1 Key ideas about evaluating educational activities and resources

Why evaluate educational activities and resources?

This document is the first in a series of documents and guides that comprise an evaluation framework for planning and evaluating educational activities and resources for use primarily in higher education, though with plenty of potential for use beyond this.

What are evaluation and monitoring?

Evaluating anything means, above all, finding out whether or not the activity or resource worked – that is, whether or not it achieved what it was intended to achieve. Evaluation also means understanding how it worked.

Monitoring is much like evaluation. We monitor something while it is happening, to see if it is working and make any necessary changes. We evaluate at the end, to guide us on what to do differently next time.

What form will this approach to evaluation take?

Basically, it asks a series of questions. And then suggests ways to make use of the answers.

These questions may vary depending on what is being evaluated. Tools and guides – mainly questions, with ideas on how to collect answers and how to use the answers – are provided for evaluating different activities and products.

Together, the levels, labels and questions below constitute the core evaluation framework.

Level	Label	Typical question(s)	When asked?
1	Awareness & knowledge	What methods did the unit use to publicise [whatever is being evaluated – we'll call this the 'evaluand']?	Before use of the evaluand
		How effective were these publicity methods?	After use
		How did people find out about the evaluand?	"
2	Reactions	What did they want from it? (also level 4 below)	Before use
		Did it meet their needs?	After use
		Did people like it?	"
		How could it be improved?	"
3	Engagement (if appropriate)	What other related activities, products and services have people used or been involved in? (It may be possible to get some answers to this from other sources such as attendance lists for other events or engagement activities.)	Before / after use
		What other activities, products and services may people use or be involved in the future?	After use
4	Learning from	What kinds of things did people learn from the evaluand?	Before use
5a	Applying the learning	What use do people plan to make of what they have learned?	Before use

5b	Applying the learning	What use have people made of what they learned from the evaluand?	3–6 months after use
6	Effects on student learning	What effects has their changed practice had on student learning?	3-6 months or more after use

This framework is adapted from Kirkpatrick, D. (1994). <u>Evaluating Training Programs</u>. San Francisco, CA, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

This framework tries to deal with the evaluation of most or all educational activities and resources. It is therefore rather abstract. It becomes more real in the tools for evaluating particular activities and products.

<u>Does every activity or resource have to use the same evaluation questions?</u>

No. But every activity or resource should be evaluated at each of these levels, using the tools.

<u>How does an evaluator decide what to ask?</u>

- Ask questions, the answers to which you can use in planning future activities and products.

- Continue to ask some of the evaluation questions you asked before, to track how satisfaction and effectiveness have improved.

<u>How can an evaluator use the answers to the evaluation questions?</u>

Above all, use the answers to improve future activities and products.

You will also be able to use the answers for accountability purposes, to show that you have done and achieved what you set out to do and achieve.

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David was founding chair of the UK Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA); a founder of the UK Heads of Educational Development Group (HEDG); founding editor of the International Journal for Academic Development; and a founding member of the Council of the International Consortium for Educational Development. He was previously a Director of the Centre for Higher Education Practice at the UK Open University. He has co-edited three books on academic development, and published some 60 papers, articles and reports. David can be contacted at <u>adbaume@aol.com</u>. He will be happy to answer your questions about evaluation.

<u>A further source</u>

Baume, D. (2008). "A toolkit for evaluating educational development ventures." <u>Educational Developments</u> **9**(4): 1-7., accessible at <u>http://www.seda.ac.uk/?p=5_4_1&pID=9.4</u>

Meta data

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Author (s)	David Baume
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Title	Key ideas about evaluating educational activities and resources
Keywords	Academic practice, development, evaluation, Higher Education Academy
Description	One of a series of guides on the evaluation of academic practice, academic development units, resources, events, activities and services. This guide, like the others in this series, is modified from an evaluation framework produced for the six Higher Education Academy Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) Subject Centres in 2009. These Subject Centres consist of Biosciences, Engineering, Information and Computer Science, Materials Science, Maths Stats and OR and Physical Sciences. The creative commons versions of these guides were created in collaboration between David Baume and Paul Chin (pac67@bath.ac.uk) at the University of Bath, who is happy to be contacted for advice on using and adapting the Evaluation Framework for evaluation of other activities.
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Language	English
File size	48Kb
File format	Word (docx)