



Transforming Access
and Student Outcomes
in Higher Education

TASO Access and Success Questionnaire (ASQ)

Guidance for using
the validated ASQ scales

Guidance for using validated scales from the Access and Success Questionnaire (ASQ)

This document guides you through using the validated ASQ scales as part of an evaluation of a student access or success programme.

Before you start

WHAT IS A VALIDATED QUESTIONNAIRE SCALE?

A questionnaire scale is a set of items, statements or questions which together capture an outcome of interest.

A validated scale has undergone a multi-step process to ensure it is user-friendly, captures the outcome it sets out to do, does so consistently, and generates good-quality data.

Validation is a complex process that requires many steps. Read the [validation process note](#) to understand how the ASQ scales have been validated.

WHY WOULD I USE A VALIDATED SCALE?

When evaluating a student access or success programme, using a low-quality questionnaire scale can generate poor-quality data, and be a barrier to gaining meaningful insights from the evaluation.

Many questionnaire scales are available, but information about their quality or their appropriateness for a specific group of learners is not always available or complete.

Using a validated scale in an evaluation contributes to good-quality data, and therefore to the quality of the insight drawn from the evaluation.

WHEN WOULD I USE AN ASQ VALIDATED SCALE?

Use an ASQ validated scale when evaluating a student access or success programme and the outcomes of that programme align with the outcomes any of the ASQ scales cover.

ASQ validated scales cover outcomes that have good evidence of relevance to higher education access and success; and that the sector said were important in student access and success work.

ARE THE ASQ SCALES THE ONLY SCALES I NEED?

The important thing is to use validated scales that align with the expected outcome of the student access or success programme being evaluated. This may be an ASQ scale, or it may be another validated scale.

New scales are being validated all the time. You can access currently available validated scales via:

- TASO's [rapid evidence review](#) of intermediate outcomes for higher education access and success.
- The Education Endowment Foundation's [SPECTRUM database](#).
- [The Toolkit for Access and Participation Evaluation \(TAPE\)](#)

Guidance is also available on the process of validating a scale from scratch, [here](#).

DO I NEED TO USE ALL THE ASQ SCALES, AT THE SAME TIME?

Not at all. The programme being evaluated should drive the choice of outcome.

Use the ASQ scale, or scales, that are relevant to the outcomes of the student access or success programme being evaluated. If relevant, combine a validated ASQ scale with one or more other validated scales.

Using the ASQ validated scales

STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE PROGRAMME AND ITS OUTCOMES

The first step is to identify the student access or success programme to be evaluated.

Then identify the outcome, or outcomes, of most relevance to the programme. For guidance about how to identify the best outcome measure for a programme, check the TASO [Monitoring and Evaluation Framework](#) and consider using the [Mapping Outcomes and Activities Tool \(MOAT\)](#).

STEP 2: DESIGN THE EVALUATION

Having identified the programme, design its evaluation. Use the TASO [Monitoring and Evaluation Framework](#) or any other evaluation framework your institution uses to develop an evaluation plan.

Decide what kind of evidence the evaluation will generate. The Office for Students' standards of evidence identify three types of evidence: [Type 1](#) (narrative), [Type 2](#) (empirical), or [Type 3](#) (causal) evidence. Because they measure outcomes, validated scales are most useful for generating Type 2 or Type 3 evidence.

You may find that specific items from the ASQ validated scales act as useful prompts in evaluations generating Type 1 evidence, for instance in interviews, but they have been designed for use in questionnaires, not interviews.

STEP 3: IDENTIFY RELEVANT VALIDATED SCALES

As part of designing the evaluation, identify the validated scale, or scales, that are most relevant to the outcomes of the programme being evaluated. This may be an ASQ validated scale, or one or more other validated scales.

Specify in your evaluation plan precisely which validated scale you will use, and how you will collect data with it. This includes outlining when the scale will be administered, to whom, and whether on paper or in an online format.

If the ASQ or any of the other currently available validated scales do not match your programme's outcome, look at the TASO [guidance on validating a scale from scratch](#). Also, consider working with colleagues in your institution who may work with validated scales as part of their research.

STEP 4: CARRY OUT THE EVALUATION AND RECORD THE DATA

Implement the evaluation as close as possible to your plan. Deploy the scales in whichever survey approach you would normally use. The ASQ validated scales will work as well on paper as online.

Record the data you have collected using the ASQ validated scales. You may use the ASQ [spreadsheet](#), that allows for input of any data you may have collected using ASQ validated scales.

Many higher education providers use the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) to track engagement with their student access or success provision. If you are a HEAT member, you can access and disseminate any of the ASQ validated scales through the HEAT Survey Tool.

Visit [HEAT's website](#) for more information.

STEP 5: ANALYSE THE DATA AND DRAW EVALUATION CONCLUSIONS

The final step consists of analysing the data and drawing conclusions based on the analysis. Your evaluation design and plan will guide how you analyse the data.

If you're starting out with analysing data from surveys and questionnaires, this [online evaluation webinar](#), and the accompanying [guide](#), might be of use. The [ASQ spreadsheet](#) will also generate one overall score which you can use in your analysis.

If you are familiar with the process of analysing survey data, use data emerging from the use of the ASQ validated scales according to your standard procedures.

Finally, draw your conclusions from the data analysis and your evaluation overall.