

4 Planning, Running and Evaluating Events

Audience and function for this Guidance

This summary guide is intended to help staff to plan, manage, administer and evaluate any workshop, conference session or other event. It is not a comprehensive guide to event planning. This guide concentrates on planning for evaluation and on the administration of evaluation.

Background

This guidance makes suggestions on how a unit can work with colleagues to plan, run and evaluate effective events of all kinds. This guide is part of a broader evaluation framework and additional guides are available for evaluating other academic or academic related product or service products and activities.

Why evaluate?

To see:

1. Whether each event achieved what it was intended to achieve; what else it achieved; and how it contributed to the unit's overall goals.
2. How the event achieved what it achieved.
3. How future such events could be even more successful.

There may be other reasons for conducting a particular evaluation. For example, to see what future events should be run; to see whether an event is still the best way of addressing this particular topic; and other reasons particular to the unit and to the event. As well as using standard evaluation tools such as those offered here, a unit should always be willing to ask particular evaluation questions that are interesting and important to the Centre.

An evaluation framework

The framework within which all a unit's activities, products and services could usefully be evaluated are included as Appendix 1. The rest of this guidance considers what evaluation activities should be undertaken before the event; during and at the end of the event; and after the event. It considers, not just how evaluation information should be collected, but also how it should be used.

Questions

The questions are intended to accompany the questions that a unit should already be asking. There is no need to change current questions, as long as the questions are generating useful data – and the data are being used! The Reference Version of this guidance suggests particular questions.

'Level' refers to the six levels of the evaluation framework – see Appendix 1.

Before the event

Question	Source	Use	Level
How; that is, through what channels; was the event publicised?	A unit's records	Together, answers show how effective current publicity channels are. Answers	1

How did participants find out about the event?	Ask the question at registration or at the start of the event	may point to any necessary changes in publicity methods.	1
Were recruitment targets – not met – met – exceeded?	A unit's records		1
What did participants want to get out of the event?	Again, ask the question at registration or at the start of the event	<p>If this is asked when participants register, this may make it possible to fine-tune the event to match more closely to participants' needs and interests.</p> <p>This question also provides an important baseline for later questions about what participants actually got from the event.</p> <p>The question also helps to focus participants' attention on learning from the event, getting useful things out of it.</p>	2

At the end of the event or at the end of individual sessions within the event

Information / Question	Source	Use	Level
Were publicity, venue, administration, catering, etc. satisfactory?	End-of-event questionnaire. (It is vital to collect as close to all of these questionnaires as is humanly possible.)	Data on satisfaction, probably best obtained using a four-point scale, enable the unit to: (a) Identify particular difficulties and (b) Track how satisfaction varies, from event to event and over time.	2
In what particular respects could these have been better?		Wherever possible, such data should be acted on for the next event.	
What other unit activities, products and services have participants previously used or been involved in?		The unit will want to build up a richer picture, not just of reactions to individual events, but of the nature and shape of individual academics' engagement with the various activities, products and services of the unit. Answers to these two questions should help a unit to build up these rich pictures, accompanied by any other information available, for example through the unit's records database(s).	3
What other unit activities, products and services may participants use or be involved in following this event?			
What kinds of things did people learn or otherwise gain from the event?	By questionnaire, at the end of the event or towards the end of individual sessions	The answers to these questions will give a unit a clearer view of the effects of their events on participants.	4

Did participants get what they wanted from the event?	within the event – these questions take a few minutes to answer thoroughly!	The answers may help with the design of future events. There is no guarantee that participants will use what they have learned. But planning how they may use ideas from the event is a valuable participant activity in its own right.	2
What use may participants make of what they learned or otherwise gain from the event?			4
Participants' permission to be contacted by the unit once or twice in the future, to explore what use participants have made in their own practice of ideas from the event and the effects of any changes to practice.	Ask permission at the end of the event	This enables follow-up questioning – see below under 'A few months after the event'	5

A few months after the event

Information / Question	Source	Use	Level
What use have participants made of what they learned from the event?	Ask participants who agreed at the event to be asked this question a few months later – by email or telephone	To show that the unit's event contributed to the improvement of teaching in the discipline	5

A few more months after the event

Information / Question	Source	Use	Level
What effects has their changed practice had on the learning of their students?	Again, ask participants who agreed at the event to be asked this question a few months later, by email or telephone	To show that the unit's event contributed to the improvement of student learning in the discipline	6

Appendix 1 – Evaluation Framework

Level	Label	Typical question topics
1	Awareness and knowledge of the event	What methods did the unit use to publicise the event?
		Were recruitment targets -- not met -- met -- exceeded?
		How did participants find out about the event?
		What other suggestions do participants have -- about how the event could have been publicised? - about how such events could be publicised in the future?
2	Reactions to the event	Did participants like the event?
		What did participants want to get out of the event?
		Did they get what they wanted to get out of the event?
		What else did they get out of the event?
		How could future such events be better?
3	Engagement with the work of the unit	What other unit activities, products and services have participants previously used or been involved in?
		What other unit activities, products and services may participants use or be involved in following this event?
4	Learning from the event	What did participants learn or otherwise gain from the event?
		What use may participants make of what they learned or otherwise gained from the event?
5	Using the learning from the event	What use have people made of what they learned from the event?
6	Effects on student learning of applying the learning from the event	What effects has their changed practice had on the learning of their students?

Meta data

The following table describes information about this resource (meta data) which is also used to locate the resource using search tools. Please note the terms and conditions of use under the Creative Commons licence associated with the use of this resource.

Author (s)	David Baume
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Title	Planning and Evaluating Events - Summary Version
Keywords	Academic practice, development, evaluation, event, planning, Higher Education Academy
Description	<p>One of a series of guides on the evaluation of academic practice, academic development units, resources, events, activities and services.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
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