Value & Impact Toolkit

Assessing the Value & Impact of services that support students

A toolkit prepared for AMOSSHE
by the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information

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Forewords

I am delighted to introduce this new resource for the higher education student services community - the result of a highly collaborative project led by AMOSSHE, the Student Services Organisation during 2010-11. We are indebted to HEFCE for the financial contribution underpinning the project and we have also benefited hugely from valuable input by a range of professional groups in the sector, including Universities UK, GuildHE, the Association of Heads of University Administration, the British Universities Finance Directors' Group, the National Union of Students, the Equality Challenge Unit, the Association of University Administrators, JISC, the Higher Education Academy and others.

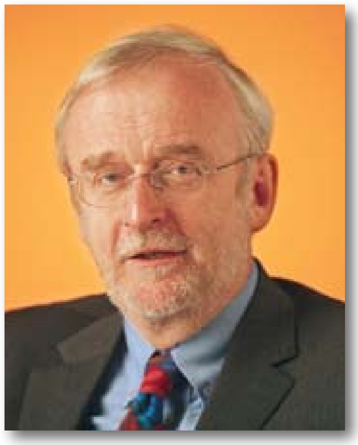
From AMOSSHE's perspective, work to assess the value and impact of student support services is related to three key drivers and benefits:

- it underpins the evidence base for the contribution of student support services in HE - a particularly important theme as we approach 2012 when the HE student experience is perhaps in sharper focus than ever before;
- it forms part of the continued development of professionalism in the student services community and the increasingly strategic approach to the management and delivery of student service;
- it leads to demonstrable and practical improvements in the delivery of student services, so contributing to improved student learning, achievement and success.

Experience gained during the pilot phase of this project suggests that the theories, models and resources set out in this toolkit form a strong basis for the development of a properly holistic approach to service evaluation. This strategic approach does not constitute a 'quick fix' for service managers and neither will it lead to the generation of superficial indicators supporting a league-table mentality. In fact the experience of this form of assessment may well be uncomfortable; but the results are likely to be invaluable.

Value and Impact evaluation represents a rich, reflective process paying strong dividends in terms of improved user understanding, professional learning and service enhancement. The evaluation journey begins here - I wish you well in your travels!

Dr. Andrew West
Director of Student Services, The University of Sheffield
Chair of AMOSSHE, the Student Services Organisation



I am delighted to introduce the value and impact toolkit developed by AMOSSHE, the Student Services Organisation. When the Student Experience policy group of Universities UK invited me to chair the steering group, there was no question in my mind about the importance and timeliness of this work. Since then I have witnessed first hand the passion and dedication of AMOSSHE and the pilot HEIs to this work, and I have been very impressed at the way that this complex issue is being tackled head on.

UK Higher Education has a very strong national and international reputation for the quality of the student experience, and it is vital that we maintain this as a sector. So I am committed to providing the best student experience possible at my own institution and across the UK. To do this, we have to understand why we provide support services and pastoral care to students, and what difference they make. Student services managers have to be able to assess their contribution and state their business case for why they do what they do. The only clear way to do this is through understanding and measuring value and impact. This is far from easy: it demands a shift in culture, approach and skills. For all that, the results are rewarding and illuminating. The work supports an ongoing professionalisation of the sector which must be welcomed. I encourage all managers of services that support students to consider the materials in this toolkit, and to adopt the concepts and tools. I hope that my fellow Vice-Chancellors will press them to do so.

My thanks go to all of those involved in this value and impact work – to the steering group and the peer support group, the pilot HEIs, the research team, and of course to AMOSSHE for introducing this material to the sector.

Now more than ever, it is essential that we understand the value that our services add to the student experience, and the impact that high performing services can have. I commend the outcomes of this project to you and look forward to its wide dissemination.

Professor John Craven
Vice-Chancellor, University of Portsmouth
Chair of AMOSSHE Value and Impact Project Steering Group

Acknowledgements

The Value and Impact Project could not have been delivered without the commitment of the following individuals and organisations, each of whom gave over and above anything we could have asked of them:

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Pilot HEIs for their commitment, dedication, and persevering with the pioneering approaches to benefit the HE and student services sector
- University of Brighton
- University of East London
- University of Surrey
- University of York

Steering Group
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- David Dickinson, Director of Student Services, University of Surrey
- Robin Dollery, Head of Student Services, University of Nottingham
- Cathryn Harvey, former Academic Registrar, Newcastle University
- Dr. Gillian Jack, Head of Student Services, University of Glamorgan
- Theresa McGoldrick, Director of Student Services, University of the West of England
- Sally Olohan, Head of Student Services, Nottingham Trent University
- Chris Twine, Director of Student Support & Development, University of Birmingham

A About the toolkit

Background

The AMOSSHE community has been increasingly aware of the need for an evidence base to demonstrate its value and impact over recent years. Whilst there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that student support makes a positive difference to the student experience, there is little solid evidence to support such statements, as demonstrated in the FSSG report 'The sustainability of learning and teaching in English higher education' (HEFCE 2009). AMOSSHE's 2009 'Supplement to the HEFCE FSSG report' rehearsed this argument in greater detail.

We were all too familiar with NASPA's critical work on assessment and learning reconsidered, but very conscious of its focus on learning outcomes and the United States context. AMOSSHE felt there was a real need for materials that would enable student services managers in the UK to adopt a more professional approach to understanding their value and impact. In turn, this would enable an improved student experience and facilitate better management.

In December 2009, AMOSSHE proposed the £135,000 value and impact project to HEFCE's Leadership, Governance and Management fund. It was awarded £73,000 toward developing the fifteen month project. AMOSSHE is delighted to be championing the value and impact approach, and in particular believes that:

- the work will contribute significantly to the evidence base for the value and impact of student services in the HE sector in the UK, thus influencing the important national debates around sustainability and funding;
- the project is a core part of the continued professionalisation of the student services community in the sector, as we seek continually to improve the effectiveness of our work and its positive impact within the whole student experience;
- as a part of the overall evaluation 'landscape' within student services, the project will contribute directly to improvements and enhancements within student services, to better support student achievement and success.

The need for a toolkit

There is a dearth of evidence to demonstrate the cost and value of student support services and student development activities (AMOSSHE, 2009; HEFCE 2009). Further, there are no appropriate sector-wide agreed or understood tools or sufficiently developed measures for evaluation. This makes benchmarking difficult, and restricts any comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of services. Thus, the value and impact project has been established to fill this gap by embedding awareness of value, impact and good practice to encourage improvements in the overall quality of service delivery at HEIs. The toolkit developed by the value and impact project is aimed at helping departments undertake performance monitoring, assess what is most appropriate to their organisation and students' needs, and support professionalisation in the sector.

The toolkit development

This toolkit is designed to help student services professionals undertake evaluations of value and impact in their service areas. It aims to support and inform evaluations rather than constrain or prevent alternative approaches, which might suit different institutional contexts. It has been developed from the literature review, which was the first output of the value and impact project (CHERI, 2010). The aim of the literature review was to identify and produce a thematic analysis of existing literature and other published resources on the policy and practice of undertaking assessment/evaluation of student services provision, which is broader than process monitoring and user satisfaction surveys and asks 'how services help students to develop, grow, achieve, learn and succeed'.

Many of the publications found for the review point to the fact that, although much has been written about assessment/evaluation theory and why it is important to assess/evaluate the value and impact of student services, there is a lack of research into the extent to which evidence-based assessment/evaluation in student services is indeed taking place. The evidence that does exist remains ad hoc and anecdotal and stems primarily from single institutional case studies. Thus, the literature identified is stronger on conceptual frameworks and approaches than on practical solutions for real life settings. Furthermore, the review failed to find relevant studies of value – specifically value for money – which meant that the search for studies continued outside the literature review phase.

With the exception of value for money evaluations, the majority of literature found for the review originates in the United Sates. Much of it is focused on student learning outcomes-based assessment rather than on other impacts on the student experience that may have only an indirect relation to academic success (e.g. health and well-being, finance, housing, careers, part-time employment). Being of US origin, the literature used for the toolkit has had to be modified and adapted to the UK context and the different institutional circumstances found in this country.

Using the toolkit

The toolkit is intended to support evaluations of the value and impact of services that support students. They are aimed at providing:

- guidance on the issues to consider when thinking about undertaking an evaluation;
- practical steps for undertaking evaluation;
- methods and instruments to use during the evaluation process;
- examples of practice taken from the literature, developed by the universities involved in the pilot phase of the project, and elsewhere.

The toolkit is not meant to be prescriptive. It has been designed to help stimulate ideas and raise questions when thinking about and planning value and impact evaluations.

The structure and contents of the toolkit

There are seven main sections to the toolkit:

1. First steps

This section provides some essential and basic first steps for planning evaluation activity and poses questions to probe the purpose, type, scope, setting and methods of an evaluation project. It defines the steps to be followed in planning and implementing evaluation. It also provides some examples of how these basic steps for evaluation planning might be used for different purposes, covering non-continuation, a special intervention and its impact on retention, and cost-effectiveness.

2. Evaluating impact

This section explores the evaluation of impact. The literature review for the value and impact project noted that the majority of literature found on impact originates in the United States and much is focused on *student learning outcomes-based evaluation*. This section focuses on outcomes-based evaluation and uses and adapts the US literature. It also uses and adapts literature from elsewhere, namely that relating to the impact evaluation of university library services (SCONUL) and from 'social return on investment' (see http://www.sroi-uk.org).

This section also moves away from conceptual frameworks to providing examples of approaches that focus on practical solutions for real life settings. These examples are derived from the experiences of the universities involved in the pilot phase of the value and impact project.

3. Evaluating value for money

This section describes what value for money is, how it can be demonstrated, and approaches to undertaking value for money evaluations. The evaluation of the performance of student support services, and demonstration of their value and contribution to the wider university, is becoming increasingly important across the sector. Performance management for student support services relies on a robust strategy with well-defined objectives, and which fit with the university's strategic aims and objectives. However, demonstrating value for money is not a straightforward process. There are no 'off-the-shelf' methods readily available. Value for money is context driven and therefore the concepts and processes described in this section will need to be adapted to the context within which it is to be used. Examples are provided to help demonstrate how these concepts and processes can be used and adapted.

4. Instruments used for collecting information for evaluations of value and impact

This section rehearses some of the issues to bear in mind when collecting information to support evaluations of impact and value. It focuses on qualitative evaluations and in particular three specific types of instruments: surveys, discussion/focus groups, and interviews. For each of these, uses, considerations, advantages and possible disadvantages are highlighted. Additional advice is provided on questionnaire design and further sources of technical assistance to support the instruments discussed are provided.

5. Ethical considerations

The toolkit is concerned with evaluating the impact and value of services that support students; it is not concerned with the personal research undertaken by individual student services staff. Thus, for an evaluation of a service area or initiative, it may not be necessary to seek formal ethical approval of an evaluation from the relevant university committee, although this should be clarified with the appropriate university personnel. Nevertheless, the guidance contained in this section comprises good practice in conducting research involving ‘human participants’ and therefore will be helpful to student services staff when planning and implementing evaluations of service areas.

6. Examples

A number of examples have been identified to illustrate the concepts that are discussed in the toolkit. The examples have been developed from various sources including: the literature review; the universities that took part in the pilot phase of the value and impact project; and others who were involved in and made contributions to the project.

7. Templates

Arising from the concepts, examples and tools discussed in this toolkit, a number of templates have been developed to support users when undertaking their own evaluation.

B Definitions

Assessment or evaluation?

As noted in section A, the literature review for the value and impact project was based mainly on literature from the United States; most of the US writers identified through the literature review tended to use ‘assessment’ in relation to performance measurement. However, in the UK ‘evaluation’ is a more commonly used term. As Markless and Streatfield (2006) note: the term assessment tends to be used to describe judgements about people’s knowledge or skills, whereas evaluation is used to refer to judgements about systems and services. As such and wherever possible, this document will use the term evaluation.

Evaluation or research?

Evaluation and research are closely related. For example, they share similar methodological characteristics and therefore the skills that evaluators and researchers use are very similar. However, they serve different purposes.

Evaluation is specific to a programme or project and its purpose is to ‘improve’ by determining the merit, worth or value of something. It focuses on process or outcomes. One definition of evaluation is that it is ‘the provision of information about specified issues upon which judgements are based and from which decisions for action are taken’. It is often characterised as an ‘inherently political enterprise’ (Cohen et al, 2003).

Research is designed to produce results and contribute to theory that go beyond individual programmes and projects with the intention of making them more generally applicable to other populations, conditions or times.

However, commentators suggest that the barriers between research and evaluation are being broken down as research (through its funding and the conditions attached, such as demonstrating impact) becomes increasingly politicised.

What do we mean by value?

Value can be both qualitative and quantitative. In qualitative terms it is the regard, importance, worth, or usefulness that something is held to deserve. In quantitative terms, it is the material or monetary worth of something, and the worth in terms of its cost.

The toolkit focuses on the concept of ‘value for money’. As noted by the Audit Commission (2009), value for money is about obtaining the maximum benefit over time with the resources available. Decisions about value for money are a daily reality in all our lives. We are constantly choosing which items or services to buy, and judging the right balance for us between quality and cost. It is about achieving the right local balance between economy, efficiency and effectiveness – the 3Es: spending less, spending well and spending wisely. This means that value for money not only measures the cost of goods and services but also takes account of the mix of cost with quality, resource use, fitness for purpose and timeliness to judge whether or not, together, they constitute good value.

What do we mean by impact?

There is a tendency to confuse impact with customer/student satisfaction. Customer satisfaction focuses on measuring whether or not students **like** or are **happy** with the educational experience and services they receive. Impact, however, is aimed at measuring whether or not the educational experience/service is making any **difference** to what they do and how. Customer satisfaction is relatively easy to measure; for example, the following statements are aimed at measuring student satisfaction:

- the service has given me the support I need
- the staff have been helpful
- I would recommend this service to another student in need of similar support

Impact, however, is more difficult to measure. Impact is about change, which implies that a situation needs to be evaluated *before* an action to stimulate change takes place, and *after* to determine whether indeed change has taken place. Impact might also be evaluated in terms of the effect of an activity on different groups; for example, students might attend a particular programme on a voluntary basis, so impact might be measured after the programme takes place in relation to the knowledge levels of those who attended against those who did not attend.

Markless and Streatfield (2006) in their work on the impact of university library services in the UK, use the following definition of impact:

…any effect of the service (or of an event or initiative) on an individual or group.

Impacts can be positive/negative, intended/unintended and direct/indirect. The impact of an event or initiative will affect different people – students, student services professionals, senior managers, academics - and in different ways. Impact can show, for example, through shifts in the 'quality of life' (self-esteem, confidence…), and in academic outcomes.

Impact is also difficult to measure because of issues of causality and timescale. Because the measurement of impact is about identifying and evaluating change, it is not easy to evaluate the impact of an intervention or activity independent of other factors that may potentially influence outcomes. The best that can be achieved is to find 'strong surrogates' for impact that provide a close approximation (Markless and Streatfield, 2008).

The relationship between value and impact

Value and impact are closely related. Clearly if something is of value then it has an impact, although questions would need to be asked about whether that impact is measurable. Conversely, if something has an impact, it may not necessarily have value as impacts can sometimes be negative and unintended.

As we note in the discussion of value for money in section 3 of this toolkit, 'value for money' is often defined in terms of the 3Es (economy, efficiency and effectiveness) and effectiveness is 'a measure of the impact that has been achieved and is essential to demonstrating the achievement of value for money' (see p27). The two terms are, therefore, inextricably linked.

C The toolkit

1. First steps

1.1 Introduction

As an introduction to evaluation, this section provides some essential and basic first steps for evaluation planning. It has been adapted from Schuh and Upcraft's 'framework for evaluation' (2001) and further developed from the experiences of the universities involved in the pilot phase of the value and impact project. It uses questions to probe the purpose, type, scope, setting and methods of an evaluation project, and defines the steps to be followed in planning and implementing evaluation as outlined in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Steps to take in the process of planning an evaluation

1 Before starting

Some general but important issues will need to be determined at the outset of an evaluation:

- **Who** needs to be involved? Don't leave it to one person. Involve and discuss with as many people as needed (who might be external to the service area under evaluation), but keep it manageable.
- What **skills** will be required to undertake the evaluation? Do the staff involved possess these skills and/or will specialist expertise need to be called on as and when necessary (see 9)?
- Consider the **timing** of an evaluation in order to maximise response rates and prevent clashes with other university activities that might involve student surveys.
- Consider also the **timescale** of an evaluation. This will be determined by whether an 'external' deadline has been set (i.e. is it an evaluation for someone else?). Timescales, however, need to be realistic and may need to be revisited and renegotiated once all the steps have been addressed.
- What are the **budgetary implications** for carrying out the evaluation? Undertaking an evaluation is time-consuming, so staff time will be the main resource. Can a case be made for additional staff time (such as a student internship)? Resources (quantity and timescale), therefore, will need to be determined in advance, agreed and set aside (and include costs such as interview transcriptions, incentives to attend focus groups/complete surveys, data analysis and so on).

2 What is the issue being investigated?

- Why are we doing the evaluation?
- What question are we trying to solve?
- What specific circumstances are at the origin of the evaluation?
- What external pressures or internal factors are driving the evaluation?

Examples could be: cost pressures on university budgets; low enrolments in a particular programme; a new equality and diversity policy; an impending visit from an external agency etc.

As part of the process of answering the above questions, the aims and objectives of the service (or intervention) being evaluated should be revisited and clarified.

Once these aspects have been determined, the question that the evaluation is aiming to address can be clearly defined.

3 What is the purpose of the evaluation?

- What information do we need to solve the question identified in 2?
- What data are critical to responding to the internal or external pressures identified in 2?

The answers to these questions will form the basis for determining the purpose of the evaluation. They will also help determine the range of internal and external stakeholder perspectives that will need to be taken into account (see 4).

4 Where to get the information needed?

Although students may be the most obvious sources of information, institutional or departmental records, and other stakeholders (e.g. academics and administrative staff, or parents and the general public) could also be approached. 'Defining the population precisely is important because the conclusions drawn from a particular inquiry apply only to those studied in the first place' (Schuh and Upcraft, 2001, p. 20).

At an early stage of an evaluation and one that involves collecting and using data from 'human participants', issues relating to **ethical protocols and standards** and **data protection** will need to be considered (e.g. gaining participants' consent, dealing with anonymity and confidentiality – see section 6 for a more detailed discussion of these issues).

It will also be important to ensure that service registration and data protection statements are up to date, which will enable a range of evaluation approaches in any one year.

5 Who should be studied?

Usually this involves selecting a sample of the population to study. Samples, for example, can be defined by gender, age, ethnic background, entry qualifications, mode of study, subject of study, year of study, disability, grades and so on.

6 What is the best evaluation method?

- What is the best way to get the information I need?

The purpose of the evaluation will determine whether quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods are best suited. Generally, if we need information on *what* is occurring, quantitative methods (e.g. surveys) are more appropriate. If we need information about *why* something is happening, then qualitative methods (interviews, focus groups, observations) are better.

7 How should we collect the data?

The method chosen – for instance online questionnaires, telephone surveys, individual interviews, focus groups – should be consistent with the purpose of the evaluation, but each method has its pros and cons in terms of breadth of information collected, cost, time, response rates etc (see section 4 for a more detailed discussion of these issues).

8 What instrument should we use?

Obviously this will depend on the methodology to be used, but a decision will be made about whether to use an already constructed instrument with high validity, reliability and other psychometric properties, or to build something that will be more suited to the local project but may lack these properties.

9 Who should collect the data?
This is particularly an issue when using qualitative methods, where the results might be biased because those who have a stake in the initiative are also the ones who collect and analyse the data. Bias can be reduced if the overall design is reviewed by someone with evaluation expertise, and staff with experience in evaluation in general and data collection in particular are involved in the evaluation team.

10 How should we analyse the data?
The application of appropriate analyses and interpretation of quantitative data may not be skills that many student services professionals possess. In such cases, the use of specialists should be considered. Analysis of qualitative data is less specialised but still must be done in a systematic way, and it should be a collaborative task.

11 What are the implications of the evaluation for policy and practice?
The impact of the evaluation will be strengthened if the implications of the findings for policy and practice are clearly spelled out. For example, we should ask: what approaches to solving the question should be considered in the light of the findings? What policies and practices need to be revised, abandoned, or put in place?

12 How should we report the results effectively?
To communicate results effectively, multiple reports for multiple audiences might need to be prepared, which highlight the results most applicable to each audience.

Note: once the planning stage has been completed and an evaluation is underway, unexpected issues may arise, which may make it necessary to go back to some/all of these steps and make modifications. It is essential, therefore, that an evaluation and the team of people undertaking it are well-managed and have the opportunity to revisit and discuss all stages of the process at regular intervals.

Some examples of how the above steps (or a variation of these steps) can be used are discussed in the next section (1.2). The above steps are also available as a template in section 7 at **Template 1**.

1.2 Applying the steps: some examples

The examples in tables 2-4 demonstrate how Schuh and Upcraft's framework (2001) for evaluation can be used and adapted to different types of evaluation. The following types of evaluation are included here:

- evaluating non-continuation
- evaluating a special intervention and its impact of retention
- evaluating cost effectiveness

Evaluating non-continuation – used to identify the reasons why students do not continue with their studies and determine ways in which retention and graduation rates may be improved.

Table 2: Example of steps to take in the process of planning an evaluation of non-continuation

Step	Example
Define the question:	Retention rates are unacceptable to the university and are worse than those in comparable universities.
Determine the purpose of the evaluation:	To find out why students are not continuing with their studies and what the university can do to improve retention.
Determine where to get the information needed:	Gather information from those students who have not finished their first year or have failed to register for the second year.
Determine the best evaluation methods:	Consider a brief quantitative study to understand the reasons why students left the university; follow-up with a qualitative study to gain a more in-depth understanding of issues. A longitudinal study might be considered in the longer-term, comparing those students not continuing with those who graduate, which takes account of pre-entry characteristics and university experience.
Determine whom to evaluate:	Consider a purposeful random sample of those students who non-continued / did not re-register.
Determine how the data will be collected:	Depending on the nature of the contact details held for students, consider a paper, telephone or web-based survey (or combination). Consider ethical issues – consent, confidentiality/anonymity.

Step	Example
Determine what tools will be used:	Quantitative survey: consider a short questionnaire asking for reasons for non-continuation and future educational plans against a pre-determined list. Qualitative study: a more personalised approach – probing reasons, experiences, how things might have been done differently, and future educational plans. Be prepared to pilot any tools that are developed to ensure validity/reliability.
Determine who should collect the data:	For the qualitative study, consider professional staff (for face-to-face) or possibly current students (especially for telephone interviews).
Determine how the data should be analysed:	Quantitative: determine if the respondents are representative of the population being studied, if not, apply weighting; follow this with frequency counts; then further analyse by demographic variables. Qualitative: review transcripts or notes of audio recordings.
Determine the implications of the evaluation for policy and practice:	The findings will impact on numerous policies and practices, therefore consider involving a team of staff and students from across the university to consider the implications of the findings and make recommendations.
Report the results effectively:	Consider the audience and the nature (sensitivity) of the findings.

(Adapted from Schuh and Upcraft, 2001.)

Evaluating a special intervention and its impact on retention – this example is of an intervention that has been introduced for first year students identified as being 'at risk' because of their lack of entry qualifications or non-traditional entry qualifications, and to help increase retention. The intervention is voluntary tutorials in English and Mathematics, which are run by third year students and 'at risk' students are encouraged to attend.

Table 3: Example of steps to take in the process of planning an evaluation of a special intervention

Step	Example
Define the question:	Does the intervention actually work.
Determine the purpose of the evaluation:	To find out if first year tutorials for students 'at risk' have the desired effect of improving retention rates for these students.
Determine what information is needed:	Assessment scores for all first year students will be required at the end of the first year, and data on those students who returned for the second year.
Determine the best evaluation methods:	The best method is quantitative.
Determine whom to evaluate:	All first year students who were considered to be 'at risk' regardless of whether they participated in the tutorials.
Determine how the data will be collected:	No special instrument for collecting the data is required as the data will be available from student records.
Determine what tools will be used:	(as above)
Determine how the data should be analysed:	Data will be analysed by conducting a comparative study of those students who participated in the special tutorials and those who did not. Two comparisons will be drawn: i) of assessment scores and ii) of return to the second year.
Determine the implications of the evaluation for policy and practice:	If there is a significant difference in assessment scores/returns to the second year, then there is justification for continuing with the tutorials. If the results are less clear, it is possible that additional data should be collected (e.g. through interviews).
Report the results effectively:	Consider the audience and the nature (sensitivity) of the findings.

(Adapted from Schuh and Upcraft, 2001.)

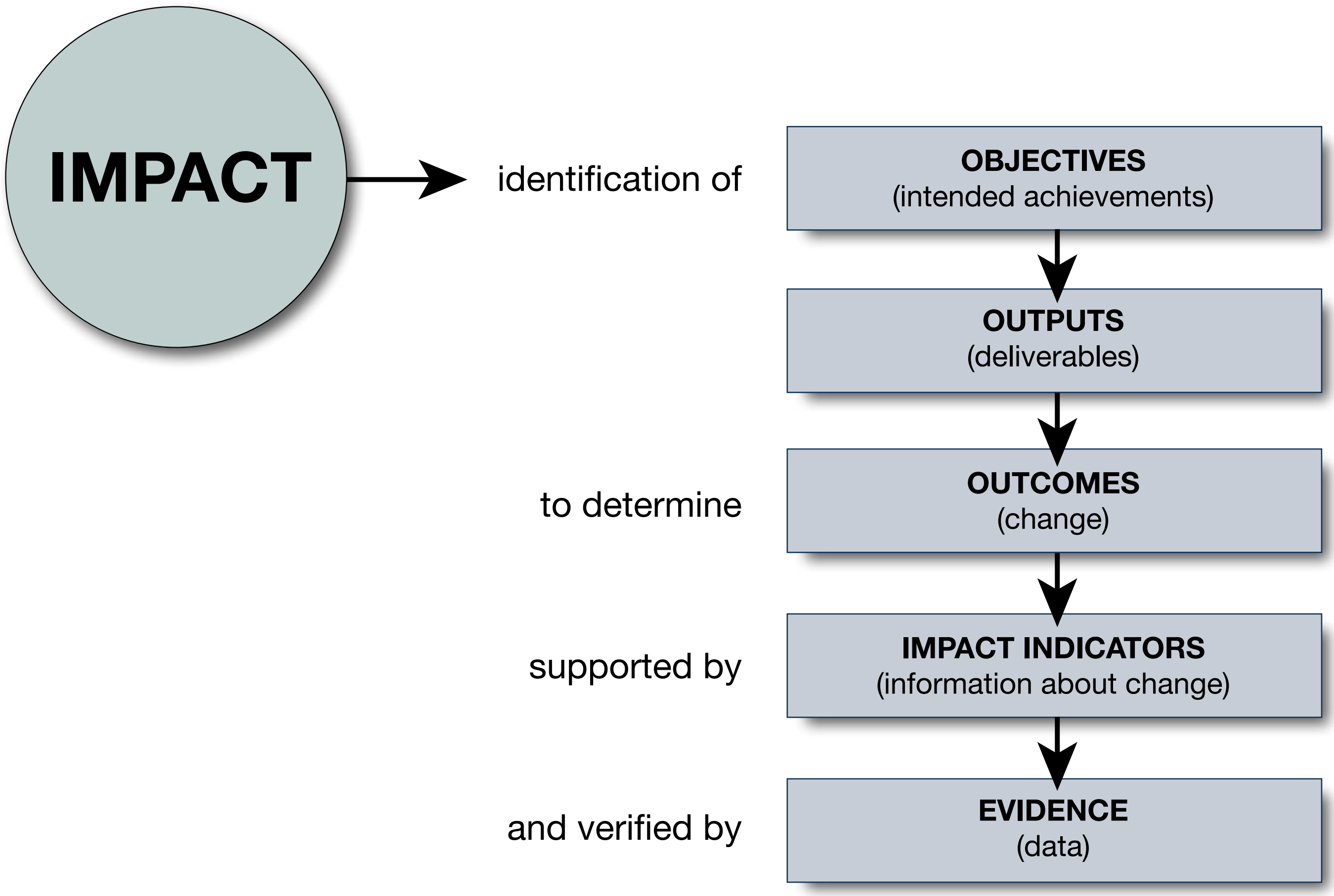
Evaluating cost effectiveness – used to demonstrate that greater breadth and depth of services /activities for students can be provided if student services is using its financial resources efficiently and effectively.

Table 4: Example of steps to take in the process of planning an evaluation of cost-effectiveness

Step	Example
Examine the institutional context:	This might include how the particular service under consideration contributes to the mission of the university (e.g. does it enhance student learning and development and therefore influence student retention?).
Determine the reasons for evaluating cost-effectiveness:	What is the reason for initiating the evaluation: is the university looking for more efficient ways of delivering the service; is it considering outsourcing the service or getting rid of it altogether?
Determine the purpose of the evaluation:	As a consequence of the above, the purpose would be to determine and analyse costs/benefits and consider alternative means of delivery.
Determine the cost of the service/ programme:	Costs will need to be determined in terms of i) fixed and variable costs, ii) those costs within control of the service and those over which it has no control, and iii) direct and indirect costs.
Identify revenue sources:	E.g. direct funds from the university, optional student fees for certain services/activities, external funding, and so on.
Determine trends:	Compare annual costs, compare to benchmarks (i.e. other services in the department, or other departments in the university), compare student usage rates – and projections for the future.
Determine benefits:	Benefits to students: list how students benefit from the service/ activities; would these change if the service/activities were eliminated, reduced or outsourced. Benefits to staff: do staff get fringe benefits from the service (and if so, would these change if the service/activities were eliminated, reduced or outsourced?). Benefits to the university: benefits are derived from having a quality service for students (and staff, and the public?). List the benefits (e.g. those derived from increased applications and retention because of the existence of the service). Are there benefits to the public: again, list these and how their loss or reduction might be perceived.
Consider the alternatives:	Alternatives might include: elimination, reduction and outsourcing, as well as alternative means of funding.
Apply the findings to policy and practice:	The way in which this is done will depend on the intended audience.

(Adapted from Schuh and Upcraft, 2001.)

2. Evaluating impact



2.1 Introduction

This section explores the evaluation of impact. The literature review for the value and impact project noted that the majority of literature found on impact originates in the United States and much is focused on *student learning outcomes-based evaluation*. This section focuses on outcomes-based evaluation and uses and adapts the US literature. It also uses/adapts literature from elsewhere, namely that relating to the impact evaluation of university library services (SCONUL) and from the experiences of the universities involved in the pilot phase of the value and impact project.

This section focuses on 'intended outcomes'. It is worth emphasising, however, that the results of an outcomes-based impact evaluation may produce 'unexpected' or 'unintended' outcomes. Whilst these may come as a surprise, they are nevertheless equally valuable and important, and will contribute to any improvements that may be required to a student service, an intervention or activity.

2.2 Evaluating outcomes

Evaluating outcomes is a specific type of evaluation aimed at gauging the impact of student services, programmes and facilities and their effect on learning, development, academic achievement, and other intended outcomes.

In evaluating outcomes, the following types of questions will need to be asked (Bresciani, 2004):

- what are we trying to do and why?
- what is the programme trying to accomplish?
- how do we do it?
- how well are we doing it?
- how do we know?
- how do we use the information to improve/celebrate success?
- do the improvements we make work?

Student services practitioners will also need to ask themselves: 'Can institutional interventions (for example programmes, services and policies) be isolated from other variables which may influence outcomes, such as background and entering characteristics, and other collegiate and non-collegiate experiences?' (Upcraft and Schuh, 1996). The same authors (2001) also note that this is the most important and most difficult type of evaluation.

The development of outcomes must be driven by the specific context of the activity/service being evaluated (see the next section on generating outcomes). Outcomes must also be measurable and meaningful in order to demonstrate the impact of programmes or services. The following points need to be considered when drafting outcomes (Bresciani, 2004):

Is it measurable?

- i.e. identifiable rather than countable
- Can you identify or observe when you know the outcome has been met?

Is it meaningful?

- Does it mean something to students and providers?

Is it manageable?

- Outcomes have to be incorporated into the day to day life of a programme, but not all outcomes have to be evaluated/measured every year.

Who will I be gathering evidence from to know that my outcome has been met?

- Students might not be the only source of evidence.
- Other parties, such as academics and administrators, might need to be involved in the process.

Who would know if my outcome has been met?

- As above.

How will I know if it has been met?

- What does meeting the outcome look like?
- How do you know the intended outcome/development has occurred?

Will it provide me with evidence that will lead me to make a decision for continuous improvement?

- Outcomes need to be articulated in such a way as to lead to improvement.

Generating outcomes

Before outcomes can be evaluated, they need to exist. This section looks at an approach to generating outcomes, which involves a number of steps concerning the identification of objectives, outputs and intended outcomes, and impact indicators. The example illustrated in **tables 5-8** is of an orientation programme to support international students[1], and it has been adapted from work undertaken by SCONUL on the impact of university library services.

Objectives drive the whole process of outcomes-based or impact evaluation. In defining objectives, they need to be *specific* (i.e. precise about what you intend to achieve) and *time-limited* (i.e. what can be achieved within a specific period). An example of a specific type of objective for a particular service/activity is as follows:

Table 5: Identifying objectives

Service/activity:	Supporting international students who are new to the country and university through an orientation programme.
Objective:	To provide international students with the information and socialisation opportunities to ensure a successful transition into university life.

Once objectives have been defined, the **outputs** can be identified. These are deliverables - what students receive from the service/activity.

Table 6: Identifying outputs

Service/activity:	Supporting international students who are new to the country and university through an orientation programme.
Objective:	To provide international students with the information and socialisation opportunities to ensure a successful transition into university life.
Output:	International students attend a programme.

The next step is to determine the **intended outcomes** so that the impact indicators can be developed. Intended outcomes are the change that is meant to happen as a result of students' participation with the service/activity by addressing the objectives. Intended outcomes can be identified by asking the following questions:
- what sort of changes are we looking for in the students that we want to reach with this service objective?
- how can we tell if the service is making a difference?

The answers to these questions will become the intended outcomes, which then need to be turned into impact indicators. Impact is usually about having an *impact on people*, which creates *change*. Changes in people may take the following forms:
- affective (attitudes, perceptions, levels of confidence, satisfaction with the service);
- behavioural – people do things differently (e.g. doing something more or less often, asking different types of questions, being more critical or more independent);

1. This is an example of an impact plan developed by one of the universities involved in the pilot phase of the vale and impact project – the University of Brighton.

- knowledge-based (e.g. knowing where to go and who to approach for relevant information and support);
- competence-based - people do things more effectively (e.g. able to find and access appropriate information and support).

Impact indicators will translate intended outcomes into pieces of information, which will indicate whether or not change has taken place. Indicators should be:

- directly linked to what you are trying to achieve - the key areas in which you are trying to make a difference;
- clear and understandable - check them with colleagues;
- generally accepted as reasonable and fair - you need to agree that the indicators really do tell you about the impact of your service;
- valid - evaluate what they say they are evaluating;
- informative, providing significant information - illuminating your successes, highlighting changes/trends, throwing up warning signs;
- as few in number as possible – three or four are ideal for any part of the service.

Table 7 demonstrates a number of impact indicators, derived from the above service/activity and its associated objective, outputs and intended outcomes.

Table 7: Identifying intended outcomes and impact indicators

Service/activity:	Supporting international students who are new to the country and university through an orientation programme.
Objective:	To provide international students with the information and socialisation opportunities to ensure a successful transition into university life.
Output:	International students attend a programme.
Intended outcome:	International students are equipped with sufficient information for a successful transition into university life.
Impact indicators:	• International students have registered with a doctor; • Students are informed about and aware of a range of services, such as student services, opening a bank account, visas, living in the UK; • International students are confident about where to go to find information; • Students are informed about and aware of socialisation opportunities at the university.

The next step in the process is to gather **appropriate evidence** and decide how much is needed to enable good decisions to be made. A balance needs to be struck between what you need to know, how well your evidence is telling you this, and how much of your resources you can afford to commit to this work. The information to be collected needs to show progress in delivering the objectives/intended outcomes and their associated impact indicators.

Table 8 is a summary of the discussion and tables 5-7. It can also be used as a template for the planning and implementation of an impact evaluation (see **Template 2**).

Table 8: Planning and implementing an impact evaluation

	Questions to address	Example
Evaluation title/aim:	What are you trying to do in conducting the evaluation?	International students – measuring the impact of an orientation programme.
Service/ activity:	What is the focus of the evaluation – is it a particular service or a particular activity (e.g. an induction programme or a series of counselling sessions)?	Supporting international students who are new to the country and university through an orientation programme.
Objective:	What objective is the service/activity trying to achieve? What impact does it want to make on students?	To provide international students with the information and socialisation opportunities to ensure a successful transition into university life.
Outputs:	What do students get from the service/activity? An output is a deliverable, i.e. it's a physical thing. It's basically a statement about what students **receive** from the service/activity.	International students attend a programme.
Intended outcomes:	What is intended to occur as a result of students' participation with the service/activity? An outcome is a level of performance or achievement. It is a statement about the transformative process – or change - that the service/activity is intending to achieve.	International students are equipped with sufficient information for a successful transition into university life.

Impact indicators:	What evidence do you need to gather to demonstrate that a change has taken place? Indicators are pieces of information that tell you whether or not a change has taken place. NB: indicators need to be measurable.	• International students have registered with a doctor; • Students are informed about and aware of a range of services, such as student services, opening a bank account, visas, living in the UK ; • International students are confident about where to go to find information; • Students are informed about and are aware of socialisation opportunities at the university.
Source of data:	How might you get this evidence – is it already available, does it need to be collected directly from the students?	• Online survey of those international students attending the orientation programme; • Focus group of international students attending the programme to test out how well the programme has supported their transition into university life; • Focus group of international students who did not attend the programme to test out how well they have fitted into university life.

Examples of how the above table was used by the other universities involved in the pilot phase of the value and impact project can be found in section 6 at **Example A**.

The next section takes the Schuh and Upcraft basic framework for evaluation (described in section 1) and adapts it to an example of an evaluation of outcomes. It assumes that the steps described to generate outcomes in the previous section have been done.

Steps in the process of evaluating outcomes and their impact

A quantitative and/or qualitative approach can be taken to evaluate outcomes. The example of an evaluation of the impact of a university's *student volunteering scheme* is outlined in **Table 9**, which uses a qualitative approach. The approach uses Schuh and Upcraft's framework for evaluation, which has been adapted for this specific type of evaluation.

Table 9: Example of steps to take in the process of planning evaluating outcomes

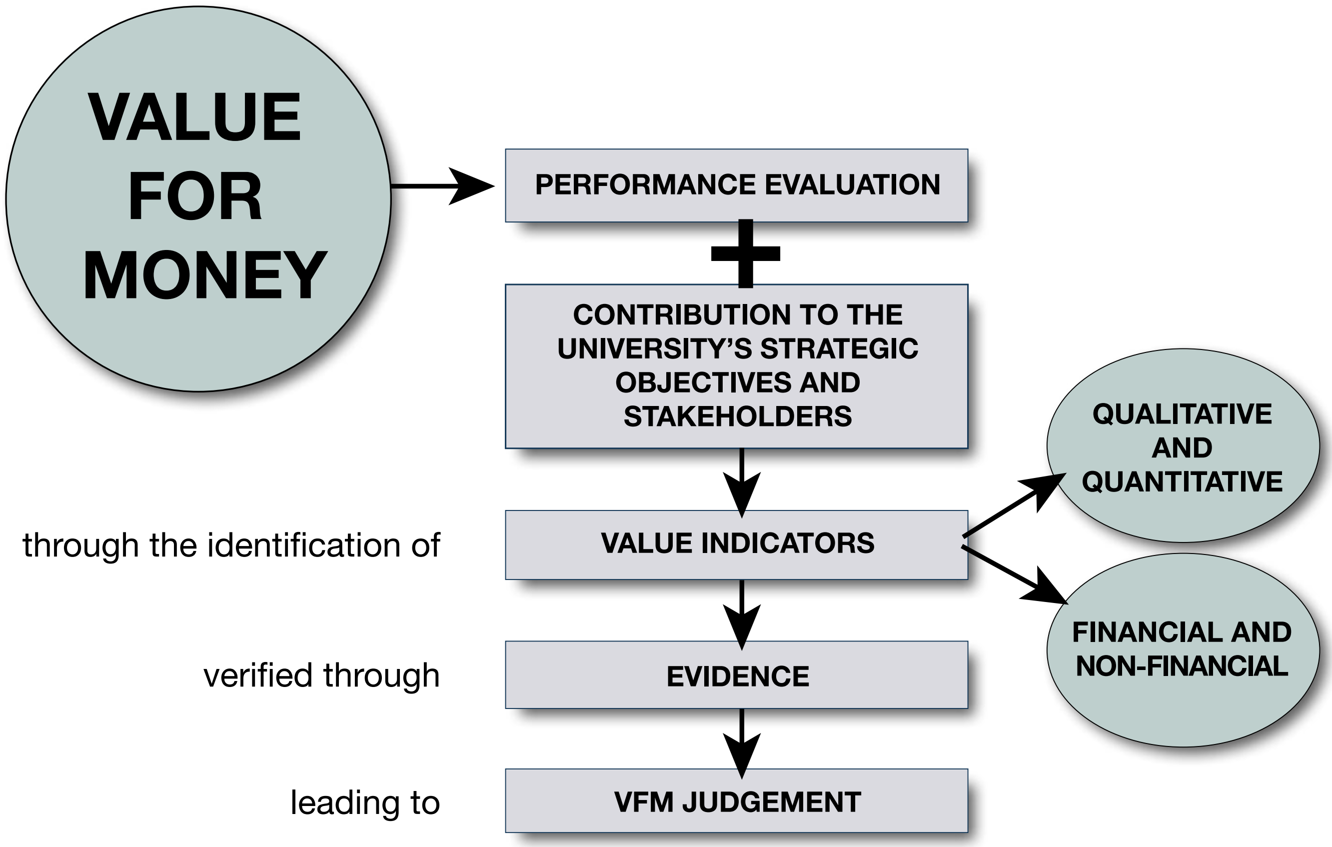
Step	Example
Define the question:	Credible empirical evidence is required to demonstrate student development outcomes from a student volunteering scheme and its impact on student achievement.
Determine the purpose of the evaluation:	To find out the extent to which students who are taking advantage of the scheme have benefitted from the experience, and whether it has impacted on achievement levels in comparison with those who are not involved in the scheme.
Determine the appropriate approach to evaluation:	This example takes a qualitative approach.
Determine the objectives / outputs / intended outcomes / impact indicators:	These will be determined depending on the service provided or the programme offered. For example, a student volunteering scheme might have outcomes aimed at students' personal development in terms of increased confidence, social and communication skills, ability to lead others, feelings of being part of a community, greater cultural awareness and understanding of diverse groups of people.
Select the evaluation tool:	Determine whether individual interviews or focus groups are the most appropriate tool for collecting the data (for considerations, see section 4).
Determine the population to be studied and the sample:	A purposive, random sample of those involved in an activity from a particular cohort or number of cohorts.
Determine how the information will be collected:	When is the most effective time to collect the data (i.e. pre- and/or post-experience?), who should conduct the interviews / focus groups (issues of experience, objectivity)?

Determine how the information will be codified / analysed:	Much information will be gathered, therefore, considerations about data organisation and sequencing need to be made to enable meaningful analyses.
Conduct the appropriate analyses:	The challenge is to make sense of the data, identify patterns, and to construct a framework for communicating what the data reveal – have the outcomes been met, what improvements are needed?
Evaluate the analyses for policy and practice implications:	What do the findings reveal in terms of evidence for policy development and practice review?
Report the results effectively:	Are different reports needed for different audiences?

(Adapted from Schuh and Upcraft, 2001.)

Some further examples of evaluation plans are described in section 6; these are for a disability service (**Example B**) and a study skills support centre (**Example C**) - derived from Colorado State University. The examples are taken from the university's campus-wide continuous improvement system known as PRISM (Plan for Researching Improvement and Supporting Mission), which is used by both academic and student affairs units. As well as demonstrating how impact evaluations are undertaken, the examples show how PRISM emphasises the linkages of the goals of specific service areas, which are being evaluated, with those of the wider department and the university's mission.

3. Evaluating value for money



3.1 Introduction

A SUMS Consulting report (2009) notes that '(t)he evaluation of the performance of student support services, and demonstration of their value and contribution to the wider university, is becoming increasingly important across the sector.' Performance management for student support services relies on a robust strategy with defined objectives, which will act as a precursor to developing key performance (or value) indicators for the service as a whole or specific service areas. Once a performance management system is in place, the outputs it produces can be used to demonstrate the value of the services across the university and to all stakeholders, and to confirm its fit with the university's strategic aims and objectives.

This section describes what value for money is, how it can be demonstrated, and suggests approaches to undertaking value for money evaluations. Value for money, however, is more than just undertaking an evaluation – it is also dependent on the results of an evaluation and on any action being taken in response to the findings. Achieving value for money requires an attitude and culture, which seeks continuous improvement and the integration of value for money principles into management practices.

Demonstrating value for money, however, is not a straightforward process. There are no 'off-the-shelf' methods readily available. Value for money is context driven and therefore the concepts and processes described here should be adapted to the context within which they are to be used. Examples are provided to help demonstrate how these concepts and processes can be used and adapted.

3.2 A definition of value for money

Value for money in the use of resources is often defined in terms of achieving *economy, efficiency and effectiveness*. The Audit Commission (2009) notes that value for money is about obtaining the maximum benefit over time with the resources available. Decisions about value for money are a daily reality in all our lives. We are constantly choosing which items or services to buy, and judging the right balance for us between quality and cost. It is about achieving the right local balance between economy, efficiency and effectiveness – the 3Es: spending less, spending well and spending wisely. This means that value for money not only measures the cost of goods and services but also takes account of the mix of cost with quality, resource use, fitness for purpose and timeliness to judge whether or not, together, they constitute good value.

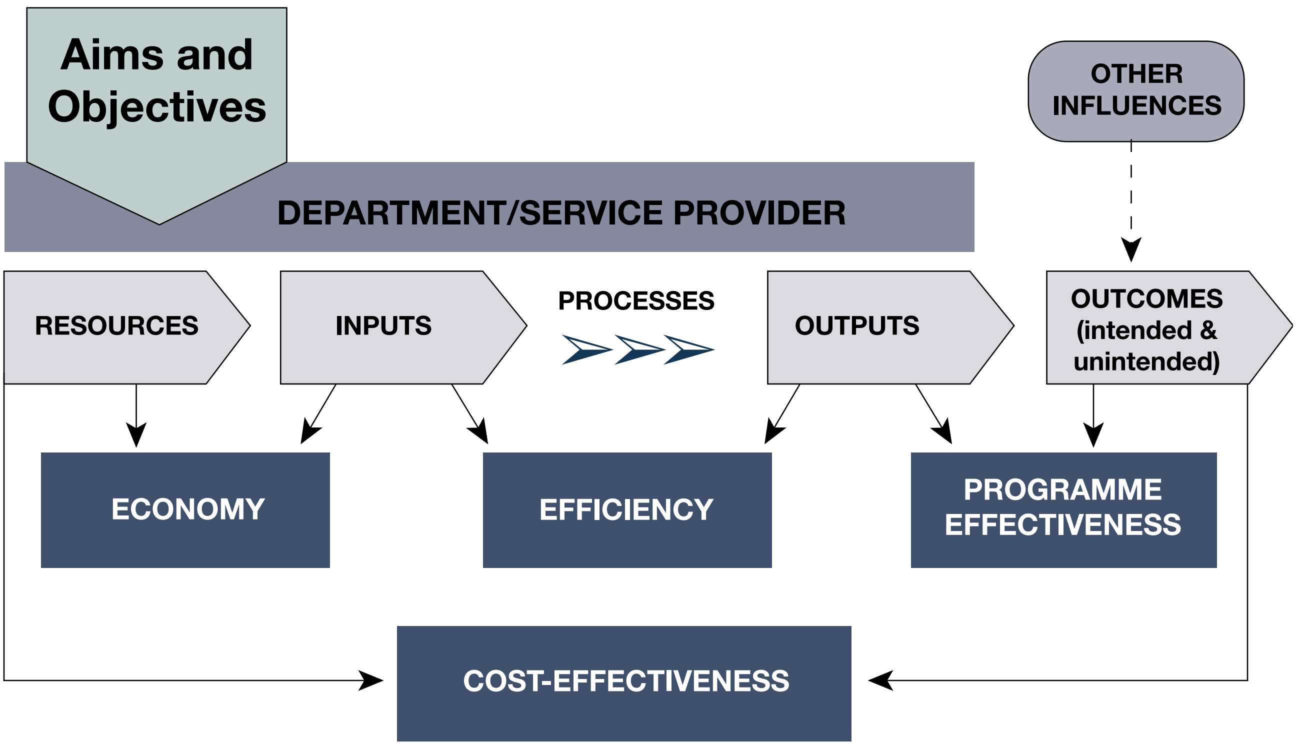
For example, in a student services context, value for money measures might include: a cross reference to Matrix quality standards; use and provision of information products; qualifications and profile of experience of staff; fitness for purpose according to the nature of the student community in a given institution; and timeliness of interactions from start to finish, as well as response times to initial enquiries.

Value for money chain: inputs, outputs and outcomes

Figure 1 shows how value for money is defined and how it relates to the activities undertaken by a university/ service (HEFCE, undated).

Figure 1: Relationship between Inputs, Outputs and Outcomes

This figure shows the relationship between inputs, outputs and outcomes.



Economy is consideration of cost. It is a measure of what goes into providing a service, such as the cost per hour of a demand-driven service, or the rent per square metre of accommodation. The whole life costs of inputs such as the (direct and indirect) costs of acquiring, running and disposing of assets or resources should be considered (see **Example E**).

Efficiency is making the most of the money that is spent on a service. It is a measure of productivity, in other words how much you get out in relation to what is put in. For example, this might include the number of students seen per counsellor, either individually or through group work, or the contribution the counselling service makes to the student learning experience and the university's corporate strategy.

Effectiveness is making sure that services meet the needs of students. It is about understanding the intended outcomes of services/activities and developing impact or value indicators to determine whether these outcomes have been met (see section 3). Effectiveness is, therefore, a measure of the impact that has been achieved and is essential to demonstrating the achievement of value for money. An activity may be efficient and economic, but it does not represent value for money unless it is effective in delivering its intended objectives. Examples might be: an increase in student retention as a result of specially targeted support initiatives, or an increase in the number of students seeking financial advice/support as a result of improved marketing/publicity of a bursary scheme. Effectiveness measures can be either quantitative (reduction in levels of students not completing their courses) or qualitative (increases in student satisfaction with support services).

Evaluating and measuring value for money is a challenge. Some elements, such as quality and sustainability, are more subjective and more difficult to measure than other elements. 'Value' can often take years to materialise. What is value for money at one point in time may not be a year later. Value for money is also specific to different contexts and a key component in evaluating effectiveness is relevance to, alignment with, and impact on, the strategic objectives of the organisation. What is value for money for one university/service, may not be the same for another. A strong element of good, informed judgement is therefore required when considering whether value for money has been satisfactorily achieved or not, and how it might be improved. Ongoing monitoring is therefore required to ensure 'currency'.

3.3 Value for money indicators

As noted in section 3.1, performance management for student support services relies on a robust strategy with defined objectives, which will act as a precursor to developing value indicators for the service as a whole, individual service areas or specific activities. A widely accepted method of creating and disseminating strategic objectives is the Balanced Scorecard approach (Kaplan and Norton, 1992). This approach is about emphasising that evaluation of value for money is more than just a financial calculation – it is a holistic evaluation of value, hence the *balanced* approach. The balanced scorecard uses four perspectives through which strategy can be viewed and from which objectives can be created. These are:

- customer perspective (**C**)
- internal business processes (**B**)
- learning and growth (**LG**)
- financial (**F**)

It also provides a mechanism through which performance can be tracked holistically using value indicators supported by both quantitative and qualitative data as demonstrated in **Table 10**. Once these indicators have been identified and the data collected, analysed and interpreted, a value for money judgement can be reached (see p34).

In developing value indicators, it is essential to define the scope of the support services function and identify core questions that reflect the requirements of a modern, value for money support services function, which the indicators are intended to help explore. These core questions need to link to the overall student services strategy and be agreed before any indicators are developed to validate whether or not they are being achieved. Core questions, which are linked to the four perspectives of the Balanced Scorecard approach, might include the following:

- Are student users satisfied with the services provided? (**C**)
- Is the support services function cost-effective? (**B/F**)
- Are support services processes operated in an efficient and timely manner? (**B/C**)
- Is the support services function helping to effectively promote and manage students' transition into and through their time at university? (**B/LG**)
- Is the support services function helping the university to effectively support students' academic and personal development and performance? (**B/LG**)
- Does the support services function help to ensure the university appropriately identifies and supports those students with specific needs? (**B**)
- Is the support services function proactively planning for future resource needs and taking appropriate action to address gaps? (**F/LG**)

An indicative list of indicators, which reflects the Balanced Scorecard approach and the core questions, is listed in **Table 10** (either for the whole support services function or a particular service area); these are suggestions and are not meant to be prescriptive. They represent a mix of qualitative and quantitative value indicators. Each on their own is partial; thus evaluation efforts need to ensure that an appropriate balance of qualitative and quantitative indicators is achieved.

A small set of key value indicators should be identified that are of most value to the university, both strategically (i.e. are we achieving what we set out to do within student support, are we making a positive contribution to the university's overall strategic aims?) and operationally (i.e. are we meeting our service levels, are we delivering our services in a cost-effective way?).

Table 10: Suggested indicators from which key value indicators might be identified

1	a) Total cost of the support services function as a percentage of university running cost (expenditure) [or for a small sub-service: budget as a proportion of overall departmental budget] b) Cost of the support services function per FTE student c) Staff costs per FTE student (by service) [or for a small sub-service: cost per hour of support provided, calculated on the basis of cost of those involved relative to the number of hours of support provided] d) Number of students seen (footfall) as a percentage of total student population (by service)
2	Non-staff costs, e.g. information products, course materials, staff development, share of administrative overhead (by service)
3	Income generation (by service)
4	Service-specific usage: • Total student footfall • Website hits • Number of enquiries (email, telephone) • Number of referrals
5	Non-continuation in the last year as a percentage of the average total students Estimated cost of non-continuation (e.g. tuition fee income, HEFCE grant income, lost income on student spend within the university)
6	Service level agreements with users of the service(s): performance against expectations (response to email enquiries, appointment arrangements, appointment waiting times, complaints etc) Service level agreements with departments/faculties for specific projects/activities
7	Reputational measures, for example: external recognition, NSS results, other rankings / league tables

8	User satisfaction index - a composite indicator compiled from the responses to a set of statements by users, for example: • The university takes the support of students seriously • I receive appropriate support in relation to my needs • I know where to go if I have a query relating to a support services issue
9	Management practice indicator – the number of practices that have been adopted by the support services function, for example: • The department's strategy and its fit with the university's corporate objectives (links to corporate, learning and teaching, research, HR, faculty/department strategies) • The department's policy on surveying student satisfaction levels (frequency, publication of the results, development/publication of an action plan, monitoring the delivery of that plan and at what frequency) • Quality assurance processes and their management, implementation, review and reporting in line with Matrix Quality Standards • The department's policy on staff development for professional support services staff • Procedures for effective budget control are in place and reviewed on a regular basis • Risk management procedures are in place, and implemented and reviewed on a regular basis • Statutory compliance (e.g. disability support) • Level of engagement with the academic community

A suggested set of prompts and questions to consider when identifying and using key value indicators are listed below:

- What questions are you hoping to answer through your key value indicators?
- Do these questions link directly to the strategic objectives outlined in your strategic plan?
- Are you collecting the data required to answer these questions, or focusing simply on the data you know you can easily collect?
- Are you collecting data unnecessarily?
- Have you consulted widely when selecting your key value indicators?
- Have your key value indicators been approved by senior management?
- How and how regularly are you going to monitor progress against your key value indicators?
- Have you assigned appropriate owners for each key value indicator and are they aware of their responsibilities in this regard?
- Have you considered a mechanism for reviewing the key value indicators themselves and changing them, removing them or adding new ones?
- Have you selected a means of displaying progress against the key value indicators that suits the needs of all relevant stakeholders?
- Have you considered whether there are other data streams (derived from both within and outside the institution) that you may wish to integrate with your key value indicator data?
- Are you collecting data in a format that may make it possible to integrate with other data streams?

- Are you comfortable with the idea of publicly flagging ‘red’ areas (i.e. areas where you appear to be failing to meet agreed key value indicators)?
- Have you considered what happens when areas are reported as being at ‘amber’ or ‘red’? For example, are there links between this reporting process and your institution’s issue and risk reporting procedures?

(Adapted from Jisc infoNet, Managing Strategic Activity Infokit: http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/infokits/strategy/managing-strategic-activity/benefits-kpi.)

An example of a set of key value indicators, which has been developed for an accommodation service, is provided in section 6 at **Example D**.

Cost examples and templates for calculating cost-related key value indicators

A number of examples and templates have been developed to help calculate the cost of student support services and the value indicators listed in **Table 10**. These examples and templates are for illustrative purposes only: they are not meant to be prescriptive. They can be found in sections 6 and 7 as follows:

- **Example E1** and **Template 3** is an example of how an overall breakdown of student services costs against student throughput per year might be undertaken.

- **Example E2** and **Template 4** is an example of how an approximate cost per service against throughput might be shown.

- **Example E3** and **Template 5** is an example of how the total number of one-to-one appointments made and attended by students per service across sites (if relevant) might be identified.

- **Template 6** is one means of identifying costs when planning or considering new services or activities.

3.4 Undertaking a value for money evaluation

Based on the discussion and tables in the previous sections, **Table 11** presents a checklist of the factors to take into account when initiating and undertaking a value for money evaluation of a student support services area. The table is also available as a template in section 7 at **Template 7**.

Table 11: Checklist for a value for money evaluation

Areas to address:	**Questions to address:**	**For example:**
Strategic objectives	What are they – what is the service trying to achieve? How do they relate to the wider university's strategic objectives?	Our vision is to provide an integrated approach to ensure high quality student support, which contributes to and enhances the reputation of the university by: • enabling students to realise their potential with clearly recognisable skills for academic progression and employability; • ensuring that student support services are coherent and co-ordinated; • promoting an inclusive approach to student support, which recognises and responds to the diversity of the university's students. The strategy has been informed by and is linked to the core values of the university's strategic plan, as well as the university's strategies for learning and teaching, marketing and communications, and quality assurance and enhancement.
Inputs (direct and indirect costs)	What is the cost of the service?	See **Templates 3-6**, which provide examples of how base data for identifying cost-related indicators might be developed - as set out in **Table 10**.
Outputs	What do students (and other stakeholders – e.g. academic staff and the wider university, employers, parents, landlords) get from the service? (An output is a deliverable, i.e. it's a physical thing. It's basically a statement about what students (and other stake holders) receive from the service)	Students using the service will have access to: • accurate and accessible pre-arrival information, advice and guidance; • a timely (and ongoing, where necessary) induction process.

Intended outcomes	What is intended to occur as a result of students' participation (and other stakeholders' involvement) with the service/activity? What is the intended impact on the university's strategic objectives? (An outcome is a level of performance or achievement. It is a statement about the transformative process that the service/activity is intending to achieve.)	Students are satisfied with the service they receive. As a result of students' encounters with the service, their confidence, academic achievement and retention improve. Academic staff are confident that students in need of support have access to that support. The service provided makes a positive contribution to the university's overall reputation.
Value indicators	What evidence needs to be gathered to demonstrate the intended outcomes? (Indicators are pieces of information - relating to the strategic objectives - that demonstrate whether or not a change has taken place.) Note: indicators need to be measurable and can be qualitative as well as quantitative.	**See Table 10.** There might also be a discussion about the relationship of the indicators (i.e. relevance and alignment) to the key value indicators and risk register of the university.
Value for money judgement	What judgement(s) can be formed when all the above factors have been taken into account?	See the next section for suggested methods for reaching an overall value for money judgement.

Suggested methods for reaching an overall value for money judgement

The following methods can be used as possible options for reaching an overall judgement.

1. Carry out a self-evaluation based on **Table 11** (including the key value indicators identified from **Table 10**) using a scale ranging from -5 to +5 depending on performance. Total these up to arrive at an overall judgement.

2. Carry out a self-evaluation but use 'traffic light indicators': red (no evidence of achievement); green (evidence of achievement); and amber (partial evidence of achievement) depending on performance. Arrive at an overall traffic light based on the whole.

3. Carry out a self-evaluation giving an outcome of 'met', 'not met' or 'point of excellence' depending on performance. (This scale is based on the British Council Evaluation of English Language Teaching.)

4. Self-evaluate using low/medium/high confidence ratings and low/medium/high importance recommendations, based on a financial audit model.

5. Self-evaluate and list areas for action. Compare the number and significance of action points with the overall number of elements/indicators/standards in **Table 11**. For example, the following action points might be identified:
   - more systematised record keeping;
   - refresh overall service purpose and mission;
   - introduce overall user satisfaction rating within feedback process.

The above suggestions have been developed and provided by Student Services at the University of Sheffield.

4. Instruments used for collecting information for evaluations of value and impact

4.1 Introduction

This section rehearses some of the issues to bear in mind when collecting information to support evaluations of impact and value.

The purpose of the evaluation will determine whether quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods are best suited. Generally, if information is needed on *what* is occurring, quantitative methods (e.g. surveys) are more appropriate. If information is needed about *why* something is happening, then qualitative methods (interviews, focus groups, observations) are better. Thus, the method will determine what types of tools are required for gathering information.

The main focus of this section is on instruments used for qualitative evaluations. The table below focuses on three specific instruments: surveys, discussion/focus groups, and interviews. For each of these, uses, considerations, advantages and possible disadvantages are highlighted.

4.2 A summary of instruments that might be used in evaluations of value and impact

Table 12: A summary of instruments that might be used in evaluations of value and impact

Instrument	Uses	Considerations	Advantages	Possible disadvantages
Surveys	Used to gather: • Demographic information • Descriptive information • Attitudes, opinions, values, experiences • Expectations, goals, needs • Self-reported behaviours • Numerical data	Content – be clear about what you are trying to find out or measure Census v sample (see sampling issues under discussion/focus groups) Closed or open questions Pilot to test out reliability/validity (see below), then refine if necessary Are specialist skills required (e.g. in questionnaire design and analysis)? Co-ordinate the timing of the survey to avoid questionnaire fatigue Reminders to boost response rates Are there ethical issues to consider (see section 5)?	Inclusive (assuming a census and a good response rate) Can provide quantitative and qualitative information Can provide information about the relationships between different variables/responses Does not require a great deal of time commitment from individual students	Establishing robustness (reliability/validity) takes time Questionnaires tend to be backward looking The accuracy of self-reported behaviour can be affected by inability or unwillingness to provide accurate information The reporting of intentionally inaccurate information can also be a problem; as is the 'halo effect' where behaviour might be inflated Response rates may be low, which will raise issues about representativeness of responses and generalisability of conclusions drawn May be costly in terms of staff time spent on analysis and interpretation of results

		<u>Reliability and validity</u> *Reliability* is the extent to which a set of items consistently measures the same thing across respondents and institutional settings. It is also the extent to which students respond in similar ways at two different points in time (although this is costly to test). *Validity* is the extent to which the instrument measures what it is intended to measure. This can be achieved by ensuring that items are clearly worded and well-defined, and logical relationships exist between the items.		

A more detailed discussion about the issues to bear in mind when designing a questionnaire can be found in section 5.3.

A number of examples of surveys developed by the universities involved in the pilot phase of the value and impact project can be found in section 6 at **Example F**.

Instrument	Uses	Considerations	Advantages	Possible disadvantages
Discussion/ focus groups	Used to gather: • Information on a specific topic • Varied attitudes, opinions, values, experiences • Information through the interaction of a group of participants (between 6-10) • More detailed and rich information • More detailed information about reasons for survey results	Content – be clear about what you are trying to find out or measure Question format – structured, semi-structured, unstructured Pilot then refine if necessary Sampling issues: probability v non-probability (see below) Vocal students may dominate discussion Requires specialist/skilled (and objective?) input to secure effective facilitation and discussion Useful to have a note-taker in addition to the facilitator Are there ethical issues to consider – consent forms and participant information sheets (see section 5)?	Useful for engaging students in dialogue and highlighting issues of concern Can provide a rich source of information Good opportunities for dialogue and testing out ideas Provides opportunities for students to hear others' views Enables exploration of an issue(s) in depth Facilitator can be neutral	May be resource intensive (in terms of student/staff time, analysis and interpretation of results) Can be difficult to manage May be intimidating for some students (consider the alternative of individual interviews if the topic is sensitive/contentious) Compromises student anonymity and confidentiality Students may not attend (incentives may be required) Logistics of organisation

		Consider over–recruitment to compensate for non-attendance <u>Sampling issues</u> *Probability* sampling includes random sampling, which enables generalisations to be made about the whole 'population'. *Non-probability* sampling includes 'purposeful' (i.e. handpicked), 'snowball' (i.e. recommendations), 'convenience' (i.e. captive audience) sampling, which only enables generalisations to be made about those taking part. If the intention is to include 'non-users', then close attention will need to be paid to sampling considerations.		

A number of examples of discussion/focus group schedules developed by the universities involved in the pilot phase of the value and impact project can be found in section 6 at **Example G**.

Instrument	Uses	Considerations	Advantages	Possible disadvantages
Interviews	Used to gather: • Information on a specific topic that may be sensitive/ contentious • Perceptions of experiences • Stories • Opinions • Extent of knowledge acquisition	Content – be clear about what you are trying to find out or measure Question format – structured, semi-structured, unstructured Pilot then refine if necessary Sampling issues (see discussion/focus groups) Number of interviewees Credibility of the evaluation (i.e. there needs to be sufficient interviewees) v 'saturation' (are the same issues coming up at each interview?) Face-to-face or telephone Data (quantity/complexity) and analysis (time required) Timeframe	Useful for engaging students in dialogue and highlighting issues of concern Can provide a rich source of information Enables exploration of an issue(s) in depth	May be resource intensive (in terms of student/staff time, analysis and interpretation of results) Logistics of organisation

		Budget (staff time, equipment, transcription, analysis, incentives) Are there ethical issues to consider – consent forms and participant information sheets (see section 5)?		

A number of examples of one-to-one interview schedules developed by the universities involved in the pilot phase of the value and impact project can be found in section 6 at **Example H**.

4.3 Questionnaire design: issues to bear in mind

A questionnaire is a multi-stage process starting with a clear definition of what is being examined through to the interpretation of the data that are collected. Every step requires careful design - the results are only as good as the weakest link in the design process.

Questionnaires might be seen as a relatively cheap method of data collection, but they can be exhausting (and therefore expensive) in terms of the time required for their design and the interpretation of their results.

An important point to bear in mind, and one which runs through the list to follow, is for those designing a questionnaire to pay considerable attention to potential respondents and to see the questionnaire through their eyes and how they will regard it (for example, with hostility, suspicion, apathy, grudging compliance, as easy or difficult, motivating or boring, straightforward or complex).

The objectives

- A questionnaire requires well-defined objectives - what are you trying to achieve/measure?
- If the objectives have been well-defined, the questions should flow in a logical sequence.
- If the writing of the questions becomes difficult, this probably means that not enough time has been spent in defining the objectives of the questionnaire.

The questions

- Questions can measure both qualitative and quantitative data, but qualitative questions require more careful crafting to avoid ambiguity.
- Decisions will need to be taken about what demographic data to collect. Demographic data are used to correlate responses between different groups of people and to see whether they are consistent across groups. Ask only those questions that are relevant.
- Decisions will also need to be taken about the most appropriate *types* of questions – dichotomous (i.e. yes/no, male/female), multiple choice, rank order, rating scales (e.g. Likert), closed, open.
- Open format questions ask for unprompted opinion and they are useful for gathering subjective data. However, the main drawback is that responses need to be read and it is not possible to perform any statistical analysis on them (without knowledge of qualitative analysis software). They are therefore costly and responses can be open to the interpretation of the reader.
- Closed format questions are easy to complete, responses can be statistically analysed and they are not costly. Furthermore, opinion can be tracked over time and extreme responses can be filtered out.
- For ease of analysis, particularly of a large sample, more closed than open questions are recommended.
- Questions must be clear, succinct and unambiguous. The chance that a question might be interpreted in different ways by different respondents needs to be eliminated.
- Ask only one thing at a time in a question.
- Leading and hypothetical questions must be avoided.
- It should not be assumed that respondents will always know the answer. Therefore, include where relevant ‘don’t know’, ‘not applicable’, ‘unsure’, ‘neither agree nor disagree’ and ‘not relevant’ categories.
- Be aware of ‘prestige bias’ where respondents provide answers to make themselves look or feel better. This is difficult to prevent, but the main way is to assure respondents that their replies are confidential.

Quality testing

- To ensure that a questionnaire is clear and understandable, it needs to be tested out on some pilot users (for example, by using a specially convened focus group). Issues arising should be discussed and the questionnaire revised and tested once more if possible.

General

- Include a covering explanation about the purposes of the questionnaire, how anonymity and confidentiality will be addressed, who is doing the evaluation/research and who will see the results. Remember to thank the target sample/population for their anticipated co-operation (see section 5 on ethical considerations).

(Adapted from Cohen et al, 2003 and http://www.cc.gatech.edu/classes/cs6751_97_winter/Topics/quest-design/ - accessed May 2011.)

4.4 Further sources of technical assistance

Various software packages are available to help create and support online surveys, including http://www.surveymonkey.com, http://www.smart-survey.com, http://www.surveygizmo.com. Packages such as these provide a quick and easy way to produce online surveys as well as basic analyses of data, which can be viewed graphically (although anyone considering using them should first refer to the data protection policies of these packages).

More sophisticated packages are available to analyse data of various kinds. For quantitative data, SPSS is commonly used; for qualitative data, available software packages include NVivo and ATLAS.ti. However, to use these packages effectively, training is required.

A number of UK universities provide training in these packages and indeed in basic and advanced social science research methods (including questionnaire design, analysing qualitative data, focus groups). The Economic and Social Research Council's National Centre for Research Methods provides an online searchable database of these courses: http://www.ncrm.ac.uk/training/

Day courses in social research are also offered by the University of Surrey. Details can be found at: http://www.fahs.surrey.ac.uk/daycourses/

5. Ethical considerations

This toolkit is concerned with evaluating the impact and value of services that support students; it is not concerned with the personal research undertaken by individual student services staff. Thus, for an evaluation of a service area or initiative, it may not be necessary to seek formal ethical approval of an evaluation from the relevant university committee, although this should be clarified with the appropriate university personnel. Nevertheless, the guidance contained here comprises good practice in conducting research involving 'human participants' and therefore will be helpful to student services staff when planning and implementing evaluations of service areas.

The guidance outlined in this section is taken from two sources. The first looks at ethics principles and is taken from the Open University's *Ethics Principles for Research Involving Human Participants*. There are six principles:
- Compliance with protocol
- Informed consent
- Openness and integrity
- Protection from harm
- Confidentiality
- Professional codes of practice and ethics

The second source is the University of Surrey's *Guidelines for the Preparation of a Submission to the University's Ethics Committee for Ethical Review of a Study*. These guidelines list the types of information that are required for completing a protocol. While it may not be necessary to complete a protocol for an evaluation of a student services area or initiative, it is a useful checklist to have when planning and implementing an evaluation.

Ethics principles

Principle 1: Compliance with protocol
Research with humans conducted by Open University employees and their agents and assignees should comply with an explicit protocol* defining how informed consent to participate is sought, gained and recorded, how data is collected, stored and accessed, and how participants are informed of their rights within the study. The only exception to this requirement shall be where any reasonable judgement would suggest that no harm could possibly arise to any person, living or dead, in connection with the proposed research.

Formal approval of the protocol shall be gained from the Open University Human Participants and Materials Ethics Committee (HPMEC) before data collection commences, and from other bodies such as the Open University Student Research Project Panel and UK National Health Service Research Ethics Committees as appropriate.

*In these Principles, the term 'protocol' refers to a filed document which specifies the procedures for recruiting participants and gathering and managing data, with which all research staff agree to comply.

Principle 2: Informed consent
Potential participants should always be informed in advance and in understandable terms of any potential benefits, risks, inconvenience or obligations associated with the research that might reasonably be expected to influence their willingness to participate.

Consent should always be gained in a consistent manner, as specified in the research project's ethical protocol. This should normally involve the use of an information sheet about the research and what participation will involve, and a signed consent form. Sufficient time shall be allowed for a potential participant to consider their decision between the giving of the information sheet and the gaining of consent.[2]

Except in exceptional circumstances, where the nature of the research design requires it, no research shall be conducted without the opt-in informed consent of participants. In the case of children (individuals under 16 years of age) no research shall be conducted without a specified means of gaining their informed consent (or, in the case of young children, their assent) and the consent of their parents or guardians, or persons acting in loco parentis.

Where participants are involved in longer-term data collection, the use of procedures for the renewal of consent at appropriate times should be considered.

No inducement to participate should be offered prior to seeking consent, either in the form of payments or of gifts. Reasonable recompense for inconvenience and time contributed to the research and reimbursement of travelling expenses can be offered.

Participants should be informed clearly that they have a right to withdraw their consent at any time, that any data that they have provided will be destroyed if they so request and that there will be no resultant adverse consequences.

Principle 3: Openness and integrity
Researchers should be open and honest about the purpose and content of their research and behave in a professional manner at all times.

Researchers should comply with the University's principles for integrity in the general conduct of research.

Where an essential element of the research design would be compromised by full disclosure to participants, the withholding of information should be specified in the project protocol and explicit procedures stated to obviate any potential harm arising from such withholding.

Deception or covert collection of data should only take place where it is essential to achieve the research results required, where the research objective has strong scientific merit and where there is an appropriate risk management and harm alleviation strategy.

Participants should be given opportunities to access the outcomes of research in which they have participated and debriefed if appropriate after they have provided data.

Principle 4: Protection from harm
Researchers must make every effort to minimise the risks of any harm, either physical or psychological, arising for any participant, researcher, institution, funding body or other person.

2 See **Template 9** in section 7 for a model consent form and checklist. Examples developed by the universities involved in the pilot phase of the value and impact project of i) participant information sheets and ii) consent forms can be found in section 6 at **Example I** and **Example J**, respectively.

Every project should carry out a risk analysis and, where significant risks are identified, should specify a risk management and harm alleviation strategy in the protocol.

Researchers shall comply with the requirements of the UK Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and any other relevant legal frameworks governing the management of personal information in the UK or in any other country where the research may be conducted.

Where research involves children or other vulnerable groups, an appropriate level of disclosure should be obtained from the Criminal Records Bureau for all researchers in contact with participants.

Where harm does nevertheless arise in the course of research, researchers should take remedial steps.

Participants should be given information as to whom they may contact in the event of any issues arising in the course of the research that cannot be resolved with members of the project team.

Principle 5: Confidentiality
Except where explicit written consent is given, researchers should respect and preserve the confidentiality* of participants' identities and data at all times. The procedures by which this is to be achieved should be specified in the protocol.

*Note that the duty of confidentiality is not absolute in law and may in exceptional circumstances be overridden by more compelling duties such as the duty to protect individuals from harm. Where a significant risk of such issues arising is identified in the risk assessment, specific procedures to be followed should be specified in the protocol.

Principle 6: Professional codes of practice and ethics
Where the subject of a research project falls within the domain of a professional body with a published code of practice and ethical guidelines, researchers should explicitly state their intention to comply with the code and guidelines in the project protocol.

Research within the UK NHS should always be conducted in compliance with an ethical protocol approved by the appropriate NHS Research Ethics Committee.

Source: Human Participants and Materials Ethics Committee (HPMEC), The Open University, March 2006

Ethics protocol and checklist

1.	Title of project
2.	Names and details of the staff conducting the research (Are there other collaborators – some of whom may be external to the university?)
3.	Who is sponsoring the project? (E.g. the Director of Student Services.)
4.	Is it funded – internally or externally? (If yes, include details of payment to those involved.)
5.	Where will the project be carried out? (E.g. on or off campus.)
6.	Source of the participants to be studied (E.g. students, staff members, other stakeholders?)
7.	Estimated number of participants
8.	Details of payment to participants (E.g. will participants receive an incentive - book tokens, entered into a prize draw, provided with lunch?)
9.	Has a risk assessment been carried out, either for potential participants or those conducting the research? (If yes, a summary of the issues considered should be described; If no, indicate why – e.g. it is not considered necessary because the study does not require participants to engage in any activities that they would not already be engaged in at the university which are already risk assessed, as appropriate.)
10.	What are the potential adverse effects, risks or hazards for i) the participants and ii) those conducting the research? (E.g. those students accessing the service area being evaluated might be vulnerable adults and therefore could feel pressurised to participate in the study. This could be addressed by ensuring that clear and full information is presented sensitively to potential participants, including issues related to confidentiality and anonymity.)

11.	What are the potential benefits for the participants? (E.g. a continued and improved service.)
12.	Provide details of the arrangements for collection, retention, use and disposal of data (Issues of data protection, confidentiality and anonymity: • questionnaires – how responses will be collected, the data stored, used and reported and to whom; • focus groups – how discussions will be recorded, stored, used and reported and to whom; • case studies – the use of student records and management information – how the data collected will be stored, used and reported and to whom.)
13.	Has a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check been carried out in relation to this research?
14.	Checklist of accompanying documents: • a summary of the project • the detailed protocol for the project • evidence of agreement of other collaborators • copy of the information sheet for participants • copy of the consent form • copy of the questionnaire/interview schedule • copies of standard letters/emails related to the project • copy of risk assessment • confirmation that CRB checks have been carried out • evidence of insurance cover/indemnity
Source: Ethics Committee for Ethical Review of Study, University of Surrey	

The protocol and checklist is available as a template in section 7 at **Template 8**.

6. Examples

A: Impact evaluation plans developed by the universities involved in the pilot phase of the value and impact project

A1: University of York - investigating the impact and value of the Maths Skills Centre for target subjects

Service/activity:	Maths support
Objective:	To support students who require specialist Maths support.
Outputs:	One-to-one support is provided for students who want help with the Maths content of their courses; targeted in this pilot year at first year students requiring help with calculus and algebra.
Intended outcomes:	Students feel more confident about their Maths skills and able to continue with their studies. Staff teaching on relevant programmes are confident that their students have access to appropriate Maths support.
Impact/value indicators:	Self assessment by students of a positive impact of support session(s) upon their ability to resolve Maths problems and confidence to do so. Perception by staff teaching the students who receive the support from the Maths Skills Centre that there is a discernible improvement in the students' understanding, confidence and performance.
Source of data:	• Targeted focus groups with undergraduates; • Statistical analysis of Centre's usage; • Staff interviews or questionnaires to identify perceived need for the Centre; • Questionnaires to students investigating perceived need for the Centre and its effectiveness.

A2: University of Surrey, Centre for Wellbeing - promoting emotional resilience in students

Activity:	Participation in a course run by staff in the Centre for Wellbeing lasting 4-6 weeks. This would combine a psycho-educational component with participation in an experiential group.
Objectives:	Through discussion and active participation (both within the session and home practice) introduce students to topics which promote greater resilience and wellbeing. This would include identifying values and strengths, recognising the importance of social connectedness, living in the moment and self-awareness.
Outputs:	Attend the workshop, engage in home practice, complete a validated questionnaire (e.g. Resiliency Scale RS 14 ™, Penn Resilience Program) at the beginning of the first session and at the end of the final session.
Intended outcomes:	By engaging in an experiential course, students will be encouraged to identify and develop traits which foster resilience.
Impact indicators:	In developing greater awareness of personal responses to difficult situations, students will be able to explore changes that have occurred as a result of participating in the course.
Source of data:	Questionnaire to be completed before and after the course to identify any changes.

A3: University of East London - students with mental health difficulties – measuring the value and benefit of a mental health support mentoring programme

Service/activity:	The Disability, Dyslexia and Access Centre (DDAC) supports students with mental health difficulties to apply for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) and to then access funding for mentoring through the DSA.
Objective:	To provide qualified mental health support mentoring and learning support to students with mental health difficulties and therefore improve student experience. We have a cohort of supervised mentors with a range of skills that can be matched with students.
Outputs:	Students with mental health difficulties attend one hour a week per academic term for mental health support mentoring and learning support.
Intended outcomes:	• To maintain student retention; • To support relapse prevention of student mental health difficulties; • To assist with academic achievement.
Impact indicators:	• Students with mental health difficulties are accessing appropriate treatment and care through NHS mental health services; • Increased attendance records of students; • Fewer students applying for extenuating circumstances for non-submission of assignments or non-attendance of exams.
Source of data:	• Questionnaire survey of students receiving mentoring asking about the impact of mentoring on student retention and relapse prevention; • Corporate systems data to compare general student retention rates with the retention rates of students receiving mentoring; • Comparison of average student marks before mentoring and after mentoring; • Corporate systems data to compare average general student final marks with average final marks of students receiving mentoring; • Comparison between different years of study in terms of impact of mentoring on marks; • Questionnaire survey (with permission) of NHS Care Co-ordinators asking about impact on student health, wellbeing and relapse rates; • Exploring themes between different types of mental health difficulties.

B: An evaluation plan for a disability service

University mission:	How does the work of the centre 'fit' with the university's mission? For example: The service supports the university in fulfilling its desire to provide fair and equal learning opportunities accessible to all applicants with the ability to succeed irrespective of background. The service also ensures the university is in compliance with disability legislation.
Strategic plan:	How does the work of the centre 'fit' with the university's strategic plan? For example: The disability service will support the university's strategic plan in ensuring that the needs of disabled students will be taken into account with respect to access to the curriculum, assessment and examinations, and student support.
Student Services strategy:	How does the work of the centre 'fit' with the overall strategy of the Student Services department? For example: The activities of the disability service supports the department by ensuring that the needs of disabled students are taken into account with respect to access to the curriculum, assessment and examinations, and student support (accommodation, financial support and allowances, and other support services).
Service purpose:	The service ensures that students with disabilities are not discriminated against due solely to their disability from participation in, or benefit from, any course of the university. The service works in partnership with other student service areas, other university departments and academic units to ensure that courses and services promote student access, learning, personal development, and retention.
Monitoring:	Data are available from a number of sources: the university's student records, feedback from students who seek support from the service through satisfaction surveys; staff meetings where problems are identified and discussed; and at departmental staff meetings.

Improvement plan and desired outcome
Outcome description: Determine whether or not the referral process between student service areas, other departments and academic units is working or if another strategy needs to be created to support disabled students in their academic progress and success. Two measures will be considered: • effectiveness will be determined by the number of students (more than XX%) who complete the referral process; • impact will be determined by an overall equivalent or higher academic performance/achievement of those students completing the referral process in comparison to those who do not complete the process.
Strategy to demonstrate outcome: Effectiveness of process: during a meeting with a student, disability counsellors will determine whether or not students need a referral to other Student Services areas or university departments based on a self-reported check list and other information provided by the student. Impact: a referral is evidence of a student who is significantly at risk in terms of academic performance.
Evaluation method: Effectiveness: each student will be identified in a database whether or not they completed the check list/were referred. For those students referred, feedback from the referred area will be sought to determine the outcome. The total number of students referred will be compared to the number of students who subsequently completed the process to determine a percentage for measuring effectiveness. Impact: academic performance/achievement will be retrieved from student records on all disabled students each semester and entered in the database. A comparison will be made between completed referrals and those students who did not complete the process to determine whether or not the referral made an impact on student performance/achievement.
Expected outcome: Effectiveness will be measured by more than XX% completion rate of referrals. If not effective, reasons why will be explored. Impact will be measured by an equivalent or higher academic performance/achievement for the completed referrals as compared to students who did not complete the process. If the referral process does not demonstrate an impact, possible reasons why will be explored.

(Derived from Colorado State University.)

C: An evaluation plan for a study skills support centre

University mission:	How does the work of the centre 'fit' with the university's mission? For example: The centre provides fair and equal learning opportunities that are accessible to all applicants with the ability to succeed irrespective of background.
Strategic plan:	How does the work of the centre 'fit' with the university's strategic plan? For example: The centre supports the learning and development of low income, first generation and disabled students.
Student Services Strategy:	How does the work of the centre 'fit' with the overall strategy of the Student Services department? For example: The centre supports the department's strategy by providing services/ programmes integral to the academic mission of the university that prepare students to maximise their university experience, integrate learning and personal development, and encourage independence and social responsibility.
Centre's purpose:	The centre aims to increase the retention and graduation rates of eligible students and foster a university environment that is supportive of the success of low income, first generation and disabled students.
Monitoring:	Data are available from a number of sources: the university's student records, the centre's student database, and feedback from students participating in the centre's activities. Data are analysed and combined with data from other student services areas where applicable.
Improvement plan and desired outcome	
Outcome description: XX% of students participating in the centre's activities will progress as a result of study skills assistance, and support/referral for academic and personal difficulties.	

Strategy to demonstrate outcome:
Provide services in the form of individual advice (3 times a semester), individual tutoring (up to 3 hours a week), weekly drop-in group tutoring (for high-demand courses), and individual study skills assistance (by appointment).
For the new academic year, a computerised study skills diagnostic assessment will be created for each new student. This tool will be used to create a plan to improve their study skills, with choices from one-to-one assistance or access to several on-line study skills improvement resources.

Evaluation method:
Track services with the centre's database, evaluate students' academic performance/achievement each semester, administer a student evaluation survey to all students participating in the centre's activities during the autumn and spring semesters.

The survey asks students to respond to statements using a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree to not applicable). Examples of statements include:
- Overall, I am satisfied with the services I received
- My academic self-confidence has increased as a result of the support I received
- My study skills have improved as a result of this support
- The support was of high quality

Expected outcomes:
1. XX% of students participating in the centre's activities will progress;
2. YY% of survey respondents will indicate that their 'academic self-confidence has increased as a result of the support received';
3. ZZ% of survey respondents will indicate that they 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the statement 'the support was of high quality'.

(Derived from Colorado State University.)

D: A set of value indicators for an accommodation service

This table has been developed and provided by the Student Accommodation Service at King's College London.

1. Is the service cost-effective?

a) Operating budgets and are these achieved?
b) Cost per student housed per site/overall - competitor analysis in both private and on-campus options
c) Affordability (rent x weeks + additional costs/liabilities)
d) Competitor analysis locally, nationally?
e) Occupancy and void rates?
f) Opportunity cost e.g. potential for summer trade?

2. Are service processes operated in an efficient and timely manner?

a) Are all guarantees met?
b) % of students housed against priority/targets (e.g. 10% of total?)
c) Web information – how accessible and useful – is it comprehensive for all housing options/applicant groups?
d) Centralised/online systems for applicants
e) Processing emails/enquiries and establishing deadlines/timescales in order to measure performance
f) Benchmark key products for each provider e.g. cost of cleaning/number of residents

3. Does the service proactively plan for future resource needs and take appropriate action to address gaps?

a) Accommodation plan which reflects corporate goals in respect of recruitment/retention and overall student experience
b) Development plan
c) Risk register
d) Agreed and well understood allocation priorities and guarantees for accommodation applicants which support both academic and student recruitment/retention goals
e) Project plans with agreed review dates, milestones/deadlines, clear goals, ownership of issues

4. Is the service helping to effectively promote and manage students' transition into and through the university?

a) Role of accommodation in recruitment process and applicant decision making
b) Priorities for accommodation, review process and how these support the university recruitment strategy
c) Strategy for international recruitment

5. Is the service helping the university to effectively support students' academic and personal development and performance?

a) Are there documented standards for pastoral care delivered to occupants?
b) Do managers take a 'real estate approach' i.e. a negative approach of protection of the physical and reputational damage to the asset rather than the positive elements of ensuring that the occupants maximise the educational benefits that can arise from communal living with other students through interaction in both planned and informal activities?
c) Integration of learning and teaching facilities in accommodation (e.g. broadband, study space per resident, location)
d) Provision of appropriate, flexible, comfortable recreation space which encourages integration/ownership/community
e) Clear integration with Campus Wellbeing/Campus Hub to fostering sense of belonging and support

6. Does the service help to ensure the university appropriately identifies and supports those students with specific needs?

a) Process for identifying applicants with special housing requirements and providing support/linking with other services
b) Physical adaptations in residence and around campus
c) Appropriate process for assisted fire evacuation etc
d) Satisfaction survey – are student needs understood/met by the university?

7. Are student users satisfied with the service provided?

a) Regular review of satisfaction surveys – entry and exit – with target audience including students who are in university/college accommodation and those who find their own housing
b) Establish system for giving feedback and informing students of identified trends/problems and proposed action
c) Number of complaints received/resolved locally/escalated
d) Number of disciplinary matters in managed accommodation
e) Number of students referred to other support services and relation to their housing provision
f) Do residents feel safe – buildings and systems designed to obtain right balance between security and independence/accessibility

8. Innovations

a) Adopt a preferred model(s) for the university to acquire and manage additional accommodation – university build, own and operate, BOOT, head lease?
b) Adopt a standard design and management specification with common parameters and structures
c) Business model for use in future planning and decision making on new developments

E: Identifying Student Services costs

The examples and the accompanying notes presented here have been developed and provided by Dr. Gillian Jack, Director of Student Services, Gyfarwyddwr Gwasanaethau Myfyrwyr, University of Glamorgan.

E1: Overall breakdown of Student Services staff costs against throughput (per year)

This example shows how an overall breakdown of Student Services costs against student throughput per year might be undertaken.

It is important to note that the approach to calculating the costs of services is a baseline from which further enhancements and refinements are expected. The template is intended to show departmental costs. As long as the basic information is available, the actual calculation of costs of the department is straightforward.

	Number	Costs	Cost per student based on one-to-one appointments	Cost per student based on throughput (including drop-in sessions)
Number of student appointments/ throughput			5,000 (A)	45,000 (B)
Number of core Student Sservices staff (FTE)	50	£2,000,000 (C)	£400 (C/A)	£44.44 (C/B)
Non staff budget (revenue/capital)		£250,000		
Total budget including staff/non staff expenditure		£2,250,000 (D)	£450 (D/A)	£50 (D/B)
Total student through-put and cost	***50,000 (A+B)***		***£45 (D/[A+B])***	

Notes:
The number of **student appointments or throughput** can be collected via diary systems or door counters which capture footfall, or manual data collection may be necessary. With a refined diary system it will be possible to break down costs per hour; however, to establish an overall assessment of cost for the department this higher level should be adequate.

A relates to the actual number of one-to-one appointments (5,000)
B relates to the actual numbers through the department either footfall or drop in sessions (45,000)
A+B equals total department throughput (50,000)
The number of core Student Services staff relates to staff that are paid directly from the university departmental staff budget. This does not include staff funded by external projects or other associated activity. In this example therefore, the department has 50 staff with a core staff budget of £2,000,000 (C).

Some basic staff costs can now be calculated. The staff cost per student based on one-to-one appointments (**C/A**) or (£2m/5,000) and the staff cost per student based on throughput **C/B** (£2m/45,000).

If the non-staff budget is added into the calculation, this will give the overall department cost per student, so adding non-staff revenue and capital of £250,000 gives the total cost **D**. Similarly to these calculations, total department costs against appointments and throughput can be determined i.e. **D/A** and **D/B**.

Finally, a total of student appointments and throughput against a total staff and non-staff expenditure gives an overall total per student.

E2: Approximate cost per service against throughput

This is an example of how an approximate cost per service against throughput might be shown.

Often, managers are expected to generate income, whether by commercial means or through project funding. This example shows each service within a department, the service expenditure and income, and therefore the total cost per student per service. This information and understanding is useful for transparency and when considering negotiation to sustain, development or terminate individual services. Not all services have the ability to generate income because of the nature of the work. This example also provides an opportunity to consider where one service might supplement another.

	Staff budget (1)	Non-staff budget (2)	External income/ projects (3)	Student throughput, including group work numbers (4)	Total cost per student including external income ([1+2+3]/4)
Service 1	£	£	£		**£**
Service 2	£	£	£		**£**
Service 3	£	£	£		**£**
Service 4	£	£	£		**£**
Service 5	£	£	£		**£**
Service 6	£	£	£		**£**
Service 7	£	£	£		**£**
Total	£	£	£		**£**

E3: Identifying the total number of one-to-one appointments made and attended by students per service across sites (if relevant)

This is an example of how the total number of one-to-one appointments made and attended by students per service across sites (if relevant) might be identified.

Diary or manual systems can be developed to a greater level of detail to help to break down the costs of throughput. This is an example whereby the length of appointments could be matched against the average hourly rate of staff and worked up to a total cost, in addition to assessing the cost of 'no shows'. Formulae on spreadsheets are straightforward to set up for actual calculations. The benefits of undertaking calculations at this level are that the total number of student contact hours can be assessed, and taking the assessment further the cost of non-student contact administration may be determined. Such calculations will only provide indicators, but indicators that should help assess the value and use of time.

Number of visits per service	**TOTAL**	**One-to-one appointments length (examples below)**	**'No shows'/ Cancellations**	**Total one-to-one appointments seen**	**Hourly rate**	**Total expenditure**	**Costs of 'no shows'**
Service 1		Combination of ½ and 1 hour					
Service 2		Combination of ½, 1 and 2 hours					
Service 3		½ hour					
Service 4		1 hour					
Service 5		1 hour					
Service 6		½ hour					
Service 7		variable					
Total							

F: Surveys

The examples below have been developed by the universities involved in the pilot phase of the value and impact project. Please note that these are drafts, which are still evolving and are therefore likely to change. They are reproduced here for illustrative purposes.

F1: University of Brighton - survey for students with disabilities

The Disability and Dyslexia Team needs your help! We are trying to improve the experience of students using our services, so if you consider yourself to have a disability, health condition or specific learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia) we would be grateful if you could give us some feedback in this short survey. Both your feedback, your ideas and suggestions will be really appreciated. Everything you say will be treated confidentially - we are gathering this information solely to make improvements to our services and information for future disabled students.

Please describe briefly the nature of your disability/ies or health issue/s

Have you accessed support or advice from the University Disability team? [yes/no]

Were you aware how students with disabilities were supported at University before you applied? [yes/no]

Did you research the support available for students at the University of Brighton before you applied? [yes/no]

	main source	other
Open Day	❏	❏
Phone call / email	❏	❏
Prospectus	❏	❏
Web Site	❏	❏
Word of mouth	❏	❏

Did you use any other sources for information?

Was the information available about disability support a factor in your decision to apply to the University of Brighton? [yes/no]

Did you disclose your disability on your UCAS form? [yes/no]

If you did not declare your disability at application...
At what stage did you disclose your disability?

- ❑ Open day
- ❑ enrolment form/ registration
- ❑ to a member of your course team
- ❑ during Welcome Week
- ❑ have not disclosed
- ❑ to a member of the Disability and Dyslexia team
- ❑ other:

If you declared your disability at application...
Did you receive emails from the Disability and Dyslexia team prior to your coming to University? [yes/no]

Did you respond to these emails? [yes/no]
If you answered 'no' to this, was there a specific reason why you did not respond?

Was the position with regard to any adjustments or adaptations you might need and how to access support made clear to you? [yes/no]

Disabled Students' Allowances
Were you aware of the Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) before you applied to University? [yes/no]

If you were aware of the DSA before you enrolled please let us know where you heard about it.

- ❑ school/college
- ❑ Connexions or other advisor
- ❑ email from University of Brighton
- ❑ from staff at University
- ❑ other:

Please highlight your current status with regard to the DSA

- ❑ I am not aware of the DSA
- ❑ I have applied and have equipment and support
- ❑ I have applied
- ❑ I do not think I am eligible
- ❑ I do not intend to apply

F2: University of Surrey - SPLASH[3] medium term evaluation form (administered 3-6 months after student workshop, meeting, or drop in)

1. Type of intervention (Appointment/Drop-in/Workshop)

2. Why did you come to see staff in SPLASH? What were you hoping to improve?

3. What did you do differently as a result of your session in SPLASH?

4. Confidence
4.1 Are you more confident in your academic abilities than you were when you first came to SPLASH?
4.2 If so, how (if at all) did SPLASH help you become more confident?
4.3 What other factors have helped you to become more confident?
4.4 If you answered 'no' in 4.1, why do you think this is?

5. Grades
5.1 What marks were you getting before you came to SPLASH?
5.2 What marks are you getting now?
5.3 How (if at all) did SPLASH help you to improve your marks?
5.4 What other factors have helped you to improve your marks?
5.5 If your grades have stayed the same or got worse, what feedback are you getting on your work? Why do you think you are not getting better marks?

6. Independence
6.1 What do you understand as 'Independent Learning'?
6.2 Would you say you are a more independent learner than when you first came to SPLASH?
6.3 How (if at all) did SPLASH help you to improve you to become more independent?
6.4 What other factors have helped you to become more independent?
6.5 If you do not see yourself as an independent learner, what could you do to become one?

3 SPLASH is the Student Personal Learning and Study Hub – a part of the University's Library - which provides a place for students to come to, to improve their academic and/or information skills.

F3: Adapted from the University of East London – telephone interview with students who received the Summer Support Fund (SSF) award[4]

1. How would you have financially supported yourself without the Summer Support Fund?

2. How likely is it you would've dropped out if you hadn't received the SSF, on a scale of 1-10?
   1 – 3 = Minor Likelihood
   4 – 5 = Moderate Likelihood
   6 – 8 = Significant Likelihood
   9 – 10 = Main Likelihood

3. What impact do you feel the SSF had on your grades?

4. On a scale 1-10, how important was the SSF to you in terms of how it impacted on the following three aspects:
   a) your quality of your life?
   b) your ability to concentrate on your studies?
   c) your student experience?

   1 – 3 = Minor Importance/Impact
   4 – 5 = Moderate Importance/Impact
   6 – 8 = Significant Importance/Impact
   9 – 10 = Main Importance/Impact

5. During the year what impact does the financial advice and support from UEL have on your overall student experience?

4 The Summer Support Fund provides discretionary financial assistance to full-time undergraduate students who are suffering financial difficulty because they cannot work during the summer vacation due to one or more reasons (e.g. they are single parents with dependent children, have a permanent disability/long-term illness, are primary carers).

G: Focus/discussion group schedules

The examples below have been developed by the universities involved in the pilot phase of the value and impact project. Please note that these are drafts, which are still evolving and are therefore likely to change. They are reproduced here for illustrative purposes.

G1: University of Brighton - first year undergraduates with disabilities

Welcome

Introduction – [from the researchers]

Explanation about the focus group – aims:

- To find out what information sources work best when communicating support messages to disabled students before, during and after application
- To discover what key messages might encourage students to access (early) support
- To explore reasons why students might choose not to access support from the university and whether these barriers could be removed

Permission to tape [consent form & data form]

Something about confidentiality and disclosing personal data – we are not expecting you to give details of your disability or personal situation, but anything that you do mention is completely anonymous. Invite people to speak freely as part of an open dialogue.

1. General introductions – who is who, and what course they are studying

2. Deciding to go to university

2.1 Why did you end up at Brighton/Eastbourne/Hastings? Was it the course, city, entry requirements, social scene…?

2.2 Did you visit the university on an open day or for an interview?

2.3 Did you consider disability support at this stage? Did it affect your choice in any way?

3. If you did think about disability support at the application stage:

3.1 What information did you seek before applying to university in relation to your disability?

3.2 Were you able to find this information? Where from and how easy was it? How could we improve it?

3.3 Did you feel confident about the university's ability to support your disability?

3.4 Was there information missing? Could we improve anything?

4. Declaring on your application form

4.1 Did you apply through UCAS?

4.2 Did you declare your disability on your application form (any entry route)? Why – what encouraged or discouraged you?

4.3 If you didn't declare your disability on your application, how did you let the university know? At what stage?

4.4 After telling the university about a disability, what happened next? Did you feel confident that the system was working? Were you kept informed?

5. Making contact with the Disability and Dyslexia Team

5.1 Reasons as to why students do or do not contact D&DT (prompts:)
- Do you know what they do?
- What do you think are the benefits of contacting them?
- What do you think are the drawbacks?
- Do you know how to contact them?

5.2 Did your family/friends/any others influence your decision to contact or not contact the team?

6. Automated emails

6.1 Did you receive them?
6.2 Did they go into inbox or spam?
6.3 Did you respond to them? Why?
6.4 Did they contain the most useful information? Were they the right length? Did they feel impersonal?
6.5 Are there other methods of communication that we could use that you think you would pay attention to? What would work better?
6.6 What would have caught your attention and encouraged you to talk to us? Is there anything else we could have done?

7. Disabled Students' Allowances

7.1 Were you aware of how disabled students at the university were funded?
7.2 How did you receive information about the DSA (or have you not?)
7.3 Do you know if you are eligible?
7.4 Have you applied? What stage are you at? If you didn't apply – why not?
7.5 Did you access support from the D&DT in your application or did you do it separately?
7.6 Is there more the university could do to encourage students to apply?

8. Do you have any other comments about disclosure, information or communication?

8.1 Have you heard anything else about the D&DT through word of mouth etc?

Thank you.

Feedback from the session – would anyone like to know what outcomes come from this evaluation?

G2: University of York, Maths Skills Centre – second year students (from target departments)

- Thanks for coming, help yourself to food/ drink
- I am [name of researcher], the facilitator for this session on your experience in the first year of your courses.
- All the information gathered today will be anonymised and treated in confidence. Please respect the confidentiality of the other people here today by not repeating anything you have heard today outside of here.
- This research has been instigated by the Maths Support service, which has started this year. It is part of a bigger project to develop evaluation methods for various student services across the university which in turn will feed into a national project.
- If you want a summary of the findings, then feel free to leave me your email address at the end and I can arrange for this next year.
- I think you are all now in your second year, but this session is interested in your experiences in the first year. You are all from different courses across the university but may have had similar experiences during your first year.

Background
- If we can start with some background information. How did you decide what course to study at university?
- Thinking back to the first year, were there any elements of the course which you hadn't anticipated?
- What did you find hard in the first year?

Maths experience?
- Ok, so moving onto Maths. What was Maths like at school?
- What level did you study it to?
- Were there any aspects you found hard in Maths at school?
- What areas did you find easy?

University experience
- What did you expect your Maths courses to be like in the first year?
- How did they compare?
- What areas did you find hard?
- Were there any areas you found easy?
- Were there any dedicated Maths modules? How did you find them?
- How did these modules compare to other modules in the first year?
- What were the methods of teaching Maths?
- How were the Maths elements assessed?
- How did you deal with any difficulties in completing the Maths modules?
- How has the Maths in the first year linked to the second year?

Thanks for your time.

H: Interview schedules

The examples below have been developed by the universities involved in the pilot phase of the value and impact project. Please note that these are drafts, which are still evolving and are therefore likely to change. They are reproduced here for illustrative purposes.

H1: University of York, Maths Skills Centre - first year interview schedule (non-users of the Centre)

5 minutes	**Introduction, ethics forms** Although I am not connected with the Centre, staff there will have access to the transcripts, but they want honest feedback. This interview has two parts: 1. How you are finding the Maths on your course 2. Your thoughts on the Maths Skills Centre Although the two parts may be interlinked, during each part we would like you to not focus on the other too much.
10-15 minutes	**The Maths on your course** Which subject are you studying? What made you decide to study this? What 'A' Levels/ previous subjects have you studied? In terms of the Maths, how have you found your modules? *Possibly omit this question* How is your course taught (lectures, seminars, tutorials, etc etc)? Do you have regular pieces of work to hand in? Procedural or assessed? How does the Maths compare with how you found Maths at school? Thinking back to your decision to study x subject, especially at York, did you expect the Maths to be like this?

Rest of interview (10-15 minutes)	**The Maths Skills Centre** So you are here in response to an email sent to your department for volunteers amongst people who had not used the Maths Skills Centre. Before that email were you aware of the Maths Skills Centre? How? Have you considered using it? How do you deal with any difficulties you encounter with Maths? Do you know other people who have used the centre, from your course or other courses? Are there any barriers to you using it? What do you think the Maths Skills Centre could do better? (*Depends on earlier responses*)
	About the interview Anything else to say? Have we covered the main areas that are relevant?
	Further Question There's been an idea to hold a one or two week workshop before the first year; would you have been interested in such a thing? Would you have paid for it?

H2: University of York – interview with students who had had a dyslexia assessment in the last academic year

Introduction

Read through consent form.

Staff from the Dyslexia Service do not know who is taking part in this process.

This interview is semi-structured, these are things I want to cover but it is not a strict format which we must follow.

....

I know you may have told me a bit about yourself via email, but can you tell me a bit about yourself:

- What course are you doing?
- Which department?
- What year are you in?
- What did you do before starting your course?

I understand that you were assessed for the first time in the last academic year as having dyslexia. Approximately when were you diagnosed?

- Since then what type of support have you had?
  - Disabled Students' Allowances – help applying? Receiving?
  - Money for books
  - Assistive technology – what?

    i.e. Mind mapping

    PDA (personal recording device)

    Read and write
  - Overlays/filter for books and/or pc
  - One-to-one support sessions – Approximately how many?
  - Liaison with academic department
  - Extra time for exams
  - Unofficial support from centre e.g. phone calls/emails

- What do you think has been the most helpful for you so far? Why is that?

- How beneficial has the assistive technology been?

- Have there been any problems with it?

- Have you told your academic department? How supportive have they been?

Ok, so that is a bit of an introduction. Can you think back to the time last year when you first went to the Dyslexia Service:

- What prompted you to contact the Dyslexia Service in the first place?
  - Was it something you had thought about before starting your course?
  - Did someone suggest it to you?
  - Were you struggling with the change in academic work?
  - What was it you were struggling with?
  - How did you find out about the service, where to go?

- How did you cope before you were assessed with work/school/earlier years of your course?

- How did you feel when the initial screening indicated that you were dyslexic?
  - Did it affect the way you thought about your academic work?
  - Did you tell anyone?

- Generally there is a wait between the initial screening at the centre and the full psychological assessment. How did this wait make you feel?

- What was your reaction to receiving the full psychological assessment report?
  - Did it affect you emotionally?
  - Was this what you had expected?
  - Did you discuss this with anyone?
  - How did it feel about your academic work/past academic achievements?
  - Did you feel differently from after the initial screening?

- We discussed earlier the type of support you have received. How has this been useful? For example:

  - One-to-one support = YES
  - What have you worked on in your support sessions?
  - Has it been generic or focused on specific pieces of work?
  - One-to-one support = NO or one session
  - You said earlier that you have not had any one-to-one sessions/had one. Why is this?

- Thinking back over the last few months/year since you were assessed, have you changed the way you approach academic work?
  - How do you feel about completing work?
  - Are you more confident about work?
  - Not just assessed work/exams - presentations, contributing in sessions etc

- Have you seen a change to the marks you have achieved or feedback from lecturers?

- Do you wish you had had the diagnosis sooner? Do you think this would have made a difference?

- Do you think the support or the services provided by the Dyslexia Service have been of benefit to you in helping you to deal with your dyslexia? What has been most valuable?

- Do you/will you still use the service during the rest of your time at York?

As I have said, this research is being done as part of a bigger project to establish ways to evaluate student support services. It was decided to undertake one-to-one interviews as it was felt that a survey or questionnaire was not appropriate.

- ❏ How would you have felt about being asked to complete a probably fairly lengthy questionnaire by email covering the topics we have covered today?
- ❏ How effective have you found this interview in establishing the impact of the Dyslexia Service? Should I have asked about anything else?

- What motivated you to take part today?

- Have you anything else you would like to contribute?

Thank you very much.

I: Participant information sheets

The examples below have been developed by the universities involved in the pilot phase of the value and impact project. Please note that these are drafts, which are still evolving and are therefore likely to change. They are reproduced here for illustrative purposes.

I1: University of Brighton - international student transition evaluation

[date of event]

What is the purpose of the study?

- To assess what impact Orientation week has on international students in relation to their transition into university life in Brighton.
- Identify whether students are equipped with the information they need to ensure a successful transition.

Expenses and payments:

You can claim back any travel at the end of the session with a valid ticket for your travel today [date of event].

What do I have to do?

The focus group is a chance for participants to give feedback on their experiences of Orientation. It is an open discussion, led by questions and all participants will be given an opportunity to speak freely about their experiences.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Your personal data (e.g. name, contact details) will all remain confidential and your comments will be anonymous. We do however gather demographic information on students, such as nationality, age and course.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The feedback you give today will be used to evaluate the Orientation programmes that the university runs and a summary of this feedback and evaluation report will be shared with other appropriate departments at the University of Brighton.

Contact Details:

If you would like any further information about this study, please contact [name and contact details of the researcher].

I2: University of York - dyslexia support

Dear Student

Student Support Services at the University is involved in a national project to develop ways in which to evaluate the impact of its services, which includes Dyslexia Support.

To undertake this work, we have recruited a researcher [name]. We are contacting all students who are registered with the service as having had a dyslexia assessment in the academic year (2009/10) to find out about people's experiences. We are interested in hearing from people regardless of the levels of support which they have received.

The research will take the form of confidential one-to-one interviews. Staff at Dyslexia Support will not be notified of who has responded to this invitation, and all findings will be anonymous to ensure confidentiality.

Interviews will be arranged (as far as possible) at a time to suit the participant at a location away from the Student Services building and will take place as soon as possible. It is anticipated that the interviews will last for around one hour, for which participants will receive a 'thank you' of a £10 book voucher.

If you are able to spare an hour to take part in this process, no matter the level of support or contact you have had with the Dyslexia Service, then please contact [name of researcher] by email: ....

If more responses are received than are needed, they will be dealt with on a first come first serve basis.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. Full details of the national project which is taking place can be found via the link below.

Yours sincerely

Deputy Director Student Support Services

http://www.amosshe.org.uk/projects/vip

J: Consent forms

The examples below have been developed by the universities involved in the pilot phase of the value and impact project. Please note that these are drafts, which are still evolving and are therefore likely to change. They are reproduced here for illustrative purposes.

J1: University of Brighton - international student transition evaluation

[date of event]

Name of Researcher:..

1. I... agree to be involved in this research which investigates the experiences of international students on the Orientation programme. I give my permission for [name of researcher] to use excerpts from the focus group.
2. [Name of researcher] has explained to my satisfaction the purpose of the study. I have been informed of the nature and purposes of the study and have read the information sheet. I understand the principles and processes of the study.
3. I am aware that I will be asked to participate in a focus group that is being recorded.
4. I understand that my personal details (including my contact details) will remain confidential.
5. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected.
6. I understand that the data collected will be used as part of a Student Services evaluation project. I understand that the data will be used in writing up and disseminating the information within appropriate departments of the University of Brighton.
7. I agree to take part in the above evaluation.

Age:	
Nationality :	
Course:	

....

Name of Participant Date Signature

....

Researcher Date Signature

J2: University of York – consent forms for the Maths and dyslexia evaluations

My name is [researcher's name].

I am a researcher for the Student Support Services at the University of York.

I am doing research to develop evaluation and impact techniques for services provided by Student Support Services.

If you have any questions, please ask me or contact my manager who is directing the project and can be contacted at ....

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this project. Before we start, I would like to say that:

- Taking part is entirely your choice
- You are free to refuse to answer any question without saying why
- You are free to withdraw at any time without saying why
- Whether you take part or not, the services you receive will not be affected.

The interview/focus group will be tape-recorded. The data will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to members of the research team. Your words and ideas may be quoted in the final research report, but under no circumstances will your name or any identifying characteristics be included in the report.

Please sign this form to show that I have read the contents to you.

....(signed)

.... (printed)

.... (date)

Copy for researcher and participant

7. Templates

1: Steps to take in the process of planning an evaluation

Questions to ask	**Answers**
1 Before starting • Who needs to be involved? • What skills will be required? • What is the timing/timescale? • What are the budgetary implications?	
2 What is the issue being investigated?	
3 What is the purpose of the evaluation?	
4 Where to get the information needed?	
5 Who should be studied?	

6 What is the best evaluation method?	
7 How should we collect the data?	
8 What instrument should we use?	
9 Who should collect the data?	
10 How should we analyse the data?	
11 What are the implications of the evaluation for policy and practice?	
12 How should we report the results effectively?	

2: Planning and implementing an impact evaluation

	Questions to address	Answers
Evaluation title/ aim:	What are you trying to do in conducting the evaluation?	
Service/activity:	What is the focus of the evaluation?	
Objective:	What objective is the service/activity trying to achieve? What impact does it want to make on students?	
Outputs:	What do students get from the service/activity?	
Intended outcomes:	What change is intended to occur as a result of students' participation with the service/activity?	
Impact indicators:	What evidence do you need to gather to demonstrate that a change has taken place?	
Source of data:	How might you get this evidence – is it already available, does it need to be collected directly from the students?	

3: Overall breakdown of Student Services staff costs against throughput (per year)

(See **Example E1** for an explanation of the components A-D.)

	Number	Costs	Cost per student based on one-to-one appointments	Cost per student based on throughput (including drop-in sessions)
Number of student appointments/throughput			(A)	(B)
Number of core Student Services staff (FTE)		(C)	(C/A)	(C/B)
Non staff budget (revenue/capital)				
Total budget including staff/non staff expenditure		(D)	(D/A)	(D/B)
Total student throughput and cost	***(A+B)***		***(D/[A+B])***	

4: Approximate cost per service against throughput

(See **Examples E1-3** for further explanation.)

	Staff budget (1)	Non-staff budget (2)	External income/projects (3)	Student throughput, including group work numbers (4)	Total cost per student including external income ([1+2+3]/4)
Service 1	£	£	£		£
Service 2	£	£	£		£
Service 3	£	£	£		£
Service 4	£	£	£		£
Service 5	£	£	£		£
Service 6	£	£	£		£
Service 7	£	£	£		£
Total	£	£	£		£

5: Identifying the total number of one-to-one appointments made and attended by students per service across sites (if relevant)

(See **Examples E1-3** for further explanation.)

Number of visits per service	TOTAL	One-to-one appointments length (examples below)	'No shows'/ Cancellations	Total one-to-one appoint-ments seen	Hourly rate	Total expenditure	Costs of 'no shows'
Service 1		Combination of ½ and 1 hour					
Service 2		Combination of ½, 1 and 2 hours					
Service 3		½ hour					
Service 4		1 hour					
Service 5		1 hour					
Service 6		½ hour					
Service 7		variable					
Total							

6: Costs for planning or considering new services or activities

This template is an example of how costs might be identified when planning or considering new services or activities.

Type of cost	Amount	Basis of costing*
Capital (i.e. the initial, one-off start-up costs)		
Equipment		
Space/building modification		
Assets/resources/materials		
Sub-total		
Revenue (i.e. recurrent costs, the highest of which are usually staff costs)		
Equipment Maintenance Facilities Rentals/access fees		
Staffing Staff 1 Staff 2 ………		
Overheads		
Sub-total		
TOTAL		

* This column is meant to provide information on the assumptions made for the costs and any sources used to create them, which allows for judgments on the accuracy of the costs detailed.
(Source: University of Glasgow, 2007.)

7: Checklist for a value for money evaluation

Areas to address:	Questions to address:
Strategic objectives	What are they – what is the service trying to achieve? How do they relate to the wider university's strategic objectives?
Inputs (direct and indirect costs)	What is the cost of the service?
Outputs	What do students (and other stakeholders – e.g. academic staff and the wider university, employers, parents, landlords) get from the service? (An output is a deliverable, i.e. it's a physical thing. It's basically a statement about what students (and other stakeholders) receive from the service.)
Intended outcomes	What is intended to occur as a result of students' participation (and other stakeholders' involvement) with the service/activity? What is the intended impact on the university's strategic objectives? (An outcome is a level of performance or achievement. It is a statement about the transformative process that the service/activity is intending to achieve.)
Value indicators	What evidence needs to be gathered to demonstrate the intended outcomes? (Indicators are pieces of information - relating to the strategic objectives - that demonstrate whether or not a change has taken place.) Note: indicators need to be measurable and can be qualitative as well as quantitative.
Value for money judgement	What judgement(s) can be formed when all the above factors have been taken into account?

8: Ethics protocol and checklist

(See section 6 for an explanation of the items in the checklist.)

Ethics protocol and checklist	
1.	Title of project
2.	Names and details of the staff conducting the research (Are there other collaborators – some of whom may be external to the university?)
3.	Who is sponsoring the project?
4.	Is it funded – internally or externally? (If yes, include details of payment to those involved.)
5.	Where will the project be carried out? (E.g. on or off campus.)
6.	Source of the participants to be studied (E.g. students, staff members, other stakeholders?)
7.	Estimated number of participants
8.	Details of payment to participants
9.	Has a risk assessment been carried out, either for potential participants or those conducting the research?
10.	What are the potential adverse effects, risks or hazards for i) the participants and ii) those conducting the research?
11.	What are the potential benefits for the participants?
12.	Provide details of the arrangements for collection, retention, use and disposal of data
13.	Has a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check been carried out in relation to this research?

14.	Checklist of accompanying documents: • a summary of the project • the detailed protocol for the project • evidence of agreement of other collaborators • copy of the information sheet for participants • copy of the consent form • copy of the questionnaire/interview schedule • copies of standard letters/emails related to the project • copy of risk assessment • confirmation that CRB checks have been carried out • evidence of insurance cover/indemnity

Source: Ethics Committee for Ethical Review of Study, University of Surrey

9: Model consent form and checklist

Model consent form

You are invited to participate in a study of [state what is being studied]. We hope to learn [state what the study is designed to discover or establish]. You were selected as a possible participant in this study [state why and how the subject was selected].

If you desire to participate, you will [describe the procedures to be followed, including their purposes, how long they will take, and their frequency].

[Describe any risks, discomforts, and inconveniences that may reasonably be expected and any benefits to subjects or society that may reasonably be expected.]

Any information obtained in this study in which you can be identified will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. [If any information will be released to anyone for any reason, state the persons or agencies to whom the information will be given, the nature of the information to be given, and the purpose of the disclosure.]

[Describe any compensation or costs related to the study.]

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your future relations with [institution]. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without affecting your status as a [patient, student, or other status].

If you have any questions about this research, please ask me. If you have additional questions during the study, I will be glad to answer them. You can contact me at [contact details].*

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

You are making a decision whether to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided about this study and have voluntarily decided to participate.

....	....
Signature of participant	Date
....	....
Signature of parent or legal guardian [if subject is under 18 years of age]	Date
....	....
Signature of researcher	Date

*If data are to be collected by means of a postal or online questionnaire, the following format may be substituted from this point:
You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your completion of this questionnaire will be taken as evidence of your willingness to participate and your consent to have the information used for the purposes of the study.

You may keep this cover letter and explanation about the nature of your participation in this study and the handling of the information you supply.

Yours sincerely,

....
Signature of researcher Date

(Adapted from Schuh and Upcraft, 2001.)

Consent form checklist

Items	Yes	No
Is the general purpose of the study stated, that is what the researcher expects to learn? Comments:		
Is the participant's right to choose indicated? Comments:		
Is there a statement indicating how a subject was selected as a possible participant? Are the population and number of participants identified? Comments:		
Are the procedures to be followed in the study clearly described (time, frequency, nature of information asked, observations, and so on)? Comments:		
Is there a statement of possible risks, discomforts, or inconveniences that the participants may reasonably expect? Comments:		
Are any substantial or likely benefits to participants identified? Comments:		

Is any standard treatment withheld or alternative procedures disclosed? Comments:		
Is participant confidentiality explained (for example, use of tapes, photos, data)? Comments:		
Are participants' compensation and costs of taking part explained? Comments:		
Is where the participant can contact the researcher to have questions answered indicated? Comments:		
Is the participant's right to a written copy of the consent form stated? Comments:.		
Is there a statement that expresses that the individual's signature indicates a willingness to participate? Comments:		
Are appropriate signatures and date spaces included? Comments:		

(Adapted from Schuh and Upcraft, 2001.)

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Notes

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