Guidelines for self-evaluation

Participants in an institutional self-evaluation need to:

- **make the aims, objectives and purposes** of the evaluation clear to all members of the institution.
- **ensure that the process is built into the structure** and function of the institution.
- **have a clear set of procedures for the sharing of data** within and beyond the institution.
- **take steps to ensure** that all members of the institution believe the evaluation is worth doing.
- **acknowledge that the sharing of knowledge and experience** within the institution may be more threatening than to those outside and take steps to lessen this threat.
- **treat all colleagues equally** in the process of the evaluation and dissemination of findings.
- **ensure that all involved in the evaluation (whether as a data givers, collectors or users)** are engaged at some level from the start so they know what is happening and why.
- **adopt methodologies that are economical and feasible** to use in the time-scales and operations of the institution.
- **have the backing and support of the head of the institution,** including financial support, where appropriate for meetings, networking, dissemination and publication.
- **assure** members of the institution that the findings from the evaluation are fed back into development as well as providing a measure of accountability.
- **indicate that the process is methodologically sound** from which valid implications can be drawn for the precise purpose agreed.
- **ensure the agreement and understanding** of all members of the institution before starting the evaluation.
- **demonstrate consistency and predictability of behaviour** in the conduct and negotiation of the evaluation.
- **recognise and agree when it is important to make data public** and when, for the development of the institution, it is prudent to retain some data in confidence.
- **communicate openly and honestly** with colleagues, consistent with maintaining fair and equitable ethical procedures.
- **seek advice and/or consider adopting a critical friend** to conduct a process audit of the methodological rigor and fairness with which the evaluation is conducted.
- **communicate to colleagues in accessible language** and engage them in discussion on the utility of the evidence and findings.

Guidelines for evaluation participants

All participants in an evaluation shall:

- **receive a proper explanation of the purpose and methods** of the evaluation and should have opportunity to comment on how they are represented in the evaluation.
- **receive an explanation of the evaluation agreement** forming part of the negotiation of the evaluation teams' access to a programme.
- **have the right to be fully informed about the purpose** of the evaluation and procedures for collection and use of data (including explicit use of interview transcripts, observations and image based data).
- **have access to the evaluation team** as agreed in the contract for purposes of feedback, reporting and ongoing support for the duration of the evaluation.
- **have proper opportunity** to be assured that the data they offer is consonant with the Data Protection Act and that any data made public is on the grounds of fairness, accuracy and relevance.
- **be assured that in the event of a dispute or difficulties** between evaluation participants and evaluators, they would have access to independent arbitration.
- **be assured that evaluators have taken all reasonable measures to ensure that the reports are negotiated.** Final reports should normally be lodged in the public domain and made available to all participants. Reasons for exemptions need to be recorded.

If you have any comments about use of the guidelines in practice, please send them to Helen Simons **h.simons@soton.ac.uk** or Georgie Parry-Crooke **georgie@parry-crooke.com**

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United Kingdom Evaluation Society

Guidelines for good practice in evaluation

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Preface

The UK Evaluation Society has generated these guidelines to help commissioners, practitioners and participants establish good practice in the conduct of evaluation. The guidelines attempt to capture, in an easily assimilated way, a diverse set of principles for action in evaluation. They are intended for use in any domain, discipline or context. Organised in different sections, the guidelines outline issues for consideration by a range of stakeholders involved in the evaluation process. In this way practice is encapsulated from the point of view of evaluators themselves, commissioners, participants and those involved in self-evaluation in organisations.

Writing guidelines to inform practice has real challenges in that it is easy to slide into a set of disembodied, somewhat rationalistic standards, which bear little resemblance to the ebb and flow of interactions as the social process of evaluation unfolds. Yet it is difficult to adopt a conversational tone that at the same time allows for quick reference and easy access.

These guidelines are written in a matter-of-fact style that eschews jargon, the obscure and the insular. They are intended for use by the novice and the experienced alike. While they may be a little truncated, each statement is designed to offer a starting point for deliberation and to act as a reference for statements of evaluation ethics, intentions and generic practice. In this sense they are educational, generated to establish a dialogue between the different groups on what constitutes good practice.

The guidelines provide frameworks for action that do not exemplify any particular evaluation approach. Many of the statements have at their heart the need to be open and transparent about the expectations and requirements of all the stakeholders *whoever* they may be. As such the language used strives to avoid hidden assumptions about the efficacy, dominance or normality of any single approach to evaluation.

The guidelines are grounded in practice, i.e., what those engaged in the practical business of evaluation, have found to be both honourable and effective ways of interacting. We believe they will come alive through use in discussions between people involved in evaluations and they will support ways of negotiating some of the critical aspects of the process from commissioning to dissemination of findings.

The guidelines are not definitive and will continuously evolve; they should therefore be received as work-in-progress.

Guidelines for evaluators

Evaluators need to:

- **be explicit about the purpose, methods, intended outputs and outcomes** of the evaluation; be mindful of unanticipated effects and be responsive to shifts in purpose.
- **alert commissioners to possible adjustments to the evaluation approach** and practice; be open to dialogue throughout the process informing them of progress and developments.
- **have preliminary discussion/s with commissioners** prior to agreeing a contract.
- **consider** whether it is helpful to build into the contract forms of external support or arbitration (should the need arise).
- **adhere to the terms agreed in the contract** and consult with commissioners if there are significant changes required to the design or delivery of the evaluation.
- **demonstrate the quality of the evaluation** to other parties through progress reports e.g. on development and financial accountability and adhere to quality assurance procedures as agreed in the contract.
- **be aware of and make every attempt to minimise any potential harmful effects** of the evaluation prejudicing the status, position, careers or lives of participants.

Evaluators also need to:

- **demonstrate** that the evaluation design and conduct are transparent and fit for purpose.
- **demonstrate comprehensive and appropriate use of all the evidence** and that evaluation conclusions can be traced to this evidence.
- **work within the Data Protection Act** and have procedures which ensure the secure storage of data.
- **acknowledge intellectual property** and the work of others.
- **have contractual agreement over copyright** of evaluation methodology, findings, documents and publication.
- **write and communicate evaluation findings** in accessible language.
- **agree with commissioners from the outset about the nature of dissemination** in order to maximise the utility of the evaluation.

In practice evaluators need to:

- **demonstrate a commitment to the integrity of the process** of evaluation and its purpose to increase learning in the public domain.
- **be realistic about what is feasible** to achieve and their capacity to deliver within the time-scale and budget agreed.
- **know when to refuse or terminate** an evaluation contract because it is undoable, self-serving, or threatens to undermine the integrity of the process.
- **be prepared to argue the case** for the public right to know in evaluation in specified contexts.
- **treat all parties equally** in the process of the evaluation and the dissemination of findings.

Guidelines for commissioners

To ensure good practice in evaluation, it would be helpful if Commissioners:

- **acknowledge the benefits** of external, independent evaluation.
- **operate fair tendering situations** in which competitors ideas are not exploited or intellectual property misused as a result of commissioning.
- **hold preliminary consultations** with all parties to the evaluation to support a relevant, realistic and viable specification.
- **specify the purpose and audience(s)** for the evaluation with appropriate background material to encourage relevant tenders.
- **operate a tendering procedure that is open and fair** ensuring that appropriately qualified assessors are involved, making explicit criteria upon which a tender decision will be made.
- **clarify the constraints that commissioners operate under,** e.g. timescales, budgets, deadlines, and accountability.
- **adhere to the terms agreed in the contract** and consult with evaluators and other interest groups if significant changes are required to the design or delivery of the evaluation.
- **specify the legal terms and responsibilities** of the evaluation in the contract.
- **match the aims and potential outcome** of the evaluation to the knowledge and expertise of the potential evaluator(s).
- **provide access to documentation and data** required for evaluation purposes.
- **establish clear principles for the reporting and dissemination** of evaluation reports funded by public monies, consistent with acknowledged procedures which ensure quality evaluation and reporting.
- **have realistic expectations on what an evaluation might provide** including sufficient time for evaluators to respond to an initial invitation to tender and produce a proposal.
- **include experienced evaluators** (who are not potential applicants for funding) in initial drafts of evaluation specifications, including feasible budget and realistic timescales.
- **have trust in and mutual respect** for all stakeholders, participants, commissioners and evaluator(s).
- **take advice of evaluators on research methodologies** for collecting and analysing data.
- **communicate openly** and keep the evaluation team informed of changes in circumstances affecting the evaluation.
- **recognise where evaluators need to keep their sources of information anonymous.**
- **preserve the integrity of the findings,** e.g. by not quoting or publicising findings out of context.