



ZEST! Essentials: Monitoring and Evaluation

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ZEST! Essentials: Monitoring and Evaluation

1 Who is this guide for?

This guide will be useful to new lecturers as an introduction to the University's monitoring processes which require Schools and programmes to review their effectiveness and the quality of their students' learning experience. The guide can also be used as a source of information on formal and informal evaluation methods and techniques that can be applied within the modules taught by an individual lecturer. Students on the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PgC LTHE) may wish to consider some of the methods and techniques outlined in this guide to generate evidence for their Learning Goal B portfolios.

Although this guide is mainly intended to show how individual lecturers can use the tools and techniques of evaluation to inform their own learning, teaching and assessment strategies, some information about formal monitoring and review processes is also included. More information on the formal processes can be found in the ZEST! Essentials guide to Academic Quality and Standards.

2 Why do lecturers need to know about monitoring and evaluation?

The ZEST! Essentials guide on Academic Quality and Standards makes the point that higher education is a major component of the Scottish economy. Because the University is funded from public money there is an external requirement to demonstrate effectiveness and efficiency through a series of quality assurance processes. This is achieved through the review procedures applied by the Quality Assurance Agency for higher education (QAA).

However there are other internal monitoring and evaluation processes which lead up to this external review. The principal University processes are the School biennial report and the programme monitoring process which is carried out annually. The University also seeks to involve students in its quality assurance processes through an online Module Feedback Questionnaire (MFQ) and Student Staff Consultative Groups (SSCGs). These formal quality assurance processes also act as a driver for continuous quality enhancement.

Monitoring and evaluation processes are a form of reflective practice. The purpose of the process has a profound effect on the approach and the timing. There are parallels with student learning through assessment in that these processes may be formative or summative and they use sources of feedback.

2.1 Activity

What does the HE2000 contract have to say about CPD in learning and teaching and how could you use this guide to fulfil the requirements?

3 What do lecturers need to know about monitoring and evaluation?

The terminology of monitoring and evaluation is confusing because there are a number of terms which are not used consistently in different contexts. Hounsell (2003) refers to intrinsic and extrinsic reasons for evaluation. Intrinsic reasons for evaluation may arise from a group eg to review the effectiveness of a module or programme or, on an individual level, the intrinsic motivation for evaluation is most likely to be about professional development. Extrinsic reasons are to do with satisfying the requirements of other stakeholders, as in the case of Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR). Enhancement-Led Internal Subject Review (ELISR) is, as its title implies, carried out within the university where the motivation may be viewed as intrinsic but the process is required by the Quality Assurance Agency for higher education (QAA).

The terms formative and summative evaluation are also often used. Formative evaluation is usually regarded as taking place during development activities eg designing a module or programme. Thus the outcomes of formative evaluation inform the next development stage. Summative evaluation on the other hand is retrospective and carried out at the end of the development phase or at the end of a project. It represents a snapshot of the activity at that time so it provides an example of end testing, like an end of semester exam. On an individual level it is possible to conduct an evaluation of the students' learning experience in mid-semester with a view to refining the teaching and assessment for the rest of the semester. This would be formative evaluation. The use of the Module Feedback Questionnaire (MFQ) at the end of the semester represents summative evaluation. The programme monitoring process carried out annually is also summative evaluation of what has happened in that year but it may result in an action plan for improvement in the following year so, in that context, it would be formative. Similarly self-evaluation for ELISR produces a summative statement of the status of learning and teaching in that subject at that time. However, the purpose of the review is quality enhancement so the outcomes from ELISR are used formatively.

Monitoring and evaluation processes may also be carried out with varying degrees of formality from an individual lecturer asking for feedback from a class to fulfilling all the prescribed requirements of ELIR.

Thus there is a whole vocabulary of terms and processes associated with monitoring and evaluation. In practice, the language of the literature frequently does not match that used to define and describe the processes applied in higher education. For the purposes of this guide the terms **monitoring and review** will be used to denote the university's **quality assurance** processes. The term **evaluation** will be applied in the context of **professional**

development of the individual. A diagrammatic representation of how these processes contribute to overall **quality enhancement** is given in figure 1 below.

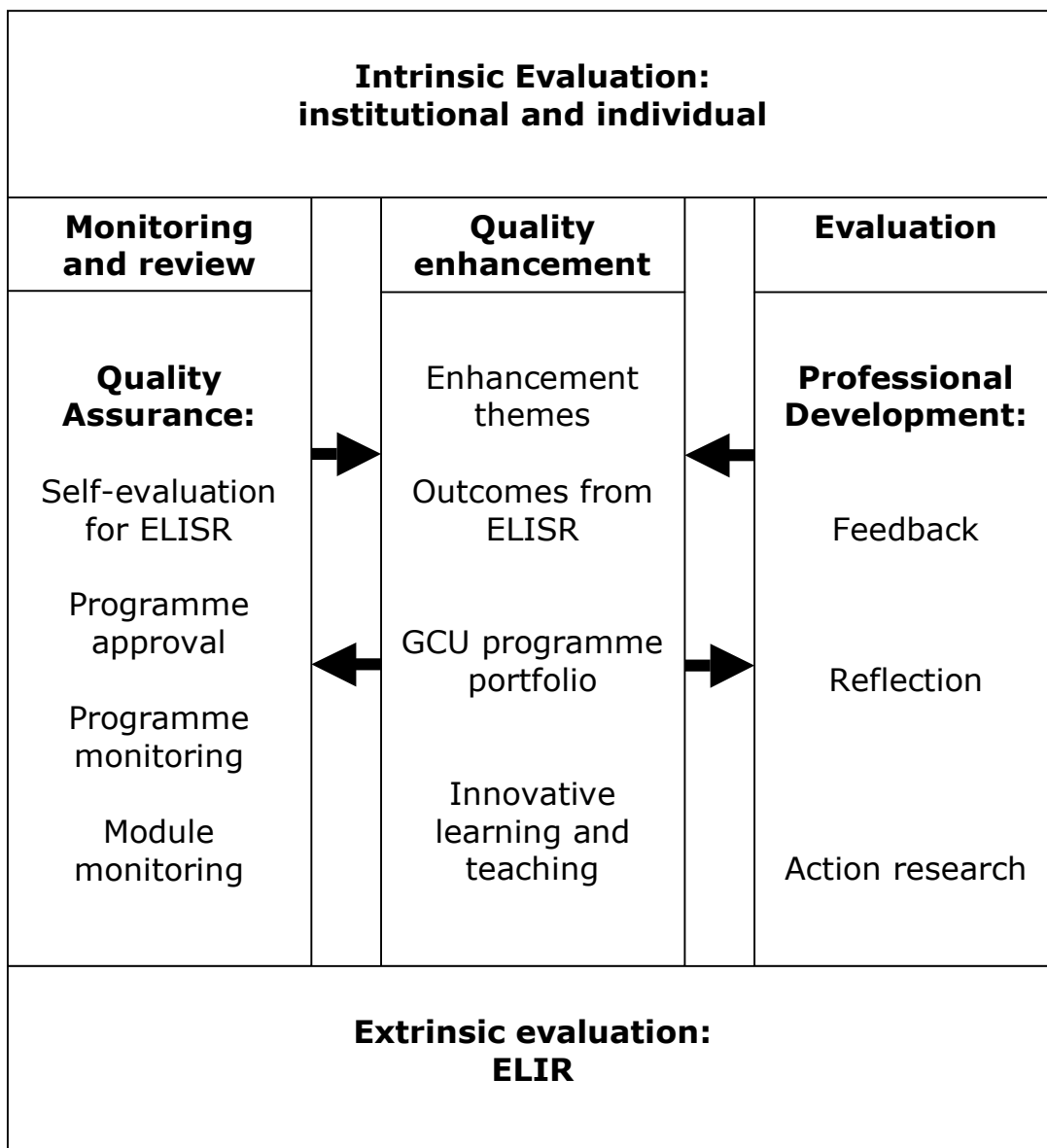


Fig 1: Schematic representation of monitoring and evaluation processes

3.1 Quality assurance

Hounsell (2003) says

“The advent of **quality assurance**, for example, has brought with it the routine expectation that academic departments and faculties will regularly make use of feedback to investigate whether their curricula are succeeding in their **aims** and achieving appropriate **standards**.”

Given this context, monitoring and evaluation processes tend to follow strict procedures like the programme monitoring process, Enhancement-Led Internal Subject Review (ELISR) and Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR). The ELISR timetable and reports of reviews already carried out are available on the Quality Office website.

3.2 Sources of feedback for quality assurance

Some of the information collected for summative evaluation is quantitative eg statistics on student recruitment, performance and progression and also from completed student MFQs. Other sources of feedback are qualitative eg issues raised by student representatives at SSCGs or Programme Boards and External Assessor reports. The University's Quality Office sets out what is required for module monitoring, programme monitoring, biennial school reports and ELISR.

3.3 Evaluation for professional development

Evaluation processes may also be carried out by individuals or groups for various reasons eg

- preparation of a portfolio of evidence for an academic award, like the PgC LTHE
- for professional and career advancement
- for innovation and action research
- for quality enhancement in learning and teaching.

Macdonald (2002) concludes that the developing approaches to monitoring and evaluation are blurring the distinction between educational development projects and research. However, the term project can be interpreted very widely to include action research projects, programme planning and review, module design and lecturers' professional development in learning and teaching.

3.4 Sources of feedback for professional development

This kind of evaluation tends to be qualitative rather than quantitative although it also includes quantitative sources like student achievement and progression rates. Hounsell (2003) lists three principal sources of feedback as:

- feedback from students
- feedback from teaching colleagues and professional peers
- self-generated feedback

and gives a general discussion of how each of these sources can be used. He goes on to discuss what he terms 'incidental feedback' from the everyday routines of university teaching and course

administration. Many of sources cited in this category are required in summative evaluation but he also includes unobtrusive observations which can be made in a teaching-learning situation.

Tessmer (1993) gives four types of evaluation:

- expert review
- one-to-one evaluation
- small group
- field test

and a general sequence of when each of these types of evaluation might be used. Thus the evaluation may be iterative leading to progressive refinement or continuous quality enhancement.

3.5 Quality enhancement

The monitoring and review processes carried out at module, programme, school, subject and institutional levels, as well as being required for accountability, make a significant contribution to continuous quality enhancement and sharing good practice in learning and teaching.

On an individual and small group level, many lecturers use evaluation processes for a variety of purposes in determining the effectiveness of their teaching eg

- to ensure that the students are learning what they should be
- to evaluate the quality of the student learning experience
- to review the modules they teach on as part of their continuing professional development (CPD).

This kind of evaluation is defined by Tessmer (1993: 11) as "a judgement of the strengths and weaknesses of instruction in its developing stages, for the purposes of revising the instruction to improve its effectiveness and appeal". It may also be carried out a group eg a Programme Planning Board.

3.6 Activities

- 1 What does Hounsell (2003) have to say about the contexts for evaluation and their influence on the nature of the feedback sought?
- 2 From the university's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook what information is required in a programme monitoring report?
- 3 Look up one of the ELISR reports on the Quality Office website, preferably from your own school if it has been

reviewed. What can you learn about good practice from that report.

- 4 To what extent are you aware of and make use of what Hounsell (2003) terms incidental feedback?

3.7 Sources of Information

Hounsell, D (2003) "The evaluation of teaching" in Fry, H et al (eds) A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education 2nd ed
RoutledgeFalmer

[GCU Quality Office](#)

4 How can lecturers use monitoring and evaluation to improve practice?

Evaluation is about asking questions so it is important that the questions are appropriate to the purpose of the evaluation to be carried out. In formal monitoring and review for quality assurance these questions have already been determined and a reporting format prescribed.

For individual lecturers designing their own evaluation Manwaring and Calverley (1998) give a very readable account of how to ensure that you are asking the right questions and avoiding some of the pitfalls of inappropriate questions. Oliver and Conole (1998) provide a useful account of how to choose an appropriate method of evaluation.

There is a wide range of evaluation methods to choose from, most with variations on the theme, depending on the purpose of the evaluation. Tessmer (1993) devotes a chapter to each of the four general types of evaluation and alternative forms, and how they can be applied. However, for this guide the sources of feedback identified by Hounsell (2003) will be used to introduce the methodology of evaluation.

4.1 Feedback from students

As Hounsell (2003) points out, obtaining feedback from students can have a cathartic function, providing an opportunity for students to 'let off some steam' and 'to tell us what they really think about the course'. Nevertheless, students are uniquely qualified to provide feedback on the quality of the learning experience.

Harvey (1998) edited an Evaluation Cookbook which gives information about a variety of methods for obtaining feedback from students. Each method is described, along with its strengths and potential difficulties. A case study of its use is also given for each method described. Hounsell (2003) gives a brief discussion on the use of questionnaires, structured group discussions and email bulletin boards as methods of obtaining feedback from students.

4.2 Feedback from colleagues

For many lecturers this is a much more difficult issue than obtaining feedback from students, not least because it is usually associated with direct observation of teaching. New lecturers may wish to observe a colleague whose teaching is acknowledged to be good practice or they may wish a more experienced colleague to give feedback on their own teaching. GCU has adopted a policy of direct observation of teaching under the title of peer support as a means of sharing good practice and encouraging professional development in learning and teaching.

Fullerton (2003) gives a critique of the benefits of direct observation of teaching and how the process should operate. Hounsell (2003) outlines two other methods involving discussion to obtain feedback from colleagues:

- previewing to anticipate any potential difficulties and taking appropriate action to minimise their effects and
- retracing or reflecting on a particular teaching situation to identify strengths and problems.

4.3 Self-generated feedback

Self-generated feedback comes from critical reflection which can be aided by adopting the same techniques of previewing and retracing. One potential difficulty with self-generated feedback is that the individual lecturer may tend to concentrate on the negatives and what did not work as well as expected. The whole point of the exercise is to obtain a balanced view of the good as well as the not so good and generate options to build on good practice as well as to resolve any areas of difficulty.

4.4 Incidental feedback

Hounsell (2003) suggests that evidence like patterns of attendance, attentiveness in class, choices in assessment tasks and external assessor feedback can also be useful in evaluation of learning and teaching activities. This evidence is not always systematically collected but it can provide an indication of student engagement with the module and the quality of the learning experience.

4.5 Using an evaluation toolkit

In the scoping study carried out as part of the Responding to Student Needs enhancement theme¹ one of the key topics identified was obtaining student feedback and evaluation. One of the outcomes from the theme was the production of a student evaluation and feedback toolkit which is available either on CD or online. The toolkit followed from a survey of practice in collecting and using student feedback in a representative sample of Scottish universities and contains extensive links to case studies on collecting and using student feedback to enhance the student experience in the UK and overseas.

¹ The enhancement themes are a key element of the enhancement-led and student-centred approach to quality and standards, developed in Scotland jointly by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (now amalgamated into the Scottish Funding Council or SFC), the National Union of Students in Scotland (NUS Scotland) and the Quality Assurance Agency for higher education (QAA) Scotland.

4.6 Using a personal voting system (PVS)²

Personal voting systems have the capacity to rapidly assess the levels of awareness among large/small audiences. Radio frequency systems can support up to 2000 individual responses in under 7 seconds on a single receiver unit connected to a PC. Normally respondents send an answer to questions embedded in a presentation. The system records, tabulates and displays graphically, if desired, the response pattern to the question posed. After each session the user is able to generate a number of different reports which may be used to analyse patterns in responses. These reports can be made available to audience members on paper, or using the VLE in order for them to compare their individual responses to questions and against the audience at large. In addition PVS allow the user to quickly acquire module evaluation data without requiring the student to log in to a separate web site.

PVS may be used both formatively and summatively and have been shown in a number of studies to provide benefits in the following areas:

- Extended periods of concentration in lectures
- Improved levels of Engagement; participation, interaction
- Improved levels of attendance in lectures
- Improved knowledge retention
- Facilitates greater levels of knowledge construction both individually and socially
- Levels of active learning are higher in lectures thus increasing knowledge retention
- Individuals can participate anonymously which can reduce embarrassment levels when questions are answered incorrectly.

However, it is worth remembering that the quality of responses using this technology for evaluation, as in all other evaluation methods and techniques, depends on the appropriateness of the questions.

4.7 Activities

- 1 What type of questions do Manwaring and Calverley (1998) say should be addressed in designing an evaluation?
- 2 Look up the Evaluation Cookbook (1998) and find a method of evaluation that would be useful to you.

² This section was mainly contributed by Andy Sharp, from the Caledonian Business School, whose work with PVS contributes to the Re-Engineering Assessment Practices (REAP) project (2006), funded by the Scottish Funding Council.

- 3 How could you use Hounsell's (2003) suggested methods of obtaining student feedback?
- 4 What does Fullerton (2003) list as the benefits of observation of teaching?
- 5 How could you use Hounsell's (2003) previewing as part of a peer support process?
- 6 The student evaluation and feedback toolkit developed in the Responding to Student Needs enhancement theme suggests a number of ways to close the loop in using student feedback. How could you implement some of these in your modules(s)?

4.8 Sources of information

Fullerton, H (2003) "Observation of teaching" in Fry, H et al (eds) A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education 2nd ed RoutledgeFalmer

Harvey, J (ed) Evaluation Cookbook The Learning Technology Dissemination Initiative also available online at <http://www.icbl.hw.ac.uk/ltdi/cookbook/cookbook.pdf>

Hounsell, D (2003) "The evaluation of teaching" in Fry, H et al (eds) A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education 2nd ed RoutledgeFalmer

Manwaring, G and Calverley, G (1998) "Directing your evaluation" in Harvey, J (ed) Evaluation Cookbook The Learning Technology Dissemination Initiative also available online at <http://www.icbl.hw.ac.uk/ltdi/cookbook/cookbook.pdf>

[Student evaluation and feedback toolkit](#)

5 Professional development

Monitoring and evaluation are crucial for continuous quality enhancement and professional development in learning and teaching. So far this guide has confined itself to what these processes are about and how they can be put into practice. Evaluations can throw up unexpected results so the final essential element of the process is about what you do with the results of your evaluation.

Hounsell (2003) discusses analysis and interpretation of the feedback obtained and acting on it to complete the evaluation cycle. Brennan and Williams (2004) give a much more detailed account. They also discuss the importance of involving students in the whole process and the issues around whether to publish the outcomes of the evaluation and how they could or should be published. Wisdom (2002) argues that, in the context of change in higher education, the most important factor is changing people and their willingness to adopt innovative approaches to learning and teaching which have been developed through action research and evaluation.

Students on the PgC LTHE may find that the activities in this guide contribute to achievement of learning objectives 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 and assessment criteria 12, 14 and 15.

5.1 Evaluation and change

A number of authors are researching the role of evaluation into organisational change or implementing change in government policy. Sullivan and Stewart (2006) compare models of change ownership in the USA and UK while Saunders (2006) and Saunders et al (2005) look at the positive contribution evaluation can make in effecting change. It is possible to draw parallels between the macro approaches to evaluation discussed in these papers and the approaches to evaluation outlined in this guide. Those who wish to research further may wish to use these sources to inform their own approaches to evaluation.

5.2 Activities

- 1 Consider an area of your teaching and/or assessment practices you feel could be improved. How could you design and carry out an evaluation to generate ideas for change?
- 2 Look up Brennan and Williams' (2004) report, in particular the case studies from UK higher education institutions. What can you learn from them that will contribute to your professional practice?
- 3 Macdonald and Wisdom (2002) give a variety of action research outcomes in a variety of disciplines, presented as

chapters of case studies. There are also a number of discipline-based case studies on the HEA website. They can be accessed either by searching for evaluation or through the subject centre sites. Identify a case study as close to your own discipline as possible. Reflect on one aspect that you could usefully incorporate into your own practice.

5.3 Sources of information

Brennan, J and Williams, R (2004) Collecting and using student feedback: A guide to good practice Learning and Teaching Support Network also available online at http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp?process=full_record§ion=generic&id=352

Harvey, J (ed) Evaluation Cookbook The Learning Technology Dissemination Initiative also available online at <http://www.icbl.hw.ac.uk/ltidi/cookbook/cookbook.pdf>

[Higher Education Academy](#)

Macdonald, R and Wisdom, J eds (2002) Academic and educational development: research, evaluation and changing practice in higher education Staff and Educational Development Association

6 Where can I get more information?

Brennan, J and Williams, R (2004) Collecting and using student feedback: A guide to good practice Learning and Teaching Support Network also available online at http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.asp?process=full_record&action=generic&id=352

Duncan, D. (2005) Clickers in the Classrooms: How to Enhance Science Teaching Using Classroom Response Systems. Pearson Education, Inc., San Francisco, CA

Fullerton, H (2003) "Observation of teaching in Fry, H et al (eds) A Handbook for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education 2nd ed RoutledgeFalmer

GCU Quality Office
<http://www.caledonian.ac.uk/quality/index.html>

Harvey, J (ed) Evaluation Cookbook The Learning Technology Dissemination Initiative also available online at <http://www.icbl.hw.ac.uk/ltdi/cookbook/cookbook.pdf>

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Saunders, M, Charlier, B and Bonamy, J (2005) Using evaluation to create 'provisional stabilities'. Bridging innovation in higher education processes. Evaluation vol 11(1): 37-54

Student evaluation and feedback toolkit available online at <http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/defaultpage131cd0.aspx?pageID=247>

Sullivan, H and Stewart, M (2006) Who owns the theory of change? Evaluation vol 12(2) 179-199

Tessmer, M (1993) Planning and conducting formative evaluations
Kogan Page

Wisdom, J (2002) "Towards a culture of evaluation" in Academic and educational development: research, evaluation and changing practice in higher education Staff and Educational Development Association