



## Evaluation Planning: RUFDATA – a Worked Example **3D**

One of the Higher Education Institutions generated the following slides during the process of working through the RUFDATA. The staff undertook this process collectively with the facilitator capturing ideas as the group discussed and made decisions about what they would take forward. In essence this process captures the content for establishing an evaluation plan. The format of the plan is open, and will no doubt depend on other institutional documents. For instance, the evaluation plan may include a discursive section with a list of evaluations, a table outlining each evaluation and detailing some of the key information, use one of the templates in HEFCE's April 2008 guidance or some other model. A brief review of the OFFA Access Agreements illustrates well the enormous diversity of approaches to addressing a set of common headings. The important point to remember is that it is a document that details timescales, responsibilities and you or a nominated committee review progress regularly.

The example is illustrative, context specific; it is not suitable for wholesale adoption, rather as a stimulus for ideas.

### Evaluation Preparation

**What does 'Widening Participation' mean to you?**

- Social Inclusion – opening up to all communities
- Targeting under-represented groups including non-traditional students
- Employability – social and cultural capital
- Developing individual potential
- Equality of opportunity and retention
- Diverse cohort of students
- Quality of experience – progression and attainment
- Curriculum design is appropriate
- Changing the culture
- Raising aspiration
- The International dimension

(Fig 1)

The group generated these results (Fig 2 below) during initial discussions that enabled individuals to surface novel or latent ideas. These slides are not in any hierarchical order. Creating these lists confirmed group philosophy on the issues and produced an embedded mind-set for the next task. The group commented that this process was most important since it enabled them to surface and capture some of their personal ideas about this area of work which they do not always bring together when they are discussing specific areas of work.

### Quantitative Evaluation Audit:



## What sort of quantitative evaluation of these issues occurs already?

- Data is difficult to get – at an institutional level it is available, but the operational data is trickier to get at a department level
- Evaluation of year 0 – foundation year a report exists
- Destination survey – post university
- Numbers brought in on aspiration raising events – not always general knowledge what these are?
- UCAS data is available to admissions tutors
- Prediction data on pre-entry practices and activities

(Fig 2)

The group considered what quantitative evaluations existed already – there was considerable discussion relating to the fact that probably a lot of ‘required’ quantitative material existed but it was not always easy to access; that there was undoubtedly some material that existed which people (in the room) didn’t always know about; that there was probably a great deal of duplication and that there are some forms of quantitative monitoring that are either hard (tricky) to get hold of or very expensive to access. In effect different participants will have different parts of the jigsaw and one of the important purposes of the evaluation plan is to bring the pieces together.



Important to remember that since the pilot, HEFCE have issued guidance to Aimhigher Partnerships about the ‘Core Participant Data’ that they expect Aimhigher to collect. Higher Education Institutions will need to think carefully and discuss with Aimhigher colleagues the extent to which data it is possible to share, who will collect, collate and analyse this data.

The wider concepts of ‘what does this mean...’ Led to the consideration of what is already done in a more quantitative sense and helped them to synthesise this material (the slides could be easily swapped around and revisited) to produce the next model of ‘outside the box’ thinking (Fig 3), this methodology allowed them a real sense of ‘ownership’ of the ideas generated and provided a model of qualitative thinking.

## What are you interested in looking at in more depth?

- Challenging the deficit model, changing it to a premium model (*not the problems but the benefits that accrue to the university from WP students*)
- Pre-entry activities and data
- Profiling and role models
- Exploring the tension between showcasing and labelling
- Parity of esteem with vocational qualifications – a narrative of success
- The capture of rich evaluation of achievement and the presentation of a frame work for capture
- How do groups of students level out
- Capturing the information that emerges at exam boards (*this may be made difficult by the use of numbers instead of names which is current practice at some boards*)
- Learning from students who could not complete
- How could the student development files inform us
- On-line forum or news letters
- Converting such data into strategic material

(Fig 3)



The group explored the RUFDATA categories in relation to the more general project so that they could understand the rationale for their use as a strategic model for specific evaluations. The completed slides show the RUFDATA descriptor at the top with the bullet points created by the team listed below each heading.

### RUFDATA headings (1/7)

**Reasons and Purposes** – (planning, managing, learning, developing, accountability)

- Why should the university take widening participation seriously?
- The financial benefit of WP
- Effect change in attitudes and cultures
- Moral obligation and economic driver
- If a thing is worth doing it is worth doing well!

(Fig 4)

### RUFDATA headings (2/7)

**Uses** – (providing and learning from examples of good practice, staff development, strategic planning, PR, provision of data for management control)

- Inform recruitment & selection
- Provide a strategy to effect change; teaching and learning and flexibility in programme development
- Feed into staff development activities
- Profile raising of WP – showcasing achievement
- Inform outreach activities

(Fig 5)

### RUFDATA headings (3/7)

**Foci** - (activities, aspects, emphasis to be evaluated connected to the priority areas for evaluation)

- Impacts of existing activities – admissions for example
- Progression tracking for WP students (not merely retention)
- Identification of issues

(Fig 6)



## RUFDATA headings (4/7)

**Data and Evidence** – (quantitative from audit of current activities, qualitative – observational, case studies, tracking/shadowing activities, focus groups etc.)

- Feeder institutions could identify a potential 'group'
- Associate college group
- Personal tutors – narratives of experience
- Students – narratives of experience – student union/student welfare
- Admissions tutors – narratives of experience
- Student 'blogs'
- Student support officers – careers staff – Head of Student Services
- sampling procedures – 'mystery shopping'
- Shadowing and tracking – individuals or classes

(Fig 7)

## RUFDATA headings (5/7)

**Audience** – (community of practice, commissioners, yourselves)

- senior management
- staff on the ground
- HEFCE
- Feeder colleges
- Potential students
- Subject specific issues related to evaluation within a discipline
- HEA and Subject Centres
- LLL Networks

(Fig 8)

In thinking about your audience it is also worth thinking about the format of the evaluation findings you will present to them, and, linked to issues of timing, the number of possible recipients who might receive the same report.

Given the time taken to organise dissemination events it is also worth discussing your evaluation plan with others and trying to ensure that events are well spaced, or jointly organised, thus allowing you to bring different audience together not only to hear about your findings, but also to consider the commonalities and emerging issues from different but complementary evaluations. As stressed in the HEFCE guidance, this type of comparison will only be possible if there is clarity and transparency of data that allows a comparison of like with like. (See discussion relating to Core Participant Data and descriptors of '*categories of activity*' and '*levels of experience*')



## RUFDATA headings (6/7)

- **Timing** – (coincidence with decision making cycles, life cycles of projects)
  - baseline data, tutor qualitative information at graduation stage – example will be circulated
  - Visit days – peer gathered information
  - Induction material – peer gathered information (September)
  - Student support officers – regular engagement involvement in progression issues and employability
  - Continual data collection both qualitative or quantitative – key points for personal tutors:
    - PDP meetings (3 per year)
    - year ends – exam board times
    - tracked student withdraws
  - Bursary students – pre-entry
  - Student life cycle
  - Academic Development Committee – ‘Student Experience sub-committee’

(Fig 11)

The timing is a particularly context specific list and it is important to think through timing issues very carefully, for example, if the PDP group meets 3 times a year – when are these meetings? When would data reports be needed? To whom does this group meet, is there a sequence or order of committees that need to receive your evaluation findings in order to make decisions about modifying future action.



HEFCE have asked all Aimhigher Partnerships to submit an evaluation report in September of each year. What are the implications for both HEI and Aimhigher Partnerships regarding sharing their evaluation findings?

## RUFDATA headings (7/7)

**Agency** – (yourselves, external evaluators, combination)

- Pro VC for Widening Participation
- COP's (Communities of Practice)
- Champions with external evaluator
- Faculty groups
- Students – welfare, peer mentoring.
- SSO's (Student Support Officers)

(Fig 12)