

NEON Establishing Evidence and Measuring Impact Working Group Meeting

Minutes

UEA History

- Large outreach team based in admissions recruitment and marketing team.
- Started to look at outreach evaluation:
 - Survey based around quality of interventions now moving into impact of activity;
 - Joined HEAT 2 years ago- started looking metrically at those who take part and ending up at UEA.
 - Dedicated officer looking after retention, progression and success- looking at all metrics and measuring gaps across different groups of students.
 - WP manager role created to sit in planning department- looking strategically across institution- taking data and developing projects to raise awareness and understanding across other areas of the university- student services etc.
 - Setting up official reporting- WP committee and setting up mechanisms to allow data to be embedded into all departments.
 - Evaluation of outreach is more developed than retention and success evaluation.
 - Started to fund roles across other departments to assist in measuring the metrics.

Conservatoire for Drama and Dance: Jon Rainford: 'Developing evaluation skills in non-evaluators'- A case study

- Conservatoire- confederation of world leading schools
 - Each school has someone working on WP- but ranges in volume and delivery
 - Students undertake vocational training- 35 hr training a week so can't necessarily assist with WP on a large scale (i.e. become ambassadors) due training commitments
 - Whilst thought of as elite students attending are:
 - 84% state school
 - 36% under £25k income- but should be interpreted with caution
 - 15% BAME
 - 30% Disabled
 - Small undergraduate pool- therefore have to rely on qualitative evaluation due to numbers
- What does Access and Success look like?
 - £1.3 million- 46% of additional fee income
 - Don't necessarily need to do more- just need to more targeted at what outreach is done- and how it is evaluated
- What were we trying to achieve/
 - Realistic approach to what is doable
 - Practitioners won't necessarily have any background in evaluation- no social science / methods training

- Making them want to do evaluation
 - Getting them to see the benefits of evaluation
- Providing new skills
 - Background in theory of change
 - Evaluation methods
- Incremental change needed- as some were not doing anything at all
- Process
 - Started with an evaluation framework
 - Overarching plan
 - Picture of how and why evaluation fits
 - Evaluation Training
 - Providing background- why do we evaluate
 - Opportunity for guided development- provided a tool to evaluate a particular topic which they could then use back in the office
 - Planning theory of change for particular projects / interventions
 - Exploring different evaluation methods:
 - Questionnaires
 - Focus groups / interviews
 - Skills wheels
 - Graffiti walls
 - Individual support
 - Co-evaluating specific projects
 - Providing 1-2-1 support
 - Follow-up training (on topics coming up)- what next?
 - Writing reports
 - Developing skills
 - Longitudinal evaluation
 - Plans to develop per support working group

Working Group Discussion 1: Reflecting on the Launch of NEON report: 'The Widening Access Scorecard – measuring progress in making HE more equal'

Thoughts on the presentation:

- The scorecard could have a practical use but it would need to be collated at an institutional level
 - To compare to sector and comparator groups (Russell Group or other groups selected by your own institution)
 - Where possible institutions would also wish to use to look at subject level progression
- The scorecard may enable a more formalised way of reporting progress- but will everyone want to share
- Think it could be used as the APP official measure if it was worked on in collaboration with OfS

Questions for NEON (which may be answered when the report is fully launched)

- What is the purpose of the scorecard?
- Is it a sector tool? Is it being drilled down to institution level?
 - How will it work for small institutions? Where not all data is available due to small numbers?
 - Who will produce it?
 - If it's not being done centrally will NEON be producing detailed guide to sourcing data and working out analysis so when it is replicated by others at institutional level it's done in the same way to allow for comparisons?
- Is there a link between this and the newly launched Wonkhe tool?
- What does the progress show?
 - Is it just a change between two years?
 - If there is positive growth how do we know it is actually positive? Do we need to show the starting point?
 - Does it need to be measured over a longer period of time?
- Do we still need NS-SEC?- given this is an outdated measure.
- Should we include a measure for good honours?
- Is there an overall score?

Working Group Discussion 2: Evaluating Retention and Success: Current Institutional approaches and ideas for the future

UEA Evaluation Strategy

Aims:

- Understand where the performance gaps are
- Develop rounded understanding of WP motivators and barriers
- Evidence based send
- Impactful and effective initiatives and interventions

Monitoring (ongoing, deep dives and evaluation):

- Robust evidence base- desk research and lit review
- Performance monitoring- management information data and analysis
- Understanding why- active quant and qual research

Outcomes:

- Improved understanding to WP across the sector and whole institution
- Informed target spend
- Recommendations for effective and impactful initiatives
- Robust evautlion of strategic approach
- Evautlion baselines and measures of individual initiatives

Retention: Logging all extra-curricular activities against student record to see the impact on retention rates

Evaluation: Making sure evaluation is proportional; Should you still evaluate things that you know work? Do you need to know if they are still working well?

Who is WP?: Mature; Disabled; POLAR q1; Male; Care Leavers; BME; Estranged; Refugees; Low household income; Young Carers; IMD; FSM

- Should we use a basket of measures to target?

University of Cambridge: Sonia Ilie: 'Designing and using evaluations across the student life cycle'

- Inequitable access to HE- the issue!
 - Equitable access is more than getting people through the door
 - Evidence about socio-economic background associated with access to different types of institution and access to different course; AND different study experiences, drop-out and graduation rates and employment prospects
- Far access interventions should go beyond getting in
- Evaluation:
 - Process evaluation is equally important as impact and outcome evaluation
 - Approaching evaluation from two different angles:
 1. The intervention is known (something that has been running for some time)
 2. The specific (type of) outcome
 - How do we know on which outcome we should be focusing?
 - What outcomes are you particularly interested in?
 - Take a step back and understand what are trying to achieve: theory of change
- How do we go about evaluation in post-access spaces?
 - Make use of existing interventions: WP can be a collaborative, not a competitive, space
 - Tell others about your results: no point reinventing the wheel
 - Evaluation isn't an RCT: be creative about your evaluation design
 - Use academics with an interest in the field- get in-house evaluation expertise
 - Design evaluation early on: embed from the beginning
 - Turn limited resources into an advantage: wait-list designs can be fair (randomly assign to get a control group for quasi-experimental evaluations)
 - Embed evaluation data collection in existing processes: focus on key variables (what to measure)
 - Try to keep in touch with your students: upon leaving, moving or graduating