



TASO

Annual Conference: How to Evaluate

Day 1 Programme

7 May



10:00 Opening and welcome remarks

Room: Conference Theatre

10:10 Keynote: Evaluation, evaluation, Evaluation

Room: Conference Theatre

Speaker:

John Blake, Director for Fair Access and Participation, Office for Students

Session details:

In taking on the role of Director for Fair Access and Participation at the Office for Students, John Blake set out five key priority areas. One of these areas was a need for better evaluation.

Jumping forward to 2024 – there is now a new approach to regulating equality of opportunity which focuses on evaluation being baked into all access and participation work from the get-go.

As the new approach takes effect, where does John feel the most progress on evaluation is still needed? And how can we as a sector work together to plug these gaps and ensure that all students – regardless of their background – can access, succeed in and progress from higher education?

10:30 Busting inequality beyond HE

Room: Conference Theatre

Speakers:

Dr Omar Khan, CEO, TASO

Professor Rachel Brookes, professor of Sociology and Associate Dean Research and Innovation, University of Surrey

Aranee Manoharan, AGCAS Board Director / KCL Senior Associate Director (Careers & Employability)

Session details:

Higher education providers are increasingly held to account for how their graduates fare in the job market but there is little evidence on what works to reduce equality gaps in employment and employability.

This session will bring together leading experts to discuss the current evidence base and what providers can do to make a difference.

11:00 Break

Room: Atrium

11:30 Robust evaluation: Building blocks for success

Room: Conference Theatre

Speakers:

Christoph Koerbitz, Chief Research Officer, TASO

Rain Sherlock, Head of Evaluation, TASO

Session details:

Evaluation is an art, as well as a science. In this session we will navigate the 'what', 'why' and 'how' questions and explore the practicalities of evaluation within the higher education landscape, highlighting the importance of key stakeholders, essential skills, and effective engagement strategies.

13:00 Lunch

Room: Atrium

14:00 Breakout sessions: Evaluation spotlight sessions

Attainment-raising

Room: Conference Theatre

Speaker:

Nichollette Pollard-Odle, Evaluation Officer, TASO

Session details:

Improve your expertise in assessing attainment-raising initiatives through our seminar. Join us for an insightful exploration into the latest attainment-raising initiatives shaping Higher Education (HE), accompanied by a brief analysis of the evidence supporting attainment-raising efforts. Led by TASO experts, this session offers more than just theory; it provides practical guidance through an interactive exercise. Attendees will gain firsthand experience in evaluating attainment-raising initiatives, empowering them to make informed decisions and drive positive change within their institutions.

Ethnicity degree awarding gap

Room: Conference Suites 3 & 4

Speaker:

Sarah Conner, Research Manager, TASO

Session details:

There is a persistent difference in the proportion of students from marginalised ethnic backgrounds who are awarded a first or upper-second-class undergraduate degree when compared to white students. This is known as the ethnicity degree awarding gap. This seminar session aims to provide evaluation support to those planning and delivering interventions to tackle the awarding gap.

The session will showcase specific examples from TASO's recent project work with six higher education providers producing theories of change and evaluation plans for their interventions. Practical activities will be embedded throughout and we encourage attendees to come to the session with an intervention or activity in mind.

15:30 Break – Check-in for overnight guests available

Room: Atrium

16:00 New IPE guidance: What works for whom, how and Why?

Room: Conference Theatre

Speakers:

Dr Emma Vardy, Senior Lecturer (School of Social Sciences), Nottingham Trent University

Dr Helen Lawson, Research Manager, TASO

Session details:

Introduction to new guidance and tools to support the sector to better understand and conduct implementation and process evaluation (IPE), as part of our recent project with Nottingham Trent University.

16:30 In conversation: Learning from and influencing senior leadership

Room: Conference Theatre

Speakers:

Professor Charlotte Croffie, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Loughborough University

Jane McNeil, Pro Vice-Chancellor – Education, Nottingham Trent University, Dr Omar Khan, CEO, TASO

Session details:

Leadership is vital in driving holistic approaches to improving equality of opportunity in higher education.

This session will bring together two Pro Vice-Chancellors to discuss how leadership can move the dial on access and participation work, and the necessary ingredients for success.

17:00 Close

18:30 Drinks reception, followed by dinner

Atrium

(overnight guests only)





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Annual Conference: How to Evaluate

Day 2 Programme

8 May



09:30 Opening and welcome remarks

Room: Conference Theatre

09:40 Keynote address

Room: Conference Theatre

Speaker:

Session details:

10:00 Impact evaluation: using quasi-experimental designs in higher education evaluation

Room: Conference Theatre

Speakers:

Dr Sonia Ilie, Associate Professor, University of Cambridge

Mike Kerrigan, Strategic Data and Intelligence Manager, Nottingham Trent University

Session details:

This session will explore the power of quasi-experimental designs (QEDs) in understanding cause and effect, crucial for informed decision-making and resource allocation. Learn about QEDs, including methods like difference-in-differences and regression discontinuity designs. Delegates will also hear about a case study QED evaluation from colleagues at Nottingham Trent University.

11:00 Break

Room: Atrium

11:30 Breakout sessions: Methods made easy**Assessing and synthesising evidence**

Room: Conference Theatre

Speakers:

Tatjana Damjanovic, Research Officer, TASO

Christoph Koerbitz, Chief Research Officer, TASO

Session details:

A beginner level seminar to introduce the principles of assessing the quality of evidence to develop evidence-informed intervention strategies.

Randomised Controlled Trials

Room: Conference Suites 3 & 4

Speakers:

Luke Arundel, Research Officer, TASO

Dr Rob Summers, Research Manager, TASO

Session details:

In this session, we will explore the practical considerations of how to conduct a randomised controlled trial (RCT). Delegates will engage in a live RCT simulation to grasp key concepts of ethical considerations, randomisation methods, sample size determinations, and resource allocation. The session will conclude with an audience Q&A.

13:00 Lunch

Room: Atrium

14:00 Breakout sessions: Unlocking the evaluation toolbox

Post-Entry Mapping Outcomes and Activities Tool

Room: Conference Suites 3 & 4

Speakers:

Dr Rob Summers, Research Manager, TASO

Luke Arundel, Research Officer, TASO

Session details:

This session introduces the post-entry Mapping Outcomes and Activities Tool (MOAT). The post-entry MOAT is a practical resource designed to enable robust evaluation of student success interventions by assisting practitioners and evaluators to consistently label and record the outcomes and activities they deliver as part of their student success work.

Through a practical activity, delegates will identify target student groups, define outcomes, and classify activities, fostering a deeper understanding of intervention effectiveness.

Access and Success Questionnaire

Room: Conference Theatre

Speakers:

Dr Kate Jones, Research and Evaluation Manager, The Brilliant Club

Rain Sherlock, Head of Evaluation, TASO

Session details:

Intermediate outcomes measures are an important tool in our evaluation toolbox. This session will explore the significance of intermediate outcomes and the role of validated scales using the Access and Success Questionnaire (ASQ). Learn practical strategies for impactful evaluation and engage in interactive activities to apply these concepts to your own evaluation.

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15:30 Break
Room: Atrium

16:00 Navigating ethics in HE evaluation
Room: Conference Theatre

Speaker:

Dr Richard Davies, Higher Education Research and Development Lead,
University of Central Lancashire

Session details:

Following recent OfS guidance on publishing Access and Participation Plan (APP) evaluations, when and how to obtain research ethics is front and centre in the minds of the HE sector. This session highlights key considerations for when to obtain ethics and signposts to practical guidance to support the sector as they navigate the ethics processes in their local contexts.

16:30 Close

Thank you for coming!

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