5   Planning and Evaluating Events – Guidance for Presenters and Facilitators

Audience for this Guidance

Staff presenting to, facilitating or leading any workshop, conference session or event.

Background

This guidance makes suggestions on how a unit can work with colleagues to plan, run and evaluate effective events of all kinds. This guide is part of a broader evaluation framework and additional guides are available for evaluating other academic or academic related product or service products and activities.

Functions of this Guidance

This guidance is intended to help colleagues to:-

1. Be explicit about the possible use in their teaching of ideas, policies, practices & etc from the workshop or session. ('Teaching' here includes all educational functions, including but not limited to course design and planning, running classes and lab sessions, provision of learning resources, feedback, assessment and course evaluation.)

The guidance is also intended to help colleagues to design and run sessions that will, with respect to the ideas, policies, practices & etc. being described in the session:

2. Offer examples of application
3. Give participants adequate time to engage
4. Help participants to explore and plan possible uses
5. Help participants plan how they can determine the impact of new practice

Approaches to event design (using the numbering above)

1   Explicit outcomes. Potential and actual participants may find it helpful to know in advance what they may gain from the event. Also, a clear statement of the intended outcome for the session provides a solid basis for planning the event – for example, participants will need access to relevant ideas and information, and time and support to work towards the outcome. (There is sometimes a reluctance to suggest to academics intended learning outcomes for a session. It is not clear that such reluctance is necessary.)

The outcome for the session also provides a basis for evaluating the session – by identifying to what extent participants moved towards the outcome. As an example, for a course for demonstrators – "Participants will be supported to identify the particular capabilities required in their own work as a demonstrator; to develop some of these capabilities; and to plan how they will develop other of these capabilities."

Those designing and running events should be encouraged to be explicit about the major intended outcomes of the event.

This focus on intended outcomes is not of course intended to discourage or devalue the unexpected and unintended learning which occurs in any development event.

2   Examples. Academics are of course skilled at working with abstract ideas. It is also helpful to show examples, real or hypothetical, of the application of the ideas in practice. Case studies, perhaps with evaluations, of the ideas in use will be appreciated, and will increase the appropriate

take-up of the ideas. "Here is the basic idea ... here is where it came from ... this is how we developed it ... and implemented it ... these were the successes ... these were the difficulties ... and this is what we'll do next..." is a powerful and useful story, of course with necessary and appropriate additions or changes.

Those designing and running events should be encouraged to include examples as well as more abstract ideas.

3   Time to engage. Learning is an active process, for academics as well as for students. Participants will usually value time to explore and review – with other participants – what they are hearing. Time for this should be built in to a session, at least every 15 minutes or so; not added on at the end where it can easily fall off again. The more participants engage with the ideas, in the session, the more likely they are to make good use of the ideas later.

Those designing and running events should be encouraged to include time and support active engagement by participants.

4   Planning to use. The most effective type of engagement for a participant is to explore and plan how they may be able to adapt and adopt the ideas in their own practice. Time spent by participants planning how they can improve their teaching using ideas from the session is well spent. The chance to explore possible implementations with other session participants from other institutions will be particularly useful. Participants are likely to implement plans made on the day (Rust, 1998)[1]. By contrast, good intentions to think later about ideas heard in the session are often driven out by other pressures.

Participants' plans also provide partial evaluation evidence, on the day, of the effectiveness of the session. Furthermore, with participants' permission, the unit running the event can use the plans, some months after the session, to ask to what extent these plans were implemented, and more broadly how participants have made use of ideas from the session. This gives evidence of the way the work of the unit has contributed to improvements in teaching in the discipline.

In particular, those planning and running events should be encouraged to support participants to plan how they can use ideas from the event.

5   Identifying impact on student learning. Workshop participants may not be experienced educational researchers. But it is useful, within a session, to describe how the ideas, policies, practices etc. being described and explored have affected, or are intended to affect, student learning. It is also helpful to show how the effects on student learning have been identified, or can be identified. This will help participants plan how to determine the effect of their changes.

Very often, evaluation of work to improve student learning can use data on student performance. Such data can be gained through normal processes of assessment. Such 'evaluation through assessment' has one huge advantage. Assessment, both formative and summative, is undertaken anyway. The evidence, the student work, is already available. Further analysis of the student work may be needed – not a trivial task, but is much less demanding than a full research study.

Perhaps with the support of the unit, those planning and running events should be encouraged to help participants plan how they will see what effects their changed practices have had on student learning.

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[1] Rust, C. (1998). "The impact of educational development workshops on teachers' practice." International Journal for Academic Development **3**(1): 72-80.

Meta data

The following table describes information about this resource (meta data) which is also used to locate the resource using search tools. Please note the terms and conditions of use under the Creative Commons licence associated with the use of this resource.

Author (s)	David Baume
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Title	Planning and Evaluating Events – Guidance for Presenters and Facilitators
Keywords	Academic practice, development, evaluation, event, planning, Higher Education Academy
Description	One of a series of guides on the evaluation of academic practice, academic development units, resources, events, activities and services.
	This guide, like the others in this series, is modified from an evaluation framework produced for the six Higher Education Academy Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) Subject Centres in 2009. These Subject Centres consist of Biosciences, Engineering, Information and Computer Science, Materials Science, Maths Stats and OR and Physical Sciences.
	The author, Dr David Baume, adbaume@aol.com, is happy to be contacted for advice and support on using this evaluation tool and others in the series.
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