


LEARNING GAIN PILOT PROJECT EVALUATION

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What is learning gain

change in knowledge, skills, work-readiness and personal development, as well as enhancement of specific practices and outcomes in defined disciplinary and institutional contexts

Aims of the pilot phase

- test and evaluate the different methodologies currently used to measure and assess learning in higher education, and the suitability and potential scalability of these methods in England.
- promote partnerships between institutions, departments and disciplines to facilitate the transfer of expertise and new ways of measuring learning gain more widely across the sector.
- build knowledge and capacity for learning gain within the higher education sector in England.
- facilitate dialogue across the sector and with experts, and thereby to develop a shared understanding to underpin future developments (e.g. the development of national measures).

Dimensions of learning gain

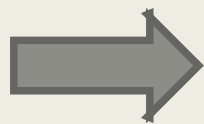
- measures of general **cognitive gain** -what students think and know;
- measures of **soft skills development** -affective measures of attitudes and how students feel and behavioural measures of students' engagement;
- **employability and career readiness** -largely behavioural measures of activities students have undertaken in preparation for the world of work.

Learning gain: reality check

*Balancing methodological
rigour and practical
delivery*

1. Using existing data

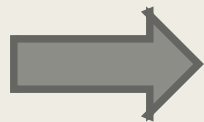
- useful for uncovering patterns in progress and attainment across student groups or courses of study
- challenges separating meaningful differences versus module or subject-specific idiosyncrasies
- large grading profiles and trajectories across modules, courses and institutions when analysing institutional-level attainment data



What are 'ideal' grade trajectories?

2. Using new data

- from tests, surveys and qualitative measures
- appropriateness of using existing instruments and the robustness of new instruments
- Student engagement major challenge of the projects



Embed in curriculum and processes such as registration

Importance of purpose

Given considerations of value for money and practicality, because something *can* be measured does not mean it *should* be measured, particularly at a large scale

Rationale

- Measures need a clear rationale for their development, use and audience
- Buy-in for scaling up any measure of learning gain depends on its intended use
- Student engagement in completing tests and surveys depends on the usefulness of the measure to them and their learning.
- Developing measures and approaches with students ensures they are relevant and result in data that is useable

Multiple measures; multiple points in time

- Multiple measures of learning gain are necessary to capture the diversity of student learning in higher education
 - *highlights the interconnectedness of measures*
- Student learning occurs across many dimensions and varies over time and direction and needs to be accounted for throughout a student's course experience at multiple points in time
 - *Entry and outcome measures need to be used contextually and carefully to support capturing learning gain measures and not as targets themselves*

Uses of learning gain data

- enhancing teaching and learning;
- employability and transition into work and further study; and
- quality, accountability and performance

Usability

- Learning gain data does not inherently provide benefit to students; it depends on how the data is used for enhancement
- Students and academic staff need support, advice and guidance to use learning gain data to enhance teaching and learning
- Students and academics reported the importance of integrating learning gain measures in disciplinary contexts
- Findings highlighted areas for improvement in existing sector-wide mechanisms for quality, accountability and performance

Rationale and scalability— Cognitive gain

- Cognitive gain is best captured through existing attainment data. Additional work in this area should focus on improving assessment, marking and alignment with quality frameworks.
- Rationale and standardised tests

Scalability— Soft skills development

Surveys

- combine engagement data with affective measures
- a clear rationale for selecting items and a plan for dissemination and use of data
- embedded within the existing quality, accountability and performance frameworks
- relationship with NSS (National Student Survey)

Scalability— Employability and career readiness

- Work-readiness through careers registration
- useful data for institutions and opportunities for benchmarking across subjects and student characteristics
- can be linked with emerging data from Graduate Outcomes to address quality, accountability and performance of employability

Learning gain in the sector

- regulator
- sector bodies
- learned societies, disciplinary communities, professional bodies
- institutions

Value for money

Value of
(l)earning
in higher education

Learn more!

- *Higher Education Pedagogies 2018, Volume 3, Issue 1*
- Project websites and publications
- SRHE Seminars (archived)
 - *Learning Gain: Different Perspectives*
 - *Engaging with Engagement Data: Education, Enhancement and Excellence*
 - *Measuring Employability Gain - approaches from different countries*