

06. Panel Achievements

Our Student Advisory Panel continues to create real change at the university, a selection of some key achievements are:

- Care Experienced and Estranged Students feedback was included in our successful re-application for the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers Quality Mark.
- Students helped to develop a Race, Ethnicity and Religion staff training toolkit.
- Co-created and continue to provide feedback on our on course support programme; Thrive.
- Following feedback from members, the accessibility of recruitment events e.g. open days is advertised in all main communications.
- Shared insight to develop our access programmes, including our new Free School Meals programme; Ignite.
- Provided feedback on the launch of our new Student Assistance Programme, as part of this students will be able to request to speak to a councillor with similar lived experience.

Applying a Theory of Change approach to evaluate Edge Hill University's Student Advisory Panel

01. Introduction

Edge Hill University's Student Advisory Panel (SAP) gives students from underrepresented backgrounds the opportunity to inform the design and delivery of a wide range of university policies, programmes and initiatives. The SAP allows students to share their lived experience with teams from across the university, providing ideas and opinions on how we could improve our practices to break down the barriers that they may be facing. The panels aim to improve student experience, to positively impact on access, continuation, completion attainment and progression gaps.

Using a Theory of Change (ToC) approach allowed us to understand what the desired outcomes and impacts of the panel is. In turn we then established effective evidence informed evaluation methods to test each of these, ensuring a thorough evaluation takes place.

03. Theory of Change Workshop

To create the SAP Theory of Change, a workshop is held with key stakeholders. This is led by the Evaluation Coordinator with the support of the Student Success Officer responsible for running the initiative.

The workshop begins with an overview of the previous years delivery and a chance to reflect on findings from the evaluation.

We hold a collaborative, interactive session using relevant discussion questions and post-it notes to capture ideas and map out each section of the ToC. This gives everyone the opportunity to contribute to the evaluation and make sure that all possible outcomes and impacts are considered.

04. Evaluation Methods

A detailed evaluation plan is created following the Theory of Change workshop outlining timelines and responsibilities. In 2023/24 the following evaluation methods were decided on and utilised to enable us to assess the programmes impact:

- Pre and post surveys with SAP members including TASO's validated sense of belonging question scale
- Thematic analysis of agenda items at meetings
- Student engagement data
- Action tracking

For 2024/25 we have also included a focus group and celebration event with an evaluation focus, to enhance both our impact and implementation and process evaluation.

Regulatory Literature

The OfS advises that universities should "include student representatives on decision making panels so that student opinions can be taken on board when making university processes, procedures and strategies.[]"

The OfS also highlights that "student engagement helps providers to understand the experiences of specific groups at different stages in the student lifecycle. This can be helpful in informing and developing effective practice in access and participation. [2]"

1 Office for Students, "Student engagement and consultation, effective practice advice," Office for Students website, July 27, 2020. <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/effective-practice/student-engagement-and-consultation/advice/>.

2 Office for Students, "Student engagement and consultation, The issue," Office for Students website, July 27, 2020. <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/effective-practice/student-engagement-and-consultation/>.

02. Evaluation Framework

Our new Widening Access and Student Success Evaluation Framework is used to evaluate all of our APP extended programmes, and ensures that we are using a Theory of Change approach.

Our framework has 6 steps; Research, Design, Deliver, Evaluate, Share and Review and Reflect.

It's cyclical nature means the ToC is reviewed and updated annually to reflect any changes and to inform our evaluation plans for the year ahead.

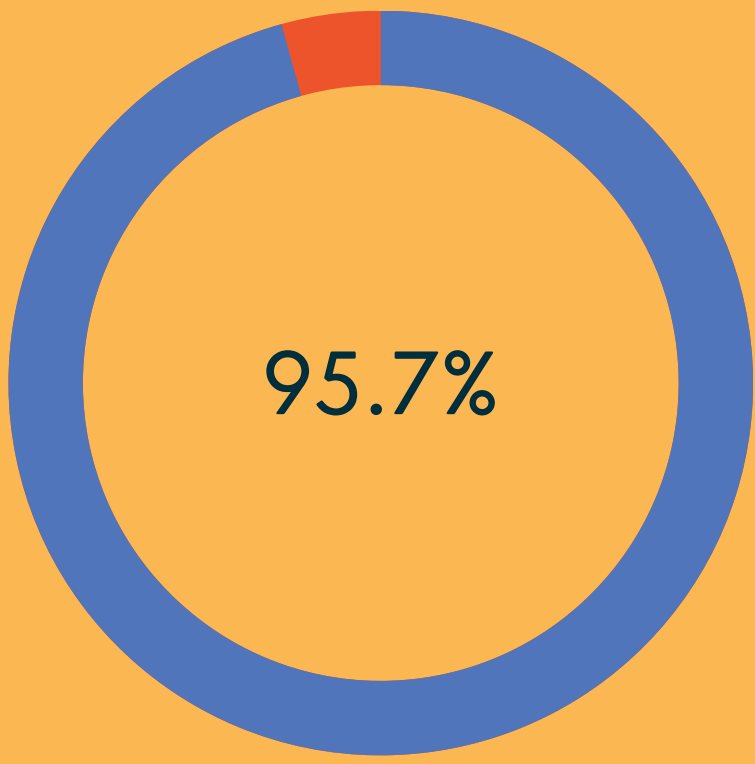
We have created a number of resources to compliment the framework to ensure that all of this work is captured and that the evaluation plan created can easily be followed. This includes an Programme Proposal Document where programme leads can capture their research (literature review, student and stakeholder engagement, quantitative analysis) and note down any initial ideas for the content of the programme. It also houses a detailed evaluation plan which is completed once the Theory of Change model is agreed and finalised.

This framework provides structure to APP evaluation work at Edge Hill and keeps us in line with Office for Students (OfS) regulation and Transforming Access and Student Outcomes Higher Education (TASO) recommendations. This approach has informed the design and delivery of the SAP and helps us to evaluate it's impact.

05. Key Findings

In 2023/24:

- 95.7% of SAP students agreed/strongly agreed that their opinions were valued by the university.



- 69.6% of SAP students knowledge of the APP increased during the year.

