Planning robust evaluation into your Teaching Excellence Project (TEP)

Centre for Learning and Teaching

THE NEED TO EVALUATE

Given the context of metric-informed provision and the need to report into TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework), APP (Access and Participation Plan) and NSS (National Student Survey) processes, there is an increasing imperative to gather evidence concerning the impact of actions upon the student experience.

If projects can show a robust approach to evaluation, they can also be more useful as clear evidence for practice improvement and can also support some of our cross-university initiatives, like our APP, the TEF and our University Mental Health Charter. This is where we need to show we have robust measures in place to show changes in practice and whether interventions do or don't work.

Evaluating your teaching provides valuable insights into your practice, helping you enhance student learning and inform your professional development. Evaluation benefits both educators and learners, offering evidence to improve teaching strategies and student outcomes.

You can evaluate ...

- Quality of education – at the programme, module, or session level (e.g., lectures, labs, workshops).
- Performance – your role as a tutor, lecturer, or facilitator.
- Learner experience – engagement, motivation, support, and resources.

You should evaluate your project to gather evidence of the impact of your work and to be able to see whether the changes which you have implemented have met your objectives and allowed the expected benefits to be realised. Once you have gathered evaluation data—whether from self-reflection, peer observation, or student feedback—the next step is to analyse and interpret the findings. Take time to look for recurring themes and patterns in the feedback.

Knowing how your project interventions are/were able to affect your project outcomes will create knowledge to transfer to colleagues and will enable your project to have a wider reach and impact. Even if your project is not expected to, or has not been able to, achieve the benefits and impact which you have anticipated, evaluation allow you to reflect upon the design and implementation of your project work, and will produce valuable knowledge from which lessons can be learnt.

Evaluation can also help to assess the 'counterfactual'. This is, looking at what would have happened if the intervention, or activity, had not occurred, and comparing this with the situation after your project intervention.

For teaching related projects (like our LBU TEPs), using qualitative and quantitative data (via a mixed methods approach) can be useful to provide a rich deep picture of an issue.

FIRST STAGE: A starting point

Setting up a simple logic chain can be helpful, in which the issue, required inputs/outputs, expected outcomes and anticipated impact(s) are identified at the outset of your planning

Initially just think generally about:

The Issue: What is the problem/area which needs to be addressed?

The Inputs: What inputs, processes or outputs are really needed?

The Outputs: What will these inputs need to deliver?

The Outcomes: What short term gains are expected?

The Impact: What longer term impacts are expected?

Types of evaluation

A **process** evaluation can be undertaken whilst the project work is ongoing, as it looks at whether your project work (intervention) is likely to achieve your project objectives/benefits.

An **impact** evaluation includes assessing/measuring the effect and influence you project intervention has had.

Your project evaluation can, therefore, involve both process and impact evaluation.

SECOND STAGE: Planning your project evaluation

- Consider **WHY** you are undertaking the evaluation:
  - Assessing how your project funding has been spent to achieve the project's purpose and
  - Informing future strategies and actions, based on the project's main purpose
  - Would carrying out a particular type of evaluation strengthen your project's aim e.g an appreciative enquiry, a cost benefit analysis, a user led evaluation or other evaluative approaches?
- Consider **WHAT** you are evaluating:
  - What are the key things you will exclude and include in the evaluation
  - Are there specific student groups you are interested in evaluating as part of your project plan- do your chosen methods do this?

- Consider what baseline data needs to be collected as a starting point.
  For example our ongoing quantitative student educational outcome data relating to results or continuation, completion and success
- What are the key outcomes that need to be captured to examine and report impact?
- Effectiveness of project inputs, process and or outputs in realising project benefits and impact.

- Consider WHEN you will evaluate:
  - During the project (process) and/or after it has completed (impact).
  - Have you built it into your project plan and designed it in from the beginning? Ideally, it is better to plan your project evaluation at the design and planning stage before the project starts
- Consider WHO will evaluate our project:
  - Who specifically in your project team (or externally?) will be designing and doing the evaluation
  - How will you avoid conflicts of interest and bias in the evaluation?
- Consider **HOW** you will evaluate your project:
  - How will you get informed consent from the participants
  - How will the evidence/findings be collected and when will you stop??
  - What questions might you ask if you are using focus groups, interviews or surveys? Are they the right questions to inform impact?
  - How will you use the project team and the stakeholders in the evaluation? Do you use students? If so, are they effectively prepared to do this?
  - How will the evidence/findings be assessed/determined?
  - How will you store the data in accordance with the GDPR guidance?
- Consider **HOW** you will report your findings:
  - How will you handle the data collected?
  - How will you ensure the integrity of the data collected?
  - How will you report your findings?
  - How will you detect, deal with, and report upon, unintended organisational consequences or other counterintuitive unexpected findings?
  - Who might lose out or be excluded because of the evaluation findings?

PROPORTIONALITY

Proportionality is an expected driver of design choices and is essential if you are leading a relatively localised teaching intervention. (Jones- Devitt,2025). Evaluations need to be proportional to the risks, scale and profile of the intended intervention, which has implications for the type and level of resources required.

Key factors include:

- Stakeholders often specify that proportionality should be built into design choices at the outset
- It is necessary to consider design choices which are relative to the scale and maturity of the initiative
- Resourcing constraints (principally funding / time) put pressure upon evaluation researchers to achieve 'value' through proportional choices
- Proportionality assists evaluators to make effective design choices. There are always 'trade-offs' when applying proportionality considerations. These include whether to emphasise breadth or depth, recognising any impact on proposed level of analysis and whether trade offs have impact on further competing needs within the evaluation process.

References and further reading:

Austen, L., & McCaig, C. (2025 – scheduled for September). Delivering and Evaluating Participation after Access: Higher Education in a Marketised System. Emerald Publishing Limited.

Publications

Jones-Devitt, S. (2025) A Guide to Basic Evaluation in Higher Education (Why Needed and How to Do It). Specialist Evidence, Evaluation and Research (SEER).

Parsons, D. (n.d.). *Demystifying Evaluation*. Policy Press; Policy Press. Retrieved 23 June 2025, from https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/demystifying-evaluation

See Appendix A below for examples.

APPENDIX - EXAMPLES

Evaluating the effectiveness of a professional development program:

An evaluation could assess the impact of a professional development course on teachers' classroom practices, student engagement, and overall student achievement. This project, using a mixed methods approach, is a good example of a process and impact evaluation of the PGCert/ MA Student Engagement in Higher Education programme (2018-2022) at the University of Winchester.
https://shura.shu.ac.uk/30905/13/Donnelly_2022_Process_impact_evaluation.pdf

Assessing the impact of a specific teaching method:

(Example of a Specific Evaluation):

Course:

A second-year undergraduate module in "Computer Programming" using a mixed methods approach.

Intervention:

The experimental group uses a flipped classroom approach with online video tutorials and interactive exercises before each class, followed by group coding challenges during class time. The control group receives traditional lectures followed by individual coding exercises. All would do the same final individual assessment.

Evaluation:

The evaluation would assess the impact of the flipped classroom on students' programming skills (assessed through coding assignments and a final exam), their understanding of programming concepts (assessed through quizzes and a final exam), and their engagement and satisfaction with the course (assessed through surveys and focus groups). Students assignment marks might indicate a difference too.

Expected Outcome:

The evaluation might show that the flipped classroom approach leads to improved programming skills, deeper understanding of concepts, and higher student engagement and satisfaction compared to the traditional lecture-based approach.