





# UOW Framework for Evaluation of Equity Programs

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## **AIM**

The UOW Framework for Evaluation of Equity Programs aims to support higher education equity program designers to formulate, implement and enhance programs and initiatives that promote positive participation and outcomes for the equity cohorts they aim to support. To achieve this successfully requires meaningful, actionable and sustainable evaluation, which enables program designers to react to and pre-empt issues that may emerge over time. This Framework aims to specify the core principles of effective evaluation, which can be used to guide design, implementation and appraisal of program evaluation activities.

## PHASES OF PROGRAM EVALUATION

The UOW Framework for Evaluation of Equity Programs is designed around four phases of program evaluation:

- PLANNING & DESIGN explicit and structured pre-planning to generate meaningful, actionable and reliable data from which to appraise the effects of the program
- **IMPLEMENTATION** the process of putting the structured plan into action
- ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION interrogation of the data through statistical (quantitative) or qualitative techniques to identify and describe trends in the data, as they pertain to the aims and intended outcomes of the program
- DISSEMINATION the reporting and circulation of findings to key stakeholders, funding bodies and the wider community

### **PRINCIPLES**

Nine core principles were developed through an iterative process of literature and theoretical review, stakeholder and expert consultation, and piloting. The intent of this consultative approach was to develop principles to guide design of program evaluations from the bottom up, rather than imposing a particular framework upon an existing program. The result was nine principles that represent the foundations, requirements and essential characteristics of an effective equity program evaluation. What follows is an overview of these principles, their meaning and, in brief, their implications for program evaluations. The companion document, Background Information on Evaluation of Equity Programs, further elaborates upon these principles, as well as their importance and supporting evidence. The supplementary Action Tool for Evaluation of Equity Programs provides a working document to aid the planning of a program evaluation, or the appraisal of a program evaluation proposal.

- Widely Consultative 1.
- 2. Sensitive
- Well-aligned 3.
- Coordinated 4.
- Impactful 5.
- Sustainable 6.
- 7. Integrated
- Carefully Managed 8.
- Disseminated 9.

## USING THE FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRAM EVALUATION

For those wanting further information about these principles, what they entail and why these particular principles were chosen, a detailed document outlining background information and underpinnings for each principle is available in the Background Information on Evaluation of Equity Programs companion document. This provides further information about what is meant by each principle, why they are important and how they can best be achieved.

For those wanting to propose or conduct an evaluation, there is a companion document, Application of Evaluation Principles. It is intended to support practitioners and coordinators of equity programs to design and implement an evaluation program that is aligned with the UOW Framework for Evaluating Equity Programs and is consistent with best practice associated with program evaluation. The reflection questions are designed to support your planning and design. You don't have to answer every question in each section; only those that seem relevant and/or appropriate to your program and context. Also included in the reflection tool is a range of suggested resources aligned to the Framework. There is also an Action Tool that assists you to transform your responses to this reflection into a clear and coherent plan for implementing your program evaluation.

## Widely Consultative

## Program evaluation seeks input from a range of key stakeholders.

In brief: Program evaluations should consider perspectives, experiences and impacts of the program across a range of stakeholders. This includes not only program participants, but also its facilitators, organisers, supporting institutions/ organisations and the families of participants. While not all stakeholder groups must be consulted in every evaluation activity, understanding how a program's impacts are distributed is important. This consultation can be achieved in numerous ways: inviting stakeholders onto a project oversight panel to discuss plans, progress and findings (i.e., consultation); adopting a 'students as partners' approach to design and implementation of the evaluation (i.e., collaboration). For further background, rationale and importance of this principle, see Application of Evaluation Principles).

Relevance to Evaluation Planning (see also Evaluation Action Tool):

#### **Principle 1: Widely Consultative**

#### **PLANNING & DESIGN**

Evaluation plans and design should be widely consultative, ensuring their appropriateness to key stakeholder groups who may be involved in evaluation activities or impacted by actions taken on the basis of evaluation findings.



#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

Key program stakeholders should be consulted on any proposed changes to evaluation plans, such as those that may arise from expected implementation issues or expected findings.



#### **ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION**

Preliminary (de-identified) findings should be shared with program stakeholders to discuss results, their appropriate interpretations and to identify possible further analyses of interest.



#### **DISSEMINATION**

Evaluation reports should be fair to the range of possible interpretations, some of which may have emerged during consultation on preliminary findings.

## Sensitive

## Program evaluation is sensitive to the equity groups that interact with the program and evaluation process.

In brief: All program evaluations should aim to develop productive and culturally sensitive relationships with diverse students and recognised equity groups. We propose that the AIATSIS ethical guidelines should always be consulted to ensure that respectful relationships are developed with stakeholders and participants. While these guidelines have specifically been developed to guide researchers engaged in Australian Indigenous studies, its principles (e.g., respect, negotiation, collaboration, giving back) reflect good practice for evaluation with participants from diverse backgrounds and/or cultural groups. As such, these guidelines will ensure that any evaluation is both culturally appropriate and also responsive to stakeholders' needs. In particular we recommend that program evaluations strive to incorporate 'consultation, agreement and mutual understanding' in all activities and where possible, design should be framed around partnership and also collaboration amongst all parties. Evaluations should also be student centred, recognising that diversity is both an enriching and valuable resource for the higher education setting. As such, students should be considered holistically and in terms of their strengths, starting with what is present rather than what is absent. Finally, evaluation results should endeavour to 'give back' to the respective communities and participants. For further background, rationale and importance of this principle, see Application of Evaluation Principles).

Relevance to Evaluation Planning (see also Evaluation Action Tool):

### **Principle 2: Sensitive**

#### **PLANNING & DESIGN**

- Evaluation should be culturally appropriate (e.g., consultation with communities as needed) and responsible to stakeholders' needs.
- Evaluation should always consult and follow AIATSIS ethical guidelines.



#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

Develop productive and culturally sensitive relationships with student and equity groups.



#### **ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION**

De-identification of data protects an individual's privacy and prevents sensitive details from being known



#### **DISSEMINATION**

Evaluation results should endeavor to 'give back' to communities and participants.

## **Well-Aligned**

Program evaluation is well-aligned with the intended aims and outcomes of the specific program being evaluated.

In brief: Program evaluations must be well-aligned to the program's intended aims, to yield insight into the extent to which the program is achieving each of its intended outcomes (as determined by the program stakeholders). Usually programs expect to have an impact over time, across each of its iterations and whenever improvements are made. As such, program evaluations should complement and extend any existing, past or planned evaluations or data sources, to give the fullest possible picture of a program's outcomes (i.e., across a variety of outcome areas, participants over time, comparing a revised version of the program to a previous iteration). To achieve this often requires triangulation of multiple sources of data – which also serve to ensure the accuracy and robustness of conclusions. For further background, rationale and importance of this principle, see *Application of Evaluation Principles*.

Relevance to Evaluation Planning (see also Evaluation Action Tool):

#### **Principle 3: Well-Aligned**

#### **PLANNING & DESIGN**

- Evaluation should be meaningfully aligned with the program's intended aims, and capture the breadth of the program's intended outcomes.
- · Evaluation should triangualate multiple data sources to ensure robustness of conclusions.
- Evaluations should complement past, ongoing and/or future evaluation data and activities of the program.



#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

 $\label{prop:continuous} \textbf{Evaluation data sources should be authentic (e.g., valuing multiple different forms and outcomes)} \\$ of learning, such as actual learning and perceived learning).



#### **ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION**

- · Analysis should triangulate data sources to ensure accurate and robust conclusions.
- Analysis should be open to unexpected outcomes.



- · Reporting should situate findings within the intended aims and outcomes of the program.
- Dissemination strategies should consider the overall aims of the program.

## Coordinated

Program evaluation articulates with a common set of outcomes to be captured across all programs ('whole-of-institution'), the entirety of the student ('whole-ofstudent') and over the entire student lifecycle ('whole-of-journey').

In brief: Program evaluations should evaluate a common and comprehensive set of outcomes across programs and time, rather than only evaluating individual programs and instantiations in isolation. That is, while there will certainly be unique foci and aims for each program that should be captured, there should also be an overarching set of outcomes that apply across all programs; these should be identified, specified and agreed. Evaluation activities that aim to capture unique aspects of a particular program (e.g., HSC results in comparison to Year 11 results, as an outcome of a university preparation program) should also aim to articulate with a core set of outcomes established, to ensure a cohesive story can be told when combining these data. This permits a higher-level strategic evaluation of the full suite of program offerings, to ensure that the programs that exist: effectively contribute a positive and cumulative effect toward participants' immediate, short-term and longterm outcomes; and are evidence-based. Oversight of this 'big picture' evaluation should be monitored by an overarching governance group. At the same time, evaluation should be open to innovation and change, rather than strict adherence to the methods of previous evaluations. For further background, rationale and importance of this principle, see Application of Evaluation Principles).

Relevance to Evaluation Planning (see also Evaluation Action Tool):

### **Principle 4: Coordinated**

#### **PLANNING & DESIGN**

- Evaluation should articulate with a common set of outcomes captured across other pertinent programs at the university.
- Evaluation should leverage routine data collection already occurring.
- Evaluations should be consistent with best-evidence designs, methods, tools and practice.



#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

Evaluation data should be collected in a manner (e.g., similar methods, data) that allows the program's effects to be compared with previous iterations or other pertinent programs



#### **ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION**

Where possible, analyses should consider data in relation to the institution's overall equity aims and the entire student lifecycle.



- Dissemination should report on outcomes related to: (1) specific program foci or iterations; and (2) overall institutional equity aims, and within the entire student lifecycle.
- Evaluation reports should be situated within (inter) national higher education equity program research and practice as a means to advance practice in the field.

# **Impactful**

## Program evaluation is designed to generate conclusions that are accurate, meaningful, and action-oriented.

In brief: A principle rationale for conducting a program evaluation is that it yields conclusions that are action-oriented. This action might take the form of other programs replicating the success of the evaluated program or making necessary revisions to the evaluated program. For this to occur, conclusions need to be accurate (e.g., triangulated across multiple data sources), meaningful (e.g., yield data that speaks to the real-world outcomes of program participants) and actionable (e.g., provide clear guidance about what, when, why and how a program is, or is not, having a particular impact). Anticipated changes need not be identified in advance of the evaluation; rather, evaluations may also be open, exploratory and creative to generate insight about the effective and efficient functioning of the program. Evaluation designs also need to be changefocused, looking at aspects of the program that do (or do not) yield short-, medium- and long-term benefits for participants. In addition, to enable changes that benefit the students currently participating in the program, evaluation should ideally also have a formative function (e.g., collection of data that can be used to inform delivery of the program), rather than only an end-of-program evaluation from which changes are too late to benefit the current cohort of participants. For further background, rationale and importance of this principle, see Application of Evaluation Principles).

Relevance to Evaluation Planning (see also Evaluation Action Tool):

## **Principle 5: Impactful**

#### **PLANNING & DESIGN**

- · Evaluation should be designed to yield insights that are accurate, meaningful and actionable.
- · Evaluation tools, measures and data sources should yield valid and reliable insight into the effectiveness of the program or its components.
- Where possible, evaluation should consider; change from before to after the program; and not just acute effects of the program, but medium- and longer-term effects too.



#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

- · Evaluation data should be collected in a manner to ensure its integrity.
- Where evaluation data serves a formative role, results should be monitored to inform change.



#### **ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION**

- · Analysis should be change-focused, identifying effective elements and further opportunities.
- Where possible, evaluation of a program's effects will be strengthened by comparison with the outcomes of those who did not have similar access to the program.



#### DISSEMINATION

Reporting of results should include discussion that is action-oriented, suggesting what seems to be effective and possibilities for future directions/revisions/opportunities.

## Sustainable

Program evaluation requires and employs resources (e.g., finance, personnel, time) in a manner that ensures evaluation activities can be sustained over time, if desired.

In brief: Evaluation activities should, wherever possible, leverage existing program activities, contexts and resources to ensure cost-effective evaluation. Program evaluations also need to be adequately and sustainably resourced (e.g., should be a line item in a program's budget) to ensure its viability over time. Another important aspect of sustainability involves ensuring the presence, development and continuity of relevant expertise within the team responsible for ongoing evaluation activities. For further background, rationale and importance of this principle, see Application of Evaluation Principles).

Relevance to Evaluation Planning (see also Evaluation Action Tool):

### **Principle 6: Sustainable**

#### **PLANNING & DESIGN**

Evaluation should be fully and sustainably costed and resourced, to enable replication over time.



#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

- · Progress against available resources should be carefully monitored and maintained.
- All evaluation protocol should be maintained to enable replication over time.



#### **ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION**

· The procedures for analysis should be clearly articulated and replicated.



#### **DISSEMINATION**

· Evaluation activities should be clearly reported so they can be repeated in future using the same approach, timing, tools and procedures.

# Integrated

## Program evaluation should minimise interference with the program's activities.

In brief: Evaluation activities should, wherever possible, leverage existing program activities, contexts and demands to ensure that evaluations are compatible with (rather than interfere with) the program. To achieve this, evaluation activities that are efficient and place minimum burden on program staff and participants (e.g., occur within planned program activities without hindering them) should be privileged. For further background, rationale and importance of this principle, see Application of Evaluation Principles).

Relevance to Evaluation Planning (see also *Evaluation Action Tool*):

#### **Principle 7: Integrated**

#### **PLANNING & DESIGN**

- · Evaluation should leverage, be compatible and not interfere with program activities.
- · Evaluation activities should be brief, replicable and minimally burdensome.



#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

Evaluation activities should be embedded within or planned around program activities, while considering participant burden (e.g., if evaluation activities are to occur outside of planned program meetings).

#### **ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION**

# Carefully Managed

Program evaluation has a designated individual or team to carefully manage the evaluation process, including planning for and monitoring risk assessments and mitigation.

In brief: Successful program evaluation requires careful planning, organisation and adherence to plans – and someone to ensure and certify this adherence. An oversight person, team or panel should have a clearly articulated, written plan for evaluation (i.e., what, when, where, by whom), and regularly review and ensure progress against this plan. Risks should also be monitored and planned for. These extend beyond ethical risks (e.g., informed consent), to include things like risks related to timing (e.g., data collection not being ready in time for planned program meetings), reliability of data (e.g., data collected accurately and appropriately) and funding (e.g., exceeding evaluation funding prior to completion). For further background, rationale and importance of this principle, see Application of Evaluation Principles).

Relevance to Evaluation Planning (see also Evaluation Action Tool):

### **Principle 8: Carefully Managed**

#### **PLANNING & DESIGN**

- Evaluation should have a responsible oversight person (or team) that oversees and manages all aspects of evaluation activities (e.g., data collection, consultation, timelines, expenditure).
- Evaluation planning should include identification of risks and risk-mitigation plans.



#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

· Evaluation should have a broadly representative steering panel/committee that consults regularly with the responsible oversight person/team to guide ongoing evaluation activities.



#### **ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION**

Data entry, collation, storage and sharing should be carefully managed to ensure adherence to ethical obligations.

## Disseminated

## Program evaluation findings are disseminated with maximum impact.

In brief: Dissemination of program evaluation findings is essential to enhance practices and approaches in the field. Even null or negative findings tell us something important. As such, program evaluations should be reported. Part of the dissemination strategy might include the discussion of preliminary findings with a group of key stakeholders, to ensure conclusions are accurate and appropriate. Be creative in the dissemination of findings to ensure maximum impact and exposure. This might extend beyond the traditional reports to include scholarly journal articles, media releases and social media postings. At the same time, dissemination strategies must always adhere to ethical requirements of reporting, such as the anonymity and confidentiality of evaluation participants. Sufficient time and resources for dissemination should be explicit in the evaluation protocols and budget, to ensure this important stage gets attention. As part of the dissemination process, an institutional response to evaluation should be sought and provided, to facilitate internal dissemination, strategising and institutional buy-in. For further background, rationale and importance of this principle, see Application of Evaluation Principles).

Relevance to Evaluation Planning (see also Evaluation Action Tool):

#### **Principle 9: Disseminated**

#### **PLANNING & DESIGN**

A plan for dissemination of evaluation results should be an explicit component of evaluation design, planning and proposals (e.g., strategy defined, within sufficient time and resources).



#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

During evaluation activities, evaluators should remain open to unplanned additional data sources that could contribute to dissemination plans and strategies.



#### **ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION**

Analysis should be oriented toward findings that can support, enhance or identify effective program elements and practices.



- · Evaluation findings should be broadly (and, if appropriate, creatively) disseminated.
- Dissemination should aim to advance higher education equity practices, approaches or research methods, while maintaining intellectual integrity (e.g. not being unduly promotive).
- · Evaluation reporting must adhere to ethical requirements of reporting.

