**Toolkit for Access and Participation Evaluation (TAPE)**

Access and Participation Plans (APPs) place a strong emphasis on improving standards of evaluation to better understand what and what does not work in closing gaps in HE participation. Despite this drive, there has been less emphasis on validating toolkits (self-reporting surveys/questionnaires) employed by practitioners to measure short and intermediate-pupil outcomes (e.g., HE knowledge) that WP programmes aim to address. A lack of validation will hamper improvements to our understanding of ‘what works’. A robust validated toolkit will ensure that we are measuring the right things (e.g., the outcomes that interventions aim to improve), by understanding if these outcomes improve a pupil’s likelihood of entering HE[[1]](#footnote-1).

To support this work a Toolkit for Access and Participation Evaluation (TAPE) has been constructed. The toolkit includes measures of a pupil’s HE expectations, HE knowledge, HE attitudes, academic confidence, and academic motivation. Since its inception, TAPE has been validated on circa 1000 pupils, in various year groups (9-13) attending over 100 secondary schools. The survey toolkit was validated over a period of 7 years (from 2012-2019) on pupils who did not engage in WP interventions (the non-treatment group). This is the largest study of its kind to date and the first to validate a toolkit for actual behaviours (HE entry). Technical details of the toolkit will follow shortly (once published). The validation work supports wider use of the toolkit across the sector, as it has been shown to be valid and reliable:

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| --- | --- |
| Link with solid fill | ***Predictive validity:*** The analysis measured the association between survey scores and HE entry. Pupils with higher scores\* were more likely to enter HE compared to those with lower scores.  |
| Settings with solid fill | ***Test-retest reliability:*** All items were found to be reliable\*. Scores on re-testing remained largely consistent for pupils who did not engage in WP interventions (non-treatment group) |
| **Books with solid fill** | ***Face and content validity:*** All items were cognitively tested with pupils for feedback (e.g., did they understand question items) and SMOG tested (readability age) to support validation. Feedback was also obtained from WP practitioners. |

\*The validity and reliability testing excludes academic confidence measures due to small samples.

***Toolkit use notes.***

1. The toolkit is validated for pupils in year groups 9-13.
2. The tape toolkit can be employed as an online or paper-based survey.
3. To remain valid and reliable the question wording and 5-point Likert scale response format should remain unchanged.
4. Question items may be employed independently to align with the evaluation of specific interventions.[[2]](#endnote-1)
5. Block B questions (see page 2) focus on pupils’ concerns/barriers. These questions are routed and should not be completed by all pupils. The routing is based on the response to the following question:

 *I am planning/considering going to higher education before I am 30 years old*?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Responses* |  | *Routing* |
| *Not sure, probably not, and definitely not* |  | Complete block 1 questions and then move on to block 2. |
| *Definitely/probably* |  | Complete block 1 questions but not block 2. |

If a paper-based survey is being employed, the wording for the Block B question should first include the following sentence to support appropriate routing:

*Please only complete these questions if have expressed that you are not sure, probably not, or definitely not planning/considering going to HE before you are 30.*

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**Block 1: Questions**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Statements**  | **Construct**  | **Response format (coding)**  |
| **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:**  |
| *I am planning/considering going to higher education before I am 30 years old*  | HE intentions / expectations and academic motivation  |         Definitely  Probably  Not Sure  Probably Not  Definitely Not    |
| *I understand what student life would be like in higher education*  |        HE Knowledge  |
| *I know enough about higher education to decide whether to go or not*  |
| *I understand how to apply to higher education*  |
| *I know the qualifications that I will need to be able to go to higher education*  |
| *I know the grades that I will need to be able to go to higher education*  |
| *I am clear on which higher education course/subject to apply for*  |
| *I am clear on which higher education institutions I want to apply for*  |
| *I understand how the UCAS application process works (UCAS is the organisation responsible for managing applications to higher education courses)*  |
| *University is for people like me*  | HE Attitudes  |
| **Block 2: Questions** |
| ***Do you have any concerns about going to higher education? If yes, please outline the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:*** |
| **Statements**  | **Construct**  | **Response format (coding)** |
| *I can’t afford to continue into higher education because I am worried about getting into debt*  | HE Attitudes  | Strongly Agree  Agree Not Sure  Disagree Strongly Disagree    |
| *It is not worthwhile continuing with education*  | HE Attitudes and academic motivation  |
| *I’m not interested in education*  |
| *I will not get the required grades to go into higher education*  | HE intentions / expectations / confidence in academic ability  |
| *I do not feel confident in my ability to cope with learning in higher education*  | HE Attitudes / confidence in academic ability  |
| *other reason (please specify)*  |   |   |

1. For example, in general we would expect pupils who hold more positive attitudes to HE to be more likely to enter HE than those with more negative attitudes. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. However, current testing has only provided validation at an aggregate level (e.g., HE knowledge scores aggregated together) and not for specific question items (e.g., if you pick just one of the HE knowledge items). Work is planned to provide validation on specific question items. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)