

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Advice and Guidance



Sector-Agreed Principle 5 -
Monitoring, evaluating,
and enhancing provision

September 2026



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About this Guidance

Context

This Advice and Guidance supports the [UK Quality Code](#) for Higher Education (Quality Code) and is designed to unpack Sector-Agreed Principle 5 Monitoring, evaluating, and enhancing provision and the Key Practices that sit under it. It has been produced by QAA in partnership with a writing group of sector experts and peer-reviewed by colleagues across UK higher education. This is in accordance with the ethos that the Quality Code remains a sector-agreed reference point, built on a shared understanding of what providers can expect of themselves and each other in the assurance and enhancement of quality and the maintenance of standards across post-secondary education throughout the UK. QAA would like to thank the writing group and peer readers for their invaluable contribution in developing this guidance. Details of the writing and reading groups can be found on [79](#) of this guidance.

An important contextual note relates to the diversity of higher education providers in the UK. Providers can be large universities, operating with significant infrastructure, or small specialist providers, operating on a significantly smaller scale, or any number of other different operating models. The Advice and Guidance is designed to be useful for all providers (and representatives from a range of providers formed the writing and peer review groups), but we recognise that, on occasion, the nomenclature used could suggest a larger provider's context. It is important that each reader interprets the Advice and Guidance in the context of their own operating environment and that all readers recognise that quality and homogeneity are not synonymous.

Scope

This Advice and Guidance encourages providers to reflect on their practice and processes in relation to the Sector-Agreed Principle. Following the Advice and Guidance is not mandatory, but illustrative of approaches that can help providers meet the relevant Principle. National regulators and QAA do not view the information in the Advice and Guidance as compliance indicators. This guidance does not interpret statutory requirements.

The language we use

Where the word 'should' (or any other similarly directive language) appears in the Advice and Guidance this represents a shared understanding within the UK higher education community. On some occasions an institution can align with the Sector-Agreed Principle in a range of different ways, and in such cases an institution may have a different approach to that set out here. Ultimately, to be aligned with the Quality Code, an institution must be able to demonstrate how it meets the Sector-Agreed Principles in practice. No provider or individual should feel that the Advice and Guidance is prescriptive or impinges their autonomy or freedoms.

Structure

In response to sector demand, the Advice and Guidance aligns directly with the overarching Sector-Agreed Principles to provide clear navigation between the different elements. The guidance begins by unpacking the Principle in an operational context. It is then divided into subsections focusing on each Key Practice outlining practical considerations and approaches for providers to benchmark their own way of working. This features practical tips and experience shared by providers on operational practice. Finally, in each subsection there are tools to enable reflection on the guidance. These tools offer the opportunity to explore what 'good' might look like through reflective questions and practical scenarios that enable interrogation of current practice with a view to enhancing quality.

Commonly used terms

The following terms are used throughout this advice. Other terms which benefit from a precise definition are listed at the end of this document.

- **Students:** refers to all individuals studying towards a higher-level award regardless of demographic, mode of delivery, level of study, subject area, or geographic location.
- **Provider:** describes all types of organisations that provide higher level learning, including universities, colleges, institutes of learning, and employers. We also use 'institution' in some instances where 'provider' might not suit the context.
- **Student representative body:** a formal body or mechanism that represents and promotes the interests of students. This may be known as a students' union, a students' association, or guild, or by another bespoke name where these specific organisations do not exist.

Raw data	
Unprocessed, original information collected through systems, surveys and databases	
• Student records • Attendance logs • Admissions records • Online learning platforms • Surveys • Staff records • Financial records • Alumni records	
Statistics	
The systematic collection and analysis of data related to students, staff and providers	
Student data analysis	• Tracking student numbers by level of study, mode of study, subject area • Tracking student numbers in relation to gender, ethnicity, nationality, disability or support needs
Performance metrics	• Graduation rates (across all levels) • Student progression/continuation (year to year) • Employment/graduate outcomes
Sector monitoring	• Staff employment and qualifications • Institutional finances • Research performance • Competitor analysis
Policy support	• Evidence the success (or otherwise) of key policy areas such as widening participation, disability support, equality, diversity and inclusion policies International
Regulatory reporting	• Comparing provider-level performance • Compliance with regulatory thresholds for evaluating quality of provision
Information/interpretation/narrative	
The inference or conclusions drawn from the statistics	
• Assessment and evaluation of quality of provision - decision for intervention/drive improvements at module/programme/institution/sector/policy • Registration with regulators • Competitor analysis • Student dashboards to predict success/performance • Setting targets for recruitment, retention and success • Governors/board/committee reporting • Prospective student information	



Sector-Agreed Principle 5 and its Key Practices

Providers regularly monitor and review their provision to secure academic standards and enhance quality. Deliberate steps are taken to engage and involve students, staff and external expertise in monitoring and evaluation activity. The outcomes and impact of these activities are considered at provider level to drive reflection and enhancement across the provider.

Key Practices

- a. Providers agree strategic principles for monitoring and evaluation to ensure processes are applied systematically, operated consistently and appropriate to their operational context.
- b. The methods for monitoring and evaluation activity are documented to clarify their aims, objectives, intended actions and targets. They are explicit about how they will be conducted, the nature of evidence (data) to be considered and the form of reporting, along with key indicators of success.
- c. Staff and students are engaged in monitoring and evaluation activities and receive appropriate training and support to undertake them.
- d. The actions and outcomes from monitoring and evaluation activities are communicated in an accessible manner to staff, students, the governing body and, where required, external stakeholders.
- e. Improvements and enhancements that have been implemented as a result of monitoring and evaluation are, in turn, monitored and evaluated to ensure their impact is positive and remains fit for purpose.
- f. Monitoring and evaluation activity facilitates providers' insights and promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion, and education for sustainable development.
- g. Programmes and modules are monitored and reviewed regularly by internal and external peers, employers and students, in line with the provider's strategic approach to quality and standards. Outcomes from processes required from funding, accrediting, professional and approval bodies feed into monitoring and review.



Principle 5 - Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision

Providers regularly monitor and review their provision to secure academic standards and enhance quality. Deliberate steps are taken to engage and involve students, staff and external expertise in monitoring and evaluation activity. The outcomes and impact of these activities are considered at provider level to drive reflection and enhancement across the provider.

Effective monitoring and evaluation is an ongoing activity that is embedded within everyday practice. To be effective, it must be adequately resourced, with sufficient time, capacity and expertise allocated to support its implementation. These resources should be in addition to, and not detract from, those required for the delivery of provision. Monitoring and evaluation activities should be focused and proportionate, ensuring they are feasible and sustainable. The range of processes and methods used may vary according to factors such as the provider's priorities, the nature of the provision, cohort sizes, regulatory monitoring and returns.

Providers should have a clear understanding of the definitions of monitoring and evaluation within their own context and communicate it to staff, students and external stakeholders; at a generic level these definitions are outlined below:

Monitoring: The routine and systematic collection, analysis and review of information relating to an area of work, project, programme or course while it is being delivered. Monitoring focuses on tracking performance, progress, quality and outcomes, identifying trends, risks and areas for improvement and enhancement; also providing timely information to support decision-making and action.

Evaluation: The planned and systematic assessment of an organisation, area of work, project, programme or course, undertaken to understand its effectiveness, impact, value and contribution to intended outcomes. Evaluation may be conducted internally or by independent external reviewers at appropriate points in the life cycle of the activity being assessed. It draws on current and historic monitoring information, together with other relevant evidence, to support learning, planning, decision-making, enhancement and future development.



It is also important for providers to set out the purpose and benefits of effective monitoring and evaluation which can:

- **Improve the student experience and outcomes**
 - improve the quality of the student experience and student outcomes
 - identify challenges in provision and support, enabling timely intervention and assessment of the impact of resulting changes
 - provide evidence of student, alumni and employer satisfaction and dissatisfaction
 - support the identification, collation and dissemination of effective practice across the provider.
- **Support evidence-informed planning and decision-making**
 - enable the development of clear short, medium and long-term outcomes, objectives, targets and goals aligned with provider strategy and informed by evidence
 - improve organisational planning, performance, enhancement and decision-making
 - inform strategic decision-making, policy development, process improvement, learning and teaching, and assessment, while providing opportunities to test the effectiveness of changes.
 - provide evidence to respond to new and emerging challenges
- **Strengthen organisational culture and capability**
 - promote an evaluative mindset and culture of continuous improvement through the effective use of existing systems and resources
 - encourage staff and stakeholder ownership of, and engagement with, monitoring and evaluation activities across the institution.
- **Demonstrate effectiveness and contribute to improvement**
 - assess and demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of activities through proportionate evidence generation
 - support the sustainability of successful courses, interventions and systems over the longer term
 - contribute to the wider evidence base on the effectiveness of higher education provision.

Provider approaches to undertaking monitoring and evaluation

Depending on their individual and regulatory context, there is a variety of approaches providers can employ when undertaking monitoring and evaluation. Specific methods are explored in [Key Practice b](#). However, it is important providers working within their own context have a robust, consistent and well-understood approach to undertaking these activities.

Approaches to monitoring

- **Risk-based**

Risk-based monitoring is an approach that uses evidence and data to identify, assess and prioritise areas of potential risk. Monitoring activity is then targeted proportionately towards those areas where the likelihood or impact of adverse outcomes is greatest, enabling providers to use resources effectively while maintaining assurance over quality, standards, student outcomes and regulatory compliance.

- **Enhancement-led**

Enhancement-led monitoring is a systematic process through which providers regularly review evidence about the quality and effectiveness of their provision to identify opportunities for improvement, support innovation, and enhance the student experience and outcomes. It emphasises learning, reflection and continuous improvement alongside accountability and assurance and regulatory compliance.

- **Periodic**

Periodic monitoring is the planned and systematic review of evidence relating to the quality, standards, effectiveness and outcomes of higher education provision at defined intervals. It enables providers to assess performance over time, identify trends, evaluate progress against objectives, and determine whether further action or enhancement is required.

Approaches to evaluation

In practice, the approaches below are often combined. For example, a provider may use project management principles to organise an evaluation, while drawing on a Theory of Change model to understand impact and a risk-based approach to determine priorities.

- **Theory of Change**

Theory of Change is a popular method of evaluation in UK higher education and wider public sector and offers a structured description of how and why monitoring activities are expected to lead to desired outcomes and impacts. It sets out the relationships between monitoring inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and longer-term impacts, together with the assumptions and contextual factors that influence whether change occurs. It offers a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of monitoring by making explicit how monitoring information is expected to inform decisions, actions and improvements.



Figure 1: A Theory of Change (ToC) component parts. Effective Evaluation (Liz Austen and Stella Jones-Devitt 2024), adapted from work by Nathaniel Pickering, Sheffield Hallam University/University of Greenwich.

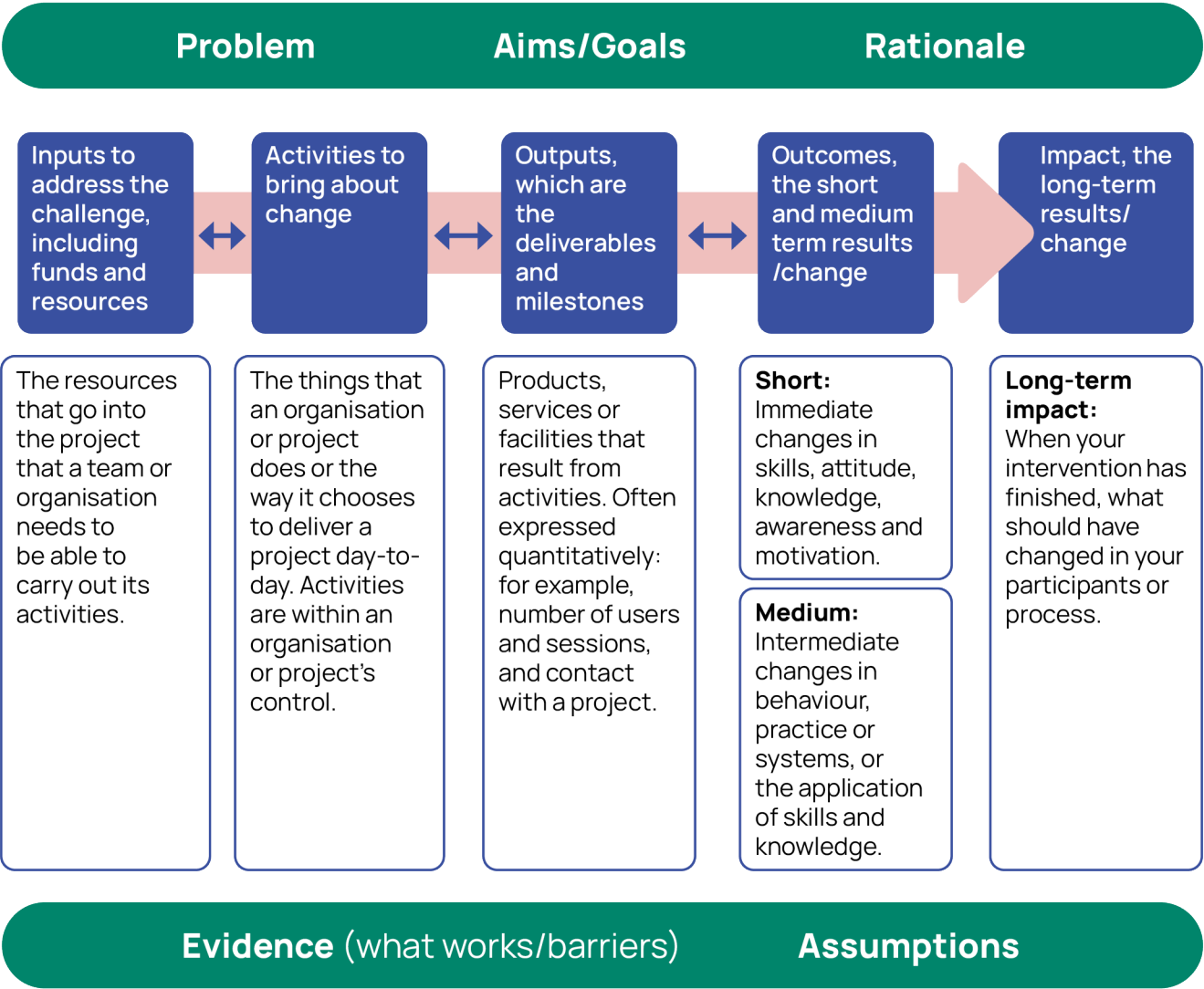
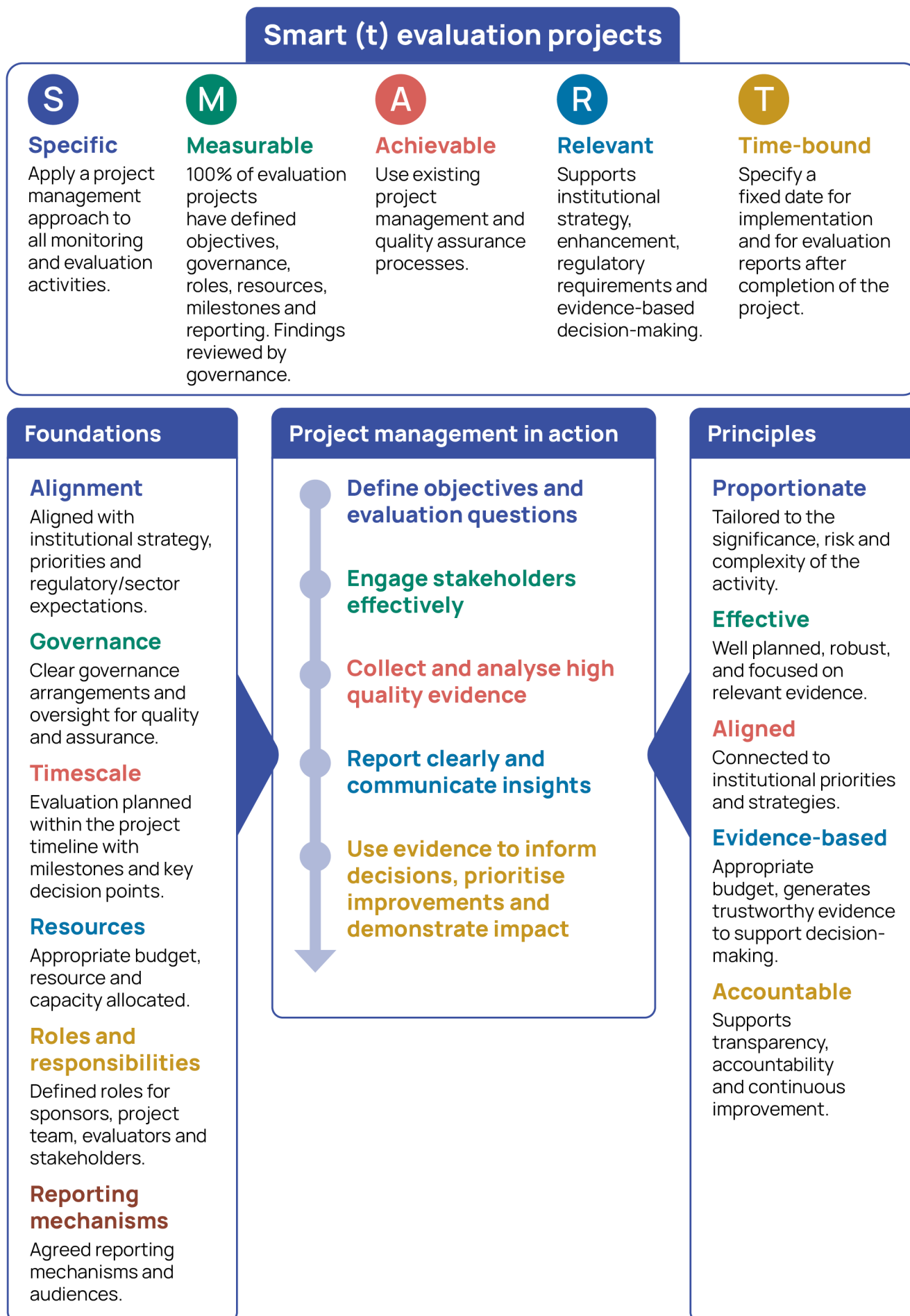


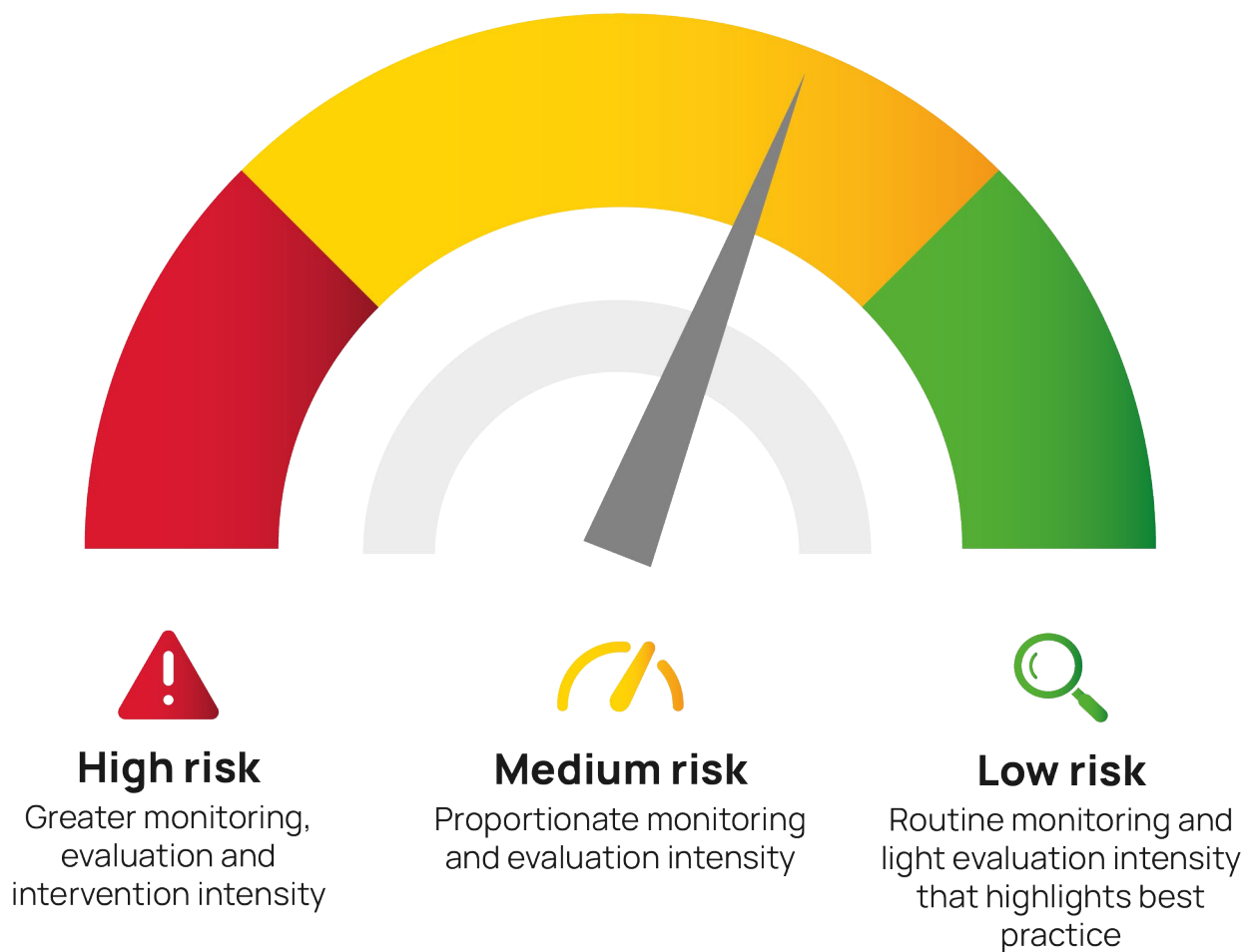
Figure 2: Considerations for a project management approach to monitoring and evaluation



Project management

A project management approach to the evaluation of monitoring activities is a structured method that plans, delivers and reviews evaluation through defined objectives, governance arrangements, timescales, resources, roles and reporting mechanisms. It seeks to ensure that evaluation activities are proportionate, effectively managed, and aligned with institutional priorities, while generating evidence to inform decision-making, enhancement and accountability.

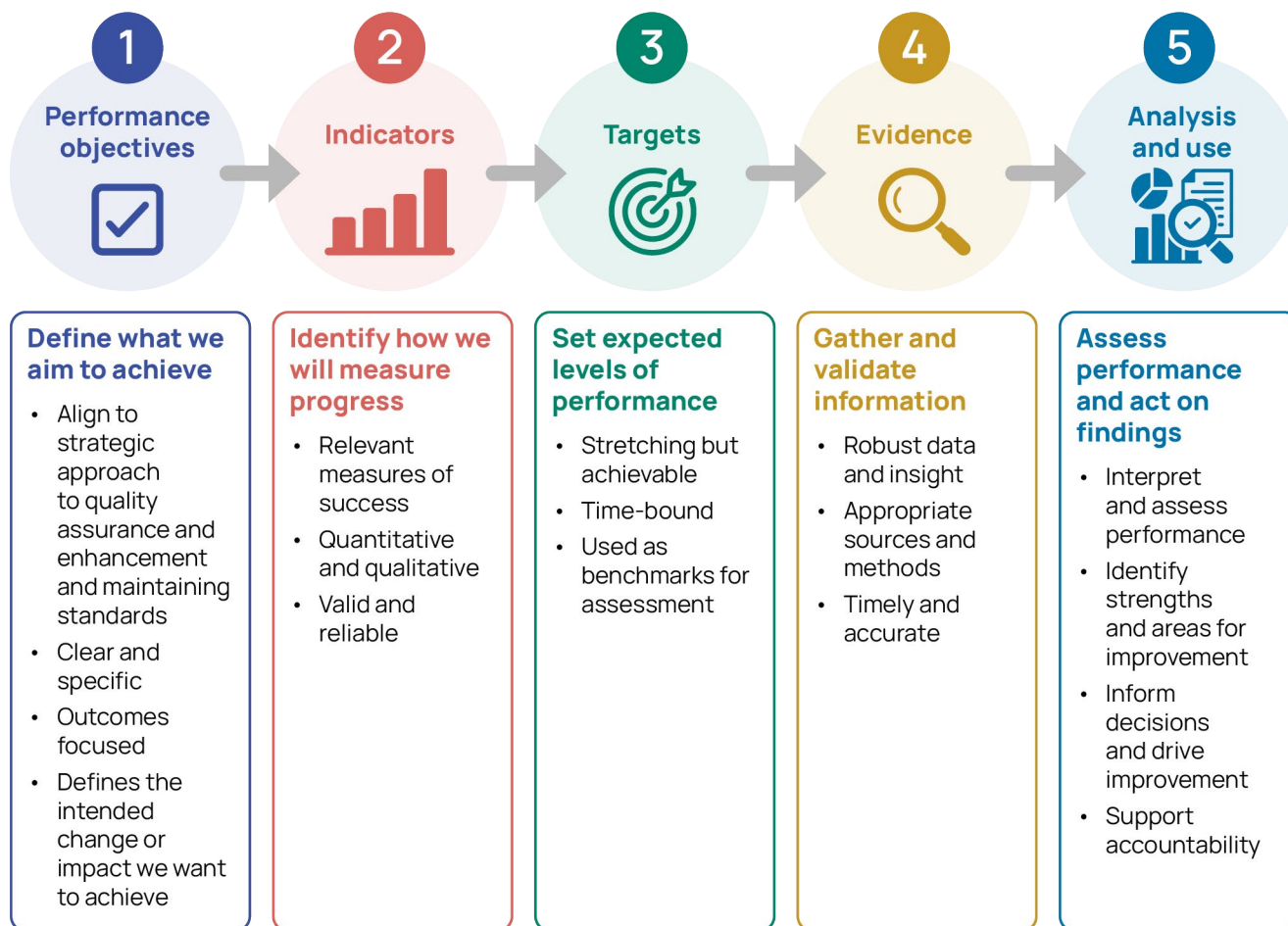
Figure 3: How the intensity of evaluation activity increases with the level of risk



Risk-based approach

A risk-based approach to evaluation prioritises and designs evaluation activities according to the level of risk associated with the monitoring process, the area of provision being monitored, or the potential impact of decisions informed by monitoring. Evaluation effort is directed proportionately towards higher-risk areas to provide assurance, identify weaknesses, support improvement and mitigate potential adverse outcomes. Ongoing activity is undertaken in the medium risk area where you would expect to find the majority of programmes and low risk provision represents areas of outstanding practice that can be used as exemplars.

Figure 4: How a performance measurement approach can be used for evaluation



Performance-measurement approach

A performance-measurement approach is the systematic use of performance objectives, indicators, targets and evidence to assess the effectiveness and quality of provision, monitor progress against expectations, and support improvement, accountability and decision-making.

Reflective questions

1. How do we know that there is a provider-wide understanding around the institution's definitions of monitoring and evaluation - what are our methods for communicating this?
2. How do we know that the purpose of monitoring and evaluation of quality and standards is understood by staff, students and external groups (for example, employers)?
3. Who provides the leadership and coordination of monitoring and evaluation activities relating to quality and standards across the provider? How do we promote a collective responsibility for embedding effective monitoring and evaluation to drive change?
4. Is there a provider-wide understanding of how monitoring and evaluation feeds into enhancement?



Key Practice a - Agreeing strategic principles for monitoring and evaluation

Key Practice a

Agreeing strategic principles for monitoring and evaluation

Providers agree strategic principles for monitoring and evaluation to ensure processes are applied systematically, operated consistently and appropriate to their operational context.

This Key Practice outlines the importance of developing a strategic approach to monitoring and evaluation underpinned by clear strategic principles. These provide a transparent, well-understood systematic approach to monitoring and evaluation activities across a provider.

Providers are advised to develop a culture of quality across their institutions with all staff recognising their role and responsibility in undertaking effective monitoring and evaluation for the betterment of the student and staff experience.

In addition, the principles underpinning monitoring and evaluation in relation to quality assurance, enhancement and the maintenance of standards should be explicitly reflected in the strategies and plans (or equivalent documents) listed below, to help ensure a cohesive, consistent and institution-wide approach:

- teaching, learning and assessment
- student experience or student success strategy (which is led by an accountable senior leader)
- data
- sustainability
- equality, diversity and inclusivity
- people plan/strategy (to ensure appropriate induction/training).

Monitoring and evaluation principles that appear within institutional strategic documents would usefully:

- have a clear purpose, most usefully linked to exploring quality assurance and regulatory conditions/benchmarks
- reflect the Principles of the UK Quality Code
- have clear senior leadership accountability
- be visible and well understood
- be appropriately resourced to be enacted (see [Principle 3 - Resourcing delivery of a high-quality learning experience](#))
- recommend actions that are proportionate to what is under scrutiny
- be conducted by those with the necessary skills and capabilities to do so
- be valued so that it leads to impactful change

- translated to local/subject targets to ensure academic delivery teams understand their strengths and weaknesses and where they sit in relation to performance across the sector
- tracking and evaluating partner performance.

Examples of strategic principles for monitoring and evaluation

Strategic principles for monitoring and evaluation will be context dependent. Some national funders and regulators will have requirements for providers to undertake monitoring, evaluation and enhancement of provision and this feeds into substantive external review methods (for further detail see also [Principle 6 - Engaging in external review and accreditation](#)).

Table 1: Example statements which could appear in institutional strategy documents (adapted from [The Evaluation Manifesto](#) (2022))

Example statements
To secure academic standards and enhance quality, we adopt the definitions of monitoring and evaluation described in the 2024 UK Quality Code, as applied to all provision.
Monitoring and evaluation of quality and standards should be a recognised collective responsibility across our institution, focusing attention and effort on how to achieve transformative educational outcomes and success for our students.
Monitoring and evaluation of quality and standards should be used for inquiry into differential student outcomes and so evidence is used to minimise barriers to student success.
Monitoring and evaluation of quality and standards is conducted by those with the skill set to do so with emphasis placed on continuous reflection through practitioner-led enquiry.
The language and expectations of monitoring and evaluation of quality and standards will be clear, accessible and familiar to encourage the widest engagement across the institution.
We are committed to building an 'evaluative mindset' in all staff and student partners and will build confidence and capacity through development sessions on evaluation practices.
We will ensure evaluation findings are shared transparently and grounded in criticality and context.
Monitoring and evaluation of quality and standards will use a variety of evidence and choice and should be guided by what needs to be measured and known. A range of methods can be adopted to gather this evidence.
We will ensure evaluation leads to learning via supported dissemination in an open access repository of findings, reporting to relevant boards/committees through an appropriate governance framework.

Key Practice a

Any approach should be accompanied by an implementation plan detailing how the principles for monitoring and evaluation might be embedded.

This may include:

- how actions are implemented from monitoring and evaluation when it highlights poor and good practice
- how timelines for actions are agreed
- how and where the outcomes of enhanced monitoring and review are reported
- how any good practice is shared across an institution
- a governance framework outlining expectations, roles and responsibilities
- a process for review to ensure that the principles and the associated activities are adhered to and enable the institution to identify areas of risk, areas for improvement and areas for enhancement with a view to the betterment of the student experience.

Key stakeholders from across an institution need to be identified and consulted in the development of the strategic approach and development of the implementation plan to ensure buy-in, consistency of practice and to promote a culture of shared ownership for quality enhancement and the maintenance of standards.



Reflective questions

1. What are the strategic principles guiding our monitoring and evaluation activities?
2. How do we ensure that strategic principles are understood and widely communicated to staff, students and other stakeholders?
3. How do our monitoring and evaluation processes align with our institutional priorities and external regulatory requirements?
4. What mechanisms do we use to ensure actions are followed up, reported appropriately and tracked?
5. How can we embed monitoring and evaluation into routine academic and operational practices?
6. What data do we need to ensure monitoring and evaluation targets align to strategic principles and are new data collection tools required?
7. How do we demonstrate the impact of monitoring and evaluation activities against our strategic goals?
8. How can we involve students and external stakeholders in the development of our strategic principles for monitoring and evaluation?
9. How are monitoring and evaluation initiatives delivered within the academic calendar and are there any challenges?
10. How do we ensure that data collection and analytical tools are inclusive of diverse student experiences?
11. If creating a culture of quality is one of our strategic goals, how do we support and train staff to engage in monitoring and evaluation activities?
12. How do we ensure key performance indicators are translated to local programme and subject targets?
13. How do we ensure that monitoring and evaluation is not only a compliance exercise but meaningfully embedded to drive continuous improvement?
14. How can we use monitoring and evaluation to identify areas of good practice which can be applied to inform enhancements and reflect on our strategic priorities?
15. Are our monitoring and evaluation priorities timely, credible, informed by and informing decision-making at a strategic level?

Scenario

Reviewing a strategic approach to monitoring and evaluation

Context

A further education college delivers a range of FHEQ Level 4 and Level 5 (SCQF/FQHEIS levels 7 and 8) pathway programmes in partnership with a large awarding body. Following a recent partnership review, the college has decided to review its strategic approach to monitoring and evaluation. The review was prompted by concerns about the consistency of monitoring and evaluation practices across the college's higher education provision, as well as varying levels of staff understanding of these processes.

Staff and student representatives have also expressed concerns that the awarding body's approach to monitoring and evaluation is overly burdensome and not proportionate to the size, level and nature of the college's higher education pathway provision.

At a strategic level, the college has identified growth in its higher education provision and the development of new partnership opportunities as key priorities. It therefore wishes to establish a monitoring and evaluation approach that aligns with partner requirements while remaining proportionate, effective and appropriate for its own context. To achieve this, the college has identified the following steps.

1. **Identify and communicate the key concerns** relating to current monitoring and evaluation processes with relevant stakeholders.
2. **Review and communicate the awarding body's approach** to monitoring and evaluation to ensure a shared understanding of its expectations and requirements.
3. **Establish a cross-college stakeholder group**, including the senior member of staff responsible for quality, to co-develop a set of strategic principles for monitoring and evaluation. These principles should align with, but not necessarily replicate, the awarding body's approach.
4. **Develop an implementation plan**, including staff development and training, for introduction across the higher education provision, with the intention of extending the approach across the wider institution over time.
5. **Consult with the awarding body** on the proposed principles and implementation plan, making amendments to the partnership agreement where necessary.
6. **Design and implement an evaluation plan** to assess the effectiveness of the new strategic approach to monitoring and evaluation and inform future enhancement.

Considerations

- What data is required to support the strategic oversight of monitoring and evaluation for quality enhancement and maintenance from the perspective of both partners?
- How is the data generated (for example, through student assessment, attendance, engagement with online learning tools/resources, National Student Survey, module evaluations and other sources of student feedback)?
- What training might staff at the college require to access and interpret data for monitoring and evaluation purposes?
- Aside from training, what other resource implications might there be to consider when implementing a new approach to monitoring and evaluation - particularly in a partner arrangement?
- From the awarding body perspective, how will the new approach to monitoring and evaluation to inform any interventions, drive reflection and enhance quality?
- How might interventions be monitored and evaluated to demonstrate impact against principles for monitoring and evaluation for both partners?
- How does the governance structure ensure that strategic principles for monitoring and evaluation processes are applied systematically, operated consistently and appropriate to their operational contexts?
- How does the governance structure ensure student representation and voice?
- How would the college undertake a mapping exercise of quality and standards procedures and policies to confirm where there is overlap/gaps?



Key Practice b - Defining the methods for monitoring and evaluation

Key Practice b

Defining the methods for monitoring and evaluation activities

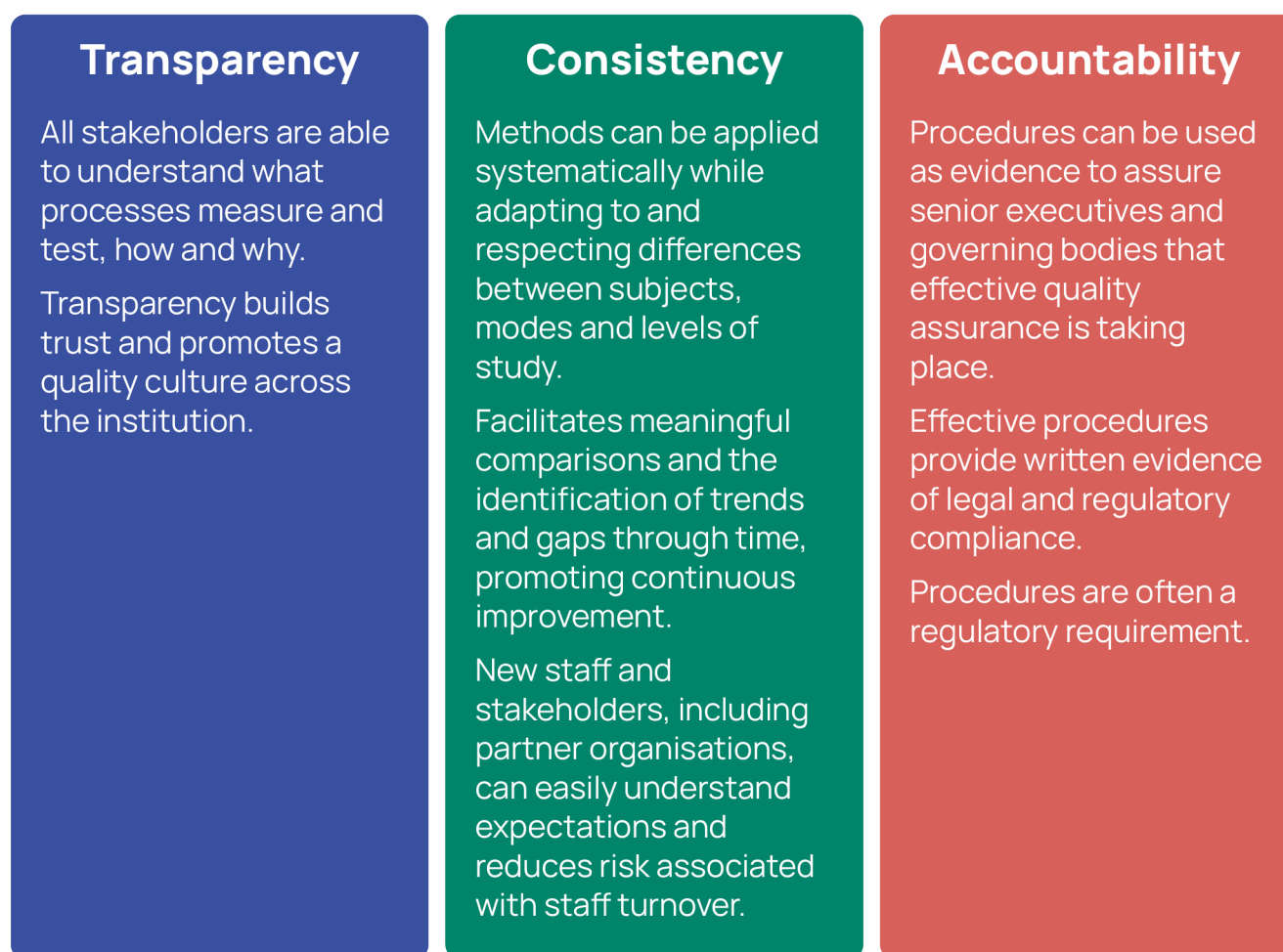
The methods for monitoring and evaluation activity are documented to clarify their aims, objectives, intended actions and targets. They are explicit about how they will be conducted, the nature of evidence (data) to be considered and the form of reporting, along with key indicators of success.

At a strategic level, providers should maintain a strategic risk register that identifies risks relating to quality and standards. This sets out the arrangements for monitoring and evaluation, including performance measures, mitigating actions, and controls to manage identified risks.

At an operational level, providers should have clear documentation that outlines the processes and methods for monitoring and evaluation. These processes should be understood by staff, students, student representative bodies, partner providers, and external stakeholders (such as external examiners). Clear operational guidance promotes consistency in practice, transparency in decision-making, and accountability across the organisation.



Figure 5: Core benefits of documenting methods for monitoring and evaluation and what this enables providers to do



Monitoring and evaluation methods

Providers' decisions and priorities around monitoring and evaluation are based upon a number of factors:

- internal and strategic priorities for managing quality and standards
- external requirements
- available resources
- approaches to enhancement.

The methods used need to yield meaningful, consistent and measurable outputs that are proportionate to the context of the provider. They establish systems for monitoring quality which are ongoing, future-directed and help drive enhancement, rather than simply reactive.

Table 2 articulates examples of the frequency and different type of monitoring and evaluation methods that providers use (these will vary depending on the regulatory context of each UK nation. For further details, see [Principle 6 - Engaging in external review and accreditation](#)).

Table 2: Different methods of monitoring and evaluation

Example statements	Description
External reviews	• regulatory inspections • reviews by external agencies • external (re)accreditation activity by professional statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs)
Institutional reviews	• regular self-assessments • annual/periodic internal review
Programme reviews	• periodic or annual evaluations of curriculum design, delivery, relevance and outcomes • programme validation/approval
External examining	• regular independent peer review of standards, quality and fairness
Student feedback	• annual sector-wide surveys • regular satisfaction surveys • regular focus groups • ongoing complaints • regular alumni feedback
Teaching observations	• regular formal and informal evaluations of teaching practice • annual/periodic peer reviews
Continuing professional development (CPD)	• regular tracking of staff engagement with training and professional development • ongoing PSRB accreditation • ongoing sector body memberships • ongoing practitioner networks • ongoing Advance HE Fellowships
Student engagement	• student involvement in governance at institutional, departmental and programme level • suggestion boxes / pulse surveys • listening events
Module reviews	• regular evaluation of outcomes • annual learner surveys of teaching, resources and support
Performance metrics	• regular monitoring of live performance data such as HESA data, against internal, subject and sector benchmarks

Review of monitoring and evaluation activities

Providers should routinely review their monitoring and evaluation methods to ensure they remain fit for purpose. Regular review enables providers to adopt new approaches and technologies, such as dashboard reporting and artificial intelligence, where these enhance monitoring and evaluation processes. When implementing these technologies, providers will need to undertake appropriate due diligence to ensure compliance with data protection requirements and carefully consider any ethical implications (see [Principle 4 - Using data to inform and evaluate quality, Key Practice c](#)).

Key stakeholders should be widely consulted in the design of the procedures, methods and processes used for monitoring and evaluation. These will be approved by an agreed committee or stakeholder group and reviewed at planned intervals, with review arrangements embedded within the provider's monitoring and evaluation framework (as described in [Key Practice a](#)).

Policies, handbooks and manuals that set out the provider's approach to monitoring and evaluation should be developed and approved in line with institutional governance arrangements, schemes of delegation, implementation plans and management structures (as outlined in [Key Practice a](#)). Consulting on draft documentation helps to build trust, secure stakeholder buy-in and foster a positive quality culture.

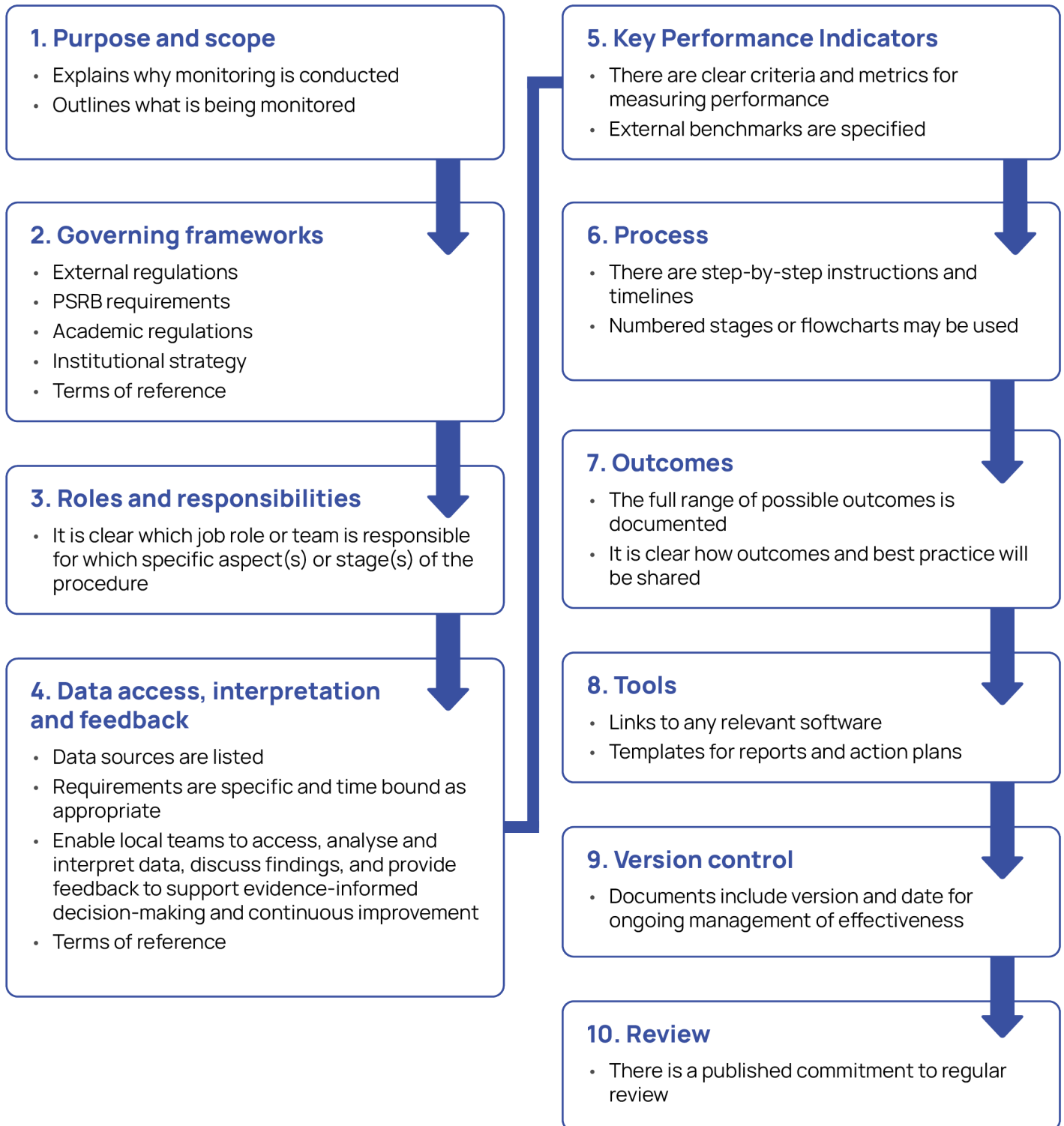
Stakeholders are drawn from across the provider and may include:

- academic staff and those who support academic delivery
- students
- careers and employability teams
- student support services
- digital learning and digital skills specialists
- other professional or subject specialists, as appropriate to institutional priorities.

Guidance documents may take a variety of forms, including quality policies, handbooks, manuals or web pages. Regardless of format, they are likely to share a number of common features, as illustrated in Figure 6.



Figure 6: Common features of documents outlining monitoring and evaluation methods



Documents will also explain how different quality and standards processes fit together within the cycle for monitoring and evaluation. Providers may also use maps or calendars of quality assurance to help illustrate and manage this.

These documents will detail procedures related to monitoring and evaluation to the extent that all stakeholders across a provider and their partner organisations are able to understand how they operate, what is in scope and what good practice looks like. Accessible language is used in preference to specialist terminology, and glossaries are used where appropriate.

Using data for monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation is an evidence-informed activity. Procedures and guidance should clearly specify data used, which may be qualitative, quantitative or, most commonly, a combination of both. Data needs to be accurate, relevant, credible, valid and reliable, with evidence focused on providing timely and meaningful information to support course design, enhancement, decision-making and continuous improvement (see [Principle 4 - Using data to inform and evaluate quality](#) for further information).

Providers should have clear arrangements for access to monitoring and evaluation data. Some adopt a 'need-to-know' approach, while others make anonymised data more widely available, recognising the benefits of enabling academic and professional staff, alongside student representative bodies and student representatives, to analyse, interpret and compare performance across subjects, departments or the institution. Wider access supports local ownership of quality, encourages informed discussion and facilitates evidence-based decision-making. Access may, however, be restricted where appropriate, for example to protect confidentiality or where very small student numbers could make individuals identifiable.

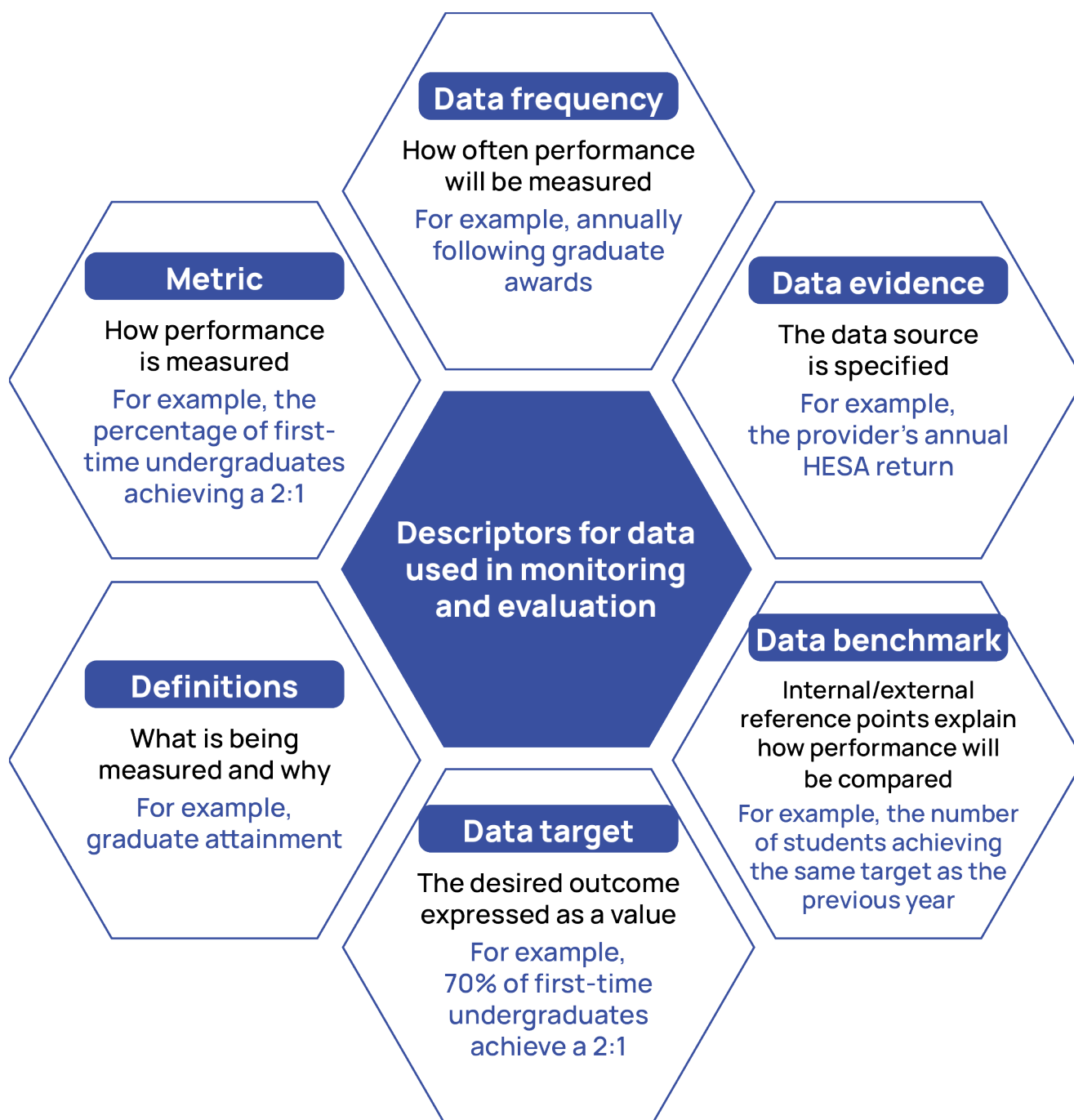
Benchmarks and key performance indicators (KPIs) should be clearly defined so that all stakeholders understand how evidence will be interpreted and evaluated.

These may be informed by:

- previous institutional performance
- strategic priorities and objectives
- subject, departmental or institutional benchmarks
- sector comparisons
- regulatory and awarding body requirements.

Evidence gathered through monitoring and evaluation should be used to identify strengths, assess performance and risk, support enhancement, and inform planning and decision-making at course, departmental and institutional levels (for example, how the subject average compares to the institution average).

Figure 7: Descriptors for data frequently used in monitoring and evaluation



Reporting outcomes of monitoring and evaluation

Templates for formal reports and action plans will help ensure the right information is elicited and reported onwards, including any information for meeting PSRB requirements. They may be designed with the ultimate reporting requirement in mind. Documents also clearly determine responsibilities so that stakeholders are clear who is responsible for identifying, disseminating and embedding good practice through the processes. For more information on communicating outcomes, see [Key Practice d](#).

Reflective questions

1. In what ways do our monitoring and evaluation methods reflect the institution's strategic priorities and regulatory requirements?
2. How do our process documents contribute to enhancement as well as compliance obligations?
3. What factors influence the feasibility of our methods in relation to available resources, and how might these be addressed?
4. How do we achieve an effective balance between formal and informal monitoring methods?
5. In what ways do our monitoring and evaluation methods achieve consistency while respecting variation?
6. How do our key performance indicators reflect meaningful progress toward strategic goals?
7. How are different stakeholders involved in shaping and reviewing our documented monitoring procedures, and what impact does this have?
8. What strategies do we use to help stakeholders understand the purpose and outcomes of our monitoring methods?
9. What potential risks arise if our current methods remain unrevised, and how might these be mitigated?
10. How are lessons learned from monitoring activities embedded into future planning and practice?
11. What evidence do we have to demonstrate that our methods drive continuous improvement rather than reactive fixes?
12. How do we determine when and how to review our monitoring and evaluation methods for continued relevance?
13. How do we approach adopting new technologies into our methods?

Scenario

A provider decides to adopt new procedures for monitoring its taught provision

Context

A provider is engaged in a project to develop metrics for measuring educational gain. The project group advises that these metrics could be incorporated into programme monitoring activity, and the academic governance committee instructs the Quality team to redefine the monitoring procedures in accordance with them.

The provider has also recently invested in new data visualisation software. The Quality team sees this as an opportunity to retire cyclical reviews and annual monitoring, and to adopt a more continuous approach to monitoring.

The Quality team is conscious that while it is responsible for defining the monitoring procedures, monitoring activity itself is mainly conducted by academic colleagues within departments. The team is keen to ensure that changes to procedures are not perceived as a burden, and that the thriving shared quality culture is upheld.

The Quality team decides to pilot new monitoring procedures. It begins by using the new educational gain pre-requisites to redesign the monitoring action log completed by programme teams and by writing a proposed timeline for future monitoring activity.

It plans to package its work into a formal proposal, including draft written procedures, for the academic governance committee to approve the pilot.

Considerations

- Who are the key stakeholders across the provider that the Quality team need to consult to help develop the draft procedures?
- What other considerations should the team take account of for a successful pilot and to gain approval from the committee?
- How could the Quality team use existing key performance indicators to help define the scope of the pilot?
- How could the Quality team reasonably evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot to gain approval, given that the impact for enhancement activity may likely be medium to long term?



Key Practice c - Training for staff and students to undertake monitoring and evaluation activities

Key Practice c

Training for staff and students to undertake monitoring and evaluation activities

Staff and students are engaged in monitoring and evaluation activities and receive appropriate training and support to undertake them.

This Key Practice encourages providers to move beyond simply requiring participation in monitoring and evaluation activities to actively enabling meaningful engagement. It emphasises a proactive commitment to building the knowledge, skills, confidence and capacity of all staff and students involved in monitoring and evaluation processes so that they can contribute authentically to quality enhancement.

This can be achieved through tailored training, clear guidance and resources, and ongoing support. Together, these help participants understand quality assurance processes, interpret evidence, provide informed feedback, and contribute confidently to decision-making. The overall aim is to foster a culture of shared responsibility and collaboration in which staff, students and other key stakeholders engage critically and constructively in monitoring and evaluation activities that lead to meaningful improvements in learning and teaching.

To support engagement, providers should create accessible opportunities for key stakeholders to contribute their perspectives and experiences through clear communication, consultation and feedback mechanisms.

These may include:

- training and development opportunities
- comprehensive induction for those new to monitoring and evaluation activity
- ongoing guidance and support to develop understanding of quality assurance processes, evidence and decision-making
- feedback and feedforward mechanisms that demonstrate how contributions have informed any action, intervention and enhancement
- staff-student liaison committees or similar forums that enable regular dialogue and provide early identification of issues at module or programme level.

Engaging key stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation activities

To foster trust and effective participation, providers need to be transparent about the purpose of monitoring and evaluation activities, and how feedback and evidence will be used to improve and enhance quality and maintain standards. Providers can create meaningful opportunities for staff, students, student representative bodies, partner providers and external stakeholders (such as external examiners) to contribute throughout the monitoring and evaluation cycle.

Engagement should be underpinned by clearly defined roles and responsibilities so that all participants understand how their contributions fit within the provider's approach to quality assurance and maintaining standards and how evidence gathered throughout monitoring and evaluation informs decision-making and quality enhancement.

Providers can use approaches to engagement that are inclusive and responsive to the differing needs of participants. This includes recognising that stakeholders may require different forms of support or opportunities to contribute depending on their role, experience, circumstances or accessibility requirements.

It is important to embed engagement with monitoring and evaluation into institutional culture, ensuring it is viewed as a continuous, developmental process that strengthens trust and accountability, and supports ongoing enhancement of the learning experience.

Training for those engaged in monitoring and evaluation activities

Training provides participants with a clear understanding of the provider's approach to quality assurance, enhancement and maintaining standards along with the monitoring and evaluation processes that underpin it. Effective training will enable individuals to understand their role, the roles of others, and how their contributions influence quality assurance, enhancement and institutional decision-making.

The design and delivery of training will be underpinned by a central principle of co-creation. Involving stakeholders in the design and review of monitoring and evaluation processes, training and support mechanisms helps ensure that approaches remain relevant, effective and responsive to changing institutional needs and sector landscape.

Participants may include new academic or professional services staff, senior managers or governing body members, student representatives, representative body staff, postgraduate researchers, external examiners and delivery partners. These participants will have diverse needs and training should be designed using principles of accessibility, inclusivity and flexibility to meet their learning requirements.



Key Practice c

Training needs to be practical and engaging, using authentic scenarios (depending on the audience participating), case studies, and, where appropriate, anonymised institutional data to develop participants' confidence, critical thinking and the ability to apply monitoring and evaluation methods in practice.

Providers are advised to view training as an ongoing process rather than as a singular activity. Monitoring and evaluation should be embedded within continuing professional development (CPD), with regular opportunities to refresh knowledge, share effective practice and build organisational capability through not only training but accessible support materials and resources. Train-the-trainer approaches can help develop sustainable internal expertise and support consistency across the provider. However, it is important to recognise that training will need to reflect the roles and responsibilities the participants have in monitoring and evaluation.



Figure 8: Core considerations for developing training on monitoring and evaluation

Training builds the knowledge, skills and confidence of those who contribute to quality assurance, enhancement and the maintenance of academic standards.

1 Clear understanding of purpose and context

Training provides a clear understanding of the provider's approach to quality assurance, enhancement and the maintenance of academic standards, along with the monitoring and evaluation processes that underpin it.

2 Co-creation

The design and delivery of training are underpinned by co-creation. Involving stakeholders in the design and review of monitoring and evaluation processes, training and support mechanisms helps ensure approaches remain relevant, effective and responsive to changing institutional needs and sector landscape.

3 Ongoing and embedded

Training is viewed as a continuous process rather than a one-off activity. Monitoring and evaluation are embedded within continuing professional development (CPD), with regular opportunities to refresh knowledge, share effective practice and build organisational capability through training and easily accessible support materials and resources.

4 Diverse participants and inclusive design

Participants may include:

- new academic and professional services staff
- senior managers
- governing body members
- student representatives
- staff from the students' representative body
- postgraduate researchers
- external examiners
- delivery partners

Training is designed using principles of accessibility, inclusivity and flexibility to meet diverse learning needs.

5 Practical and engaging

Training is practical and engaging, using authentic scenarios (depending on the audience), case studies, and, where appropriate, anonymised institutional data to develop participants' confidence, critical thinking and the ability to apply monitoring and evaluation methods in practice.

6 Build internal capability

For example, train the trainer approaches develop sustainable internal expertise and support consistency in understanding and practice across the provider.

Recognise training will need to reflect the roles and responsibilities the participants have in monitoring and evaluation through training and easily accessible support materials and resources.

Reflective questions

1. How do we ensure staff and students and their representative bodies are meaningfully engaged in monitoring and evaluation processes, beyond consultation or feedback collection?
2. How are we assured that staff and students clearly understand their roles and responsibilities, and the impact of their contributions on decision-making?
3. How do we ensure engagement opportunities are inclusive and accessible to all student and staff groups?
4. What are the barriers (structural, cultural, practical) that limit engagement, and how are these being addressed?
5. How do we recognise and celebrate effective collaboration between staff and students in quality enhancement activities?
6. How have we mapped the distinct monitoring and evaluation training and support needs for our different stakeholder groups (such as academic staff, professional services, new or experienced staff, student representatives)?
7. How do we evaluate the effectiveness and impact of our monitoring and evaluation training in building confidence and competence, and how do we use this feedback for improvement?
8. Beyond formal training, what ongoing support and resources (for example toolkits, mentoring, dedicated advice) do we provide to staff and students engaged in monitoring and evaluation activities?
9. How do we ensure our training promotes an evaluative mindset focused on enhancement, rather than just compliance with procedural steps?
10. How do we review and build the capacity of student representatives to engage confidently and critically with quantitative and qualitative data in committee meetings and in communicating information back to their cohort?
11. How do we ensure that data collection, monitoring and evaluation remain current and contemporary?
12. How do we translate change from key stakeholder voices/feedback and embed it into future practice and procedures?
13. How could we use innovative methods (such as simulation exercises, interactive dashboards, peer observation) to make monitoring and evaluation training more experiential and impactful?
14. How can we better recognise and reward the development of evaluative expertise as a core professional competency for both academic and professional services staff?
15. What would a truly co-created, staff-and-student-led approach to monitoring and evaluation training and support look like at our provider, and how could we achieve it?

Scenarios

Scenario 1: Building confidence with monitoring and evaluation activities in a new programme team

Context

A provider has recently appointed several new early-career academics to its flagship engineering programme. The annual programme monitoring report is due, and the new programme leader believes the team lacks confidence to analyse the complex set of data (NSS, module evaluations, attainment data, external examiner comments) and distil it into meaningful actions.

Actions taken

The Head of School commissions the Academic Development Centre to run a bespoke, half-day workshop for the programme team.

The workshop:

- uses the programme's own, anonymised data from the previous year as the core case study
- walks the team through a simplified Theory of Change template to structure their analysis around a set of questions:
 - What is the problem?
 - What change do we want to see?
 - What actions will we take?
 - How will we know if it worked?
- includes a session from the Students' Union on how to effectively involve student representatives in the interpretation and action planning process
- results in a draft action plan that the team can refine and formally submit.

Considerations

- How does this approach build capacity beyond just completing the current annual report?
- What are the benefits of using real internal data in training?
- How could this model be scaled and adapted for other programmes?

Scenario 2: Empowering student representatives in a specialist college

Context

A small specialist art college has a highly engaged but time-poor student cohort. Student representatives on college committees often feel overwhelmed by lengthy papers filled with data that they struggle to interpret, leading to low-impact student contributions to monitoring and evaluation discussions.

Actions taken

The Quality Office and the Students' Association collaborate to create a new, engaging format for presenting data to committees

They:

- develop a series of short, visually engaging data snapshots for key metrics, using infographics and clear, concise commentary
- create a 30-minute interactive online module for all student reps titled Data in a Dash: How to Read a Committee Paper, which teaches them to quickly identify key points, trends and questions to ask
- institute a pre-meeting briefing for student reps with the Chair of the committee to discuss the papers and agree on key points for representation.

Considerations

- How does this make the process more inclusive and accessible for student representatives?
- What skills are being developed in the students that are transferable to their future careers?
- How does this change the dynamic of committee discussions?
- How is feedback from the team collated and used to drive enhancement?



Key Practice d - Communicating outcomes of monitoring and evaluation activities

Key Practice d

Communicating outcomes of monitoring and evaluation activities

The actions and outcomes from monitoring and evaluation activities are communicated in an accessible manner to staff, students, the governing body and, where required, external stakeholders.

Effective quality assurance is centred on the continuous improvement of learning and teaching. Communicating the outcomes and actions arising from monitoring and evaluation helps staff and students understand how these activities contribute to the wider cycle of quality assurance and enhancement.

Clear, timely and transparent communication ensures that monitoring and evaluation remain focused on continuous improvement. It engages staff and students by demonstrating the purpose, value and impact of monitoring and evaluation, while reinforcing how their contributions inform improvements, ongoing enhancement and institutional decision-making.

Communication of actions and outcomes is embedded within providers' monitoring and evaluation processes to promote a shared understanding of priorities, decisions and areas that require improvement. This enables stakeholders to see how evidence has informed action, strengthens transparency and accountability, and encourages ongoing engagement in quality enhancement.



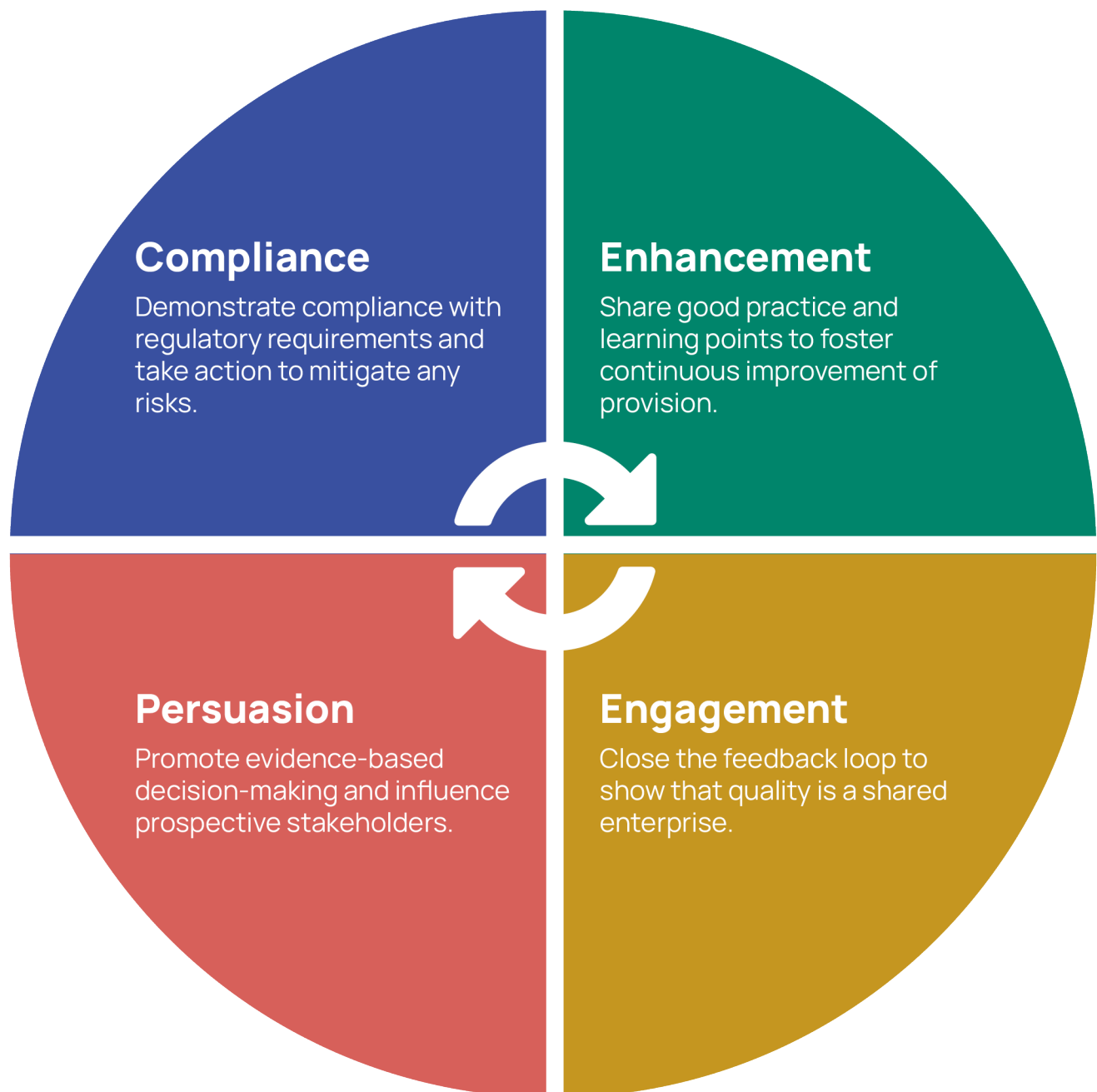
Actions and outcomes

Actions arising from monitoring and evaluation are specific tasks or activities undertaken to achieve a defined target or objective, they can be time-bound or ongoing and they are often auditable, and are typically presented in an action or improvement plan.

Outcomes may be identified and articulated during analysis of data for monitoring and evaluation, or they may result from follow-up actions.

Providers may communicate monitoring and evaluation actions and outcomes for a range of purposes as demonstrated in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Core considerations for developing training on monitoring and evaluation



Methods of communicating outcomes and actions

Providers should consider a suite of appropriate methods for sharing, discussing and interpreting actions and outcomes according to their context and with a range of stakeholders. The mode of delivery will vary in its level of formality depending on the primary aim or audience.

Table 3: Examples of communicating monitoring and evaluation outcomes to different audiences

How outcomes might be used and to what audience	Example methods of communication	Intended audience
To evidence compliance and enhancement to external regulators such as PSRBs, national regulators and governing bodies	- Action logs - PSRB reports and returns - Governing body reports - Case studies - Enhancement plans	- PSRBs - Internal governance such as Quality committees or Academic Board - Senior leaders - External examiners - Information on web pages or specifications for stakeholders - Partner colleges or placement/ apprenticeship partners
To influence strategic decisions, identify risk, policy development and process improvements	- Committee papers - Briefings - Enhancement plans	- Senior leaders - Internal governance and committees
To identify problems and risk at provider, faculty and course level, and seek to effect an early remedy, where appropriate	- Internal evaluation workshops and meetings - Department/faculty committee discussion - Action logs - Enhancement plans - Risk register	- Programme teams - External examiners - Academic and professional services staff

Continued ...

How outcomes might be used and to what audience	Example methods of communication	Intended audience
To be discussed and used by staff to consider changes made, effectiveness of those and how these could be shared more widely	• Staff meetings • Working groups • Teams channels	• Programme teams • Academic and professional services staff • Internal governance committees
To attract prospective students and applicants	• Feature boxes on website • Video reels • Social media posts • Press releases	• Applicants • Schools and colleges • Employers - including apprenticeships and widening participation offers
To demonstrate to current students how their programme is being evaluated and enhanced	• Student fora • Programme boards • 'You said, we did' • In-session updates	• Students • External stakeholders • PSRBs • Applicants • Students Union
To support enhancement of joint provision delivered by academic partners	• Informal joint review meetings • Toolbox updates • Joint workshops	• Partner colleges • Placement providers • Apprenticeship employers
To collate and disseminate good practice and techniques across a provider, and identify internal or external factors that may be facilitating or constraining progress	• Internal circulation of report • Dedicated intranet page • Examples added to pro formas • Slideshows • Case study videos	• Internal governance committees • Academic and professional services staff
To engage and motivate staff, and to cultivate a partnership approach to student success	• Town hall updates • Internal newsletters • Intranet	• Internal governance committees • Academic and professional services staff • Students Union

Designing and reviewing communications

Accessible communication of actions and outcomes from monitoring and evaluation should be suitable for the audience that they are intended for. This may require a tailored approach for a specific audience or design relevant to a wide range of stakeholders.

Aims and audiences might overlap, therefore a shared communication strategy for different audiences and stakeholders may be helpful in some areas. This is likely to involve consulting and collaborating across different internal stakeholders to gain insight on preferred and effective methods of communicating actions and outcomes in order to make decisions on what types of shared communication would be relevant and suitable.

Providers are reminded that if information needs to be shared internally and externally, consideration is given to removing use of internal acronyms and/or jargon.

Statistics (for example) will be labelled clearly and so that it can be understood by all stakeholders. Consideration should be given to information overload, ensuring that information remains relevant and evaluative to provide clear outcomes and actions to stakeholders.

Internal templates may be designed with onward reporting requirements in mind, allowing for easy extraction of information and repurposing of findings for different stakeholders.

Providers will regularly review their methods for capturing and sharing actions and outcomes to ensure they remain relevant and meaningful for stakeholders. Feedback on how communication is provided may be sought by methods such as surveys, student satisfaction, staff-student meetings, PSRB report feedback and recommendations. Use of a 'what works library' or repository can support consideration of effective communication methods to stakeholders.



Figure 10: A model for reviewing communication methods of actions and outcomes of monitoring and evaluation



Reflective questions

1. What is our aim in sharing actions and outcomes from monitoring and evaluation activities?
2. What methods do we use to share actions and outcomes to staff, students, governing bodies and external stakeholders?
3. How do we present the information clearly, targeting information to the different audiences and stakeholders?
4. How do we capture feedback from stakeholders about how the actions and outcomes are communicated?

Scenarios

Scenario 1: A new monitoring template

Context

The Quality and Standards team within a small and specialist institution collate monitoring reports submitted by faculties and departments. These are presented to the Academic Board to review. The team prepares a cover paper with executive summary, highlighting key findings and learning points, as well as recommendations for provider-wide actions.

During the meeting, committee members find it hard to locate key information in the reports. They request that the reporting format is redesigned.

Considerations

- How could the format of the paper reporting monitoring actions and outcomes be improved?
- What other information might the committee need? What could be the risks in presenting more detailed information?
- What else should the Quality and Standards team consider when designing the new format?
- How can the team ensure the format still meets the compliance requirements for internal frameworks but also for PSRB or other external bodies?
- What are the potential risks if the committee cannot find the information they need?

Scenario 2: Identifying and communicating risk

Context

A degree programme team has identified (via its monitoring and evaluation activities) a risk to successful delivery of the programme and student completion. Continuation data shows a significant decrease and it is not meeting the provider benchmark for continuation and is at risk of not meeting PSRB compliance requirements.

The programme team has independently created an improvement plan and identified key actions. The programme team now needs to communicate this outcome and identified actions to students, the institution internal committee structure, the professional body and associated placement providers and needs to consider the most appropriate communication methods.

Considerations

- Does the improvement plan need to be communicated in alternative formats appropriate to varied audiences and stakeholders?
- What might be the intended impact of the communication?
- Which stakeholders or external colleagues might the team consult with before sharing the plan more widely?
- How does the improvement plan evidence compliance with PSRB requirements, identify and mitigate risks of non-compliance, and communicate progress and outcomes to support internal and external assurance?
- Should the Quality team put into place enhanced monitoring for this programme? If so, why?



Key Practice e -
Maintaining impact
of monitoring and
evaluation to ensure
processes remain fit
for purpose

Key Practice e

Maintaining impact of monitoring and evaluation to ensure processes remain fit for purpose

Improvements and enhancements that have been implemented as a result of monitoring and evaluation are, in turn, monitored and evaluated to ensure their impact is positive and remains fit for purpose.

Understanding what we mean by impact evaluation of quality assurance activities

Impact evaluation can be understood as the systematic process of assessing the longer-term effects of quality assurance policies, processes and interventions on educational quality, maintenance of standards, student outcomes, institutional enhancement and wider stakeholder confidence. It draws on qualitative and quantitative evidence to consider the extent to which changes can reasonably be attributed to, or understood as being influenced by, quality assurance and enhancement activities.

The purpose of an impact evaluation is to move beyond assessing whether monitoring and evaluation activities have been completed or whether immediate objectives have been achieved. Instead, it focuses on establishing what longer-term changes in quality, enhancement and student success have resulted from these activities, and to understand the contribution that quality assurance and enhancement processes have made to those changes. In doing so, impact evaluations should support institutional learning, continuous improvement and evidence-informed decision-making, while demonstrating the value and effectiveness of quality assurance and enhancement arrangements.

Continuous monitoring and evaluation of enhancements are essential to ensure that quality improvement initiatives achieve their intended outcomes and remain aligned with institutional strategic goals, sector expectations, and evolving student and stakeholder needs. In the UK tertiary education context, this approach underpins the enhancement-led model of quality assurance - moving beyond compliance towards an embedded culture of evidence-based reflection and continuous improvement.

Embedding evaluation within the enhancement cycle

Enhancements are most impactful when embedded in a structured improvement cycle such as plan-do-check-act (PDCA). These models emphasise iterative reflection and adaptation. Best practice when implementing enhancements includes establishing from the outset clear aims, success indicators and data sources for assessing impact over time; going beyond confirming compliance to probing the enhancement's continuing relevance and effectiveness.

Aligning continuous enhancement with strategic priorities

Institutions that embed a culture of enhancement evaluation within their strategic planning, learning and teaching strategies and quality assurance frameworks can ensure that changes are not only effective in isolation but contribute to overarching goals.

Alignment with risk management ensures enhancements strengthen rather than jeopardise standards or regulatory compliance, with evaluation acting as both an assurance and improvement tool. Integrating enhancement evaluation within strategic frameworks and transparent governance structures supports coherent decision-making and demonstrates the strategic value of continuous improvement.

Evidence-based and proportionate approaches

Monitoring and evaluating enhancement activities are most effective when grounded in robust, triangulated evidence, with data (see [Principle 4 - Using data to inform and evaluate quality](#)) used not only to provide assurance but also to generate insight into impact and inform future enhancement. Drawing on both internal and external datasets, and combining quantitative and qualitative evidence through triangulation, strengthens the validity of findings. Longitudinal data collection can help track sustained outcomes over time, while benchmarking against peer institutions provides external context and validation. The effective use of differential student outcomes data, analytics dashboards, and evaluation tools enables timely reflection and evidence-informed decision-making, fostering an institutional culture in which evidence actively drives enhancement and continuous improvement rather than simply documenting activity.

A risk-based and proportionate approach ensures that monitoring focuses effort where it is most needed. Low-risk, well-established areas may warrant light-touch monitoring and evaluation, while areas of innovation, rapid growth or past challenge may require more intensive activity. Such proportionality avoids overburdening staff while maintaining accountability and responsiveness.

Models for planning and evaluation tools

An increasing number of providers use logic models to plan, implement and evaluate enhancement activities. Beginning with a clear, evidence-informed understanding of the issue/challenge to be addressed and the SMART objectives to be achieved, a logic model sets out the causal pathway between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and longer-term impacts. This promotes clarity of purpose, supports the early identification of risks and assumptions, and embeds measurable outcomes into the design of enhancement activities from the outset.

By embedding evaluation within the model, institutions identify early which data will be needed, when to collect it and how it will demonstrate success. These models enhance transparency, link resources to results and promote accountability across departments. They also foster evaluative thinking - a reflective stance where enhancement is viewed as a learning process informed by evidence and experimentation.

Table 4: Example of a template action plan based on a logic model evaluation method

Description of the problem or situation:						
SMART objectives:						
Specific						
What do we want to achieve from the enhancement?						
Measurable						
What criteria will be used to track progress?						
Relevant						
How does this objective align with our principles for monitoring and evaluation?						
Achievable						
How do we know the goal is realistic and achievable?						
Time-bound						
What is the deadline for achieving our objective?						
Inputs/ resources	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact		
What are the resources available to support enhancements?	What are the specific activities that will happen to achieve the objectives?	What are the tangible deliverables that result from the activities?	What are the intended accomplishments of the enhancement?	Short term	Medium term	Long term
Context						
Wider contextual factors that may impact the evaluation						

Characteristics of good practice

Good practice in monitoring the impact of enhancements as a result of quality assurance activity is systematic, evidence-based and reflective.

It demonstrates:

- planned, structured evaluation - enhancements are underpinned by clear logic and measurable outcomes from the outset
- continuous, adaptive learning - evaluation occurs throughout implementation, allowing timely adjustments and responsiveness to changing contexts
- visible, measurable impact - providers can demonstrate, with evidence, that enhancements have achieved and sustained positive outcomes for students and staff
- deliberate rather than reactive practice - enhancements emerge from analysis and strategy, not short-term issues, ensuring coherence with institutional goals
- active feedback and communication - stakeholders are engaged in evaluation, and outcomes are shared openly to foster trust and shared ownership
- stability and sustainability - enhancements are embedded into existing systems to ensure change is enduring and does not disrupt operational stability.

Supporting effective implementation

Sustained enhancement monitoring requires practical infrastructure, communication and capacity-building, much of which has been highlighted in this guidance. The list below will serve as a reminder.

- **Practical tools:** providers may offer templates, toolkits and logic model guides that link activities, evidence and outcomes in a consistent yet adaptable format.
- **Communication frameworks:** clear timelines, accessible guidance, and transparent reporting processes help staff and students understand how evaluation informs change.
- **Visual and conceptual frameworks:** diagrams like PDCA cycles, logic models and experiential learning cycles make evaluation accessible and engaging.
- **Inclusivity and accessibility:** evaluation that involves diverse learners and delivery modes, using multiple feedback formats, ensures broad representation.
- **Capability building:** professional development, communities of practice, and internal sharing of case studies strengthen institutional evaluation literacy.
- **Integration with existing systems:** enhancement monitoring that aligns with established quality assurance and risk management processes avoids duplication and maintains coherence.

Considerations for diverse provider types

The UK higher education landscape is diverse, encompassing large research-intensive institutions, small and specialist providers, further education colleges, and alternative or private institutions. Providers may align impact evaluation activities to reflect differing national frameworks and other internal and external evaluation requirements, to avoid duplication. Monitoring and evaluation approaches should therefore be context-sensitive and scalable, as suggested in the list below.

- Large, multi-faculty institutions may employ data-rich, system-wide dashboards and formal enhancement projects supported by dedicated quality units. Cross-institutional evaluation frameworks can ensure consistency across disciplines while allowing local autonomy.
- Smaller or specialist providers might adopt more qualitative, narrative-based approaches, emphasising staff-student collaboration and case studies to evidence impact.
- Further education and degree-awarding colleges may integrate enhancement monitoring within existing vocational quality systems and external regulator expectations.
- Transnational education (TNE) providers ensure enhancements are evaluated collaboratively with local partners, respecting different cultural and regulatory contexts while maintaining UK standards.

Flexibility is key: while processes differ, all providers share responsibility for ensuring that enhancements remain effective, evidence-informed, and aligned with their mission and regulatory obligations.

Closing the loop

Monitoring and evaluating enhancements close the feedback loop within the quality cycle, transforming evidence into action and reflection into improvement. By embedding evaluation within enhancement activities, using structured tools such as action plans and follow-up, logic or theory of change models, and maintaining open dialogues with stakeholders, providers ensure that improvements remain impactful, appropriate and beneficial. This continuous, proportionate and evidence-informed approach exemplifies the Principles of the UK Quality Code - securing accountability, sustaining excellence, and reinforcing public confidence in the quality and integrity of UK tertiary and higher education.



Reflective questions

1. How do we know that our enhancement activities have objectives or planned outcomes that are shared and agreed with the relevant stakeholders from the start?
2. How do we communicate the purpose, process and findings of evaluation clearly and transparently to engage and maintain stakeholder buy-in?
3. What steps can we take to involve students, staff and other partners in co-designing objectives and success criteria?
4. How will we agree which metrics and indicators will be used to measure the intended and unintended impact of the enhancement activity?
5. In what ways can we build evaluation and reflection points into the lifecycle of our enhancement projects to enable timely adjustments?
6. What practical tools (such as action plans, logic models, evaluation templates) could we use to ensure consistent and proportionate evaluation in our project?
7. In which ways can we align enhancement monitoring with institutional strategy and risk management frameworks to ensure relevance and sustainability?
8. How can we design governance and reporting mechanisms to ensure impact is measured while avoiding undue administrative burden?
9. What steps can we take to balance the need for continuous improvement with maintaining stability and consistency in academic standards and student experience?
10. How can early feedback loops be employed to address feedback from different stakeholders, such as students or partner organisations?

Scenarios

Scenario 1: Defining what success looks like

Context

A quality assurance specialist led a six-month initiative to improve communication between students and programme teams through enhanced student feedback processes. The project drew on staff expertise, a digital survey platform, and a modest budget for promotion and participation incentives.

The initiative generated strong engagement, with high levels of participation and constructive dialogue between students and staff. It also resulted in lasting improvements to the way student feedback was collected and considered.

However, when the university council requested evidence of the initiative's impact and whether the resources invested had delivered value, the specialist found it difficult to provide a robust evaluation. Although there was evidence that the activity had been delivered successfully, there had been no agreed definition of success, no baseline measures and no planned approach to assessing longer-term outcomes.

To address this, the specialist brought together the available evidence, including survey response rates, examples of improvements made in response to student feedback, and reflections from staff who reported more effective engagement with students. While these demonstrated positive changes, they provided only limited evidence of the initiative's wider impact. Reflecting on the experience, the specialist recognised that evaluation should have been planned from the outset by agreeing clear, measurable objectives, establishing baseline data, and identifying indicators of success, such as response rates, the timeliness of actions taken in response to feedback, improvements in students' perceptions of communication, or evidence that feedback informed programme enhancement. Aligning these measures with institutional priorities would also have made it easier to demonstrate impact and value for money.

The experience reinforced the importance of embedding proportionate evaluation into enhancement activities from the planning stage, enabling providers to demonstrate not only what was done, but also what changed and why it mattered.

Considerations

- How could you define what success will look like before your enhancement activity begins?
- What outcomes or impacts do you expect the activity to achieve, and how will you know whether they have been realised?
- What baseline data or evidence could you collect at the outset to enable meaningful comparison over time?
- How can proportionate evaluation activities be built into the project timeline and resource planning?
- How will you communicate the outcomes, impact and learning from the initiative to demonstrate its value and inform future enhancement?

Scenario 2: Designing approaches to assessment

Context

A quality assurance (QA) team has been leading a one-year assessment redesign project focused on developing more authentic assessments that better reflect real-world skills. The project is now approaching the implementation stage, where redesigned assessments will be used for the first time.

The team is concerned that the anticipated impact may not be fully achieved as it believes that many assessments are still not well designed. The team found it difficult to engage effectively with all staff across all faculties and participation in training on the new methods was limited in some subject areas. The project has primarily relied on staff time, creating additional pressure on busy teams.

To address its concerns, the QA team plans to revisit the assessment design using feedback from pilot users and key stakeholders after the first term of implementation. Additional training sessions and tailored support will be offered to academic staff to build confidence and competence in applying the new assessment methods.

Improved communication channels will be established to keep all staff and students informed and involved. Clear success criteria will be defined for the implementation phase, and early monitoring of assessment outcomes and staff experiences will guide any necessary adjustments.

Considerations

- What early signs or feedback could you use to indicate a project might not meet its goals?
- What data and information can you collect at a late stage of a project if you have no baseline data?
- What is the scope for making adjustments at a late stage of a project?
- How can you plan and manage iterative improvements as the project progresses?
- How can you strengthen engagement with academic staff and other stakeholders at various stages throughout an enhancement project?
- How could you ensure that sufficient resources or support are provided to avoid design or delivery gaps?
- How can you improve communication to ensure clarity and buy-in from all participants?



Key Practice f -
Monitoring and evaluation
activity facilitates insight
and promotion of EDI and
sustainable development

Key Practice f

Monitoring and evaluation activity facilitates insight and promotion of EDI and sustainable development

Monitoring and evaluation activity facilitates providers' insights and promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion, and education for sustainable development.

This Key Practice encourages providers to assure themselves that their monitoring and evaluation processes are not simply compliance-driven but are meaningful mechanisms to generate insight into how learning, teaching and wider provision support equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) initiatives and policies.

Providers are encouraged to look beyond surface-level data and to consider the lived experiences of their diverse student and staff populations, across modes of study and disciplines, and in ways that reflect their size, mission and student body.

Advice from other sector reference points and guidance raises useful points for consideration and context in monitoring and evaluation within the context of EDI, such as the [Athena SWAN](#) and [Race Equality Charter](#) and ESD such as [Advance HE's guides to ESD in practice](#).

The [QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Health Studies](#) (2024) defines EDI as 'a wide range of identity characteristics, including, but not limited to, race/ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion and belief, disability and mental health, age, and socio-economic background. Many forms of difference are subject to legal requirements, but it is important to also recognise intersectionality across the student and staff population.'

QAA and Advance HE's [Education for Sustainable Development](#) guidance (2021) defines sustainable development as 'an aspirational ongoing process of addressing social, environmental and economic concerns to create a better world' and ESD as 'the process of creating curriculum structures and subject-relevant content to support and enact sustainable development'. An understanding of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is essential to this vision and, where appropriate, the SDGs should be integrated holistically across the curriculum. The UNESCO sustainability competencies (2017) include systems thinking, anticipatory and future thinking, normative thinking, strategic thinking, collaborative practice, critical thinking, self-awareness and integrated problem-solving.

Providers will have strategic goals around EDI and ESD and examples of how providers can demonstrate effective and strategic monitoring and evaluation for EDI and ESD can be found in the resources described below.

- The [Inclusive Education Framework](#) provides a resource which can be used to map gaps in inclusive practice, which may be supported by data such as student demographics, student engagement and attendance, achievement and well-being. Monitoring and evaluation for interventions can therefore be useful in determining how interventions promote change.
- QAA and Advance HE's ESD guidance and associated case studies offer examples of how ESD can be meaningfully embedded within teaching and learning without the perception of greenwashing the curriculum. Data generated through course approval/ validation and annual programme monitoring reporting, for example, can be useful in identifying gaps and areas for enhancements which promote change.

Implementing monitoring and evaluation for promotion of EDI and ESD

When implementing this Key Practice, providers are advised to think carefully about how they gather and interpret information in a meaningful but sensitive way, and also to be mindful to comply with legal requirements around the use of personal data - particularly around EDI (see [Principle 4 - Using data to inform and evaluate quality, Key Practice f](#)).

- Ensure that the processes are inclusive, accessible and genuinely representative of the student and staff experience.
- Feedback mechanisms should be designed so that they can be accessed and understood by people with different needs, including those studying online, part-time or through apprenticeships.
- Balance between quantitative data - such as retention rates, progression and attainment - and qualitative insights - such as focus groups, case studies and student stories - enables a more complete picture.
- Visual tools such as dashboards, infographics or storyboards can help bring the data to life, highlighting inequalities and opportunities in a way that text alone may not achieve.
- Consider how education for sustainable development is captured within monitoring and evaluation activity, for example by asking how curricula and practices are preparing learners to contribute to more sustainable and just societies. Curricula and practice may also demonstrate how they develop ESD competencies to meet the demands of the workplace.

Evaluating practice

Good practice in the areas of EDI and ESD is likely to be visible in evaluation activities that are recognised as authentic and relevant to the communities they are intended to serve. It might mean that monitoring does not stop at headline measures but delves deeper into the experiences of different groups of learners.

When communicating outcomes (see [Key Practice d](#)) messaging will need to draw attention to key issues and be engaging, clear and concise. Where providers work in partnership with students and staff to design and interpret evaluation activity, the resulting insights are more likely to be trusted and acted upon when tailored to the specific context of the provider. For example, a small specialist provider may use rich qualitative methods that reflect its close-knit learning community, whereas a larger provider may operate with more systematic and layered approaches.

In all cases, good practice is demonstrated not just by the collection of information but by evidence of meaningful enhancements to provision, especially where these relate to equality, diversity, inclusion and sustainability. For different types of providers, evaluation of monitoring and evaluation will align to their individual contextual priorities, for example:

- colleges may emphasise local community impact, vocational pathways and partnerships with employers
- specialist providers' (such as the creative arts, conservatoires in music and performance or theological training) monitoring may need to be discipline-sensitive and aligned with industry/professional body requirements
- small providers can draw on closer relationships with learners and personalised evaluation methods, while still being mindful of representativeness
- transnational/online provision can ensure cross-cultural inclusivity and relevance of EDI/ESD in diverse contexts.

In all cases, good practice is demonstrated not just by the collection of information but by evidence of impactful enhancements to provision as highlighted across this guidance.



Reflective questions

1. How do we know that our monitoring activities are genuinely informing and advancing EDI and ESD, rather than being tokenistic or compliance-driven?
2. In what ways do we engage with external benchmarks, sector-wide insights or global agendas to enhance our understanding of EDI and ESD?
3. How do we ensure that student and staff voices, particularly from marginalised groups, drive change and innovation?
4. What creative approaches (such as visual, narrative or co-designed) might make our monitoring activities more engaging and impactful?
5. How do we evaluate the longer-term impact of our enhancements in relation to EDI and ESD?
6. How do we ensure that monitoring and evaluation activities for EDI and ESD are aligned to strategic priorities?
7. How effective are we at capturing monitoring and evaluation data that relates to EDI and ESD?
8. Are staff supported to interpret data from an EDI and ESD lens? Is training required?
9. Are our findings from our evaluation used to challenge systemic barriers and promote inclusive practice?
10. How can we ensure that feedback from underrepresented groups informs transformative changes and our decision making?
11. What new methods or tools can we use to evaluate EDI and ESD outcomes?
12. How can we embed EDI and ESD metrics into strategic planning and quality assurance cycles?
13. How can we support staff and students to co-create evaluation processes that reflect their lived experiences?
14. How can we ensure that evaluation outcomes are able to make tangible improvements to policy and practice?
15. How can we work with our partners to strengthen evaluation of EDI and ESD?

Scenario

Advancing equity in higher education

Context

Through its routine monitoring and evaluation activities, a large university identified that the awarding gap between Black and white students had remained persistent over several years. Although reducing this disparity formed part of the institution's strategic objectives, annual monitoring showed that progress had consistently fallen short of the targets set within its Access and Participation Plan.

Recognising that existing interventions had not achieved the desired impact, the Student Engagement and Inclusion team and the Access and Participation team, working in partnership with the Quality Enhancement and Data Analytics teams, used this evidence to develop and pilot the Awarding Gap Programme. The project aimed to create a more equitable student experience and sense of community and belonging by working collaboratively with Black students to identify barriers to their success and co-design improvements to institutional practice.

Rather than consulting students through traditional feedback mechanisms alone, the project adopted a partnership approach. Students were recruited as paid partners (or recompensed with vouchers) and worked alongside staff to investigate areas of institutional practice that directly influenced the experiences of Black students. These projects focused on identifying barriers, proposing practical improvements and supporting their implementation. In addition to contributing to institutional enhancement, participating students developed valuable employability skills through project management, collaborative working and influencing organisational change.

The project was initially funded as a one-year pilot with a relatively small cohort of participants. Throughout the pilot, monitoring and evaluation activities included analysis of student attainment, continuation and satisfaction data, alongside qualitative feedback from participants and staff. Early evaluation suggested that students involved in the project experienced improved levels of engagement and satisfaction, with positive indications of improved academic outcomes compared with previous cohorts. Qualitative evidence also demonstrated that the partnership model strengthened students' sense of belonging and trust in institutional processes and gave them the opportunity to develop skills that will be useful in the workplace.

Although the scale of the pilot meant that findings could not yet be generalised across the wider student population, the combination of quantitative and qualitative evidence provided sufficient confidence to extend funding for a further year. A dedicated project lead was appointed to ensure continuity, strengthen evaluation processes and support the embedding of successful practices across additional programmes and departments.

Considerations

- How do you move from identifying an awarding gap to understanding the institutional factors that may contribute to it?
- How do you determine whether a pilot project has generated sufficient evidence to justify continued investment or wider implementation?
- How does monitoring and evaluation support a culture of continuous improvement that advances equity, rather than simply demonstrating compliance with strategic targets?
- What mechanisms are in place to ensure that successful initiatives are embedded into institutional practice rather than remaining isolated projects?



Key Practice g -
External review of
programmes and
modules feed into
internal monitoring
and review

Key Practice g

External review of programmes and modules feed into internal monitoring and review

Programmes and modules are monitored and reviewed regularly by internal and external peers, employers and students, in line with the provider's strategic approach to quality and standards. Outcomes from processes required from funding, accrediting, professional and approval bodies feed into monitoring and review.

As noted in the previous Key Practices, providers develop and implement a systematic approach to monitoring and reviewing programmes and, where appropriate, modules, to maintain academic standards and support the continuous enhancement of the student learning experience. Monitoring and review activities need to be ongoing, data-informed and aligned with the provider's strategic approach to managing quality and standards, drawing on insights from students, staff, independent external peers, employers and other relevant stakeholders.

Monitoring and review of quality assurance activities brings together evidence from internal activities and external requirements, including those arising from funders, regulators, accrediting organisations, PSRBs (see [Principle 6: Engaging in external review and accreditation](#)) and programme approval processes. Integrating these sources of evidence within the provider's quality framework enables informed decision-making, supports enhancement and helps to demonstrate that actions are proportionate, effective and responsive to institutional priorities and external expectations. This use of external evidence enables decisions to be made about the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of programmes and modules.

Internal stakeholders

Internal stakeholders involved in monitoring and review may include staff from across the provider, not only those directly responsible for delivering a programme. This can include colleagues involved in curriculum design, teaching, assessment, and academic and pastoral student support, and student representative bodies. As highlighted in [Principle 2: Engaging students as partners](#), students are active participants in monitoring and review, while also being the subjects of much of the data used to inform these activities.

The data used for monitoring and review is likely to include admissions, continuation, progression and student outcomes data, alongside formal student feedback and other student voice activities. This information provides valuable insight into the quality of the student experience and the effectiveness of provision. The collection, analysis and use of data to inform and evaluate quality are explored in more detail in the guidance supporting [Principle 4: Using data to inform and evaluate quality](#).

External stakeholders

External stakeholders may contribute to monitoring and review through formal and informal means, depending on the provider's strategic approach to managing quality and standards. These stakeholders may include employers whose expertise aligns with the provider's portfolio, graduates or students in apprenticeships.

Independent academic experts, such as external examiners and subject specialists, can provide valuable perspectives on the maintenance of academic standards, the effectiveness of assessment and the quality of learning and teaching. Their expertise can help providers evaluate programmes against national regulatory requirements and relevant subject-specific reference points.

Monitoring and review may also be informed by the requirements of external accrediting and approving organisations. For some programmes, PSRBs specify monitoring, reporting or review requirements that providers are expected to meet. In these cases, monitoring and review will normally include consideration of evidence needed to demonstrate ongoing compliance with relevant professional or regulatory standards.

Employer engagement is regularly used as part of the processes for curriculum development, approval and review, particularly where programmes are more vocational in nature or offer a year in placement or where programmes offer specific skills for the workplace. Where programmes are delivered through partnership arrangements, partner providers are expected to meet the monitoring and review requirements of the awarding provider. Responsibilities, processes and reporting arrangements should be clearly defined and agreed between partners to ensure effective oversight and assurance. Further advice on managing quality in partnership arrangements is provided in the guidance supporting [Principle 8 - Operating partnerships with other organisations](#).

Considerations for monitoring and reviewing the quality of programmes and modules

Despite the range of approaches to monitoring and evaluation described in [Key Practice a](#), there are several core considerations that support effective monitoring and review of programmes and modules.

- **Defining roles and responsibilities**

The roles and responsibilities of those involved in monitoring and review of programmes and modules are clearly defined and aligned with the provider's strategic approach to managing quality assurance, enhancement and academic standards. Staff, students and other stakeholders understand their own responsibilities and those of others, enabling them to engage effectively in the process.

- **Access to evidence and information**

Stakeholders require timely and appropriate access to the evidence and information at programme and modular level to be able to engage in a meaningful way and to ensure they not only understand the process but how outcomes were arrived at. They are supported to interpret and use this evidence in their deliberations and decision-making (see [Key Practice c](#)).

Arrangements for accessing, sharing and handling data are clearly communicated and comply with relevant legal, regulatory and institutional requirements and data sharing agreements. Further guidance on the use of data and data sharing is provided in [Principle 4 - Using data to inform and evaluate quality](#).

- **Frequency of programme and module monitoring and review**

The frequency and timing of monitoring and review activities are proportionate to the nature of the programme, its modules and the methods used to evaluate quality. As described in [Key Practice b](#), the monitoring and evaluation approaches adopted influence when review activities take place.

Depending on the provider's approach, programmes and modules may be monitored and reviewed continuously through risk-based approaches or at defined intervals, such as termly or annually. Review arrangements take account of programme delivery and enable those involved in delivery of programmes and supporting students to participate meaningfully.

Regular monitoring and review enable providers to identify strengths, evaluate the effectiveness of programmes and modules, respond to emerging issues and support continuous enhancement. Where appropriate, review cycles align with programme approval/validation, accreditation, and professional and regulatory requirements to reduce duplication, make effective use of available evidence and support a coordinated approach to quality management.

- **Clear timelines and expectations**

Clear information is provided about the timing of programme and module review activities, including key milestones, responsibilities and reporting arrangements. This enables evidence to be prepared, reviewed and discussed in a timely manner. Well-communicated review schedules help embed monitoring and evaluation as an ongoing and integrated part of academic quality management and contribute to a culture of continuous enhancement.

- **Regulatory compliance and enhancement**

Programme and module review considers both institutional requirements and the wider regulatory and policy context in which provision operates. Evaluating programmes and modules through both perspectives enables providers to demonstrate compliance while identifying opportunities to enhance learning, teaching and the wider student experience.

- **Relationship between programmes and modules**

Monitoring and review recognise the relationship between individual modules (or other constituent elements of a programme) and the overall programme. Evidence is evaluated at module level before being considered collectively across the programme, enabling providers to identify themes, understand how individual modules contribute to programme outcomes, evaluate curriculum coherence and inform enhancement at programme, departmental and institutional levels.

- **Relationship to disciplines, professions and industry**

Where appropriate, monitoring and review is informed by developments within relevant academic disciplines, professions and industry. Providers draw on insights from employers, external academic peers, accrediting organisations and PSRBs to help ensure programmes remain current, academically rigorous and professionally relevant.

Providers also review the external perspectives they seek and the methods used to obtain them, ensuring these remain effective, proportionate and aligned with the nature of the provision, the needs of students and the provider's strategic priorities.

Providers will also review both the external insight and the mechanisms used to gather that insight to ensure they remain effective, proportionate and aligned with the nature of the provision, the needs of students and the provider's strategic priorities.

Integrating outcomes from external funding, accreditation and approval processes

Providers are reminded that outcomes from processes required by funding, accrediting, professional and approval bodies should be integrated into monitoring and review activities. Bringing this evidence together enables a holistic view of quality, rather than responding to each external requirement in isolation.

Providers are encouraged to use external regulatory and assurance activities not simply as a compliance exercise, but as valuable sources of data that informs monitoring and review, supports continuous improvement and helps ensure that programmes remain academically robust, professionally relevant and responsive to the needs of students and society.



Figure 11: The benefits of integrating the outcomes from external quality activities into monitoring and review



- **Maintains academic standards and quality across the sector**
External processes provide assurance that programmes continue to meet national expectations, regulatory requirements and professional standards. Incorporating these findings into monitoring and review helps providers identify where improvements are needed and where effective practice can be shared.
- **Supports enhancement**
External reports will contain recommendations, commendations and examples of good practice. Consideration of these alongside internal sources of evidence helps providers make informed decisions about curriculum development, assessment, student support and the student learning experience.
- **Reduces duplication and burden**
Integrating evidence from multiple external processes into a cohesive monitoring and review framework will enable providers to avoid repeating similar exercises for different audiences and make more effective use of staff and institutional resources.
- **Strengthens evidence-informed decision-making**
Combining external findings with institutional data, student feedback and staff insight provides a rich evidence base for evaluating performance, prioritising areas for improvement and agreeing enhancement activities.
- **Provides assurance to stakeholder**
Governing bodies, students, regulators, employers and partners can have greater confidence that the provider is responding systematically to external expectations and acting on recommendations.
- **Supports risk management**
Monitoring outcomes from external bodies enables providers to identify areas of emerging risk, maintain compliance with regulatory and professional requirements, and take timely action where risk is identified and/or concerns arise.
- **Promotes coherence across quality processes**
Rather than regulatory reviews, accreditation visits, funding requirements and programme approval being viewed as separate quality and standards activities, integrating their outcomes creates a more coordinated and strategic approach to quality assurance, enhancement and maintaining standards.

Reflective questions

1. Do our monitoring and review processes for programmes and modules enable us to respond to feedback or outcomes from external peers and bodies in a timely manner?
2. Do our monitoring and review timelines align to processes for external peer or regulatory review?
3. How do monitoring and review processes enable appropriate focus on compliance with internal and external requirements as well as facilitate enhancement?
4. How do our stakeholders know who is responsible for responding to and acting upon external monitoring and review outcomes?
5. How do we ensure that the outcomes of internal and external monitoring and review are responded to, acted upon, and shared with internal and external peers?
6. How can we enable developments from disciplines, professions and industries to inform our expectations and priorities for monitoring and review?
7. Are there opportunities in our provider to develop communities of practice to provide peer support and feedback on experiences of monitoring and review?
8. How are the different modes and mechanisms of monitoring and review captured to drive a deeper understanding of student experience, within and across programmes and disciplines?
9. What tools or resources could we use to support monitoring and review processes and the stakeholders involved with them?

Scenario

Evaluating externality in quality assurance and enhancement

Context

A small higher education provider offering both vocational and research programmes is undertaking a significant cost-saving exercise. As part of this, the Quality team has been asked to evaluate the impact and value of externality within its quality assurance and enhancement processes, and to identify where efficiencies could be made without compromising quality.

The evaluation includes consultation with:

- academic teams
- academic support teams
- students
- Students' Union staff and sabbatical officers
- senior leaders
- external examiners
- employer advisers.

Data reviewed includes:

- graduate outcomes data
- year-on-year attainment data
- four years of thematic analysis of external examiner reports and examples of good practice adopted across programmes
- the financial cost of external examiners
- the financial cost of employer advisers
- student feedback.

Key findings of the evaluation exercise

Academic teams: Most academic staff regarded external examiners as essential for maintaining academic standards, assuring marking, sharing subject expertise and supporting programme approval. Some longer-serving staff also considered module-level external examining essential. While staff valued employer advisers, some expressed concern that the evaluation might conclude that employer input offered greater value than academic peer review.

Academic support teams: Professional services staff recognised the importance of external examiners in maintaining standards but questioned the value they added to enhancement relative to the resource required. They also noted that many external examiners had served for long periods, often through reciprocal arrangements, raising questions about how independent the process remained. Staff also observed that module-level external examining had expanded over time without strategic review.

Students: Student-Staff Liaison Committees and institution-wide focus groups were consulted through a combination of campus-based and online sessions. Student academic representatives had a basic understanding of the role of external examiners. However, overall, students demonstrated a much stronger understanding of employer advisers and, where relevant, PSRBs. Students consistently valued employer involvement because it gave them confidence that programmes reflected current professional practice.

Students' Union staff and sabbatical officers: Education officers recognised the contribution of external examiners to fairness in assessment and the comparability of academic standards. However, they also acknowledged that most students had little awareness of the role. Officers reported that they had never seen individual or thematic external examiner reports and were unsure how to access them or how findings informed improvement.

External examiners: External examiners described their role as important in maintaining standards but questioned the use of module-level external examining, which they considered uncommon across the sector. Several were uncertain how their reports contributed to quality enhancement beyond individual programmes.

Employer advisers: Most employer advisers had limited understanding of external examining or its role in assuring standards, except those who had participated in programme approval events.

Senior leaders: Senior leaders clearly articulated the strategic value of externality in maintaining standards and enhancing quality. Most were aware of the annual thematic summary of external examiner reports but had limited knowledge of how recommendations translated into measurable enhancement. Employer input during programme approval was viewed positively, although several questioned whether current investment across all forms of externality represented best value.

Institutional data: Graduate outcomes and attainment data showed variation across subject areas, with some improvements and some declines, all broadly within expected levels. While improvements aligned with changes arising from staff and student feedback, it was difficult to attribute outcomes directly to externality.

Student feedback: Student feedback from vocational programmes indicated that employer involvement increased confidence that courses remained relevant to professional practice.

Overall, the cost of externality was significant, and the Quality team was asked to identify opportunities to reduce expenditure while maintaining confidence in academic standards.

Considerations

- What conclusions might be drawn from the evidence?
- How could the provider improve its approach to externality while making better use of available resources?
- How could the provider communicate the purpose and value of externality more effectively to students and staff?
- Does the current external examining model remain proportionate, particularly at module level?
- How could the provider adopt different approaches to externality for vocational and research-based provision, rather than a single institutional model?
- How could external examiner reports and thematic analysis be used more effectively to support enhancement?
- What additional evidence would strengthen an evaluation of the impact and value of externality?

Terminology

Term	Definition
Capacity building	The process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that organisations and communities need to effectively engage in and benefit from monitoring and evaluation activities.
Co-creation	A collaborative partnership approach where training, resources and processes are designed and developed with stakeholders (especially students and end-users) rather than for them, ensuring outcomes are relevant, owned and effective.
Evaluation	Actionable evidence-informed learning and continuous improvement of process and impact related to an area of work, project or course, that should be undertaken collaboratively with a range of relevant parties with differing skills, capabilities and capacity. Evaluation uses information from monitoring, current and historic, to develop a deeper understanding of outcomes and impact and inform change.
Evaluative mindset	A culture of continuous curiosity and critical thinking, where staff and students routinely ask what is working, for whom, and why, using evidence to inform their practice and drive enhancement.
Impact evaluation	The systematic process of assessing the longer-term effects of quality assurance policies, processes and interventions on educational quality, maintenance of standards, student outcomes, institutional enhancement and wider stakeholder confidence.
Logic model	Identifies the resources, activities, outputs, outcomes and intended impacts, providing a framework for monitoring and evaluating progress and impact.
Monitoring	The routine collection and analysis of information that focuses on an area of work, project or programme/course, to track progress while the area of work, project or programme/course is ongoing.
Theory of Change	'A theory of change model explains how activities are understood to produce a series of results that contribute to achieving the final intended impact. It can be developed for any level of intervention - an event, a project, a programme, a policy, a strategy or an organisation' (Theory of change, Patricia Rogers, 2014). A theory of change provides the rationale for impact evaluation.

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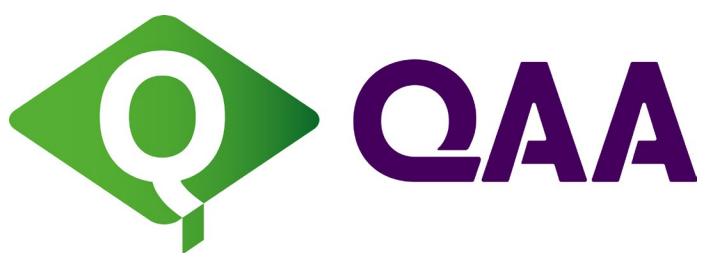
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Continue exploring the Advice and Guidance

This publication is part of a suite of Advice and Guidance that accompanies the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024](#).

Select the Principles below to access additional guidance, practical considerations and resources that support the enhancement of quality and the maintenance of academic standards.

Principle 1 Taking a strategic approach to managing quality and standards 	Principle 2 Engaging students as partners 	Principle 3 Resourcing delivery of a high-quality learning experience 	Principle 4 Using data to inform and evaluate quality 
Principle 5 Monitoring, evaluating, and enhancing provision 	Principle 6 Engaging in external quality review and accreditation 	Principle 7 Designing, developing, approving, and modifying programmes 	Principle 8 Operating partnerships with other organisations 
Principle 9 Recruiting, selecting and admitting students 	Principle 10 Supporting students to achieve their potential 	Principle 11 Teaching, learning and assessment 	Principle 12 Operating concerns, complaints and appeals processes 



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