evaluation

Risk identified	Consequence of risk occurring	Risk assessment	Mitigation actions
Unable to access ex-participants in the WP programme	Gaps in the evaluation findings	Low	Build schools and colleges into the project planning and steering group to ensure they have a strong stake in the evaluation. Allocate sufficient time to school liaison.
Illness or absence of key team members	Potential delay in project timetable	Low	The project team is sufficiently large to be able to absorb some staffing issues. If these issues were severe it would be possible to seek funding for a professional evaluator to provide project support.

Download an [Evaluation risk register template](#)

Part of the consideration of resourcing and timescales should be thinking about whether there is any value in seeking help from a professional evaluator. A large number of companies and individuals specialise in the evaluation of education programmes. Many HE providers have academic departments that specialise in the research and evaluation of educational programmes.

If an external evaluator is to be engaged, an evaluation specification will be needed. This sets out the evaluation requirements and allows the evaluator to understand what is needed and identify a possible cost. It is possible to work in partnership with an evaluator and to use them for everything from consultancy about the best approach to the delivery of the entire evaluation.

Further information about planning evaluations is available at:

- [Aimhigher Greater Merseyside Evaluation Toolkit](#)
- [Measuring Success: A guide to Evaluation for Aimhigher](#)

Identifying the evaluation purpose

No two evaluations are likely to be the same. The nature of the subject of the evaluation will influence the approach that is adopted, as will the resources available and the particular questions that need to be answered.

A good place to start is by clarifying exactly what should be the subject of the evaluation. This might vary from an evaluation of a one-hour talk to parents through to a large-scale evaluation of an HE provider's overall programme or even a national programme like Aimhigher. Clearly these extremes

are going to require very different approaches. It is helpful to spend some time working out clear boundaries for the proposed evaluation, including a description of what is to be reviewed in detail.

> **❓ Identifying the evaluation purpose**
>
> - Is it a new or existing programme?
> - Is it a big or small programme?
> - Is it simple (such as a one-off intervention) or complex (such as multiple interventions)?
> - Does it happen over a short or long period of time?
> - What kinds of stakeholders, collaborators or partners are to be involved?
> - What kinds of clients are to be involved?
> - What are the intended outcomes of the programme?
> - Are any data collected as part of the programme?

Measuring impact

The purpose of the evaluation will shape how one is conducted. An important concept often explored through evaluation is **impact**. Impact is essentially about looking at what happens as a result of a programme or project. It is sometimes easier to think about impact by putting this question the other way round and asking 'what would happen if the programme did not exist?'.

It is possible to look for a variety of impacts: the impact on those employed to deliver the programme, impacts on participants, and impacts on society or the economy. A framework that is helpful in thinking about impact and about the kind of impacts that different evaluations are seeking to explore is the four-level model developed by Kirkpatrick (1994). Figure 6 summarises Kirkpatrick's levels of evaluation.

Figure 6: Kirkpatrick's evaluation model

Level	What is measured?	Examples
1 Reaction	How participants feel about their experience	'Happy sheets'/feedback forms. Observing participant reactions to WP programmes that they are involved in.
2 Learning	The increase in participants' knowledge and skills	Formal and informal assessments of knowledge and skills before and after the intervention perhaps to measure levels of understanding about HE.
3 Behaviour	How far learning is applied and results in personal change	Observation and interview of programme participants over time perhaps including tracking them into university/post-school life.
4 Results	How far the programme impacts on organisational or societal factors	Using local and national data sets to identify whether WP is shifting the nature of participation in HE both within an institution and nationally.

Many WP programmes will be operating at level 1 of Kirkpatrick's model as part of their monitoring. However, on its own level 1 does not provide the kind of information that policy makers, senior stakeholders and funders are likely to value nor does it offer many insights about either the efficiency or effectiveness of the activity. It is important to be able to show what happens as a result of a programme (levels 2-4) rather than just what happens within it (level 1). Kirkpatrick's levels therefore build on each other and become increasingly robust. However, each level is more challenging to identify than the last. There is likely to be value in seeking impacts across more than one level. Thinking carefully about what level of evaluation is being aimed for will ensure that meaningful evaluation objectives are set.

HEFCE guidance (HEFCE, 2010) suggests that WP activities should be undertaken where they have the most impact. This suggests that HE providers need to attend to the idea of impact and devise evaluation strategies which can demonstrate where this impact is being made.

Using research questions to define the evaluation

It is important to think through the focus of the evaluation. Developing a research question (or number of research questions) can help to define this and communicate it to others. A research question draws together the thinking that has been done so far and states it as a question. For example:

Does our institution's WP summer school increase participants' desire to pursue HE?

Research questions should be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely). In essence, research questions are those where it is possible to obtain an answer. The question above would therefore need further work to make it truly SMART, and crucially would require evaluators to consider how 'participants' desire' could be measured and how an increase could be observed and related to participation in a summer school. A research question is likely to be a work in progress during the early part of an evaluation as ideas are gradually developed about what is being looked for and what it might be possible to find. **Research questions are best designed at the same time as the WP programme itself**.

eg What makes a good research question?

The following research question does not provide a good basis for an evaluation study.

> *Is our WP programme effective?*

This does not provide a viable research aim because it leaves too many elements unspecified (effective for whom?), is not measureable (what is effective?) and lacks detail about time (over what period?). A more effective restatement of this research aim might be something like:

> *How many participants in our WP programme:*

- *achieved higher attainment levels than predicted by their school/college?*
- *had progressed to HE three years later?*
- *indicated that the programme was influential in their achievements?*

These questions are SMART: they are **specific** and suggest a way that success might be **measured**. There may be questions about how **achievable** it is, and the answer to this is likely to depend on the availability of tracking data or at least current contact details and about the quality of partnership with schools and FE colleges. It is clearly **relevant** to an evaluation of a WP programme, and **time** related.

It is important to note that these questions, and indeed most viable research questions, are much more limited in scope than the original question (Is our WP programme effective?)

Understanding the existing evidence

Once the purpose of an evaluation is established it can be useful to consider what is already known about this area. A considerable amount of research has already been conducted about participation in HE and interventions to widen participation. A good starting point for understanding this research evidence is the seven research syntheses produced by the Higher Education Academy.

Higher Education Academy Research syntheses

- Findings from the final years of the Aimhigher Programme 2008–2011
- The contribution of FE institutions to WP
- The role of HE students in widening access and improving student retention and success
- Collaboration and partnership working in a competitive environment
- The contribution of pre-entry interventions to student retention and success
- The role progression agreements are playing in promoting social mobility into the professions and vocational careers
- Student finance: what have we learned to date to inform access, retention and success under the new funding regime in England?

Evaluators may wish to go beyond these syntheses or explore the evidence in areas not directly covered by them. A simple Google search is often a good place to start when seeking existing evidence. Google also has a dedicated academic search tool, Google Scholar, which only searches academic and public policy material that has been identified by publishers, universities or other recognised bodies. This kind of searching may identify evidence that exists about WP in other countries. Wider material about youth transitions, educational choices and educational programme design may also be useful.

Evaluators who are based in HE providers are likely to have access to considerable support from librarians, researchers and other information professionals. These professionals will be able to help identify information sources that may support evaluations. WP is a subject that has the potential to cross a variety of fields: there may be useful materials in education, sociology, economics, psychology, policy studies and other fields. Because of this breadth it can be difficult to find everything that might be useful, and drawing on others' expertise can therefore be invaluable.

Because there is much potential literature to look at, it is important to keep references in good order so that you can relocate useful materials. Keeping an alphabetical reference list is a good starting point. Online reference managers can help with this and make material easier to find. HE providers may have a recommended tool which a librarian will be able to advise on. Commonly used tools include CiteULike, Mendeley, RefWorks and EndNote.

> ### ❓ Exploring existing literature
>
> - Has anyone already evaluated a similar programme anywhere else in the world?
> - Does any of the existing literature give you any ideas about how to approach your evaluation?
> - Has any research been done that might underpin your thinking about what should work or why it should work?
> - Can you use any existing research to give you baseline data?

Different approaches to evaluation

The approach taken in an evaluation depends on a range of factors. The nature of the evaluation subject, the purpose of the evaluation, the resources available, the timescale, the evaluator's confidence in using a range of approaches and a host of other factors are all likely to influence the approach.

The RUFDATA (Saunders, 2000) approach set out in Figure 7 provides a useful framework and a good basis for an evaluation plan.

Figure 7: The RUFDATA approach

R	Reasons and purposes	What are the **Reasons** and **Purposes** for this evaluation? Examples: planning, accountability, developing, to gain resources
U	Uses	What will be the **Uses** of the evaluation? Examples: staff development, learning from good practice, strategic planning, PR, completion of the annual monitoring return to OFFA/HEFCE
F	Foci	What will be the **Foci** for our evaluation? Examples: range of activities, emphasis, aspects of evaluation, identification of priority areas
D	Data and evidence	What will be the **Data** and **Evidence**? Examples: qualitative (interviews, case studies), quantitative (questionnaire)
A	Audience	Who will be the **Audience**? Examples: HEFCE, senior management, other stakeholders
T	Timing	What will be the **Timing**? Examples: once a year, at year end
A	Agency	Who will be the **Agency** conducting the evaluation? Examples: staff developer, course co-ordinators, external facilitator

The answer to each of these questions is likely to influence the evaluation approach.

A blank version of the RUFDATA evaluation framework is available to download. There is also the RUFDATA evaluation plan template that may be useful in shaping an evaluation plan further.

There are two broad approaches to evaluation, which are usually referred to as quantitative and qualitative methods. It is also common to use a blend of the two (usually known as mixed methods). Figure 8 summarises the difference between these different approaches.

Figure 8: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods of evaluation

Quantitative	Seeks to quantify (count) the size of inputs and impacts	Includes a range of methods such as surveys and analysis of existing monitoring data that produce numerical results.
Qualitative	Seeks to understand the nature of impacts and how they have come about	Includes a range of methods such as interviews, focus groups and observations which produce text, pictures and understanding that are not reducible to numbers.
Mixed	Seeks to both quantify and to understand the nature of inputs and impacts	Uses a mixture of methods to build up a picture that provides both quantification and enhanced understanding.

It can be difficult to generalise about when to use particular methods. One factor is to consider how far the evaluation is seeking to quantify what the programme is doing and the impacts that result from it (quantitative), as opposed to how far it is seeking to increase the understanding about how the programme is working (qualitative). Mixed method approaches can allow the combination of these aims or the organisation of the project in a structured way, for example first exploring whether something works using a quantitative method and then examining why. Mixed method approaches tend to increase the amount of evaluation work that is undertaken and therefore are relatively resource-intensive.

> ### ❓ Choosing methods of evaluation
>
> - What issues do you need to consider before choosing your approach to evaluation?

Evaluating ethically

Evaluators who are based in HE institutions are likely to find that their institution has detailed ethical guidelines for undertaking research and evaluation. Institutions may expect a proposal to be submitted to an ethics committee before an evaluation project begins. It is important to check these local details before starting on an evaluation.

Research ethics are not a set of rules about what is and is not allowed. It is probably more helpful to see research ethics as a systematic approach to research design and implementation.

Ethics committees will want evaluators to demonstrate that they have thought through the ethical challenges and come up with an answer to them.

The British Educational Research Association's (BERA, 2011) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research is an authoritative summary of ethical issues that evaluators are likely to encounter. In particular it is important to consider the following:

- Evaluators should treat all research participants and project stakeholders fairly and with respect.

- All research participants should understand what they are participating in, the purpose of the evaluation and the nature of the outputs. They should give their consent to be involved.

- Consent to participate should be given freely and without pressure or undue incentive. Participants should be able to withdraw consent at any time without giving a reason.

- Evaluators must ensure that they comply with the law, particularly with respect to working with young people or vulnerable adults and following data protection regulations.

- It may be appropriate for consent to participate to be sought from parents or teachers as well as young people themselves.

- Evaluators should seek to do no harm to research participants including causing stress and distress.

- Evaluators should advise participants of any anticipated negative effects of participation.

- Evaluators should be clear about the level of anonymity that they are able to offer participants and then respect the agreement.

- Evaluators should ensure that data is kept securely and that no publication will directly or indirectly lead to a breach of agreed confidentiality or anonymity.

- It is good practice to debrief participants of the outcomes of the research, and to provide them with copies of reports and other documents that were produced following their participation.

> ## ❓ Evaluating ethically
>
> - What is the process for obtaining ethical approval in your organisation?
> - What are the timescales involved?
> - What are the ethical considerations for your evaluation?

Download a <u>Sample information sheet and consent form</u> and a <u>Sample letter to parents</u>

<u>Evaluation Practicalities: Ethical Considerations</u> is a useful resource from Lancaster University covering informed consent, anonymity, privacy and confidentiality.

Data

Earlier sections explored the purpose of evaluation and set out the process of designing an evaluation. This section moves on to discuss the actual process of conducting an evaluation, collecting information and making sense of it.

Evaluators usually describe any information that they collect during the course of an evaluation as data. Data is often numbers and statistics, but can also be words, pictures, observations and objects that have been collected through the evaluation.

Understanding data

In considering how to collect and analyse data, evaluators need to think carefully about how to design the process of data collection in a way that provides data which address the purpose of the evaluation.

> **❓ Thinking about what data are needed**
>
> In an evaluation which seeks to explore participants' level of satisfaction and engagement in a WP programme it is important to think about how to identify satisfaction and engagement. One way to form an opinion about participants' experience is to talk to the university staff who were involved in delivering the programme. Insights can also be gained by talking to the participants' teachers or parents. However, while these data sources might be useful they would not really meet the aims of this evaluation. In this case it would only be possible to identify participants' satisfaction and engagement by either talking to participants or asking them to fill in a survey or evaluation form.

Consideration of what data to use and how to go about collecting and analysing them should be informed by the concepts of **reliability** and **validity**. In the context of an evaluation these terms have specific meanings, as follows:

- **Reliability** describes the extent to which any given data collection method will produce the same findings under the same circumstances. So asking participants to evaluate a programme using a lengthy and complex survey might give unreliable results, because information provided may be more influenced by the (poor) design of the survey than by participants' actual experience of the programme.

- **Validity** describes the extent to which any data collected reflects the thing that is being investigated. So a study which seeks to claim that a particular intervention had changed individuals' aspirations but which did not ask about or measure aspirations would lack validity.

Reliability and validity are only really possible where an evaluation has clear aims (as discussed in the earlier section on Planning). This section considers a series of questions which proceed from a clearly defined project purpose.

- Using existing data: What data have already been collected that help to answer the research questions?

- Collecting new data: What new data are needed, and how should these be collected?

- Managing data: How can we make sure that the data that are collected are managed in a way that makes it possible to answer our questions?

- Analysing data: How can we make sense of the data that we have collected and use it to answer our original evaluation questions?

Using existing data

WP programmes within HE providers and their partners (schools, colleges, work-based training providers, other HE providers) routinely collect large amounts of data. Some of these data may provide insights useful to an evaluation. For example, HE providers receive WP data from external

sources such as the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and combine these with data generated internally or from partners to produce annual monitoring returns to OFFA and the Widening Participation Strategic Assessment (WPSA) for HEFCE.

The OFFA website includes a Guide to interpreting institutions' self-assessments and commentaries which provides an explanation of the data comprising the access agreement monitoring return. The website also contains each institution's self-assessments and commentaries.

OFFA's monitoring form asks HE providers to report against milestones around applicants, entrants or the student body. In terms of the Kirkpatrick model (Figure 6) this is seeking level 4 impacts (i.e. how far the programme impacts on organisational or societal factors). In other words does the WP programme actually have an impact on the HE provider itself? There is also value in reporting other levels of evaluation and impact that have been observed, because this will give a fuller picture of how the institution subjects its WP activity to scrutiny. If they are well organised, existing data collected by the institution can be useful in identifying and demonstrating impact.

Figure 9: Types of data sources for evaluation

Input data	Participation data	Output data
What learners are like	**What happened in the intervention?**	**What happens next?**
What schools do they come from? What areas do they come from? What are their predicted grades? What disadvantages do they have?	What did they do? How many times did they do it? Who delivered it? Did they value it?	Do they stay in school? What grades do they achieve? Do they apply to higher education? Do they remain within/succeed in higher education? Where do they work after leaving higher education?

Figure 9 sets out types of data sources that are available to HE providers.

- **Input data** sources are commonly used for targeting activity. They include data sources such as the Index of Multiple Deprivation, POLAR2 and Free School Meals.

- **Participation data** is the dataset that HE providers will need to build as part of managing their monitoring arrangements. Data about what interventions were organised and who attended them will exist within the institution. The question is how flexible these data are and how easy it is to link to input and output data.

- **Output data** sources provide information about what happened to learners once they moved beyond the immediate environment of the WP intervention.

HE providers have a lot of control over what and how they collect participation data. They typically have less control over input and output data (although it is possible to supplement this to some extent by collecting new data, see below).

When using existing sources of data for evaluation purposes a key question is how well different sources can be linked. Ideally it would be possible to link input data (to provide a baseline), participation data (to identify the intervention) and output data (to identify the impact). Understanding different data sources and considering how they can be linked is important when developing effective evaluation.

When using existing data sources it is essential to determine the quality, nature and organisation of the participation data held by the institution. Data that are in a format that facilitates linking with other data can be extremely useful. Features of a database that support linking with other datasets include:

- **Absolute values.** Are the data recorded as absolute values rather than percentages?

- **Granularity.** Is it possible to extract very fine-grained and detailed information from the database? For example, can you find out how many people attended a course, how many people were from a particular cohort, and whether John Smith attended this course?

- **Unique indicators.** Do the data held have unique indicators that can be used to identify them? Many people share a surname or a data of birth but numbers like the unique pupil number (UPN) or the UCAS Personal ID should be genuinely unique. Similarly for location, many areas share a town name but postcode is unique.

- **Standard taxonomies.** Are the data recorded using standard taxonomies or classifications? For example, is the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) being used to classify the socio-economic background of learners?

Ensuring that these features underpin database design and data collection will make it possible to link the data held with other data sources and to ensure that it is useful for evaluation.

Given the vast amount of data that exist it is important to consider what each dataset covers and how it might inform an evaluation of a WP programme. Figure 10, which is also presented in **Toolkit 2: Targeting**, sets out the relationship between what a dataset describes and the level of granularity at which it provides data.

Figure 10: What evaluation data sources cover

Targeting level	Data source title
Geographical or area level	• indices of deprivation comprising: income; employment; health and disability; education, skills and training; barriers to housing and services; crime; living environment • Output Area Classification • ACORN classification • MOSAIC classification • School Census • FE and Skills Participation and Achievement • POLAR (now POLAR3) • HE Students Snap-shot • UCAS aggregated data
Organisational level or school/FE college/work-based learning provider level	• POLAR (now POLAR3) • UCAS custom data • Working Age Adults with Higher Level Qualifications • DCSF Edubase (now DfE EduBase2) • Level 2 and 3 attainment by age 19 • school and college performance tables • local authority data • free school meals • School Census
Personal or learner level	School information on: • free school meals • learner postcodes • parental background • learners in public care • SEN • Fischer Family Trust (FFT) • other attainment predictor data

Brief Guide to data sources: A resource for Aimhigher practitioners was published by Aimhigher Kent and Medway.

Collecting new data

There will be occasions when it is useful to collect new data for an evaluation. New data can be useful to address gaps in existing data, to explore issues in more depth, and to provide evaluators with different kinds of data, such as observation data. This is particularly important when seeking to investigate the short- and medium-term impact of a WP intervention.

Many kinds of data collection can be useful. The following methods are commonly used in the evaluation of WP programmes:

- action research
- document analysis
- focus groups/group interview
- interviews
- observation
- surveys.

Each method produces different kinds of data. The distinction between quantitative and qualitative data is an important one to think through when choosing data collection approaches. Another key consideration is the level of resourcing available. For example, undertaking large numbers of interviews can be time-consuming, as access to each person has to be negotiated before the interviews can be conducted, recorded and stored, and findings analysed.

When collecting data, the following issues are key:

- **Recruitment and sampling:** how will participants be chosen, and how will they then be encouraged to participate? A sampling approach should identify the spread of characteristics and experiences that it is hoped to represent in the data. Be aware that there is a strong likelihood of some drop-out, and consequently over-sampling can be useful. See p.6 of the [Aimhigher Greater Merseyside Evaluation Toolkit](#) (Aimhigher, n.d.) for further information about sampling.

- **The competence of the collector:** it is important that whoever is undertaking the data collection feels competent and well-supported to undertake this task. This may mean providing training and/or thinking about how the data collector is debriefed after undertaking the work.

- **Neutrality and objectivity:** the way the data collection is undertaken should not determine its outcome. This means trying to avoid leading questions (e.g. asking "what have you done since attending the summer school" rather than "how did the summer school change your perspective on higher education") and questioning assumptions made by both the data collector and the research participant.

- **Verifiability:** the conclusions drawn from data should be verifiable by others. This means making sure that the data (spreadsheets, transcripts, notes) are available if the evaluation's conclusions are called into doubt.

Managing data

It is important to consider how all data collected will be recorded and stored. Above all, evaluators should ensure that their approach to data collection, storage and use complies with the Data Protection Act 1998. The way researchers need to respond to this Act is discussed in BERA's (2011) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research. BERA summarises the responsibility as follows:

> In essence people are entitled to know how and why their personal data is being stored, to what uses it is being put and to whom it may be made available. Researchers must have participants' permission to disclose personal information to third parties and are required to ensure that such parties are permitted to have access to the information. They are also required independently to confirm the identity of such persons and must keep a record of any disclosures. Disclosure may be written, electronic, verbal or any visual means. (pp.7-8).

Further guidance on the Data Protection Act 1998 for HE providers can be found in useful guidance produced by Jisc and published on the JISC Legal website.

Even when data have been collected, stored and used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 there are still a number of challenges for evaluators in seeking to use it. Some methods, such as online surveys, produce a data file that is relatively easy to store and analyse. Others, such as observation of programme delivery, pose considerable challenges for recording the subtlety of what might be happening. For such observation a template can guide and structure the recording. In the case of interviews and focus groups, decisions must be made about a range of issues: what to record and what to omit, and whether to produce full transcripts, detailed summaries or just brief notes from each interview. Decisions on these questions depend on the evaluation objectives, but it may be worthwhile to look into what other evaluators on similar projects do. Also a balance must be struck between the amount of time that is available for activities such as transcription and the level of detail that is required for the final output.

Analysing data

Collection of evidence during an evaluation can result in vast amounts of data being generated. Every article read, data source discovered and interview conducted produces new insights. The challenge in an evaluation is making sense of all of these insights, understanding the contradictions, and giving appropriate weighting to different perspectives. This process of disentangling the evaluation findings and making sense of them is what is meant by analysis.

Before undertaking data analysis is important to clarify whether the research is undertaken to prove or disprove an initial research question or hypothesis, or whether it is more exploratory in nature.

Starting with a clear research question then analysing data against it is called **deductive research**. In this approach the process of analysis is about identifying whether the data answer the initial research question then developing an approach to quantifying the different perspectives. A more exploratory approach to analysis is to be led by the data, recognising that it might not have been possible to encapsulate all possibilities in the initial research question. This is called **inductive research,** and in this case analysis seeks to identify patterns and develop new hypotheses about what is happening.

eg An analysis challenge

When evaluating an HE summer school, evaluators drew on a wide range of data. They identified a series of academic articles discussing aspiration-raising interventions, observed the summer school in operation, reviewed feedback forms, and surveyed participants one month after participation. They also surveyed participants from previous years and talked to tutors, teachers and mentors involved with the programme. Unsurprisingly they found a lot of different perspectives: some participants stated they enjoyed the programme, others attributed radical personal changes to their participation in it, and still others (albeit a minority) reported that participation was a 'waste of time'. In total the evaluators had 300 survey responses and 40 hours of recorded interviews to work through as well as 40 evaluation forms and notes from reading research and observing the programme as it was delivered. Developing coherent findings in this sort of situation is likely to be challenging.

? Deductive and inductive

If the evaluators of the HE summer school in the example above had set out with SMART research questions, perhaps around the efficiency of the summer school and the level to which the positive reaction of participants could be quantified, a **deductive** process of analysis could have been adopted. This might mean sorting through the evidence to find material that either supports or challenges the idea that the summer school was run well and enjoyed by participants. Evidence that does not speak to these issues can be set aside (even if it is interesting). Conversely, if the evaluators had set out to investigate what it was that the organisers and participants in a summer school found to be important, meaningful or impactful, an **inductive** approach could have been taken where data are analysed to try and see if there are any common themes or issues emerging. For example, it may be that everyone talks enthusiastically about peer contacts that they made during the summer school. Evaluators might observe this pattern and note it as something that merits further discussion or investigation.

Whichever approach is taken it is important to be systematic in the analysis of data. A range of software tools exist to support analysis of both quantitative data (such as Excel, SPSS) and qualitative data (such as NVivo). It is advisable to invest some time in learning how to use such tools because they can greatly increase the speed and accuracy of analysis. However, the tools will not, in and of themselves, analyse data. A systematic approach to data analysis allows the evaluator to describe what the data are revealing, to quantify the different perspectives that emerge and to make connections and spot patterns.

The process of analysing evaluation data is likely to be an ongoing process. It is not advisable to leave it until the end of a project, but rather to see analysis as a process that informs all stages of an evaluation.

Analysis should probably inform each of the following project stages:

- **Research design:** analysis should be considered at an early stage as part of the research design

- **Analysis of pilot:** initial analysis can be undertaken as part of a pilot to explore whether the research approach is delivering the data required

- **During the project:** to check interim results, for example by looking at the representativeness of a survey

- **After data collection has finished:** to quantify, describe and make connections within project data.

The process of analysis needs to achieve the following tasks:

- **Quantification:** the process of assigning values and importance to elements of data. For example, some people might report that an intervention changed the way that they thought about HE and while others might report the opposite. By identifying the relative size of these two groups it is possible to understand their relative importance.

- **Description and coding:** understanding the patterns that exist within data. For example, in answer to a question about whom they see as a role model young people might give a long list of names. The process of describing and coding these answers would organise them into a limited number of codes, such as parent, friend, celebrity, teacher. Coding transforms data from just being many items of information into patterns that can be quantified and understood.

- **Making connections:** identifying connections between different aspects of the data and between the data and other information that you have. For example, it might be the case that most people who answered 'yes' to a particular question are female and this might therefore be a correlation worthy of comment. Alternatively, it might be that a pattern in the data corresponds with a pattern observed in previous research.

When analysing data it is important to consider all possible explanations for the findings. Evaluation is not about confirming what the evaluator thinks already.

❓ Analysis questions

- What have we found?

- Why have we found it?

- What does it tell us about what we are evaluating?

- Could there be any other explanation?

- Is there anything that we don't understand or can't explain?

- How does this link to other research?

- How does this link to policy?

Report

This section focuses on how an evaluation can be used to identify what is working, communicate its value and ultimately to develop WP practice. Figure 1 showed how the lifecycle of a project moves from planning to doing and then to evaluating. However, it is only when the evaluation influences the next iteration of planning that an evaluation can really be said to be effective. It is also important to consider how the evaluation will be communicated to stakeholders and used to inform practice.

Who to report to

When planning and designing the evaluation it is important to consider who will receive the evaluation report, as this is likely to influence the nature of the evaluation and the way reporting is undertaken. A range of stakeholders may benefit from such a report, such as project participants, practitioners and management involved in the delivery of outreach, outreach partners, funders, and other researchers and evaluators. A useful process is to begin by detailing these stakeholders and thinking about what they want. Figure 11 provides an example of this kind of thinking.

Figure 11: Who to report to (example)

Stakeholder	What are they looking for	Possible genre
Senior managers in the HE provider	Short output that sets out high-level implications and could be included in annual monitoring returns	Two-page summary
Outreach partners	Detailed discussion of how the evaluation changes the operation of the partnership	PowerPoint presentation followed by workshop discussion
Outreach practitioners	Detailed information about all aspects that have been evaluated	Detailed written report
Funders	Quantifiable information that can be compared with outreach activity in other HE providers	Submission of information through monitoring procedures backed up by a detailed written report
Participants	Easily digestible feedback about the process they have contributed to	A thank you letter and one-page summary

Download a [Who to report to template](#)

What to report

An evaluation report is a communication from the evaluator to whoever they have identified they are reporting to. Exactly what to report depends on the audience. However all reports should present a narrative of what the evaluation concludes is happening. For example the evaluation might conclude that although a series of open days and HE visits are well liked by participants there is no evidence that they lead to participants being more likely to attend HE or to choose to study at this HE provider in particular.

As a narrative is developed it is important that the evidence is presented in a way that allows the audience to understand how the conclusions have been arrived at. It is also valuable to acknowledge alterative conclusions, and to explain why they have been rejected. The purpose of reporting is to help clarify the audience's understanding rather than either to present them with vast amounts of data or to argue in favour of a position that the evidence does not support.

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eg Drawing conclusions and asking questions

An evaluation found that an HE provider's mentoring scheme is under-recruiting mentees, but that for those mentees there is evidence that the mentoring scheme is providing high quality information and support. It would be possible to respond to these findings with the following conclusions:

- the HE provider should re-examine its WP marketing strategy and give greater priority to mentoring

- the HE provider should identify successful mentees and capture their story as part of an approach to encouraging future mentors.

Alternatively it would be possible to present action points as questions for consideration as follows:

- given the under-recruitment to mentoring is there any way that the HE provider can increase the appeal of the programme to potential mentees?

- given the positive experiences of many mentees can the HE provider find a way to capture their experiences and make them available to potential mentees?

Some evaluation reports will include recommendations, for example, that a particular programme should be stopped, continued or expanded. However, evaluations often just present evidence and ask questions that can support decision making.

The latter, less directive, approach allows the reader of the report to identify their own solutions and avoids evaluators making decisions about institutional policy which may exceed their authority or knowledge.

Reporting genres

There are lots of ways to report an evaluation. Probably most evaluators will produce a weighty report that contain the following elements:

Example structure 1: 'IMRaD'

1. **Introduction.** Setting out what the evaluation's aims were and how it came about. This might include discussion of the policy environment and preceding literature on this topic.

2. **Methods.** Setting out what was done and why this method was chosen.

3. **Results.** Reporting what was found as a result of the evaluation. Results will typically be presented with a minimum of reported analysis.

4. **Discussion.** Exploring the results through further analysis and by making connections to the context.

An alternative approach is to use the report to provide detail about the key issues that have been identified through the evaluation:

Example structure 2: Thematic

1. **Introduction**

2. **Methods**

3. **Theme 1.** Identifying a key theme that emerged from the evaluation and presenting and discussing the data that addresses that theme.

4. **Theme 2**

5. **Theme 3 etc**

6. **Conclusions.** Drawing together key messages from the evaluation.

However, there are no rules about how to present an evaluation report. For example, it is common to move the Methods section out of the body of the main report and to present it as an appendix to allow readers to move to the substance of the report more quickly.

It is useful to begin the report with an executive summary. This should be a short summary that draws out the main findings in a way that can be quickly digested. It is usually presented at the start of the report, and should be able to stand on its own. Executive summaries are the most read and most influential element of an evaluation report. Few people will read the whole report, but the executive summary allows its messages to be communicated to a much wider audience.

Figure 12: Types of evaluation report

Type	Example
Conventional evaluation report using a structure similar to the IMRaD approach	Evaluation of the impact of Aimhigher and widening participation outreach programmes on learner attainment and progression
Thematic evaluation report. This report includes an executive summary and a press release as alternative reporting genres	Widening participation in higher education
Executive summary	Formative Evaluation of the National Scholarship Programme (see pp. 2-4 for Executive summary)
Press release	Universities and colleges spent £395 million on access measures in 2009-10, finds OFFA
PowerPoint presentation	Evaluation Capacity Building in Widening Participation Practice
Online films	Intervention Programme Evaluation (This example is not directly focused on WP but shows how a short film can get key messages across)

The importance of thinking about the audience for an evaluation report has already been discussed. The audience is likely to determine the appropriate type of communication. It is important to focus on the best way to communicate the findings rather than assuming from the start that an evaluation report has to be presented in a particular way. Examples of different approaches are given in Figure 12.

Acting on evaluation

The reporting of evaluation results should not be seen as the end of the evaluation. The reporting merely serves to open a conversation with the project stakeholders. Whether the evaluation has found that the outreach programme is effective and should be continued, or that it needs to be changed and developed to make it more effective, it is important to make sure that conclusions are discussed and addressed by those who can take action on them.

The final stage is therefore to close the plan>do>evaluate cycle that was set out in Figure 1. Evaluation is only really useful when this is done and the additional intelligence that is drawn out in the report is transformed into actions. How easy this is will depend on the engagement of project stakeholders and this is why it is valuable to engage them throughout the project and to use the reporting as an opportunity to re-engage them. Useful strategies to ensure that evaluation reports are acted on include the following:

- ensure the report is available at a timely point in the planning cycle, such as before the start of term

- call a meeting specifically to address the evaluation findings, and use this meeting to develop concrete action points

- identify where the evaluation suggests changes need to be made, and identify who needs to take action

- encourage the whole project team and all stakeholders to sign up to a process of continuous improvement, one where responding to evaluation and feedback is built into programme design and delivery

- avoid a culture of blame. Evaluation reports should be seeking to support people to improve rather than to blame them for failures.

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Kingston University

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

OFFA

Sheffield College

St Angela's Ursuline School

St Mary's University College

The Open University

UCAS

University of Birmingham

University of Bristol

University of Cumbria

University of Derby

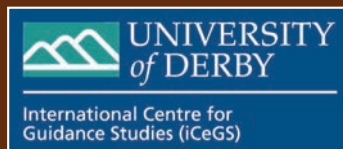University of Greenwich

University of Leicester

University of Sussex

Acronyms

ASDAN	Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network
BERA	British Educational Research Association
CEIAG	Careers education, information, advice and guidance
CURDS	Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies
DBIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EBLO	Education Business Link Organisation
EFA	Education Funding Agency
FE	Further education
FFT	The Fischer Family Trust
FSM	Free school meals
GLA	Greater London Authority
HE	Higher education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher education institution
HEPF	Higher Education Progression Framework
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
IAG	Information, advice and guidance
IMD	Index of Multiple Deprivation
IMRaD	Introduction, methods, results discussion
ITT	Initial teacher training
LLN	Lifelong Learning Network
LPN	Low Participation Neighbourhood
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
MAT	Multi-agency team
NEETS	Not in education, employment or training
NS-SEC	National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification
OFFA	Office for Fair Access
POLAR	Participation of Local Areas
SEN	Special educational needs
SFA	Skills Funding Agency
SMART	Specific, measureable, attainable, relevant and timely
SSCLLN	Skills for Sustainable Communities Lifelong Learning Network
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering And Maths
STEMNET	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Network
UPN	Unique pupil number
UTC	University Technical Colleges
WASRS	Widening Access and Student Retention and Success
WP	Widening participation
WPSA	Widening Participation Strategic Assessment
WPSS	Widening Participation Strategic Statement