



# WORKING WITH DATA AND EVIDENCE: A PLANNER



QAA  
Scotland



SEPT

OCT

NOV

DEC

JAN

FEB

MAR

APR

MAY

JUN

JUL

AUG



### FOCUS

What do you want to achieve? Why is this important? Will this change over the year?

[Empty dotted box for Focus - Sept]

[Empty dotted box for Focus - Oct]

[Empty dotted box for Focus - Nov]



### ENCOUNTERS

What will you have access to? What's likely to come up? How does this link-up with your core activities and ambitions? What data and evidence will you be generating? Think about when these encounters will occur.

[Empty dotted box for Encounters - Sept]

[Empty dotted box for Encounters - Oct]

[Empty dotted box for Encounters - Nov]



### ACTIONS

What do you need to do with this data and evidence? Who do you need to share it with? Who do you need to ask for help or access? When should you do these things?

[Empty dotted box for Actions - Sept]

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### DEVELOPMENT

What training and support opportunities are open to you? Who could help with this? What could you do to support and develop yourself and others? When would be useful to access or offer these opportunities?

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## Key questions

- **What does 'the data landscape' look like for you?** What data and evidence do you have access to? Who provides access? What data and evidence are you generating? Who has access to this? How and why is it generated? Where are key data and evidence sets stored?
- **What are the patterns and cycles of data and evidence relevant to your work?** When do you have access? Is your access timely? At what stage do you feel involved in the process and is this appropriate? How does your use of data and evidence link up with other activities?
- **What are the benefits and challenges you face in engaging with data and evidence?** What is your approach to using data and evidence in your work? What outcomes have you achieved using data and evidence? Do you ensure that your use of data and evidence is clear in your reporting and communications? Are there particular barriers to access or interpretation of data and evidence? Do you have appropriate resources to fully engage with the data and evidence you generate and encounter? What are the main challenges you face in using data and evidence?
- **What support and development do you require to fully engage with data and evidence in your work?** What training and support is required to help you and colleagues better engage with data and evidence? What knowledge and experience do you have in your team? What free-to-access and institutionally-provided resources for training and development have you tried? What relationships with colleagues across your organisation and institution do you need to foster and develop?



## Using this planner

After thinking through and discussing the questions above, you will be ready to map out your year in evidence and data. This planner offers a framework for doing this, for better understanding how data and evidence are encountered and engaged across the academic year for students and students' association/union staff.

Alongside the other resources noted below, this planner could help individuals and groups to strategise, simplify and organise their engagement with, and use of, data and evidence, and could be particularly useful for coordinating these efforts across and between teams.

The planner could be used in:

- planning and strategy exercises
- designing and developing new initiatives and to provide a reference point for evaluation exercises
- monitoring and managing the use of, and engagement with, key data and evidence sets over time
- handover notes and handbooks for incoming student officers and students' association/union staff.



## Other resources

There is a range of related resources featured on the Enhancement Themes website. These include: a guide to using evidence aimed at students and students' association/union staff; a range of useful case studies; a webinar setting out creative ways of involving students in the use of data and evidence; and a range of 'fact sheets' providing introductions to key national data sets and processes.

To access these resources, please go to [www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk](http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk) and search for 'Students using evidence' and 'HE Data Landscape'.



# USING DATA AND EVIDENCE: A PLANNER

**The aim of this planner (and the associated resources noted on the back of this leaflet) is to assist students and students' association/union staff in better understanding and using data and evidence in their work. This planner is an output of the QAA Scotland student-led project conducted as part of the Evidence for Enhancement Theme (2017-20).**



## Using data and evidence

There has been a rapid growth in the availability of, and demand for, data and evidence across all areas of higher education policy and practice.

Data is information, in the form of either numbers (quantitative) or words and images (qualitative), collected for a specific purpose using a defined method, usually to answer a research question. When this information is analysed and applied to a specific context it can become evidence. There are many ways of generating, organising, analysing, interpreting, and critiquing data and evidence.

It is clear that engaging with data and evidence is important and, in many cases, a requirement for students and staff enrolled in representative systems, institutional initiatives, and in the delivery of students' association/union services. From influencing committees and shaping and supporting campaigns, to designing and evaluating services, data and evidence matter.

It is crucial that attention is paid to how data and evidence matter in the work of students and students' association/union staff enrolled in systems of academic representation and service across higher education. To make the most of the opportunities and overcome the challenges presented by encounters with data and evidence, students and students' association/union staff need to be clear about:

- what the data landscape looks like for them
- what patterns and cycles of data and evidence relevant to their work are operating
- the benefits and challenges they face in engaging with data and evidence
- the support and development they require to fully engage with data and evidence in their work.

By prompting reflection and offering a framework for understanding when and how data and evidence emerge in the academic year, this planner (and the range of resources associated with it) will help students and students' association/union staff to more fully and effectively engage with the data and evidence that they encounter and generate in their work.

Before opening the planner, go to the back page of this leaflet to see suggestions for questions you might want to think through and discuss, possible uses for the planner, and useful resources that will help you get the most out of using it.