



Using Theory of Change to Review and Evaluate WP Activity

Dr Tammy Thiele and Amanda Bishop

Overview

- What is Theory of Change
- Why consider it?
- Developing, and Applying Theory of Change to WP Activity

Discussion 5 minutes

What do you hope to get from the session?

What is Theory of Change

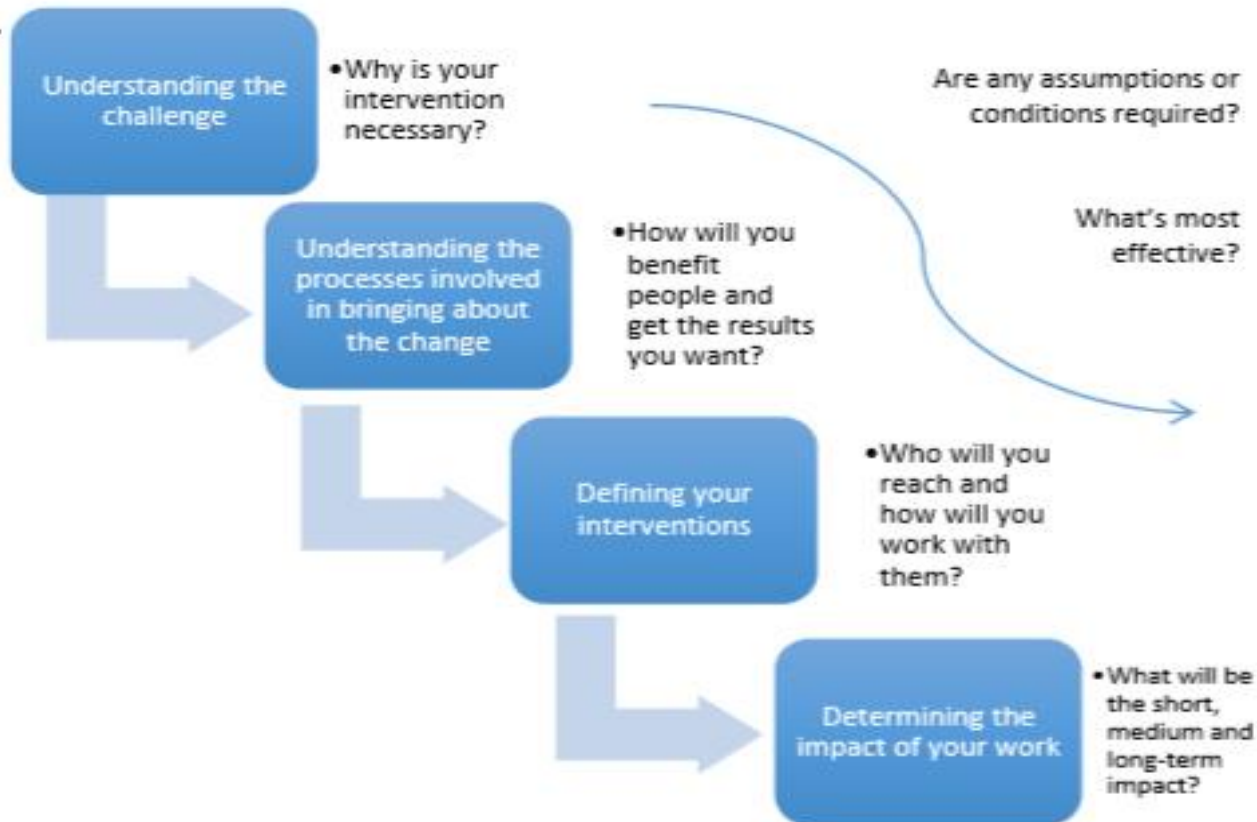
An approach that describes and illustrates how and why an intervention is going to achieve its intended goals in a particular context.

It focuses on mapping out or filling in what a programme does and how it achieves a desired change.

Theory of Change (Design)

The main stages in developing a Theory of Change are:

Start here...



Source: OfS (2019) SEF

Why use Theory of Change?

By using this approach we can build evaluation processes that are relevant and appropriate to the intervention being delivered, thus recognising that these vary in many ways and the fact they are not amenable to a 'one size fits all' approach to evaluation.

Access and Participation Plan

The Office for Students' (OfS, 2019) guidance for HE providers states:

A provider's plan must demonstrate a clear overarching theory of change. It must show how the assessment of performance has informed the strategic aims, objectives and targets which in turn have determined the strategic measures and investment necessary to deliver them, underpinned by robust evaluation. A provider's targets must directly reflect the aims and objectives detailed in the plan, and be sufficiently ambitious to make a meaningful and effective contribution to the promotion of equality of opportunity.

(OfS, 2019 Regulatory Notice 1 Access-and-Participation-Plan-Guidance, p 18)

Access and Participation Plan

The Office for Students (OfS) guidance states that HE providers should demonstrate:







- the provider's ambition for change
- what it plans to do to achieve that change
 - the targets it has set
- the investment it will make to deliver the plan.
- a clear overarching **theory of change**

What we are expected to achieve

OfS (2019) Standards of Evidence and Evaluation

Type 1 Evaluation Standards= *clearly defined aims and objectives in the context of our institutional Strategy*

Self-assessment tool

Dimension 2: Designing your programmes			Does it exist?		How is it demonstrated?	Notes
This dimension considers the rationale for programmes, the extent to which programme design and choice of outcome measures are underpinned by and informed by the existing evidence, and whether evaluation is built in at the design stage.			Response (choose from list)			(use this space to explain your answers and the scores you have given yourself)
Rationale for programmes	Expected	Are your programmes underpinned by clear objectives for what you want to achieve?	Yes, already in place for the majority of programmes		Defined objectives documented in enough detail to enable someone else to work towards them correctly and effectively, and capable of being measured and evaluated. This might be underpinned for example by guidance and support for setting of objectives.	
	Expected	Is your programme design informed by evidence?	Emerging or in development for most programmes		This is referring to whether your programme development practice draws on your own or other people's existing evidence of the impact of activities to inform your programme design features. This evidence would include published research, monitoring, feedback, impact evaluation evidence, national data and own evaluation(s).	
	Commended	<i>Is there a clear and detailed specification of the specific activities your programmes will deliver, and why you are delivering them in this way in order to best meet your objectives?</i>	Neither in place or in development for most programmes		References to evidence of impact elsewhere, in the research literature, or both, on effectiveness in different contexts. Identification of impact evaluation to show that those receiving the intervention treatment you are delivering have better outcomes, i.e. you can point to results that show that what you are doing is likely to be effective in terms of generating the desired results.	
Indicators and measures	Expected	Have you defined and agreed the deliverables for your programmes?			Specification of what will be delivered: for example, you have set targets for the number of different types of activities that the programme will deliver and the volume in terms of those taking part in them and target group characteristics.	
	Expected	Are you clear on how you will measure all of the outcomes and impacts of your programmes?			For example, measures of your outcomes would include specification of specific and achievable changes for your participants (pre and post) which can be reliably measured and which are relevant to the aims of your interventions. Measure of impact might include clearly articulated measures of the difference your activities are making to access and participation in higher education. This might be underpinned for example by use of a framework of outcome and impact measures appropriate for different activities and circumstances.	
	Expected	Are your success measures focused on impact in terms of achieving outcomes for participants?			Evidence of moving beyond feedback and satisfaction measures and the opinions of the participants to specify outcomes, e.g. continuation and progression, attainment, behavioural changes.	

Discussion

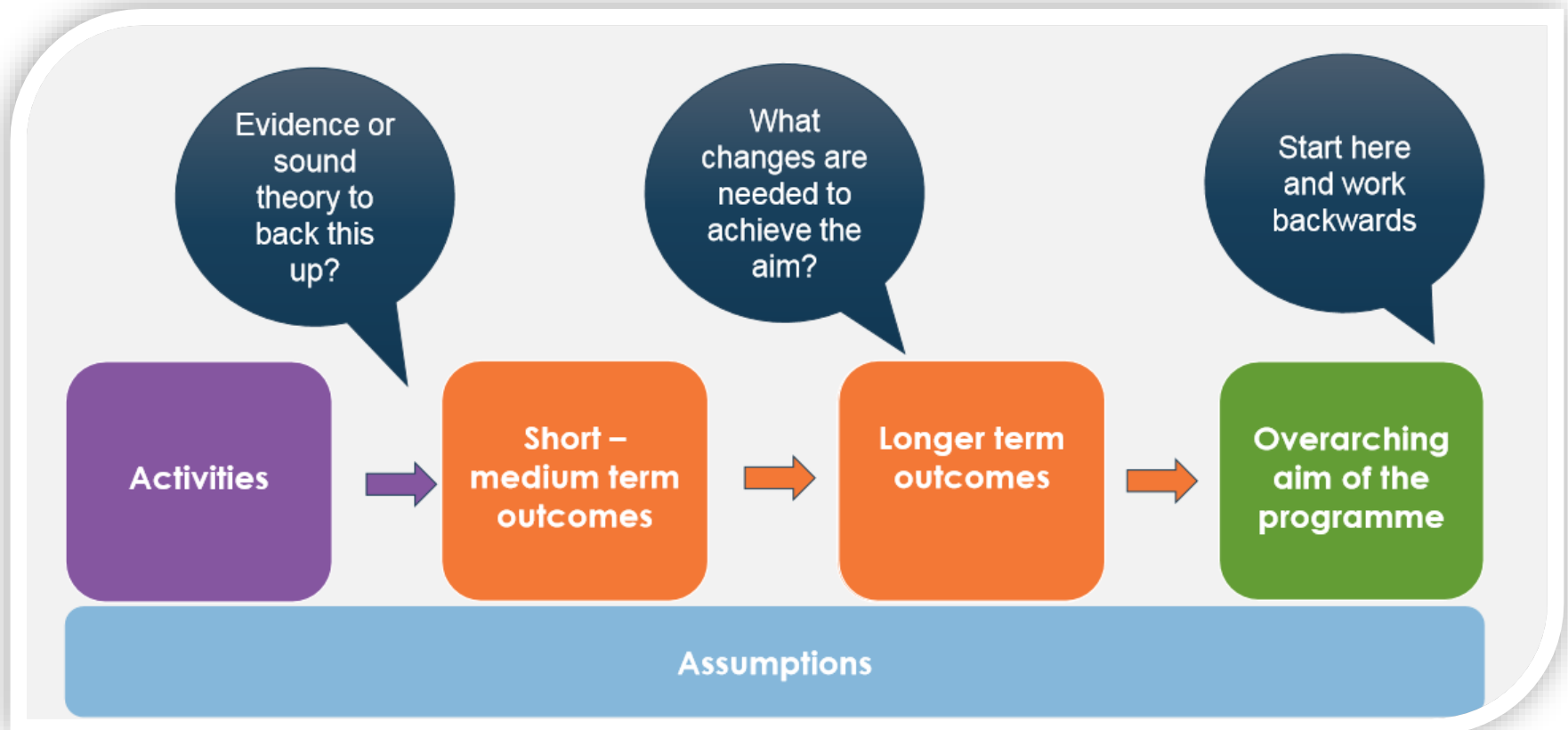
Who has seen the self-assessment tool?

Who has used it?

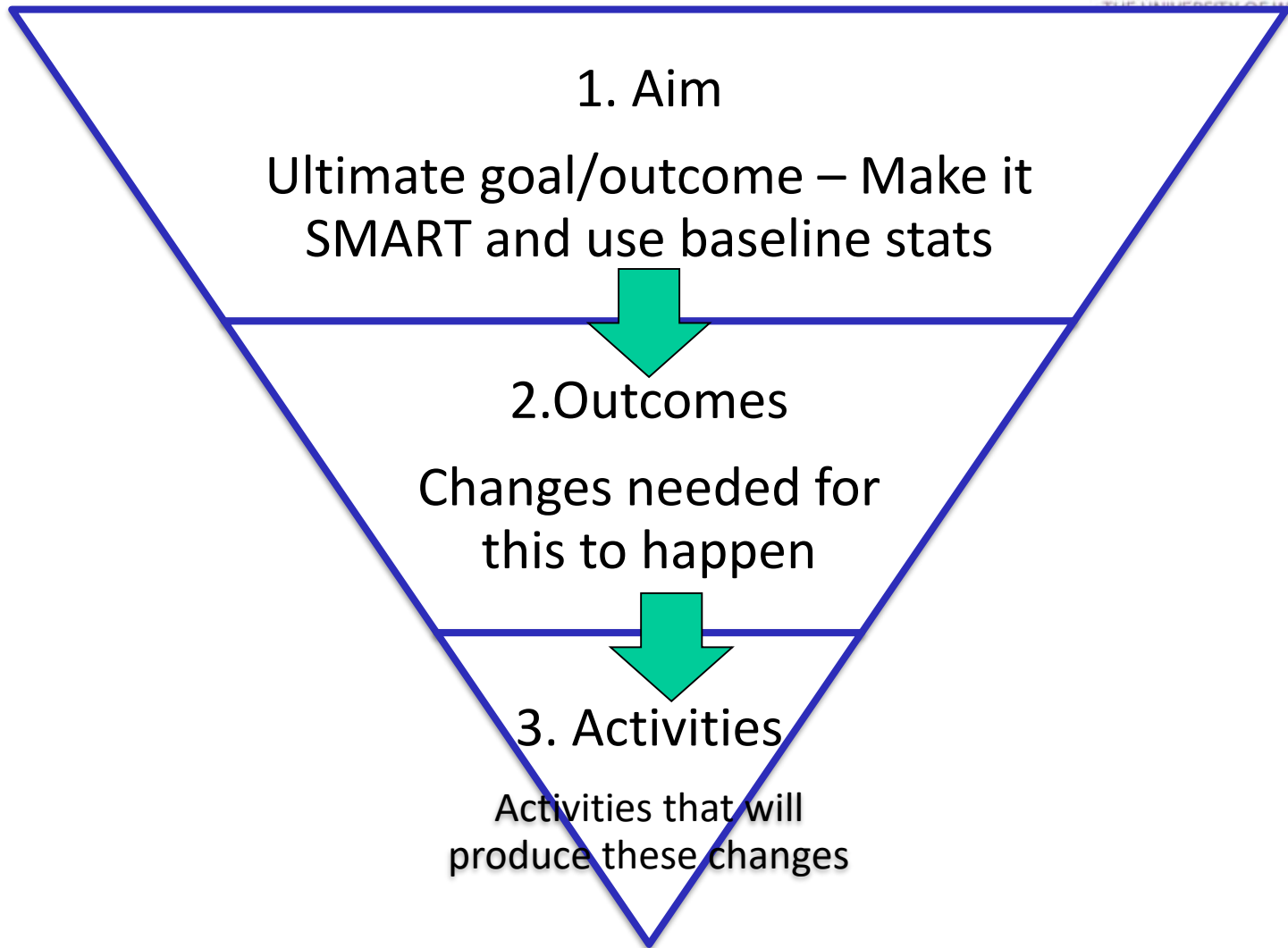
How have you used it?

Developing a Theory of Change

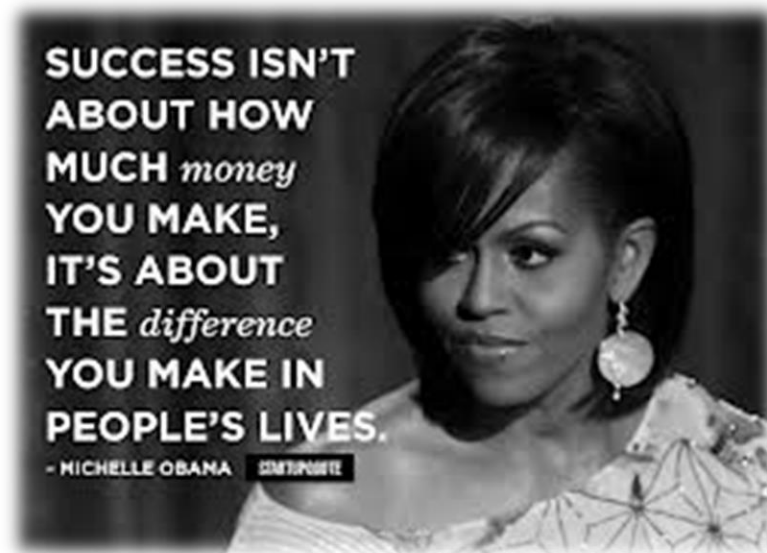
Working Backwards



Working Backwards



1. Identifying your ultimate aim/goal



Ultimate Aim

Broad statement of the change you hope to make in the lives of your target group

Example 1 from Brilliant Club:

To support young people aged 14-19 to develop employability skills and enable them to effectively plan and compete for employment and training opportunities within the financial services and accountancy sector

Example 2 from NCOP

To drive a rapid increase in the number of young people from under-represented backgrounds who go into higher education

Evidence that underpins aims?

- What evidence is there to justify the selection of your aims?
- Assessment of performance for individual HE Institution
- National trends

Task

Identify a programme or activity may be access focussed or lifecycle (i.e. success and progression)

Multiple one-off activities may be viewed as a collective (i.e. one-off recruitment visits could be viewed as 'school visits')

What is the ultimate aim of the programme/activity?

Ultimate Impact Measures

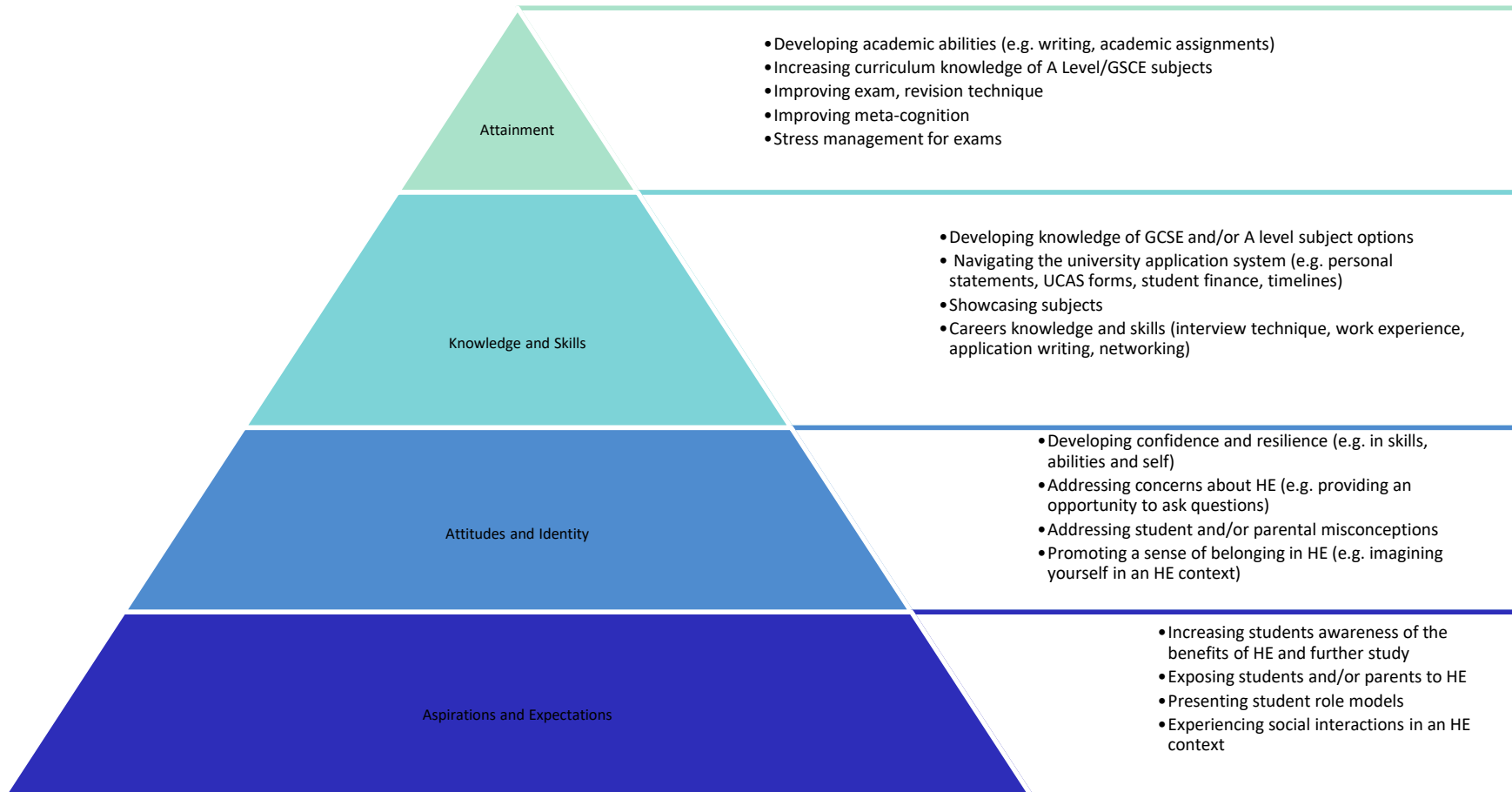
- What can be measured to look at success against main aims?
 - % applying/progressing to HE/Specific HE/ Research Intensive Universities (may also focus on progression to HE in FE, higher apprenticeships)
 - Achievement and success in HE
 - % applying/progressing to PG study/graduate employment
- Typically longer-term measures due to time lag between when an intervention is delivered and when data related to such measures are available

Intermediary outcomes/objectives

- What intermediate changes are needed to achieve/influence ultimate goal?
 - Behaviours/ skills/ attributes/ progress
- Informed by the evidence you have used to help identify the factors and barriers to equality of opportunity you wish to address

2. Identifying outcomes needed to achieve your aim(s)

Intermediary Outcomes



Tips for identifying intermediary outcomes

- Focus on the needs of your participants and describe the main ways in which you hope their skills/ behaviours/ knowledge will be different as a result of your work.

-->To increase, to develop...

Again, is there evidence to justify the focus on those indicators?

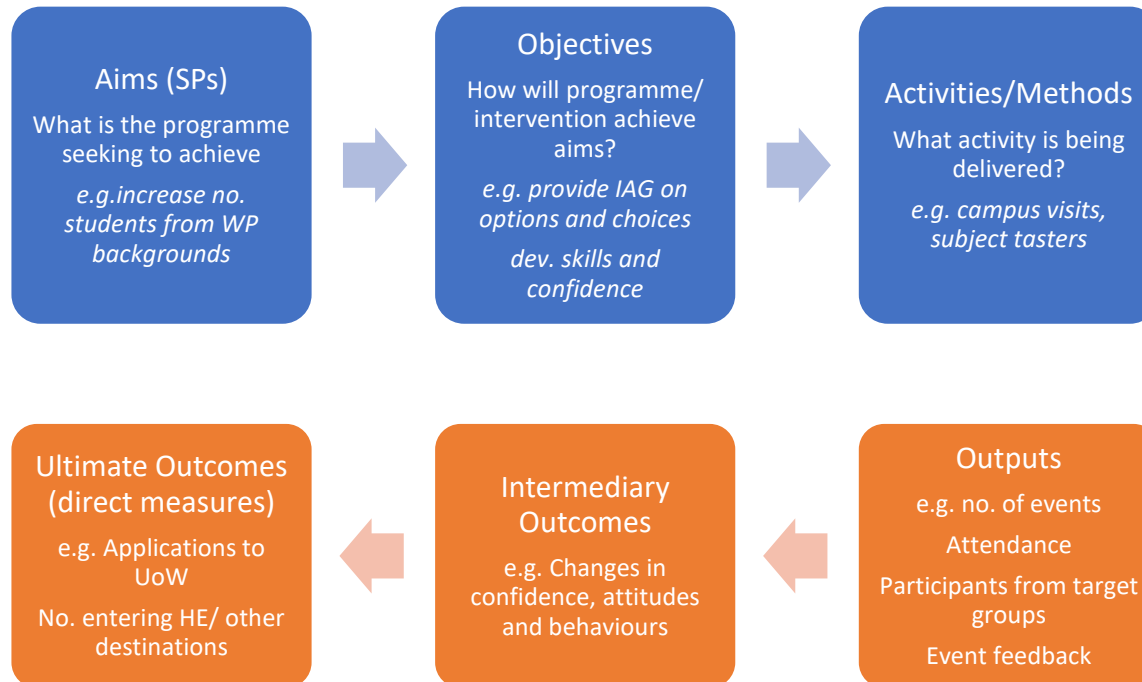
Activities (Inputs)

- What activities will contribute to achieving your desired outcomes?
 - How are activities linked to outcomes (i.e. what outcome(s) does each activity lead to)?
- Test your assumptions, and try to provide evidence to demonstrate impacts.

Mapping Outcomes with Activities

Outcome	Objectives	Pathways KS4 Events	RAG Status
Attainment	Developing academic abilities (writing, academic assignments)	0 events	
	Increasing subject specific knowledge	2 events (in school, on campus)	
	Improving exam, revision technique	1 event (invited to GCSE Bootcamp)	
	Improving meta-cognition	0 events	
	Stress management for exams	0 events	
Knowledge and Skills	Developing knowledge of GSCE/A Level options	1 event (in school, briefly)	
	Navigating the university application system (ps, UCAS, finance)	1 event (on campus, briefly)	
	Showcasing different subjects	0 events	
	Developing academic and soft skills	0 events	
	Careers knowledge (interview technique, work exp, app writing, networking)	1 event (on campus)	
Attitudes and Identity	Developing confidence in skills and abilities	2 events (in school, on campus)	
	Addressing concerns about HE	2 events (in school, on campus)	
	Providing IAG	2 events (in school, on campus)	
	Promoting sense of belonging in HE	2 events (in school, on campus)	
Aspirations and Expectations	Increasing students awareness of benefits of HE	2 events (in school, on campus)	
	Exposing students to HE	1 event (on campus)	
	Presenting student role models	2 events (in school, on campus)	
	Experiencing social aspect of HE	0 events	
Parental Engagement	Increase awareness of HE with parents	0 events	

Logic Model



Logic Model as a Foundation for Evaluation Plan

PROGRAMME PLANNER

Programme Title: _____

Aim(s): _____

Objectives Define how you will achieve the aims These should link to intermediate outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes <i>Describe the actual change that you want to see as a result of activities (e.g. increase knowledge of HE). Each of these should link to the objectives. All of these should also link to ultimate outcomes but should be the intermediate steps.</i>	Information Collection Tools	Who will collect info and when?	How will you use this information?	Notes

Selecting an Evaluation Approach

- Three-tiered evaluation categorisation system assigns evaluation approaches and standards of evidence to interventions based on their respective ‘intensity’ levels
- Involves using different approaches to generate evidence suited to a wide range of interventions with varying aims/objectives, outcome measures and target groups.

Stratifying by 'Intensity'

Three categories (high, medium, low intensity) defined based on expected impacts, aims/objectives, groups that are targeted + in some cases cost and duration

Intervention Categories	Description
Category 1 (low intensity)	Mainly one-off activities that are broadly aspirational such as campus visits, tasters sessions (may form part of multi-component interventions).
Category 2 (medium intensity)	Activities that involve more than one interaction with the same group(s) of participants (i.e. they take place over one or more days). Typically include a learning component. Examples include: mentoring, and summer schools.
Category 3 (high intensity)	Interventions with highest expected impacts based on evidence. These include sustained post-16 outreach and in-reach interventions as well as contextual data & financial bursaries.

Evaluation Standards

Evaluation Types and standards established by OfS (2019)

	Description	Evidence	Claims you can make
Type 1: Narrative	The evaluation provides a narrative and a coherent theory of change to motivate its selection of interventions/activities in the context of a coherent outreach strategy	Evidence of impact elsewhere and/or in the research literature on outreach effectiveness or from your existing evaluation results	We have a coherent explanation of what we do and why Our claims are research-based
Type 2: Empirical Research	The evaluation collects data on outcomes and impact and reports evidence that those receiving an intervention have better results, though this does not establish any direct causal effect	Quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of a pre/post treatment change or a treatment/non-treatment difference	We can demonstrate that our interventions are associated with beneficial results.
Type 3: Causality	The evaluation methodology provides evidence of a causal effect of an intervention	Quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of a pre/post treatment change on a treated group relative to an appropriate control or comparison group using an appropriate and robust research design	We believe our intervention causes improvement and can demonstrate the difference using a control or comparison group

Intervention Category	Evaluation Approaches	Key Questions to Address	How will information be gathered?	How will the information be used?
Category 1 One off activities, with the lowest level of intensity. Typically broadly aspirational. Examples: Campus visits, one off- taster sessions, general HE talks. * Subject tasters could be cat 2	Type 1 reflective process evaluation What is required: Clearly defined aims and objectives Strengthened by evidence from the literature to motivate the selection of activity What is measured: Participants' reactions and satisfaction with the experience	Pre-implementation: What are your specific aims/objectives? What evidence is there to support selection of activity? Post-implementation: Was the event enjoyable, useful, was time well spent, did the material make sense?	- Monitoring -Feedback forms at the end of events - Participant interviews at the end of or during event (formal or informal) - Learning logs	To improve design and delivery.
Category2: Activities that involve more than one interaction with same group; typically include an active learning component. Examples: Summer schools, mentoring, *most pre-16 and primary school sustained	Type 2 reflective process & impact evaluation What is required: OfS Type 1 requirements plus evidence of impact that those receiving an intervention treatment have better outcomes (this does not need to establish any direct causal effect). What is measured: quantitative or qualitative evidence of pre/post treatment change or a treatment/non-treatment difference (e.g. increase/change in knowledge, skills, aspirations, attitudes)	Pre-implementation: Type 1 questions plus: What are the baselines? What evidence is there to support selection of success measures? How will you measure change? Post-implementation: Did participants acquire new knowledge and skills? Was there a change in participant's knowledge, aspirations, and attitudes?	-Pre and post questionnaires -Interviews/focus groups at the start and end of the event or later -learning logs/participants portfolios -participant reflections -HEAT tracking form	To understand and improve programme content, impacts and effectiveness
Category 3 Interventions with highest expected impacts These include our post-16 programmes such as: UniTracks, P2L, P2B, RO. Contextual Data Financial Bursaries	Type 3 multi-modal process and impact evaluation What is required: A robust evaluation methodology which combines process and impact evaluation approaches to provide substantive insight into the impacts of interventions, how these have been influential, what components are effective or aren't and why. And/or OfS Type 3 An evaluation methodology that provides quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of a pre/post treatment change on a treated group relative to an appropriate control or comparison group and/or What is measured: (change/causal impacts/perceptions and experiences)	In addition to the above, questions may include: How did participant/s experience the intervention? How was the intervention implemented? What was the impact on the participants? What was the impact on the UoW/school/society? Can changes during and following intervention be reasonably linked to the intervention?	-Pre and post questionnaires -Interviews/focus groups at the start and end of the event or later -learning logs/participants portfolios -participant reflections - Observations -Document Review -Novel tools such as photovoice (+ Causality-RCT/quasi-experimental design) Control groups- RCT -HEAT tracking for outreach and in-reach	To understand meaning of activities from different perspectives, use action change to facilitate implementation along the way. To establish causality where possible.



Novel Approaches

- **Participatory Action Research:** involve training ambassadors to understand impacts as interventions unfold using observation and informal feedback
- **Case Studies:** series of case studies based on findings from multiple forms of data. These will provide a deeper insight into the experiences of selected participants during the course of their participation in our more intensive interventions.
- **Control groups/comparison groups analysis:** seek to carry out quasi-experimental study to establish *causal impacts* and achieve the OfS Type 3 Evaluation standards

Data Collection Tool	Description	Examples of interventions this may relate to
Pupil Surveys (baseline and post-survey)	Used to capture pre/post-treatment change in for example: students' aspirations, knowledge of HE/postgrad/employment, confidence, resilience	Used for all participants involved in sustained outreach and in-reach interventions (if possible)
Post-activity feedback forms	Used to capture participants' reactions to interventions, ensure that content and delivery of specific activities are relevant and meaningful.	A main method used for low intensity, one-off activities.
Online feedback tools (e.g. turning point)	Used to capture reactions to interventions and knowledge at the beginning/end of the activity.	A main method used for low intensity, one-off activities.
Interviews/focus groups	Used to explore people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviours and interactions. Will be conducted with students, project stakeholders, teachers, parents and carers (depending on the focus of the activity).	Used for activity involving multiple components over a set period of time (categories 2 and 3)
Observations	Used by practitioners to gain insight into the experiences of participants as they take part in activities or after these have taken place. Will be used to generate case studies and 'stories' of the impact activities are perceived to have by practitioners, ambassadors.	Used for a one-off, category 1 activity or activity involving multiple components over a set period of time.
Reflective journals/diaries	Participants and ambassadors can complete reflective journals/diaries to capture experiences during/after activities. These could incorporate metacognition to explore how students' reflect on learning.	Used for activity involving multiple components over a set period of time.

- Qualitative & quantitative data collections tools
- Used in a flexible manner and adapted to address the objectives of the given intervention/project.

Design Factors	Key considerations	Checklist
Aims	Aims should be clearly defined in relation to institutional strategy and evidence.	
Objectives	What are the objectives? Have objectives been defined in enough detail to enable someone else to work towards them?	
Indictors	What indicators will be used to assess change over time? Are the chosen indicators capable of capturing the changes activities are attempting to bring about on individuals, groups, organisations and/or systems?	
Baselines	Do we have a specific target from the baseline (i.e. increase the number of WP applicants going to UoW, or increase self-confidence from a baseline measure?)? Again, it is important to use evidence from the literature and/or think about how we can collect baseline indicators related to the measure of interest before delivering an intervention.	
Data collection	<p>What approaches and methods (qualitative and/or quantitative) should be used to measure and understand the impacts of the intervention? What data will be collected, how and when will data be collected and also recorded if necessary?</p> <p>Think carefully about what data should be collected and how it can be collected to determine if the intervention is achieving its purported aims and objectives.</p>	
Ethics/Security/ Transparency	Are there ethical issues involved in collecting the necessary data? What lawful basis should we use? Are all individuals/agencies involved as fully aware as is appropriate regarding the nature of the intervention and data collection and use? Is there a protocol to ensure that data are kept securely?	
Consent	Is consent required and if so, have all individuals/agencies involved in providing data given their consent? Considerations like this depend on the age of the participants.	
Feasibility	Is it certain that we will be able to collect the evidence/data we will need and the number of participants needed?	
Timing	What is the time frame for achieving the objectives of the intervention and hence for the collection and analysis of data?	
Evaluation plan	Do we have a protocol outlining procedures for data collection, time frames and key deadlines?	



Evidence base

- Developing evidence base, from internal and external research to inform our approach
- Currently have an overview and explanation to cover each intermediary outcome

Next steps for outreach team and beyond

- Mapping events and activities against aims and objectives
- Evaluation plans including timelines and data collection
- Similar approach for larger departmental projects

Recap: What you hoped to get

Questions?