

The LSE Evaluation Framework – Overview & Guide

1.0 Why, and why now?

1.1 LSE is one of the world's leading social sciences institutions and puts rigorous, evidence-based analysis, research, and understanding at the heart of its mission to 'know the causes of things'. We want to build on that strength and way of working to support LSE to become a true learning organisation. A key part of that goal is to use evaluation to improve our activity over time. We do this well in pockets, but there isn't a School-wide focus on, commitment to, or platform for evaluation that all areas can work from. The Evaluation Framework seeks to develop an evaluative culture at the School; alongside an enhanced culture for and methods of communicating and sharing engaging, meaningful, timely insights with each other that build up shared understandings of what works; all supported by some practical resources and guidance. This is being driven internally by the benefits to all of us from learn from the extensive changes that have been delivered across LSE over the last three years and that are sought or occur in future. Externally, this is being driven by a growing need to respond effectively to requests for accounts of the value of our work with students.

2.0 Our working definition of evaluation as a practice

“Evaluative practice consists of purposefully gathering, analysing and discussing evidence from relevant sources about the quality, worth and impact of provision, a development, or policy.”

3.0 Core assumptions

3.1 Evaluation is not Monitoring. Monitoring compares measures against targets or objectives to monitor an activity's performance. Evaluative practice learns from the activity, irrespective of whether it has achieved what was expected or not, or was 'successful' or not.

3.2 The focus for this LSE-wide approach is education and student experience, with the emphasis on activity leading to their enhancement.

3.3 The Framework will bring together and incorporate the pockets of good practice that already exist across the School and it will build knowledge with regards to how specific evaluative approaches work.

3.4 The Framework will not duplicate or cut across existing evaluative practice in evidence gathering for quality assurance, management information, or teaching and research excellence.

3.5 The Framework will not mandate or preclude specific evaluative approaches. The Framework encourages diversity in both types of data used and methods of data collection.

3.6 The Framework is dynamic and will iterate over time – this is the explicit intention.

4.0 Principles of procedure

4.1 These principles reflect the complex and emerging needs of the LSE and should underscore the approach of all evaluations within the School.

4.2 The aim is to embed an evaluative culture that routinely produces evidence that can be drawn on for communications with internal and external stakeholders, and which underpins the design of any changes.

4.3 The central objective is to provide the School with an institution-wide Framework that staff and students can draw on to undertake evaluative activity. The Framework is responsive to specific circumstances and supported by an accessible and adaptable box of resources.

4.4 The Framework focuses on three broad purposes for evaluation: development of the activity, developing knowledge across the community, and accountability. These purposes are not mutually exclusive and a single evaluation can address all three purposes.

5.0 Procedural dimensions of the Framework

5.1 We will use a straightforward planning tool (the '**Pro-forma & Planner & Resource Log**') to move forward with evaluation design, sharing of outputs at small group, departmental, divisional, and institutional levels, and/or externally (as appropriate), and reflecting on the utility of the evaluation.

5.2 Evaluations will focus on combinations of one or more levels of evaluation including:

- the quality of the experience and immediate effects or situated learning.
- the transfer and sustainability of learning to new environments and practices
- the extent of institutional wide impacts
- the quality and extent of impact on macro or long-term strategic objectives.

5.3 Evaluations will use indicators that can be either open and exploratory, intended to focus on a broad aspect on which to collect evidence, or indicators that involve an intended outcome against which evidence of actual practice or outcomes will be compared.

5.4 A range of tools, examples and models will be made available to support evaluative practice at all levels through the '**Pathway & Resources Box**'. These resources will be flexible and easily adapted to specific circumstances and needs. Their use will not be mandatory.

5.5 Where appropriate, evaluations will draw on the Theory of Change model, which is used to help design and orientate evaluative activity. This model supports the examination of assumptions that underpin the nature of change or the focus of a strategy or intervention. Further information is available through the '**Pathway & Resources Box**'.

6.0 Communication and engagement

6.1 The emphasis will be on the use of the outputs to provide evocative accounts of what we do, with the communications approaches and stakeholder groups considered at the beginning of the evaluation design as key drivers for it; to provide developmental resources; and to know more about how our students experience learning and life at LSE.

6.2 This Framework will undergo several iterations and the assumption is that there will be ample opportunity to discuss, refine and participate in the process of development along with support in designing and carrying out evaluations.

6.3 This Framework recognises that the purpose of an institutional approach to evaluation should be enabling rather than controlling. As such, this Framework seeks to develop a set of principles to which everyone can agree. The operationalisation of these principles will be supported through a bank of usable and adaptable resources designed to assist rather than constrain.

6.4 As far as possible, this overarching approach evaluation approach will be developed with as diverse and extensive participation as possible across LSE.