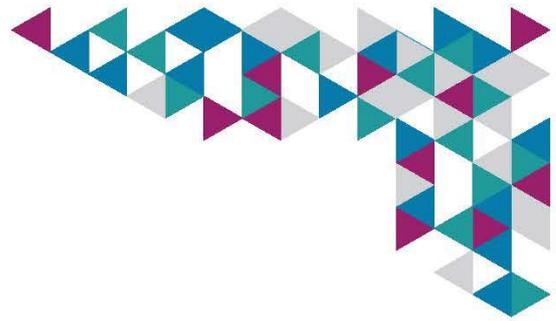




QAA
Scotland



Enhancement
Themes



Evidencing the Intangible Aspects of the Student Experience Workbook

Authors' note: This workbook forms part of the QAA Scotland 'Beyond the Metrics: Charting the intangible aspects of enhancement' Collaborative Cluster Project. We hope you find it a useful resource and would welcome any feedback to help to improve it.

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Contents

Introduction	1
Overview of the process	3
Step 1: Identifying your intangible assets from a stakeholder perspective	3
Step 2: Mapping the 'Big Picture'	3
Step 3: Evidencing value through narrative, affirmation and evaluation.....	3
The Evidencing Value Grid	4
The Evidencing Value Framework	5
Purpose	5
Approach	5
Output.....	6
The Evidencing Value Review and Planning Tool: Micro-level questions for module and/or programme teams	7
The Evidencing Value Audit and Planning Tool: Meso-level questions for departmental/programme cluster/professional services teams	11
The Evidencing Value Audit and Planning Tool: Macro-level questions for institutional or college/faculty/school leadership teams	15
References	19

Introduction

The process and associated resources set out in this workbook are designed to help you capture and evidence the value of important but intangible aspects of the student experience: your intangible assets. Intangible assets (IAs) are defined here as those aspects of your area of work that are not easily counted or quantified, but nevertheless form a valuable part of the teaching and learning culture and student experience on offer. While not being prescriptive, we anticipate that completing these exercises might prove beneficial for a variety of quality processes such as, curriculum design, internal quality review, ELIR, Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submissions, and reviewing student support services. In order to undertake the exercises thoroughly and gain the maximum benefit, it is recommended that you dedicate at least half a day to complete the activities described below.

The process offers you an opportunity to identify, map and plan for the enhancement of your most important intangible assets, using a framework based on four interrelated dimensions of the University's organisational structure: its **systems and structures**; its **resources**; its **core educational and support components**; and its **ethos, cultures and identities**.

We identified these four dimensions of organisational structure by drawing on a range of established models of organisational design and effectiveness (see, for example, Katz and Kahn, 1978; Martins & Terblanche, 2003; May & Bridger, 2010), as well as the evidence collected during our own research in Scotland and in England with a range of 'teaching excellence' stakeholders, which included educational development leaders, academic and professional services staff, students and national policy representatives.

In developing the process, the project team have drawn on and adapted a relatively new and establishing methodology: cultural mapping. This has developed as a 'practical, participatory planning and development tool and an emerging mode of research' (Duxbury, Garrett-Petts & MacLennan, 2015). A helpful place to start, if you would like further information about this process, is a special edition of the journal *City, Culture and Society* (Duxbury & Longley, 2016) which explores the ways in which important yet intangible aspects of a place's culture can be made visible through cultural mapping. Importantly, a key part of this process is the incorporation of the 'audience/customer' perspective, with the aim of capturing and improving 'audience reception and engagement with the results of cultural mapping activities' (Longley & Duxbury, 2016, pp 4-5). This perspective is important because, as explained by the influential early 20th century sociologist W I Thomas, it is:

'highly important for us to realise that we do not as a matter of fact lead our lives, make our decisions, and reach our goals in everyday life either statistically or scientifically. We live by inference. I am, let us say, your guest. You do not know, you cannot determine scientifically, that I will not steal your money or your spoons. But inferentially I will not, and inferentially you have me as a guest.'

(quoted in Volkart, 1951, p 5; cited in Goffman, 1959/1990, p 15)

In brief, our prospective and current students (and other stakeholders, such as our colleagues from within our wider institutions and the wider sector, professional body and employer representatives) will 'infer' the quality of the student experience from a range of things we say and do that exist beyond the metrics. This will emanate from the cultures of excellence we create, and the vibrant stories we tell about the intangible assets that lie at the heart of these cultures of excellence. In developing these stories, we need to ensure that we base them on appropriate evidence rather than isolated hearsay or anecdote, or descriptions of initiatives.

The process outlined here, and its associated resources, provide a way in which you can build and provide this evidence, to showcase your intangible assets in ways that will help others to infer that you promote, build and value all contributory factors to a high-quality student experience across a number of organisational dimensions.

In undertaking this mapping we can, in turn, add value to our intangible assets by making them more 'real', prominent and tangible for those who experience them. Thomas and Thomas, writing at the turn of the twentieth century in America, provide an insight into this process that remains, nearly one hundred years later, clear, succinct and relevant: 'If men [sic] define situations as real, then they are real in their consequences' (1928: 572, cited in Gross, 2007:194).

Finally, it is worth highlighting the importance of providing holistic evidence in the context of current higher education policy developments. Chris Husbands (Chair of the first TEF Panel) argued that '...the best provider submissions did not describe initiatives - of which no institution is short - but *systematically* demonstrated the difference they had made.' (Beech, 2017, p 6: *our emphasis*). Similarly, the recently published outputs of the £4m Learning Gain research initiative reinforce the complexity of the issues, urge caution on the use of readily available metrics for such purposes and question the robustness of such approaches. Again, understanding, valuing and enhancing intangible assets are key!

Overview of the process

The 'Beyond the Metrics' process involves three interrelated steps:

Step 1: Identifying your intangible assets from a stakeholder perspective

Participants complete the 'Evidencing Value Grid' to capture their key intangible assets and to form the basis of further work with colleagues and stakeholders to identify the most important assets for your area.

- What (are the intangible assets)?
- Who (are they important for)? And at what level (institutional and/or local)?
- Why (are they important)?
- How are they currently, or how might they be 'measured'?

Step 2: Mapping the 'Big Picture'

The "Evidencing Value" conceptual framework and associated review and planning tool are designed to help you undertake a systematic mapping and reflective analysis of the ways in which you value and evidence your intangible assets and to plan for their further enhancement.

- Are the important intangible assets adequately captured and evidenced?
- Are there any opportunities for additional or new value creation and capture?

How do you know your activities are enhancing the intangible asset? Are you spending your time effectively?

The review and planning tool is divided into three parts, focusing on three levels at which the mapping and reflective analysis might take place in an institution: the macro, the meso and the micro-levels. Brief guidance as to when to use a particular level of questions is included in the tool, but please take a moment to decide on the right level of questioning for your context. You will be the best arbiter of this.

Step 3: Evidencing value through narrative, affirmation and evaluation

NB. This step is not included in the workbook as the particular approach taken will depend on purpose, context and audience. This step will form the focus of future work.

Plan how best to communicate and evaluate the ways in which your intangible assets are reflected and evidenced in all four institutional dimensions of your organisation, at the relevant levels, to evidence alignment, interrelationships, and coherence and impact.

- How can you use this evidence to 'map' these intangibles through words, stories or other modes of communication?
- Do your communications affirm the value of each intangible at the appropriate organisational level for the appropriate audience and for the greatest impact?
- Are existing evaluation activities targeted in the right areas and asking the right questions?
- Are there opportunities to collect more nuanced and focused evidence of impact and case studies?

The Evidencing Value Grid

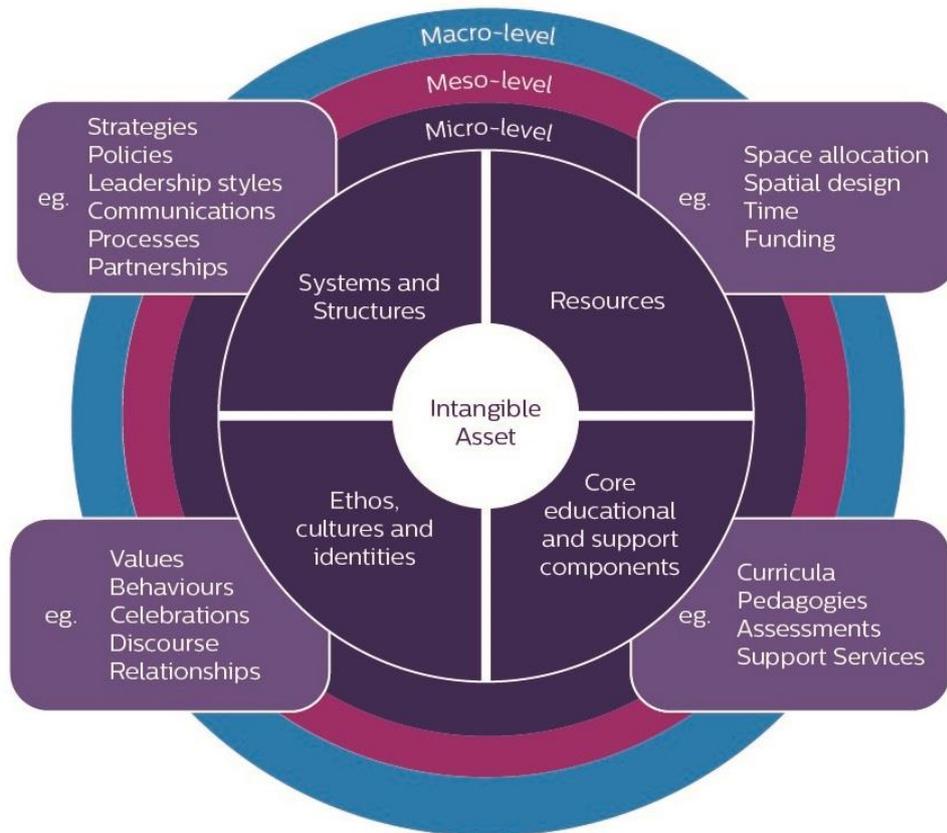
What is your area of influence, for example, job title, responsibilities?	
In your area of influence, what is important to you which you can't easily measure? 	Why does this intangible aspect of your practice or your daily work matter to you and others? Why does it have value to you and others?
If you dared to dream, how might your intangible be better recognised and valued in your institution? 	At the moment, do you have a way of 'measuring' this intangible? Is there an agreed proxy measure? 

The Evidencing Value Framework

Purpose

The Evidencing Value Framework is designed to do the following.

- 1 Help map the ways in which the most important intangible assets (IAs) in a given area of an institution are embedded and evidenced.
- 2 Provide an evidence-informed baseline for IA evaluation activities: Are the ways in which the IA are embedded making a difference and for whom?
- 3 Plan for the enhancement of IAs: Are there areas that, given their impact, should be the focus of further investment; and are there areas where current investment could be reduced?



Approach

The framework encourages you to map IAs across four interrelated organisational domains:

- systems and structures
- resources
- core educational and support components
- ethos, cultures and identities.

For each of the domains we have provided indicative examples of areas in which an IA may be embedded and evidenced. (NB Not all will be relevant to the particular IA you are mapping; others not listed may be more important.)

It also allows for mapping to take place at different organisational levels to evidence vertical as well as cross-domain mapping. The level at which IA mapping takes place will depend on

the purpose of the mapping exercise, the size and structure of an institution, and the starting point of those undertaking the mapping from within that structure:

- micro-level: for example, mapping IAs at module or programme level
- meso-level: for example, mapping IAs at department/programme cluster/service level
- macro-level: for example, mapping IAs at institutional or faculty/school/college level.

Output

A baseline 'IA Value Map' to demonstrate the different ways in which an IA is currently embedded and evidenced, and from which meaningful evaluation and enhancement activities can take place.

The Evidencing Value Review and Planning Tool: Micro-level questions for module and/or programme teams

Institutional dimension	Indicative questions for individual module and/or associated programme teams	Team response	Supporting evidence What are we doing in this domain? How do we know this is having an impact?	How might this IA be enhanced? Actions might include developing new ways of evidencing value, reducing emphasis on existing ways of evidencing value or stopping some activities altogether.
Systems and structures	What module or programme strategies and policies are used to guide the development of this IA?			
	How is the IA embedded in and evidenced by module or programme quality processes , eg approvals, review, evaluation, annual monitoring?			
	How is the IA reflected in module or programme communications : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to staff? • to students? • to external stakeholders? 			
	How do the module and programme leadership team endorse and communicate the importance of this IA?			
	How is the IA's importance communicated to external partners, and embedded within module or programme partnership arrangements?			

Institutional dimension	Indicative questions for individual module and/or associated programme teams	Team response	Supporting evidence What are we doing in this domain? How do we know this is having an impact?	How might this IA be enhanced? Actions might include developing new ways of evidencing value, reducing emphasis on existing ways of evidencing value or stopping some activities altogether.
Resources	How are formal and informal spaces and places of the modules and programme used to reflect, build and promote this IA, eg learning environment(s)?			
	How much time is dedicated to the development and promotion of the IA within the module and programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for staff? • for students? • for other stakeholders? 			
	What (internal/ external) funding is available for projects and other activities that promote and embed this IA within your module or programme?			

Institutional dimension	Indicative questions for individual module and/or associated programme teams	Team response	Supporting evidence What are we doing in this domain? How do we know this is having an impact?	How might this IA be enhanced? Actions might include developing new ways of evidencing value, reducing emphasis on existing ways of evidencing value or stopping some activities altogether.
Core educational and support components	How is the IA promoted, built and/or reflected within the curricula of your module(s) and programme?			
	How is the IA promoted, reflected in and/or built through pedagogies and other academic practices within your module(s) and programme?			
	How do your module and programme assessment practices promote, build and/or reflect this IA?			
	How do module or programme support mechanisms (eg personal tutors, year tutors) build, promote and/or reflect the value of the IA?			

Institutional dimension	Indicative questions for individual module and/or associated programme teams	Team response	Supporting evidence What are we doing in this domain? How do we know this is having an impact?	How might this IA be enhanced? Actions might include developing new ways of evidencing value, reducing emphasis on existing ways of evidencing value or stopping some activities altogether.
Ethos, cultures and identities	How do the shared values of the module(s) and programme reflect the IA?			
	How do the expected and demonstrated behaviours of module and programme teams reflect this IA?			
	How do local celebrations demonstrate the value and importance of the IA?			
	How do module and programme written and verbal discourses reflect and support the IA?			
	How do the ways in which you build relationships and work together across modules within your programme, reflect and support the IA?			

The Evidencing Value Audit and Planning Tool: Meso-level questions for departmental/programme cluster/professional services teams

Institutional dimension	Indicative questions for departmental/programme cluster/services teams	Team response	Supporting evidence What are we doing in this domain? How do we know this is having an impact?	How might this IA be enhanced? Actions might include developing new ways of evidencing value, reducing emphasis on existing ways of evidencing value or stopping some activities altogether.
Systems and structures	What departmental/programme cluster or services-level strategies and policies are used to guide the development of this IA?			
	How is the IA embedded in and evidenced by your departmental/programme cluster/services-level processes ?			
	How is the IA reflected in departmental/programme cluster/services-level communications : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to staff? • to students? • to external stakeholders? 			
	How does your leadership team at the departmental/programme cluster/service level endorse and communicate the importance of this IA?			
	How is the importance of the IA communicated to external partners, and embedded within your departmental/programme cluster/services partnership arrangements?			

Institutional dimension	Indicative questions for departmental/ programme cluster/services teams	Team response	Supporting evidence What are we doing in this domain? How do we know this is having an impact?	How might this IA be enhanced? Actions might include developing new ways of evidencing value, reducing emphasis on existing ways of evidencing value or stopping some activities altogether.
Resources	How are formal and informal spaces and places at the department/programme cluster/service team-level used to reflect, build and promote this IA?			
	How much time is dedicated to the development and promotion of the IA within your school, department or programme cluster: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for staff? • for students? • for other stakeholders? 			
	What funding is available for projects and other activities that promote and embed this IA within your school, department or programme cluster?			

Institutional dimension	Indicative questions for departmental/ programme cluster/services teams	Team response	Supporting evidence What are we doing in this domain? How do we know this is having an impact?	How might this IA be enhanced? Actions might include developing new ways of evidencing value, reducing emphasis on existing ways of evidencing value or stopping some activities altogether.
Core educational and support components	How is the IA promoted, built and/or reflected within the curricula of your department or programme cluster?			
	How is the IA promoted, reflected in and/or built through pedagogies and other academic practices that you engage with in your department or programme cluster?			
	How do your department or programme cluster assessment practices promote, build and/or reflect this IA?			
	How do academic support services build, promote and/or reflect the value of the IA?			

Institutional dimension	Indicative questions for departmental/ programme cluster/services teams	Team response	Supporting evidence What are we doing in this domain? How do we know this is having an impact?	How might this IA be enhanced? Actions might include developing new ways of evidencing value, reducing emphasis on existing ways of evidencing value or stopping some activities altogether.
Ethos, cultures and identities	How do the shared values of the department/programme cluster/services team reflect the IA?			
	How do the expected and demonstrated behaviours of the department/programme cluster/services team members reflect this IA?			
	How do local celebrations demonstrate the value and importance of the IA?			
	How do department/ programme cluster/ service teams' written and verbal discourses reflect and support the IA?			
	How do the ways in which you build relationships and work together with one another, reflect and support the IA?			

The Evidencing Value Audit and Planning Tool: Macro-level questions for institutional or college/faculty/school leadership teams

Institutional dimension	Indicative questions for institutional or college/faculty/school leadership teams	Team response	Supporting evidence What are we doing in this domain? How do we know this is having an impact?	How might this IA be enhanced? Actions might include developing new ways of evidencing value, reducing emphasis on existing ways of evidencing value or stopping some activities altogether.
Systems and structures	What institutional or college/faculty/school strategies and policies are used to guide the development of this IA?			
	How is the IA embedded in and evidenced by institutional or college/faculty/school processes ?			
	How is the IA reflected in institutional or college/ faculty/school communications : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to staff? • to students? • to external stakeholders? 			
	How do the institutional or college/faculty/school leadership teams endorse and communicate the importance of this IA?			
	How is the importance of the IA communicated to external partners, and embedded within institutional or college/ faculty/school partnership arrangements?			

Institutional dimension	Indicative questions for institutional or college/faculty/school leadership teams	Team response	Supporting evidence What are we doing in this domain? How do we know this is having an impact?	How might this IA be enhanced? Actions might include developing new ways of evidencing value, reducing emphasis on existing ways of evidencing value or stopping some activities altogether.
Resources	How are formal and informal spaces and places in the college/faculty/school and wider institution used to reflect, build and promote this IA?			
	How much time is dedicated to the development and promotion of the IA at the institutional or college/faculty/school levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for staff? • for students? • for other stakeholders? 			
	What institutional or college/faculty/school funding is available for projects and other activities that promote and embed this IA?			

Institutional dimension	Indicative questions for institutional or college/faculty/school leadership teams	Team response	Supporting evidence What are we doing in this domain? How do we know this is having an impact?	How might this IA be enhanced? Actions might include developing new ways of evidencing value, reducing emphasis on existing ways of evidencing value or stopping some activities altogether.
Core educational and support components	How is the IA promoted, built and/or reflected within the curricula of the institution or college/faculty/school?			
	How is the IA promoted, reflected in and/or built through pedagogies and other academic practices of the institution or college/faculty/school?			
	How do your institutional or college/faculty/school assessment approaches promote, build and/or reflect this IA?			
	How do institutional or college/faculty/school support services build, promote and/or reflect the value of the IA?			

Institutional dimension	Indicative questions for institutional or college/faculty/school leadership teams	Team response	Supporting evidence What are we doing in this domain? How do we know this is having an impact?	How might this IA be enhanced? Actions might include developing new ways of evidencing value, reducing emphasis on existing ways of evidencing value or stopping some activities altogether.
Ethos, cultures and identities	How do the shared values of the institution or college/faculty/school reflect the IA?			
	How do the expected and demonstrated behaviours of staff and students at the institutional or college/ faculty/school level reflect this IA?			
	How do institutional or college/faculty/school celebrations (eg graduations, awards ceremonies) demonstrate the value and importance of the IA?			
	How do institutional or college/faculty/school written and verbal discourses reflect and support the IA?			
	How do institutionally or college/faculty/school-endorsed and supported approaches to working together , reflect and support the IA?			

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