

# Liz Thomas

— associates —

Higher education research and consultancy



**Evidence for Enhancement: Impact Evaluation  
Workshop, Edinburgh, 6<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

# Aims and objectives

**Aim:** To provide further information about the impact evaluation.

**Objectives** are for institutional teams to:

- Develop understanding about the approach to evaluation;
- Make decisions about which activities are to be evaluated and to what extent;
- Begin applying the evaluation model;
- Discuss potential indicators of success and sources of evidence; and
- Understand what is required with regards to evaluation this year, and the additional support that is available.

# Overview of the workshop

- Overview of the approach being adopted to impact evaluation
- Theory of change and logic chains
- Planning to have and demonstrate impact
- Next steps and support

# Our approach to impact evaluation

- Focus on impact.
- Different evaluation levels and priorities.
- Smaller project evaluation template.
- Theory of change and logic chain informing evaluation priorities.

# Evaluation levels and priorities

- Wide range of projects within this Enhancement Theme.
- **Scale:** Large projects e.g. taking place across the institution, involving significant staff time or financial investment; smaller projects e.g. local context, involving one or two staff/students, little or no funding.
- **Evaluation categories:** in-depth evaluation, light-touch evaluation; no evaluation.
- **Priorities for 2018-19:** at least one project for in-depth evaluation each year. Light-touch evaluation can be applied to as many projects as desired.

# Pre-workshop task

Title of key activity or project	Scale: Large (cross-institution) or smaller (local)	Evaluation level for 2018-19 (in-depth, light-touch, none)

# Light-touch evaluation for smaller projects

- Semi-structured template, designed to collect some common information and to facilitate comparisons and synthesis.
- Can be used for a range of smaller projects, e.g. to funded projects, staff/student partnerships, etc.

# Theory of change and logic chains

- The evaluation of the Evidence for Enhancement Theme is informed by theory of change thinking and a logic chain approach.
- This assumes that activities are implemented to create a positive impact (e.g. on the student experience), rather than simply for compliance.
- Logic chains and theory of chains are intended to help make the relationship between activities/outputs and impact explicit, and to identify interim outcomes or steps that indicate progress towards longer term goals.



# Theory of change and logic chains

- Broadly activities are of two types: generating new evidence, and enabling staff or students better use of evidence. These activities have short-term benefits, medium-term outcomes and longer-term impact.
- Across the institutions longer-term impacts coalesce around 'improving the student experience' and 'creating an institutional culture that utilises evidence' (to improve the student experience).
- The logic chain and theory of change thinking can be used to spell out the link between these activities and longer term impact.

# Logic chain



# Narrative account of change and impact

- Describe the links between your project activities and longer-term goals.
- *This project is developing alternative ways to collect the student voice. If the ways of collecting student voice are more affective then more student views will be heard. If more student voices are available then staff can use this evidence to improve the design and delivery of curriculum or services; and then this will improve the student experience.*

# Activity

- Institutional teams.
- Tasks 1-5 on the worksheet.

# Indicators of success

- What can you use as indicators that you have been successful?
- Refer back to your narrative statement to consider:
  - In the short-term, i.e. immediately after the delivery of the project or initial tasks, we would expect the following benefits...
  - In the medium-term, i.e. during the year after the project has started, we would expect the following changes or outcomes...
  - In the longer term, which may be beyond the project time-frame, we would expect to see the following changes or impact...
- Indicators should refer to a change which could be quantified, e.g. increase, more etc.

# Examples of indicators

- [Outputs: Events to collect student feedback are organised]
- Short-term benefits: More students from different backgrounds, years and courses share their views (compared to previous years).
- Medium-term outcomes: Staff from 75% of courses use the feedback to make changes to the organisation, contents, delivery or assessment of their courses.
- Longer-term impact: Students report improvements in the course experience, attendance increases, retention and completion improve. Staff use evidence more in the review and planning of courses.

# Baselines

- **Historical**, i.e. with previous years, ideally an average from 2 or 3 years previous. This is useful for whole institutional changes, or if no suitable comparison can be made.
- **Comparative**, e.g. with other courses or student groups or staff groups. The comparative group needs to be sufficiently similar, e.g. entry criteria, background characteristics etc.

# Sources of evidence

Think creatively about the evidence that you already have. During interviews a wide range of suggestions were made, including:

- Module evaluation forms and student feedback on courses
- Institutional surveys, including additional questions, free responses
- Minutes from staff-student liaison meetings and other committee meetings
- Staff applications for promotion or AdvanceHE fellowships
- Institutional data: attendance, continuation, progression, number of submissions, attainment, resits, VLE engagement
- Staff annual monitoring / review of own performance, course, etc
- Course documents, periodic review, quality processes, TEF narratives
- Withdrawal reports
- Student-led teaching award nominations



# Activity

- Institutional teams
- Task 6 on the worksheet

# Next steps and support

- Complete tables 1 (preparatory work overview projects, scale and level of evaluation) and 2 (overview of impact evaluation for each in-depth evaluation priority) and submit to QAAS by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2019.
- Initial indication of further support required and format, e.g. face-to-face at the institution, regional/national workshops, webinars, telephone support.

**Thank you**

## Contact details

- [liz@lizthomasassociates.co.uk](mailto:liz@lizthomasassociates.co.uk)
- [www.lizthomasassociates.co.uk](http://www.lizthomasassociates.co.uk)
- @ProfLizThomas

