

Office for
Students

The logo for the Office for Students, featuring a dark blue square with a yellow square in the top right corner containing the letters 'OfS' in white.

OfS

Strengthening evaluation

Wave 1 provider engagement webinars:
2024-2025 onwards access and
participation plans

2 May 2023

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Event notices

- Closed captions are available – please click the CC icon
- Use the chat box if you would like to speak to the events team
- Please use the Q&A box rather than the chat box to ask a question
- A recording of this event will be available on the OfS website

Agenda

1400 Welcome

Introduction and vision for strengthening evaluation by John Blake

Overview of expectations

TASO: Strengthening evaluation

Q&A

1530 Close

Introducing the presenters



John Blake

**Director for Fair Access
and Participation**



Adam Lambert

**Access and Participation
Manager**



Heather Bowyer

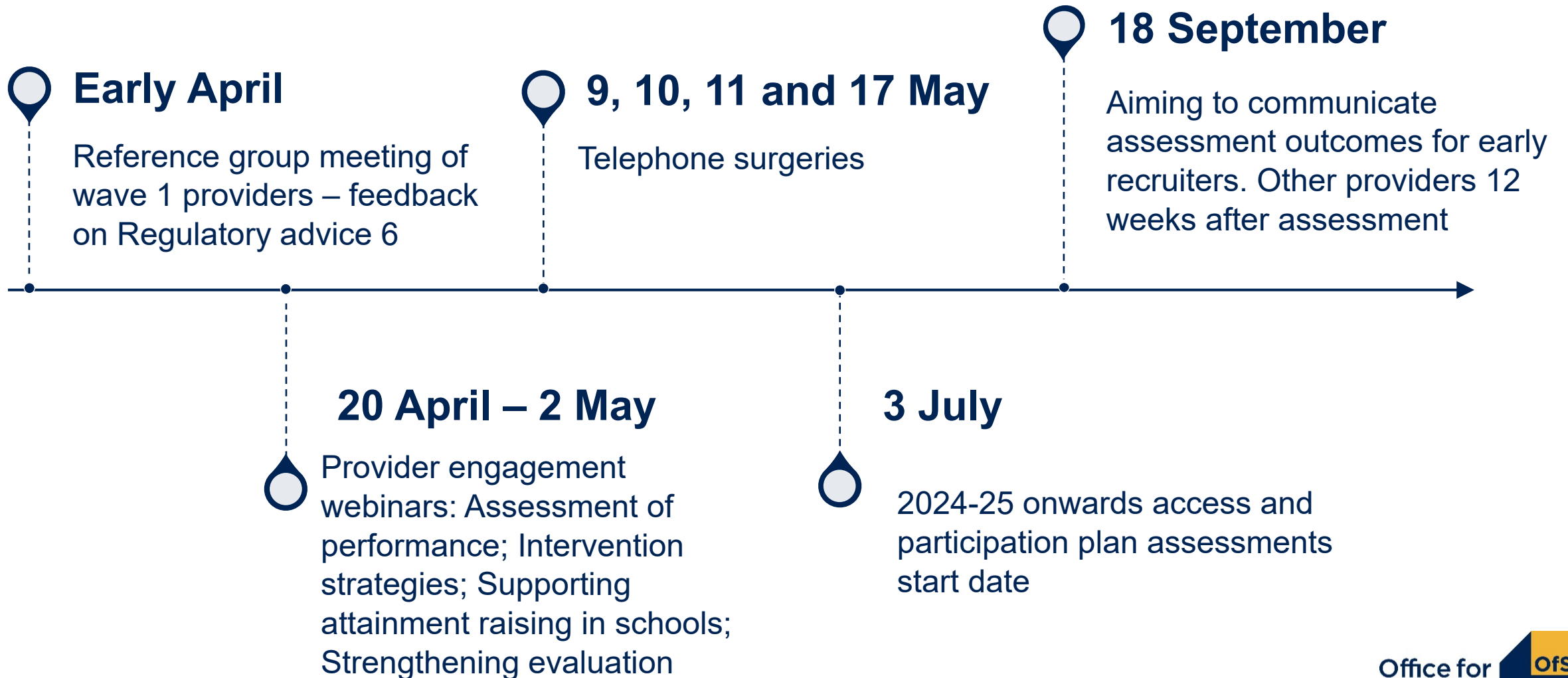
**Senior Access and
Participation Officer**



Eliza Kozman

Deputy Director - TASO

Assessment timeline



Agenda

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Introduction and vision for strengthening evaluation in access and participation plans (APPs)

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Evaluation in APPs

What we will cover:

- writing your evaluation strategy
- evaluating your intervention strategies
- sharing your findings.

Overview of expectations – evaluation strategy

What does the OfS expect?

- set out your strategy for how you will strengthen activity overall
- share your results (good, bad and null)
- learn from your own findings and from the wider sector
- a timetable for sharing findings

How can you do this?

- use the OfS evaluation self-assessment tool to determine what level you are working at
- identify areas you would like to strengthen
- commit to this in your plan
- have a dissemination approach

Overview of expectations – evaluation plans

What does the OfS expect?

- description of an evaluation plan, including:
 - focus on determining what works, doesn't work and in what contexts
 - methodologies that you expect to use to evaluate the outcomes
- description of the mechanisms in place for evaluation findings to influence practice
- for you to consider evaluating the outcomes in an intervention strategy and the effectiveness of an intervention strategy as a whole

How can you do this?

- consider which activities and outcomes in an intervention strategy will be evaluated
- use the standards of evidence and tell us what 'type' of evidence you will generate for each outcome
- focus resource on high impact, high cost, innovative activity or activity with a limited evidence base

OfS evaluation self-assessment tool



- enables you to assess your performance and set a baseline from which to make improvements
- enables you to identify where improvements are needed
- can be used by all providers

Strategic context

- evaluation is prioritised
- resources (including financial, expertise, time...) are committed to evaluation
- opportunities and structures to discuss evaluation of impact
- senior managers understand the importance of embedding evaluation
- evaluation supports strategic objectives
- open to learning and create opportunities for practitioners to reflect and develop.

Programme design

- programmes are underpinned by evidence
- evidence is used to inform decisions on the course of action to take
- clear on what change you want to bring about
- clear on the activities and the rationale for delivering them in this way
- coherent description of what you are doing and why
- the quality of thinking is more important than how the theory is presented.

Evaluation design

- evaluation aims to fill gaps in the existing evidence
- a range of factors will determine which type of evaluation is most appropriate in different circumstances
- you choose the type of evaluation that best supports the claims you want to make
- different methods are used to collect evidence from a range of perspectives
- review existing evaluations and generate a source of evidence (e.g. a systematic review)
- more costly and intensive activities generally require a more intensive evaluation
- a range of skills at different levels are required – expertise is identified and invested in
- commissioned evaluations can be used to bring in expertise and gain an external perspective

Evaluation implementation

- the outcomes you want to achieve are the starting point for thinking about how to evaluate
- clear how you will measure the outcomes and impacts of your activities
- have indicators capable of capturing the changes you are looking to achieve
- data collection methods and tools you put in place are appropriate for the outcomes you are seeking to measure
- use tested and validated data collection tools
- you work in an ethical way and adhere to the law, seeking advice where needed
- consider intermediate as well as final outcomes especially where these will take a long time to materialise

Learning

- different types of evaluation provide different evidence from which to draw conclusions
- you ask yourself whether the conclusions you make are reasonable considering the quality of the evidence you have generated; that your assertions of impact are valid; that your measures are appropriate to what you are trying to achieve and whether the conclusions depend on any particular set of conditions
- evaluation reports are objective, accurate, and transparent
- you take account of who does the evaluation and if they are unbiased and objective
- recognise the limitations of your study
- negative results are just as important for learning as positive evaluations - learn, learn, learn
- think about how impact evaluation results can be shared in order to influence future practice internally and externally
- be sure to provide enough information on how the evaluation was undertaken to enable others to use your evidence appropriately.

Standards of evidence

Type of evidence	Description	Evidence	Claims that can be made
Type 1 - narrative	The impact evaluation provides a narrative or a coherent theory of change to motivate its selection of activities in the context of a coherent strategy.	Evidence of impact elsewhere and/or in the research literature on access and participation activity effectiveness or from existing evaluation results.	We have a coherent explanation of what we do and why our claims are research-based.
Type 2 – empirical enquiry	The impact evaluation collects data on impact and reports evidence that those receiving an intervention have better outcomes, though does not establish any direct causal effect.	Quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of a pre/post intervention change or a difference compared to what might otherwise have happened.	We can demonstrate that our interventions are associated with beneficial results.
Type 3 – causality	The impact evaluation methodology provides evidence of a causal effect of an intervention.	Quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of a pre/post treatment change on participants relative to an appropriate control or comparison group who did not take part in the intervention.	We believe our intervention causes improvement and can demonstrate the difference using a control or comparison group.

Aim for this!

Even better if you can do this!

Example intervention strategy

Intervention Strategy 1: Objectives and targets	To remove gap in acceptance rates between FSM and non-FSM students by 2027-28. Directly contributes to Target PTA_1. Indirectly contributes to Targets PTS3 and PTS4		
Risks to equality of opportunity	Knowledge and skills; information and guidance; perception of HE; application success rates despite qualifications		
Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross intervention?
High level description of each activity e.g. Deliver tutoring to 140 KS4 students per year who are eligible for FSM. Run in partnership with The Access Project	Estimation of the resources needed to deliver it £50,000 per year	Expected outcome of this activity Increased GCSE and A Level attainment; increased metacognitive scores (compared to national average for FSM students)	Does this activity contribute to another strategy? Yes – IS2
Evidence-base & rationale	<p>Evidence-base and rationale for why it is believed that the activities stated above will contribute towards achieving the stated objective</p> <p>GCSE attainment is a strong indicator of whether a learner will attend higher education (BIS, 2015). Evidence shows that the use of metacognitive strategies can lead to +7 months additional progress, especially for disadvantaged pupils (EEF). This also shows that teaching these strategies in a collaborative group setting can be effective. There is some evidence that teaching metacognitive strategies can lead to an increase in attainment, although evidence on this is emerging (TASO). We have been delivering the tutoring activity since 2022 and have used findings from the pre and post knowledge test and feedback survey to make improvements e.g., added a knowledge test during the year to allow for better tracking of participants to provide support.</p>		
Evaluation	<p>This section should be a high-level summary of the way in which this intervention strategy will be evaluated:</p> <p>Increased metacognitive scores (Type 2 – empirical): pre, during and post intervention knowledge testing, TASO’s widening participation questionnaire (study strategies scale). We will publish two years of data in 2026 via blogs and will share with TASO on a yearly basis. Findings will be shared informally with other faculties delivering access activities and with our access, research and evaluation networks and partnerships, e.g., NEON’s establishing evidence and measuring impact working group and with our Uni Connect partnership.</p> <p>Increased attainment (Type 2 – empirical): pre and post attainment data analysis (data sharing agreement in place with participants schools), and semi-structured telephone interviews with teachers. We will publish the findings of this evaluation as a report on our website and share findings via blogs and in networks in 2026. We will share the findings of the whole evaluation with TASO (also in 2026).</p>		

OfS guidance and support

- impact of outreach guidance
- OfS financial support toolkit (statistical, interview and survey tools)
- evaluation of outreach interventions for under-16s
- whole provider approach evaluation guidance and toolkit
- Uni Connect resources.

Sharing your findings

What's the issue?

- research shows that providers want to share evidence and good practice, and for this to be collated, research and shared at the national level
- we see active pockets of providers sharing findings in their networks and partnerships
- however, over 40 per cent of providers have reported not sharing their evidence.

Sharing your findings

What you can do:

- share your findings internally (cross-provider networks, steering groups, committees, faculties or with academics/practitioners/evaluators)
- share your findings with other providers, networks and partnerships
- work with TASO – submit evidence and/or join their trials
- be mindful of your different audiences - can the findings be easily read and easily accessed?
- engage in formal and informal peer review processes
- share findings of the short, medium and long term outcomes – don't just wait for the long term!

Sharing your findings

What we are doing:

- an intention to create a repository where you can submit evaluation findings, with more details on this in the coming year
- continued our funding of TASO for 2023-24
- accepting that identifying what doesn't work is just as important as what does work.

Agenda

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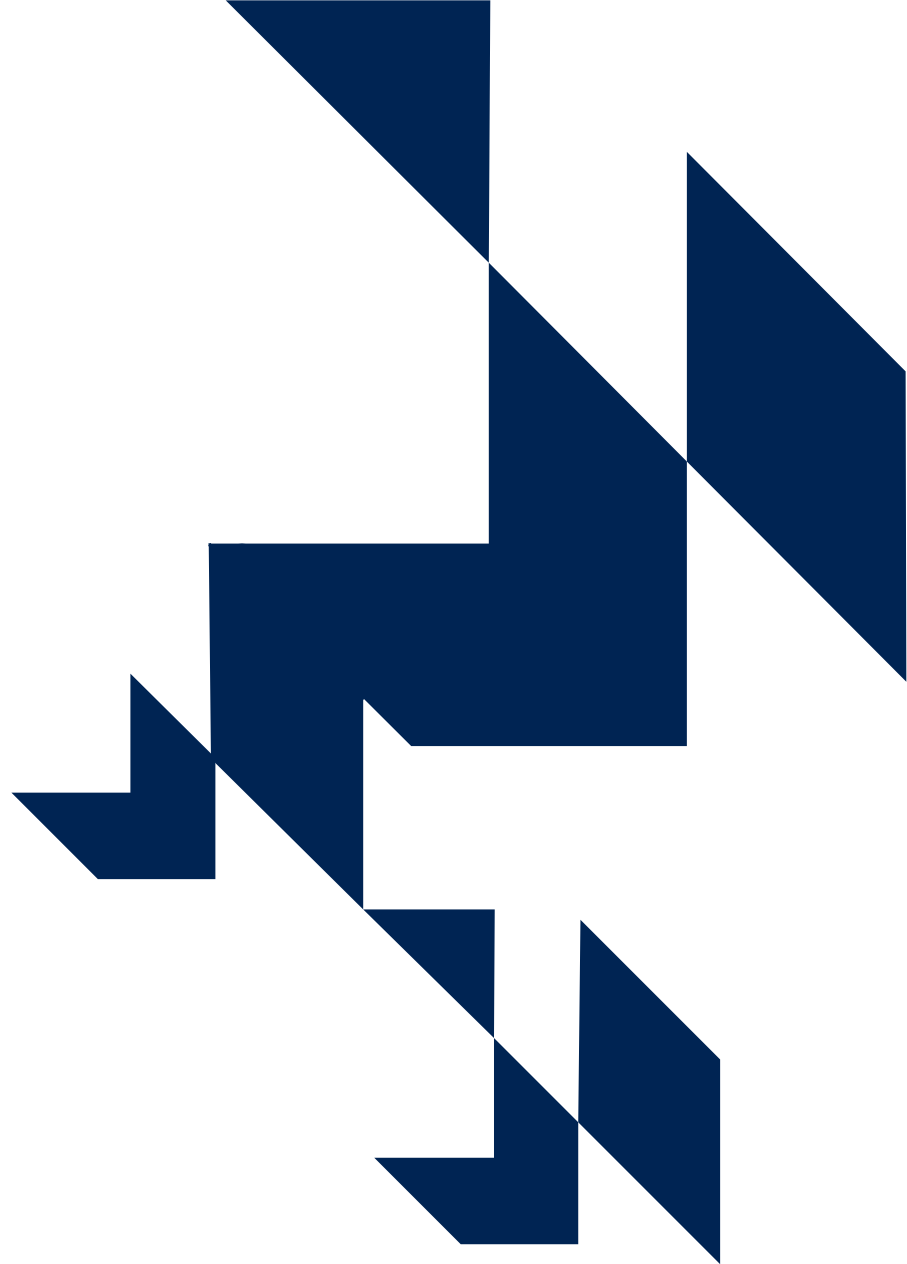
Overview of expectations

TASO: Strengthening evaluation

Q&A

1530 Close

TASO



Strengthening evaluation

Dr Eliza Kozman

May 2023

Outline of session

1

Who we are

2

Our evaluation projects and support

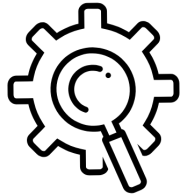
3

Useful examples

3

Resources to access

Who we are



TASO is an independent charity and part of the UK Government's What Works Movement.



A hub for HE professionals to access research, toolkits, evaluation techniques and more to help widen participation and improve equality within the sector.



Funded by the Office for Students.

Vision and mission

Our vision is to eliminate equality gaps in higher education.

Our mission is to improve lives through evidence-based practice in higher education.



Our work spans 5 key areas



Theme 1: Effectiveness of widening participation outreach



Theme 2: gaps in the student experience



Theme 3: Employment and employability



Theme 4: Mental health and disability



Evaluation guidance

Evaluation guidance



Monitoring and evaluation framework (MEF):
diagnose, plan measure, reflect



Evaluation webinars: survey design & validation,
correlation versus causation, pre- and post-test
design



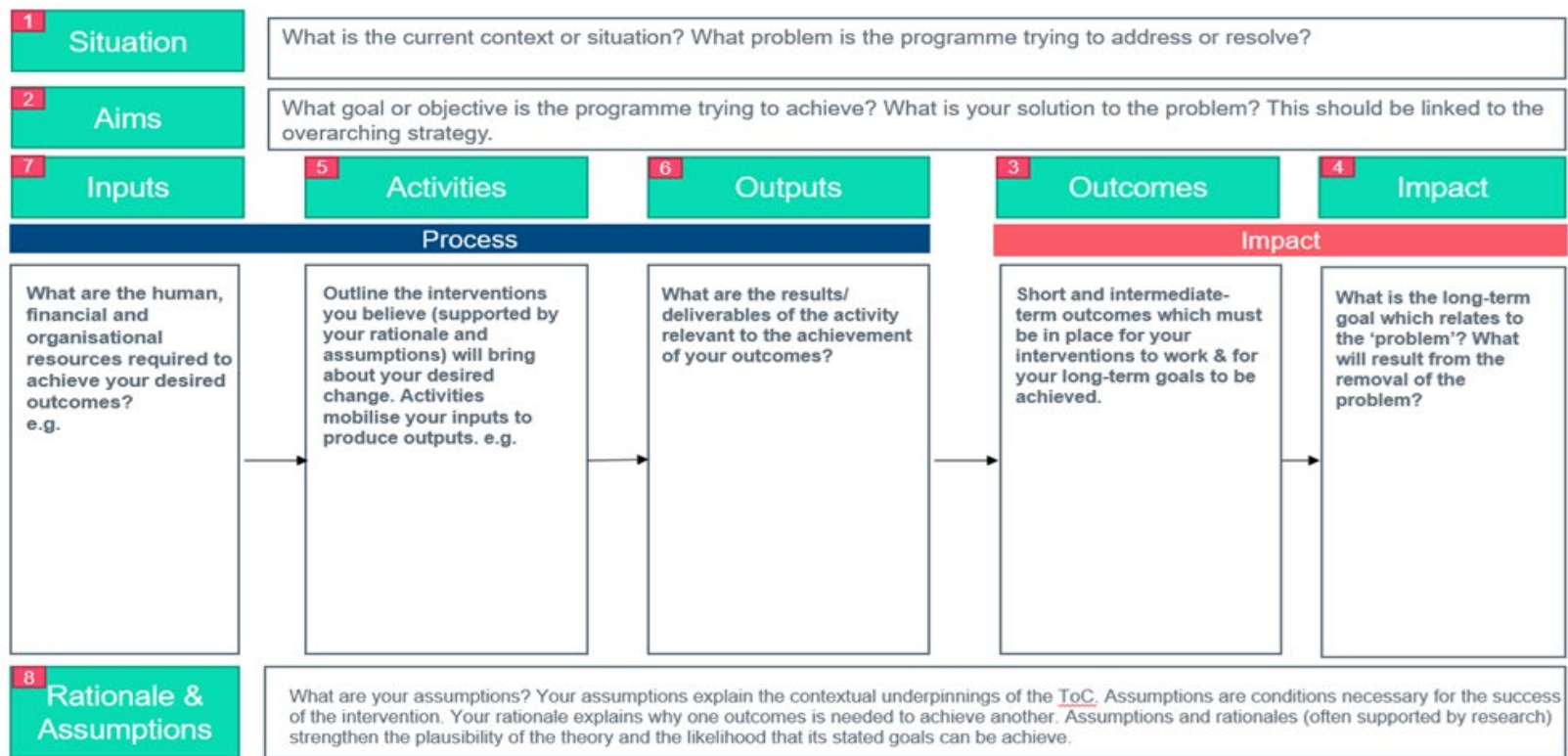
Evidence toolkit

Standards of evidence

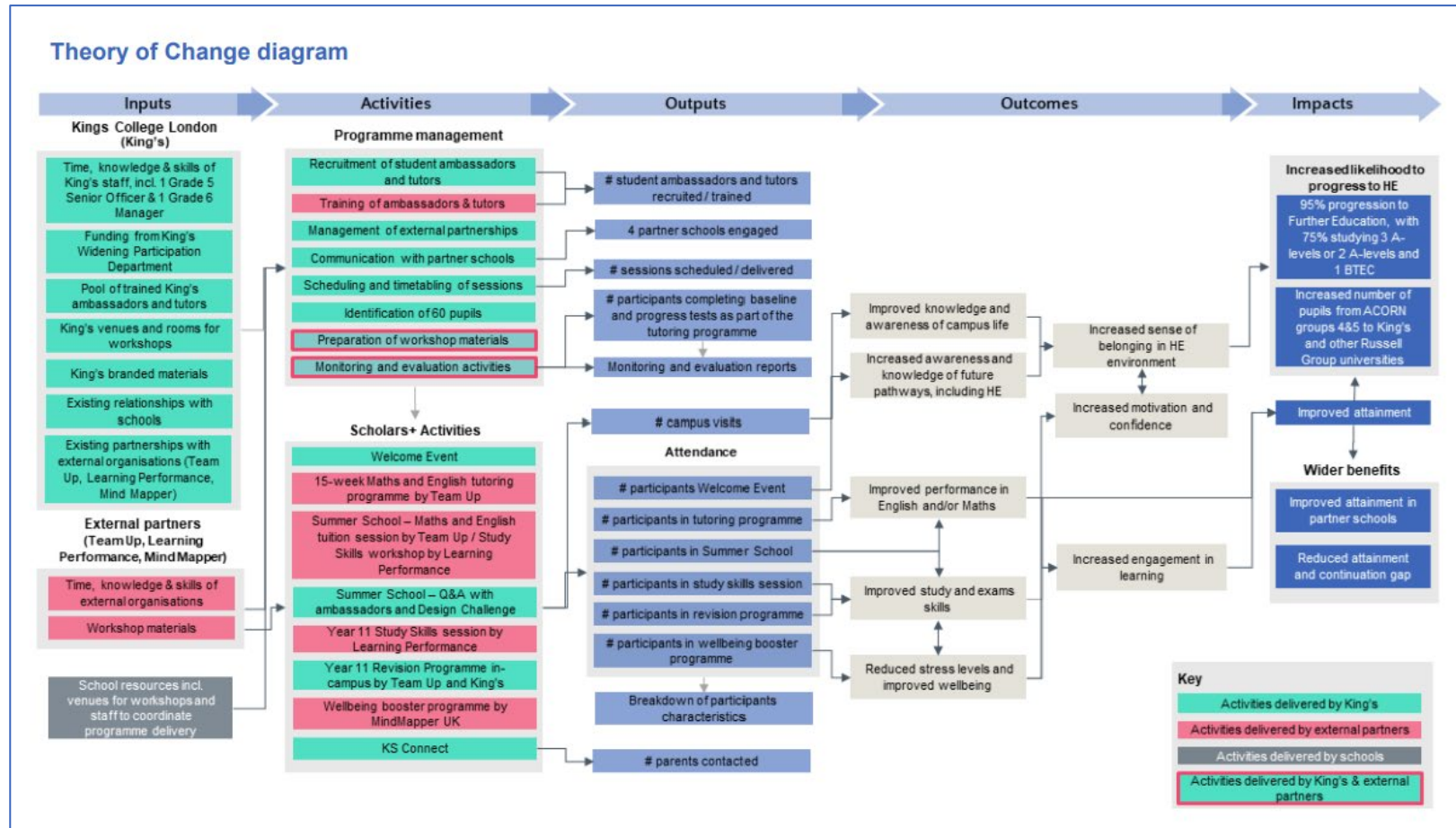
Our approach to classifying evidence is aligned with the OfS ‘Standards of Evidence’:

- **Type 1 – Narrative:** there is a clear narrative for why we might expect an activity to be effective. This narrative is normally based on the findings of other research or evaluation.
- **Type 2 – Empirical Enquiry:** there is data which suggests that an activity is associated with better outcomes for students.
- **Type 3 – Causality:** a method is used which demonstrates that an activity has a ‘causal impact’ on outcomes for students.

Type 1: Theory of Change



Type 1 TASO example: attainment raising



Type 2: association with better outcomes

- Move towards making more robust claims
- People who took part had better outcomes

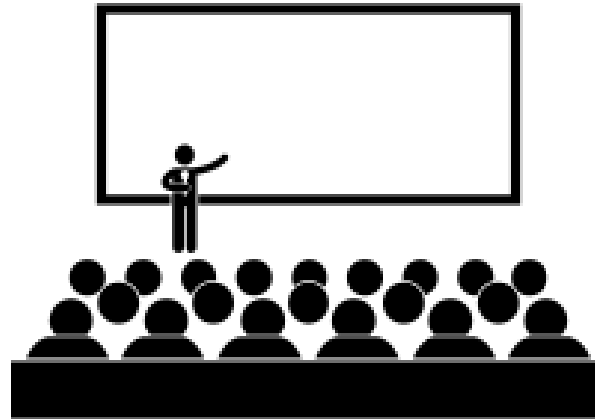
Summer schools

- Assessing the impact of university summer schools.
- Increasing progression to HE.
- Current evidence shows an increase in confidence/aspirations related to HE.
- But, limited evidence that:
 - Links SS's to HE enrolment rates
 - Provides causal evidence



Pre-post comparison

Pre-test



Post-test

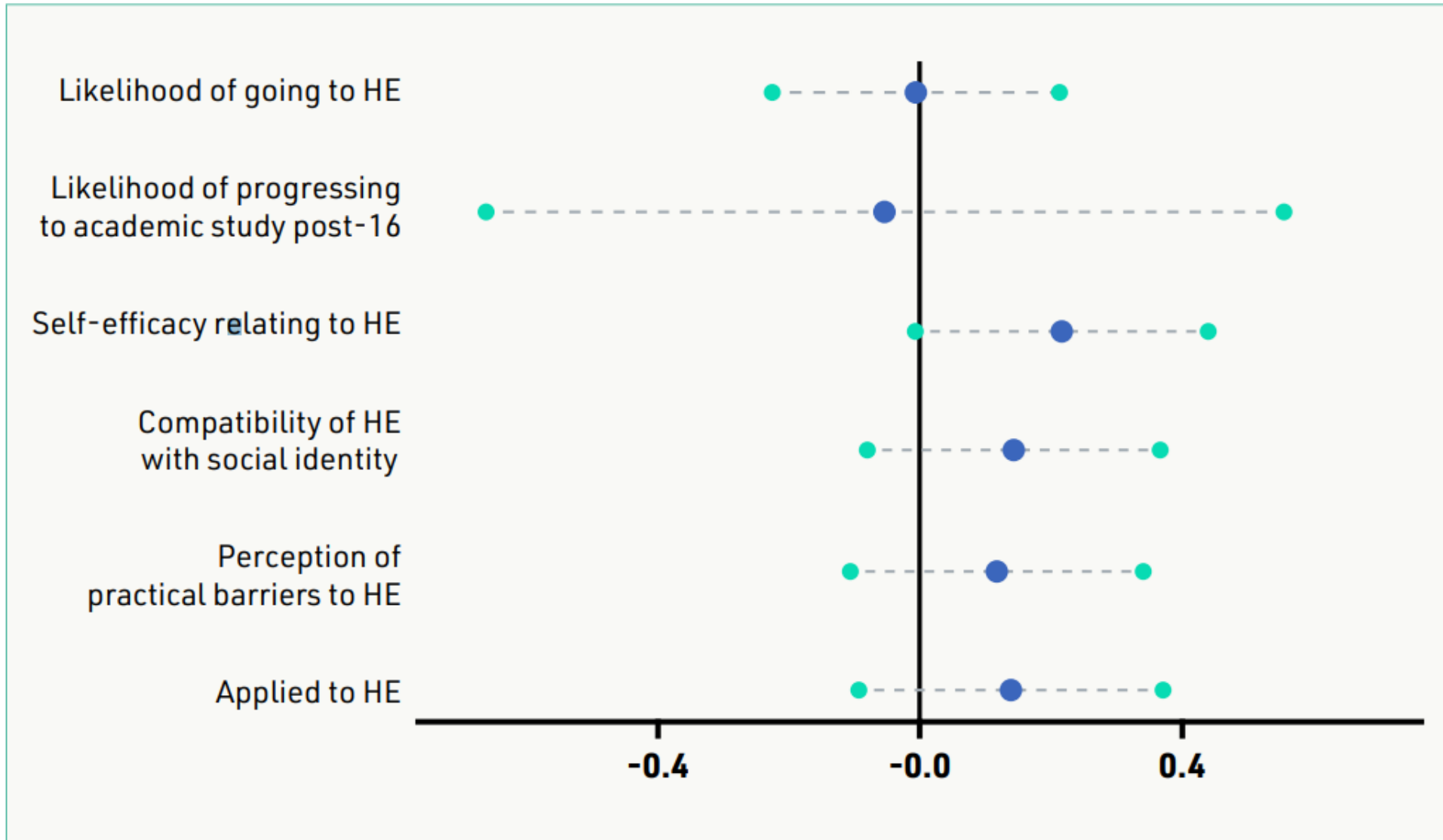
Table 8: Estimated effects for the outcomes of interest

Outcome	Pre-summer-school mean	Post-summer-school mean	t statistic	Estimated effect (Cohen's <i>d</i>)
Likelihood of progressing to HE (7-point Likert scale)	6.42	6.65	2.16*	0.20
Self-efficacy relating to HE application (5-point Likert scale)	3.68	3.87	2.72**	0.24
Self-efficacy relating to post-entry success (5-point Likert scale)	3.94	4.01	1.18	0.10
Compatibility of HE with social identity (5-point Likert scale)	3.73	3.94	2.76**	0.23
Perception of financial barriers to HE (5-point Likert scale)	2.99	3.55	6.49***	0.58
Perception of knowledge barriers to applying to HE (5-point Likert scale)	3.13	3.94	9.06***	0.81

Notes: n = 142

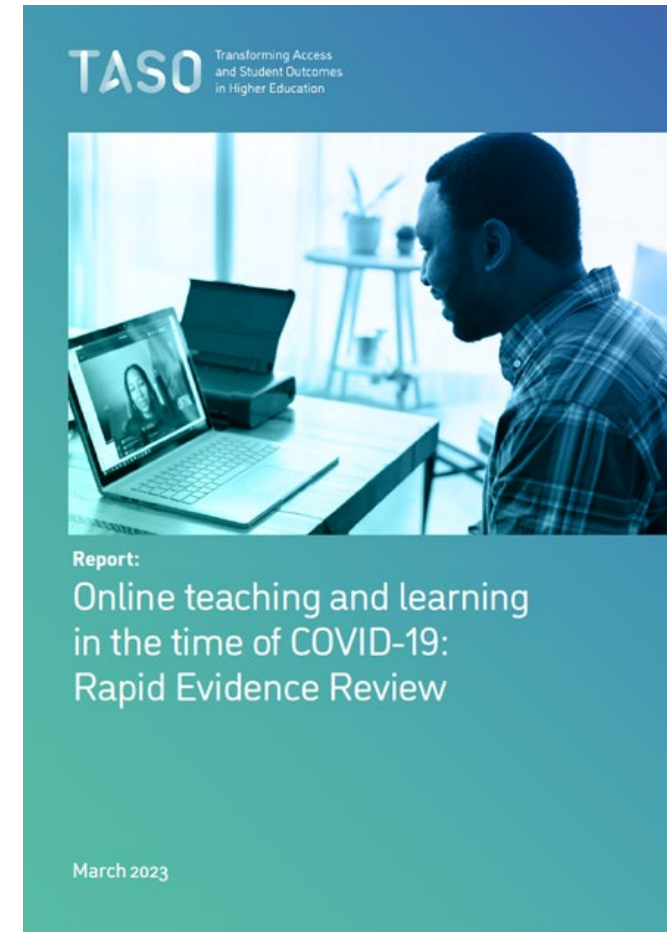
+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 1: Estimated effects size in Cohen's d for the outcomes of interest



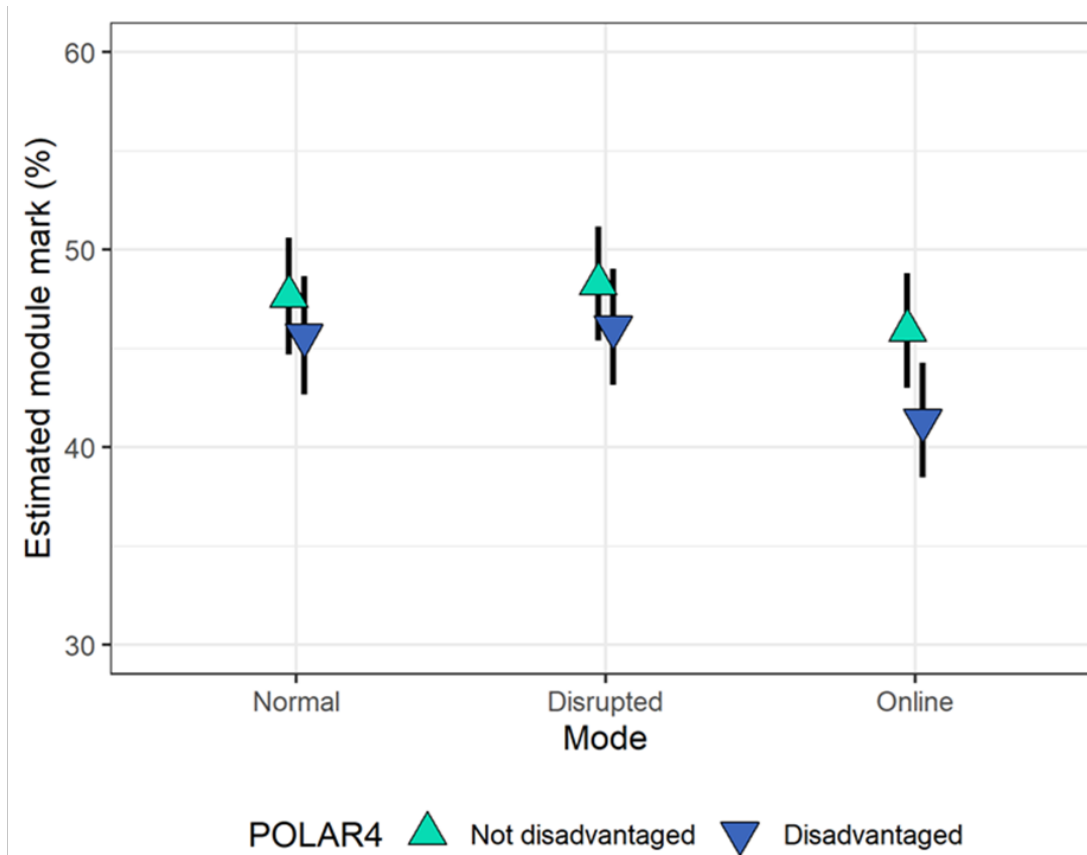
Teaching and learning analysis

- Mixed evidence of effectiveness
- Overall associated with worse outcomes
- Course design is key



Teaching and learning analysis

Mode	Gap
Normal	2.1 pp
Disrupted	2.5 pp
Online	4.8 pp



But limitations to this sort of approach

Pre-post

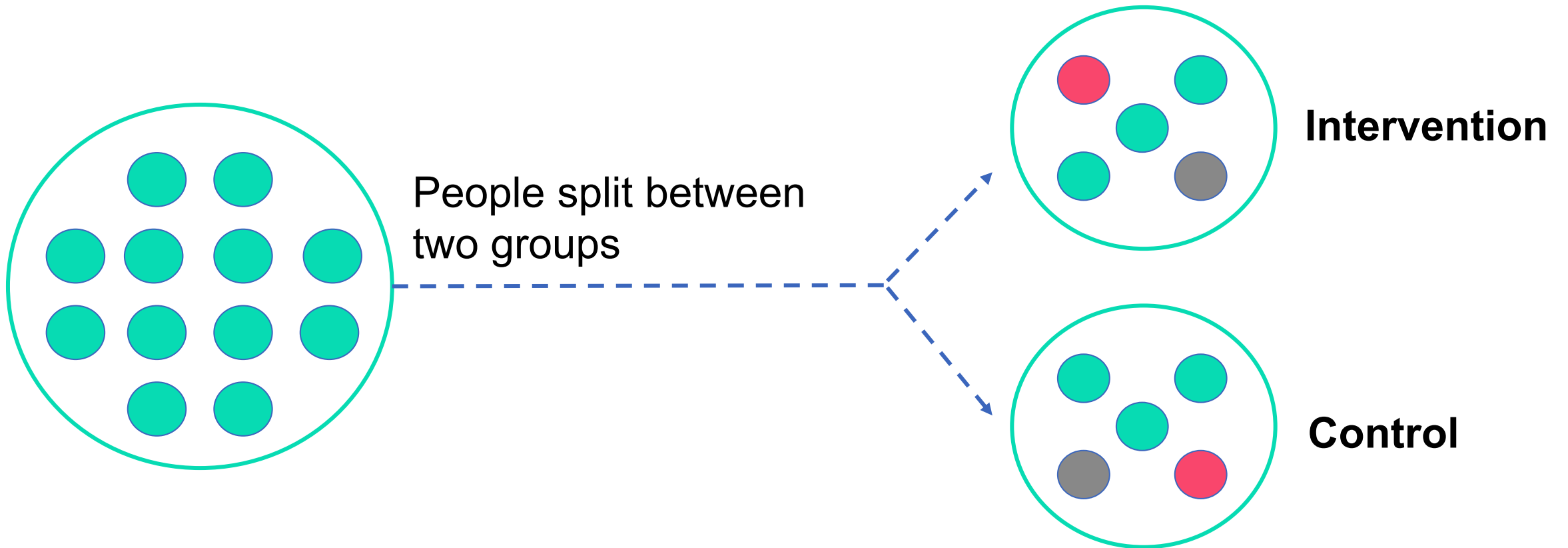
- Assumes that if the summer school never existed, the outcome for students would be the same as before.

Basic comparisons

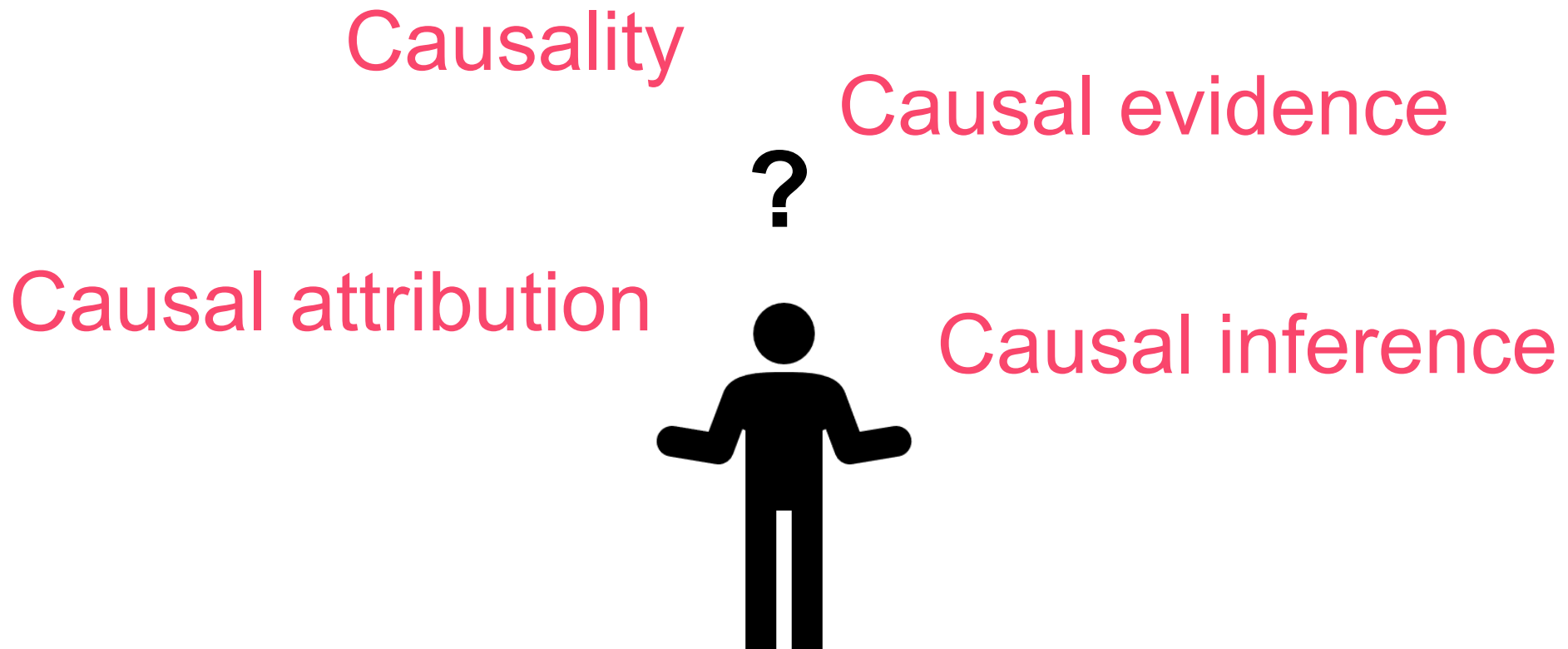
- **Demographic differences?** (e.g. gender, prior attainment, location)
- **Other differences?** (e.g. family support, individual motivation, other barriers)?

Neither give **causal evidence** (Type 3)

Type 3 methods



Type 3 methods



Type 3 examples

- **Randomised controlled trials(RCTs)**
 - University summer schools
 - Learner analytics
- **Quasi-experimental studies**
 - Multi-intervention outreach
 - Curriculum reform to address ethnicity degree awarding gaps

Practical advice

Correlation versus causation



Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) –
theory, methods and practice



Introduction to quasi-experimental designs



Impact evaluation with small cohorts



Practical advice

Theory of Change resources



Pre and post-test design



Survey design and validation



Question time – addressing common
challenges in evaluation



Practical advice

The screenshot shows the TASO website interface. At the top left is the TASO logo and tagline. To the right is a 'Sign up for our newsletter' button and social media icons for Twitter and LinkedIn. Below this is a navigation menu with 'RESEARCH', 'EVIDENCE & EVALUATION' (highlighted), 'GET INVOLVED', 'NEWS & BLOG', and 'ABOUT'. A search icon is on the far right. A breadcrumb trail reads: Home > Evidence & Evaluation > Evaluation guidance resources > Pre and post-test design. The main heading is 'Pre and post-test design'. Below the heading is a 'Share content' section with icons for Twitter, LinkedIn, Email, and WhatsApp. The main text describes the webinar and lists three sections: an introduction, a practical example, and a Q&A session. On the right, a sidebar titled 'EVIDENCE & EVALUATION' lists various resources like 'Evidence toolkit', 'Evidence ratings', and 'Our approach to evaluation'.

TASO Transforming Access
and Student Outcomes
in Higher Education

Sign up for our newsletter

RESEARCH **EVIDENCE & EVALUATION** GET INVOLVED NEWS & BLOG ABOUT

Home > Evidence & Evaluation > Evaluation guidance resources > Pre and post-test design

Pre and post-test design

Share content

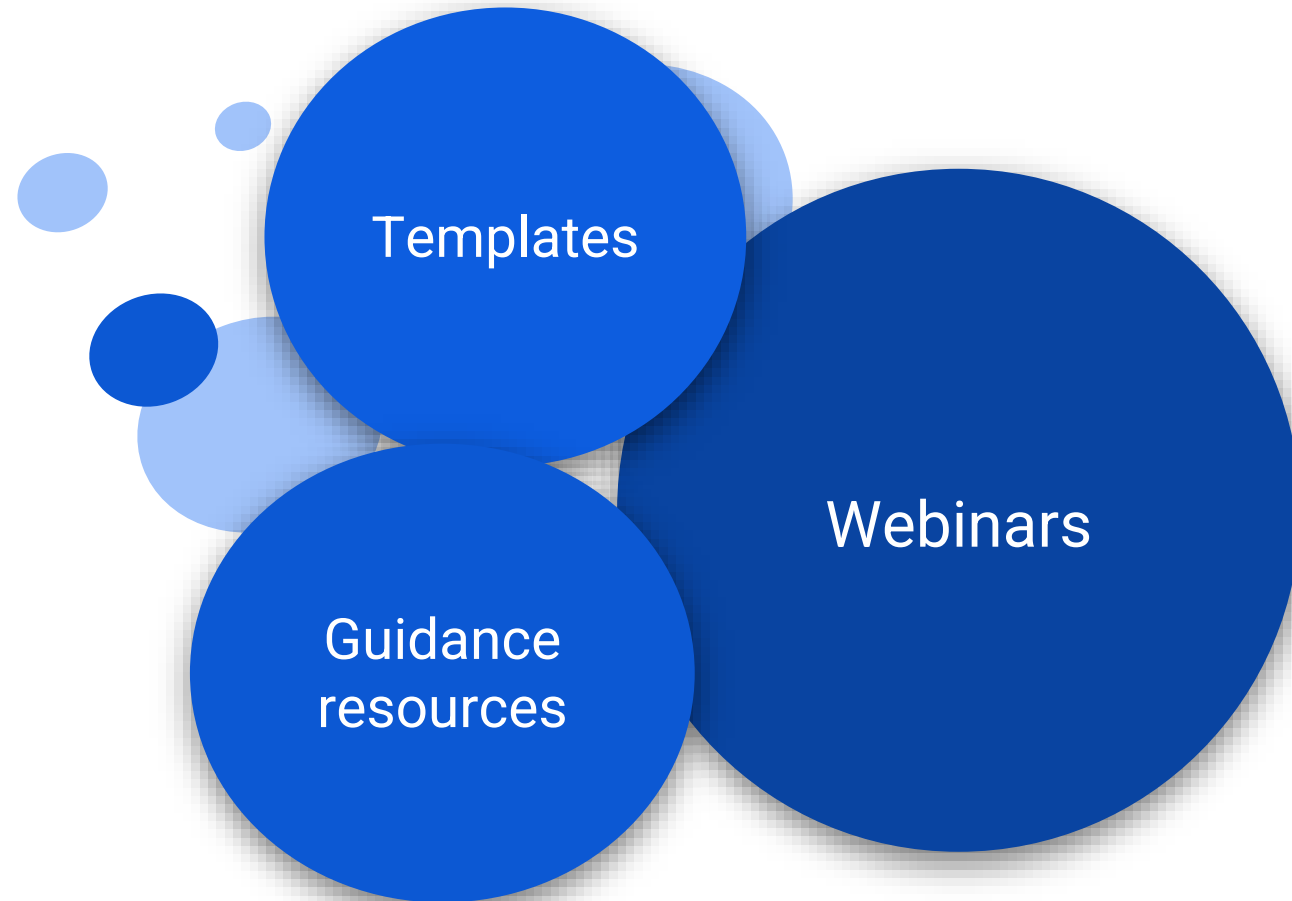
Pre and post-event surveys are a commonly used evaluation measure, but knowing what data to collect and how to use it can be a challenge. This webinar is an opportunity to hear from TASO's evaluation experts about how to get the best out of pre and post-event surveys. This is a full recording of a webinar session we hosted as part of our Unlocking Effective Evaluation series, which was presented in three sections:

- An introduction to the pre-test and post-test design and when to use it.
- A practical example of implementing the pretest-posttest design.
- Q&A with the audience.

EVIDENCE & EVALUATION

- Evidence toolkit
- Evidence ratings
- Our approach to evaluation
- Evaluation guidance resources
- Correlation versus causation
- Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs)

Practical advice



Open access protocols

Research protocol K+ RCT

VERSION	DATE	REASON FOR REVISION/NOTES
<i>Any changes to the design to be agreed between the implementation partner(s), evaluator and TASO. Note any agreed changes in the table below.</i>		
2	April 2021	Change of TASO staff – Rain Sherlock now TASO lead on MCOM local evaluations
1 [original]	November 2020	NA
Pre-registration	October 2020	This design has been pre-registered on the Open Science Framework registry and is currently embargoed until TASO chooses to make it public

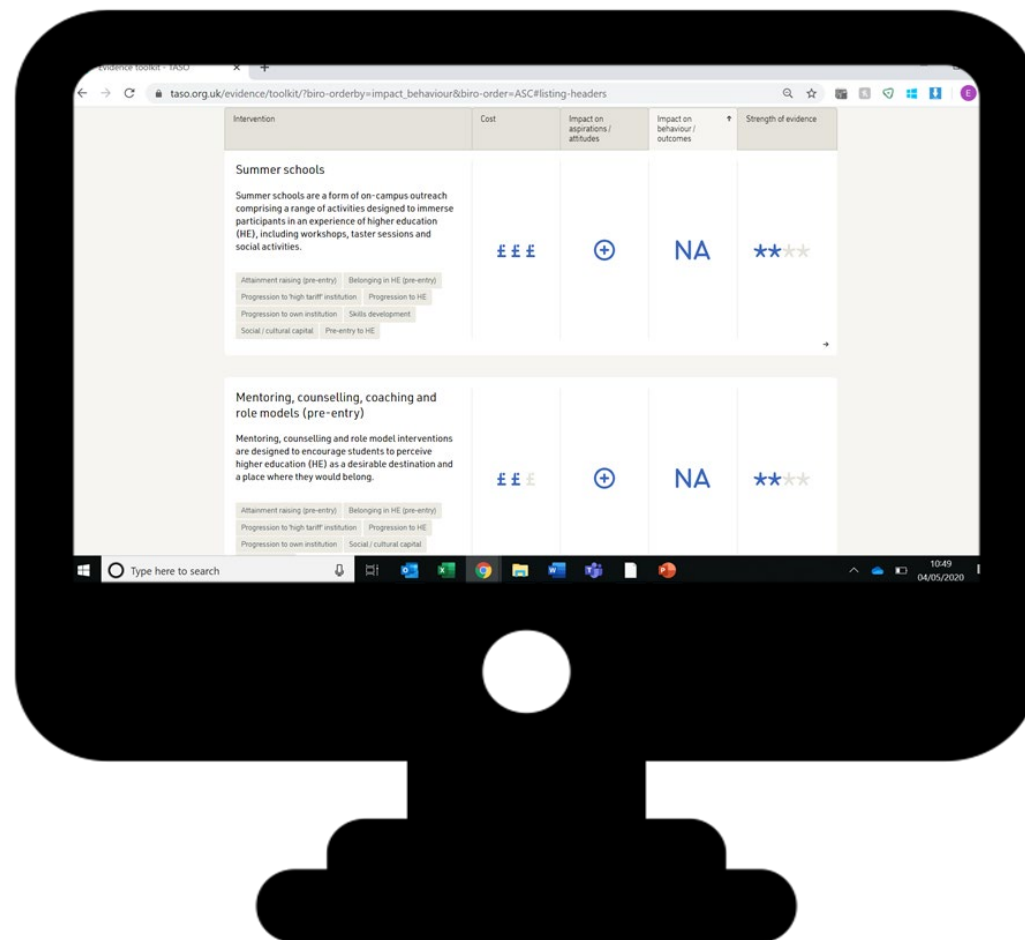
QA to be completed by Deputy Director, Academic Lead, or another individual nominated by them before project launch.

The QA rating system is based on Evaluation Security tool presented in the TASO Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.¹

QA	Comments	Rating (out of 5)
Design	RCT	5
Sample size	Expecting a sample of ~300 per arm	2
Outcome measure	Primary outcome is actual behaviour	5
Attrition	Expected to be low for primary outcome based on record of tracking historic participants	4
Validity	A key risk to validity is the extent to which participants may take part in other outreach activities	3
Overall		3.8

¹ <https://taso.org.uk/evidence/evaluation/>

Our toolkit



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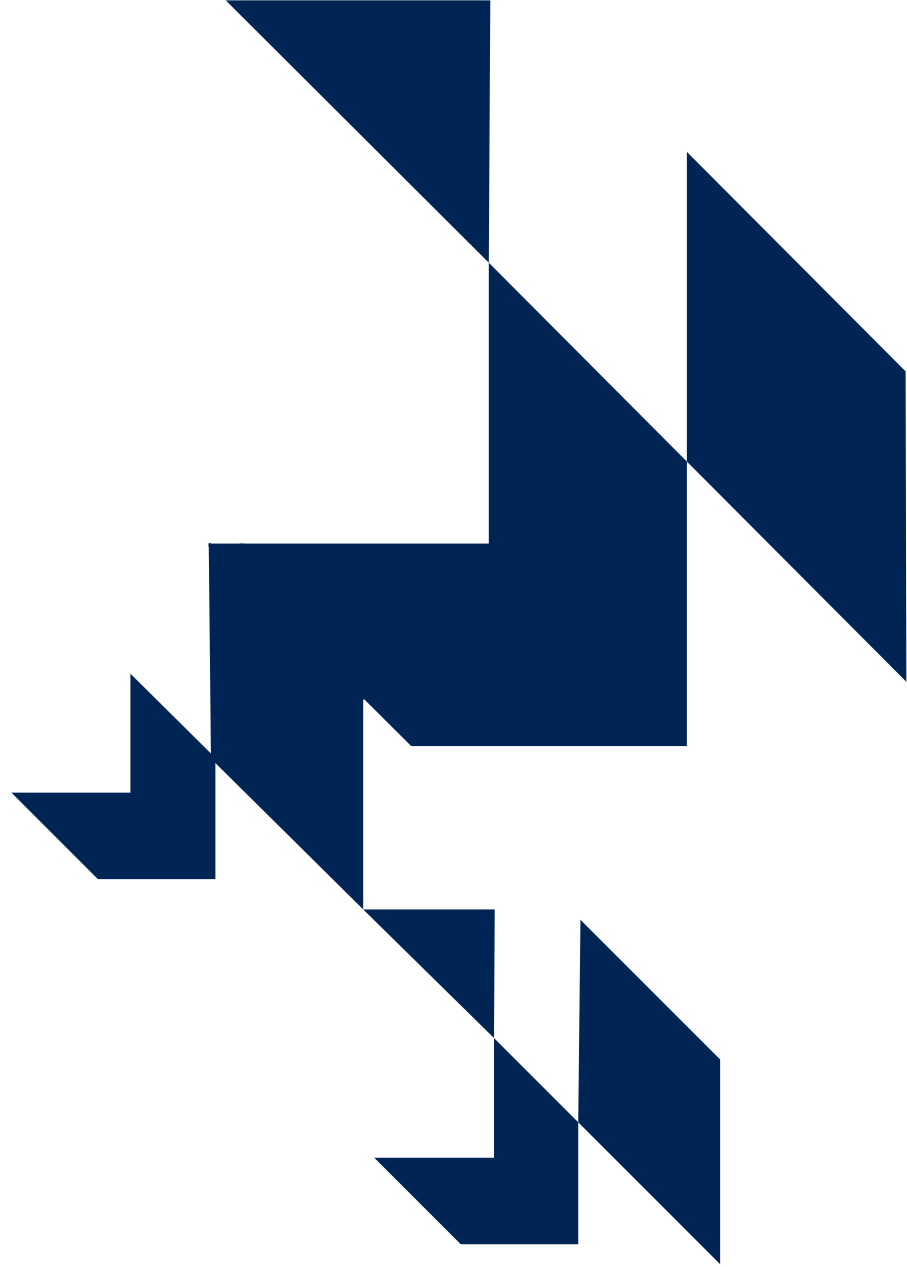
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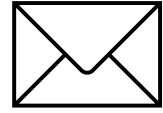
TASO: Strengthening Evaluation

Q&A

1530 Close

Questions and answers





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OfS

Thank you for listening

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