

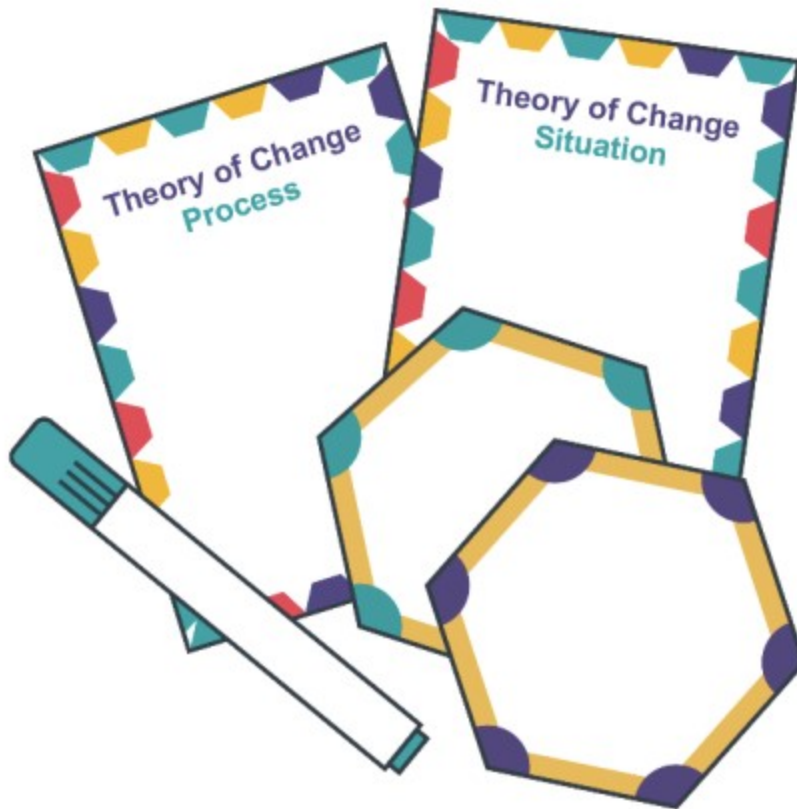
A Theory of Change and Diagnose Action Zone

What is the problem/issue that you want to address?

Whether the proposed longitudinal intervention concerning our buddying scheme will be effective in improving L4 retention rates over the next 3 years.

What is your Theory of Change - i.e. how will your proposed actions realise your long term outcomes?

Planned workshop in three weeks at which we will use Change Busters ToC process to help determine short, intermediate and long-term outcomes. Will update here when completed and outcomes established.



What evidence and assumption are you critiquing to help you explore your proposal?

As a start: Last 3 years of UoGr retention data from dashboard; NSS reporting facets over last 3 years; data from SU project exploring drop out and retention, post COVID; national benchmarks; analysis of Departmental and Programme review reports 2019-22. Key assumption: that COVID has had spurious impact on trend analyses. Check it all out in ToC. Need to track L4 experience across subsequent UG years and do comparator group sample to assess impact of buddying scheme. Maybe consider cautious upscaling after first year analysis rather than waiting for whole UG cohort experience?

B Protocol/Route Map and Plan Action Zone

What do you need for this evaluation to be effective?

- We need to challenge the trend assumptions with other forms of triangulated evidence
- Important to have a heterogeneous stakeholder group to ensure that pursuit of objectives developed in the ToC are scrutinised effectively
- Builds on previous point, agency is crucial, and inclusive engagement mechanisms need to be built into the protocol.

What does your evaluation protocol/route map look like?

The protocol will need to cover the following aspects:

- Methods of engagement articulated
- ToC information and agreed outcomes
- How we will prioritise weight of evidence when scrutinising progress towards stated objectives
- QA processes and reporting lines
- Proposed impact mechanisms and impact pathway

How will you judge the effectiveness of the evaluation?

- The extent to which short, intermediate and longer term outcomes have been met.
- Robust decision-making trails for changes made.
- Extent of awareness, agency and policy integration at all levels.

C Impact and Gather Action Zone

What impact claims do you want to make and how will you evidence them?

- Certainly need to see a reversal of L4 trends in sample
- Need to work through *Evidence of Impact checklist* to assess key aspects for impact claims, including consideration of: difference; scale; attribution; quality; partnership; engagement; experience; corroborative evidence; accessibility; recognition. See the checklist at https://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/ethemes/resilient-learning-communities/10-point-framework.pdf?sfvrsn=23f5d681_4

What decisions have you made about appropriate methods to gather data?

- A triangulated approach to gathering evidence longitudinally will be needed across a range of stakeholders. Typically, this will comprise:
- Data gathered about student retention rates of those on L4 buddying scheme, contrasted with broadly matched comparator groups at each academic year of UG study
 - Interactive focus groups with buddying group participants to assess/unearth further impact and outcomes from their participation.
 - Tracking of buddying mentors to assess whether this elevates possible employment opportunities due to potential upskilling when compared with comparator group.
 - Looking at overall performance data of buddying participants to assess whether assessment trajectory is more positive than non-participants over UG period
 - Interactive focus groups with programme teams in which buddying engagement has been developed to assess their perceptions of difference made or otherwise.

What plans have you made for reporting impact?

- Once evidence of impact checklist has been completed and agreed with stakeholders, the stakeholders will need to consider the impact pathways needed, including:
- What is the anticipated benefit or benefits?
 - Who are the key beneficiaries?
 - What activities are needed to drive impact (including comms planning, key collaborators to achieve impact, application to practice)

D Lessons Learned and Reflect Action Zone

What have you learned/are hoping to learn from your evaluation in terms of implementation and impact?

We anticipate that lessons learned will emerge over time; however some obvious things spring to mind:

- Building in sufficient flexibility within the intervention to continuously monitor and shape the scheme in light of emerging evidence

- Using the QAA *Evidencing Value* toolkit at

https://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/ethemes/evidence-for-enhancement/evidencing-the-intangible-aspects-of-the-student-experience-workbook.pdf?sfvrsn=4b37c681_4 especially to capture unintended outcomes.

How will you explore and report any unintended consequences?

By using the *Evidencing Value* framework in a series of scheduled stakeholder workshops to assess early intangibles which will then be tracked longitudinally throughout the intervention. N.B. This could also include what is stopped across the intervention timeline in addition to identifying what worked well.

What outputs are you creating and for which stakeholders?

This will need to be agreed with all stakeholders at ToC and revisited but envisaged to include: