**Effectively Evaluating Student Recruitment and Outreach Initiatives.**

* Speaker manages WP evaluation unit at the University of Sheffield, which was established 2012. It was driven by value for money and ensuring that WP money was effectively spent.
* They aim to share good practice and improve work of sector.

Evaluation challenges:

* Setting measures effectively, evaluating what people think and ensuring it’s relatable to interventions.
* Didn’t have a group of non-participants so couldn’t prove that the outcome was from intervention.
* Didn’t have baseline, so didn’t know if there was an improvement.

Four fundamental questions to ask yourself:

* Why are you evaluating?

This then informs what you do and what you might get out of it. Is it formative, are you getting feedback as you go or summative at the end. Is it about establishing value for money? Impact, measure effectiveness – what is effectiveness, what does success look like so that you know you have achieved it. Checking targeting and reach, are you preaching to the converted. Are you evaluating because you are told to? What do the people telling you want from the evaluation?

* Who are you evaluating for?

Are you providing proof to managers that this project should be funded or should be expanded expand. Is it for regulators, such as the OFS. What works and what provides value for money. Financers – are you justifying value for money? It is useful to clarify expectations of evaluation. Know what they’re looking for – qualitative/quantitate? Will they want to see data? How do they want it displayed, should it be visual or a written report?

* What do you want to get out of it?

Useful a reflective process. Use it to buy space and think about what you do. Test particular aspects of activity and get ideas on how to tweak it. Promotion? Enjoyment? Gain trust?

* What are you evaluating?

Understanding this from the outset can help to define how and what you evaluate.

* Pay more attention at the start, rather than just jumping in. This means you more likely to get it right.
* Can be useful to start at the end. What are you expected to produce, what is the audience expected to see.
* Use as a frame to design your evaluation.
* Defining the problem.
* Refining what you look at when evaluating activity.
* Is the intervention/activity part of a larger activity? Decide which aspects are part of the mix – what will you aim your evaluation at?
* What slice of intervention will you evaluate? Once you have done an autopsy on intervention you can then start to prioritise what you will concentrate your evaluation on.

Things to consider:

* What are you evaluating? Who is the intervention for? Are they the same or different, how do they differ, will that impact on your activity. This questioning helps to decide if you’re targeting the right people.
* Working with people running activity, ask them to tell us what doing and how it works to get them where they want to be. Eg, improving their familiarity with the campus. How are you doing it? Map out set of assumptions. Test if what you’re doing is making a difference. Then you can start to evaluate on a more granular basis.
* Talk to parents, you assume talking to them will make them less anxious about finance – ask the audience if this has happened. Has it succeeded in doing what you wanted it to?
* How do you know if taster session was successful, how are you measuring it? Are you changing attitudes? What does success look like? This helps define what you will evaluate.

What does success look like?

* What do your stakeholders want to see by way of outcomes? Step back before you start. How much should you put in to this?

Points from group discussion:

* This kind of thinking is relevant in in our context. Need impact assessment to engage stakeholders – e.g., academic staff.
* Is data collecting accurate? Are young people copying each other, are they reading the questions properly?
* Are there more creative ways of evaluating? More interactive. More engaging.

Evaluation measures:

* Can we prove our intervention has caused the impact? If we don’t do pre evaluation we cannot say that it was due to our activity that their opinions are what they are.
* Break evaluations down, easier to prove that it’s out intervention that had impact.

Neil Harrison and Richard Whaler - Perspectives magazine – good to read about evaluation.

* Knowing what success looks like and measuring it. Small steps. Pathway, from a to b to c.

Counter factuals:

* How do you know this wouldn’t have happened anyway? Best way to do this is to compare to another group that haven’t participated. BUT its complicated to set up and labour intensive.
* Stakeholders may not want to see this – so is it worth the effort? Even if you can do it in a small scale it might work and could be more manageable.

Questionnaire:

* Easy and straight forward. Can gather quantitate and qualitative.
* Cognitive biases. Dunning kruger effect – knowledgeable about something, but tend to down play it and vice verser.
* Halo effect – people tell you what they think you want to hear.
* Get what you ask for – quality of questions is key!
* Be careful of leading questions – asking questions that will prompt a certain answer.
* Careful of loaded words and questions.
* Avoid subjective meanings - was the food good – what are their standards? Do you stay late in library – what is late?
* Make sure questions are clear to answer.
* Don’t ask two questions in one.

Using response scales:

* 7 or 5 points? (5 points can be easier when evaluating, but can lose some finer detail). Left to right, low to high? (Arguments for both. Consistency is important). Should you have neutral mid-point?
* Caveat data – make aware small data set, it was just after the activity, etc.