



Yorkshire Consortium for Equity in Doctoral Education

YCEDE Evaluation Plan

YCEDE's main evaluation plan, produced by colleagues at Sheffield Hallam University for our in-house project monitoring and evaluation. The plan details evaluation goals and objectives, data collection methods, ethical considerations, and how the evaluation activity links to the YCEDE logic models and theory of change.

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YCEDE

Suggested Audience: Staff

Suggested Sub-Audience: Evaluation & Impact / Project Management

This resource is intended for use in improving equity and outcomes for ethnically minoritised individuals interested in doctoral study or careers in research.

This resource was produced by the staff named above on behalf of the YCEDE project. Please ensure appropriate credits are clearly included in any external use of this resource.

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<https://ycede.ac.uk/toolkit/pgr-recruitment-selection-and-admissions/evaluation-impact/ycede-evaluation-plan/>

Introduction

Aims and objectives of YCEDE

Analysis of doctoral application success rates at YCEDE partners show that UK domiciled People of Colour are less likely to receive an offer than White British applicants, but where they receive an offer, they are just as likely to go on to enrol as White applicants. As a consequence, important voices are not heard, and as a result, the research enterprise is deprived of invaluable opportunities for creative problem solving. YCEDE aims to reduce the gap in access to PGR education between UK domiciled BAME and White applicants and thus the ethnicity gap in progression into academic and other research careers.

OfS, Research England and the Yorkshire Consortia for Equity in Doctoral Education (YCEDE) partners have committed to invest more than £4 million over 4 years to improve access and participation of BAME people in postgraduate research (PGR) study across Yorkshire. The partnership consists of the University of York, Bradford University, University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Leeds.

YCEDE is divided into three delivery workstreams:

Workstream	Lead Partner	WS activities/interventions
WS1: Improving access to PG research degrees	Uni of Leeds	Internships, network events.
WS2: PGR recruitment and selection for equity and diversity	Uni of York	Review and reform recruitment, selection and admissions processes at partner institutions. Training in awareness of barriers that BAME students face.
WS3: Enhancing the on-course PGR experience	Uni of Sheffield	BAME scholars' network. mentoring scheme. Peer-led community building and support.

A fourth workstream focuses on evaluation:

Workstream	Lead Partner	WS activities
WS4: Evaluating and disseminating our activities	Sheffield Hallam University	Theory of change development and evaluation.

Evaluation goal

The evaluation aims to assess the impact and implementation of the YCEDE programme. Data will be collected from participants and partners involved in the programme to determine whether the intended impact was achieved, as well as to evaluate the extent to which the programme was implemented as planned. To achieve this, the collected data will be mapped against the co-created theory of change and logic model to establish a comprehensive understanding of the programme's effectiveness and adherence to its original objectives.

Evaluation objectives:

The evaluation plan is designed to address the following key objectives:

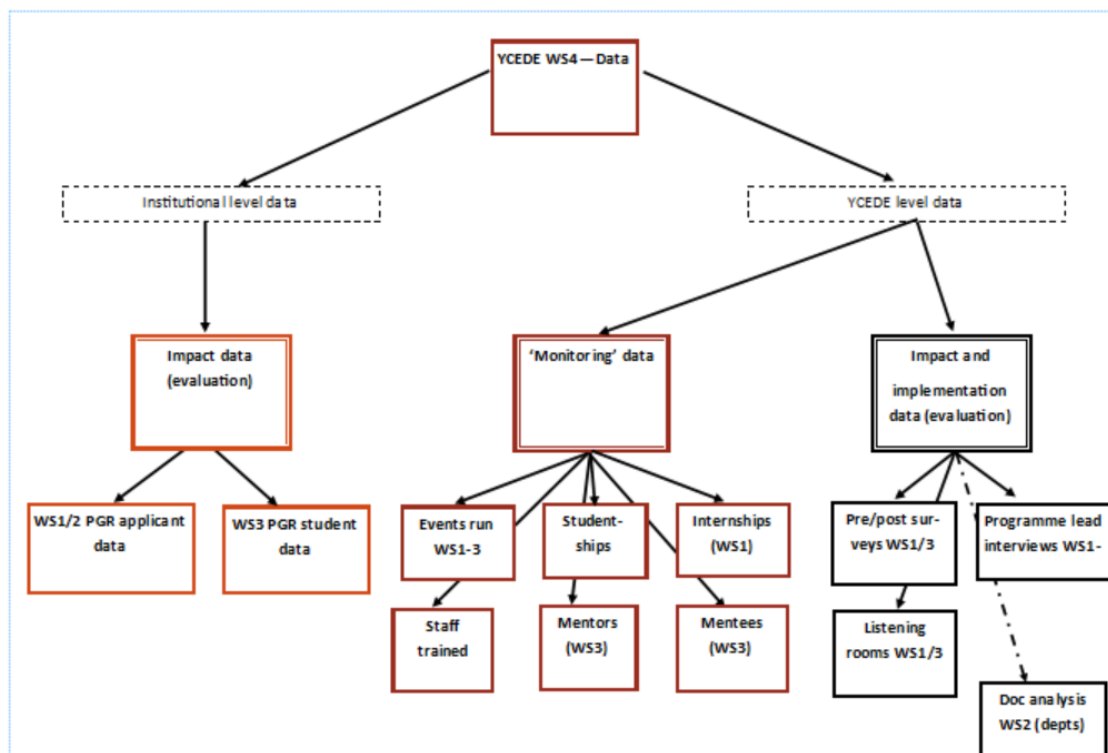
1. Determine the extent to which the YCEDE programme achieved its intended impact on participants and partners at individual workstream and programme level. Identifying the individuals or groups impacted, the specific ways in which they are affected, and the varying circumstances under which these impacts occur.
2. Evaluate the alignment between the programme's activities and the co-created theory of change and logic model.
3. Assess the overall implementation of the YCEDE programme in accordance with its original design and intended strategies.
4. Note where the iterative approach has led to programme changes over the lifetime of YCEDE.

Data Collection Methods:

To effectively evaluate the YCEDE programme, a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods will be employed:

- a) **Monitoring Data.** The monitoring process will entail collecting data on the following key indicators: the number of events organised and people attending, the number of studentships offered, the number of internships facilitated, the tally of staff members who received training, and the number of mentors and mentees involved. The data will be broken down by ethnicity where appropriate.
- b) **Institutional PGR applicant and enrolment data:** will be collected year on year from the 5 partner institutions to assess changes and impact by ethnicity, amongst other variables, over the lifetime of YCEDE.

- c) **Surveys:** online pre and post surveys will be distributed to participants in WS1 and WS3 to gather quantitative data on their knowledge and confidence before and after taking part in YCEDE activity.
- d) **Interviews:** semi-structured interviews will be conducted with including staff from WS2, and workstream and programme leads to gain in-depth insights into their perspectives and experiences related to the programme.
- e) **Peer-to-peer interviews:** the Listening Rooms evaluation method will be utilised with participants from WS1 and WS3 to gain in-depth data around themes of: belonging and becoming; success; confidence; happiness; journey; and success.
- f) **Documentation Review:** relevant admissions documentation from specific departments within the 5 partner institutions will be examined over time to note any changes against an analysis framework of good practice.



Data Analysis:

The collected data will be subjected to a rigorous analysis process:

- a) Quantitative data will be analysed using statistical software to generate descriptive statistics and identify patterns and trends.
- b) Qualitative data from interviews will be analysed using thematic analysis techniques to identify key themes and insights.
- c) The data will be cross-referenced with the co-created theory of change and logic model to assess the alignment between the programme's activities and the intended outcomes.

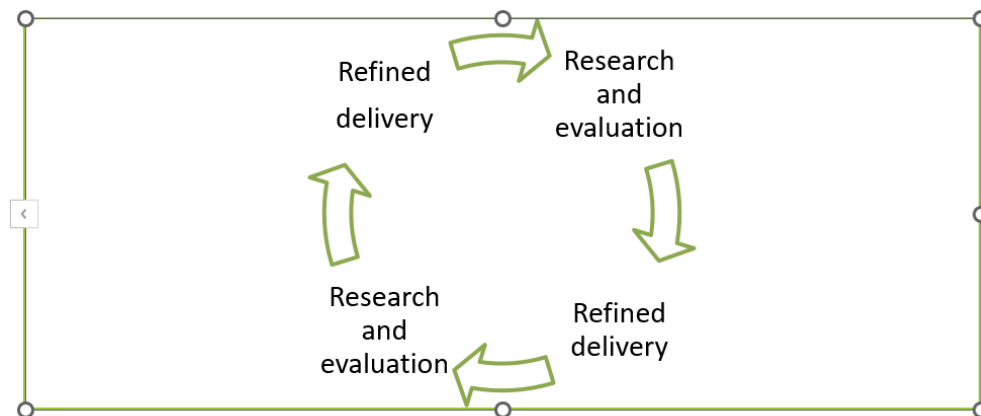
Ethical Considerations:

The evaluation will adhere to ethical principles, ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of participants, unless stated otherwise within permissions documentation. Relevant permissions will be obtained, and data sharing, storage and handling will comply with relevant data protection regulations.

Evaluation Framework:

The evaluation will be based on a mixed-methods framework, allowing for triangulation of findings to ensure the reliability and validity of the results. The evaluation is underpinned by a realist approach, most notably developed by Pawson and Tilley (2014 [1997]). Realist evaluation is a holistic approach to evaluating the efficacy of a programme which aims to understand what works for whom, in what context and why. Realist evaluation has the particular benefit that it “takes account of complexity, and is concerned with making sense of context, mechanisms and outcomes” (Thomas 2017:4).

Realist programme evaluation is an iterative process, whereby initial assumptions may alter over time through evaluative evidence which can then be used to amend programme inputs and targets.



The evaluation framework also takes on board an innovative active theory of change approach whereby tight linkages are created between the logic model and evaluation planning bridging the gap between theory and practice and ensuring that the logic model is utilised as a living document (see 'logic model monitoring and evaluation tool' section for more on this).

Logic model and theory of change

The YCEDE programme has adopted a theory of change approach from its inception, emphasising transparency in decision-making and ensuring alignment with the objectives of OfS/Research England and YCEDE. In November 2021, a series of online discursive logic model workshops were conducted with YCEDE leads and stakeholders. These workshops facilitated a collaborative process, enabling the evaluation team to move beyond the ideas solely held by the delivery team and jointly develop theories of change, incorporating programme outcomes and targets. This participatory approach fostered a shared understanding and collective ownership of the programme's framework

Logic model monitoring and evaluation tool

To assess the achievement of proposed interventions and activities and the extent to which outcomes meet their designated targets, an evaluation tool has been created. This tool enables the evaluation team to identify the most effective data sources for evaluating the functionality of each activity, mechanism and outcome. The team can devise relevant questions to assess the effectiveness of the interventions, mechanisms and outcomes accurately. Furthermore, the tool allows for the linkage of targets to the mechanism evidence on which they are based through the co-creation theory of change workshops, reinforcing the evaluation process with a strong evidential foundation. Overall, this comprehensive approach ensures a rigorous and evidence-driven evaluation of the programme's progress and impact. See Appendix 1 for a visual representation of the tool with each of the workstream indicators, targets and data sources mapped onto activities, mechanisms and outcomes.

Dissemination:

The evaluation outcomes will be disseminated among pertinent stakeholders, such as programme leads and partner institutions, to foster transparency and support evidence-based decision-making. Additionally, any valuable insights gained will be shared with the broader sector through conference papers, blogs, and academic articles to promote knowledge exchange and contribute to the collective understanding in the field.

Continuous Improvement:

The evaluation process will incorporate feedback mechanisms, enabling continuous improvement and learning for future iterations of the YCEDE programme.

References

Pawson, R. & Tilley, N. (2014 [1997]), *Realistic Evaluation*, Sage: London

Thomas, L. (2017) *Understanding a whole institution approach to widening participation: Final report*, Office for Fair Access: online
<https://www.offa.org.uk/egp/whole-institution-approach/> (Accessed 1/6/18)