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The Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework (SEHEEF) Guidance Manual

The Institute for Social Science Research,
The University of Queensland

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Glossary

Term	Definition
Activity	An individual component of work funded (wholly or partially) by HEPPP (or through other relevant Commonwealth funding) that either stands by itself or is an individual part of a program with other substantial components.
Commonwealth-funded equity (project, program or activity)	Refers to the relevant project, program or activity defined, and accommodates HEPPP as well as future student equity in higher education funding programs, including those implemented under the IRLSAF.
Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)	Systematic planning, data collection and reporting of HEPPP-funded activities and programs designed to enable ongoing learning and improvement during the program lifecycle.
Evaluation	The systematic collection of information about the design, implementation and outcomes of a program in order to: enable judgments to be made about performance; understand what is working well, for whom, and in what context; inform decisions about future activities; improve effectiveness and impact.
HEPPP-funded (project, program or activity) or HEPPP (project, program or activity)	Refers to the relevant project, program or activity as defined, and are funded by HEPPP in the current context. However, it also accommodates future student equity in higher education funding programs, including those implemented under the IRLSAF. Also see 'Commonwealth-funded equity (projects, programs or activities)'.
Impact	The change in broader context that occurs as a result of program delivery, often large-scale and longer term. In the context of the SEHEEF, includes changes in primary outcomes.
Input	A resource (e.g. financial, human, equipment, materials) used to undertake activities/produce outputs as part of a program.
Intervention	An activity or program that is implemented with the expectation that it will result in change.
Indigenous, Regional and Low SES Attainment Fund (IRLSAF)	The IRLSAF funds universities to support Indigenous students and students from low SES and regional and remote backgrounds. The IRLSAF combines the HEPPP, regional loading, enabling loading and the National Priorities Pool Program.
Key evaluation questions	High-level questions that an evaluation is designed to answer, typically drawing on information from a number of sources, and

Term	Definition
	asking about the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of a program or activity.
National level	An action or output produced at the level of the Australian Government, such as a full evaluation of a Commonwealth-funded program.
Output	A defined quantity of events, services or items that are provided by the activity or program (e.g., sessions, information sheets)
Primary outcomes	The important milestones for achieving successful HE studies (in terms of educational progression, attainment and graduate destinations) or precursors of successful HE studies, which are situated in the education system (school attendance, performance, retention), and can be measured using administrative data.
Project	An umbrella term to cover programs and activities defined in this document.
Program	A set of activities managed together over a sustained period of time funded (wholly or partly) by HEPPP (or through other relevant Commonwealth funding).
Program Logic	A diagram explaining how an activity, program or strategy is understood to contribute to a chain of results that produce the intended outcomes/impact.
Quantitative Impact Evaluation (QIE)	Evaluation that specifically aims to produce a quantitative estimate of the impact of a program on target beneficiaries (such as students), in comparison with a counterfactual or control group; typically uses quantitative methods.
Specialist evaluator	An individual or team of individuals with the necessary specialist evaluation and research methods expertise to undertake and report on the evaluation. A specialist evaluator(s) could be located within the institution that is implementing the project or an external evaluator could be commissioned.
Student Life course stages	Time points in the student experience at which HEPPP-funded activities may take place: re-access, Access, Participation, and Attainment/Transition Out. P
Supporting outcomes	The initial outcomes that activities and programs are intended to influence and that support the achievement of the Primary outcomes included in the Student Pathway Map and Program Logic.
System Map	A visual representation of the components and boundary of a defined system, which aims to communicate the structure of a

Term	Definition
	system in an understandable way. In the SEHEEF, use of the term System Map relates specifically to a stock and flow diagram that shows the system involved in a student accessing, participating, and succeeding in higher education.
Theory-Based Impact Evaluation (TBIE)	An evaluation type which specifically looks for empirical evidence of the causal chain between program inputs and activities and the outcomes/impact that follow on from these; typically uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches.
University level	Refers to activities or programs run by individual universities, as opposed to ubiquitous programs that may operate at every university and/or be run at government level.

Summary

Background

In 2010, the Australian Government established the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP), with the key objective of promoting equality of opportunity in Higher Education (HE).

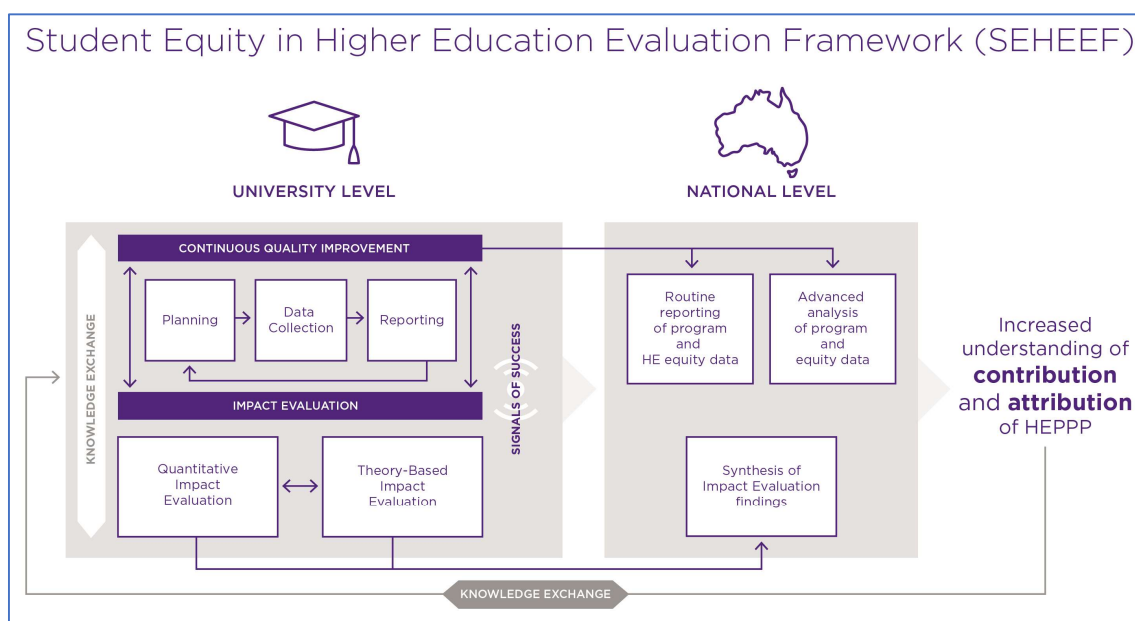
An evaluation of the HEPPP in 2017 highlighted the many positive outcomes of the HEPPP, with the overarching recommendation to continue with HEPPP funding. Another key recommendation was the development of a national evaluation framework to collect information for overall program evaluation of the HEPPP and to guide universities in quality improvement and impact evaluations.

The Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR) at The University of Queensland (UQ) was commissioned by the Australian Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE, or the Department) to design the Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework (SEHEEF, or the Evaluation Framework)

The SEHEEF (see Figure 1 for an Overview Visual) has been designed to:

- Improve the level of consistency in how the evaluation of equity activities is understood, described, and implemented within and across HEPPP-funded universities.
- Maximise the usefulness of data collected by equity program practitioners.
- Embed evaluative thinking within the sector, highlighting and supporting the critical role of program staff in collecting data and recording their observations and experiences and those of participants.
- Explain how the collection of data at the activity level informs and complements other evaluation components at the university and national level.
- Support the use of in-depth impact evaluation to strengthen understanding of what works, for whom, in what circumstances, how and why.
- Support the building of an evidence base to inform better equity policies and practices and deliver better higher education outcomes for people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Figure 1. The SEHEEF Overview.



Purpose of this Guidance Manual

This Guidance Manual is designed for senior leaders responsible for student equity, equity practitioners working in universities and other relevant stakeholders. The manual provides a foundation for the adoption of best practice in relation to continuous quality improvement and impact evaluation.

The SEHEEF

The SEHEEF is built upon strong foundations to provide guidance for those involved in the implementation and evaluation of HE equity programs, including:

- A categorisation of student life stages; a distinction between HEPPP-funded programs and HEPPP-funded activities;

- A typology of HEPPP-funded activities;
- A Student Pathway Map; and
- A HEPPP Program Logic.

The overarching SEHEEF Visual is presented in The SEHEEF Overview Visual (Figure 1), which demonstrates how university and national activities should be linked and triangulated to enable a comprehensive evaluation of the HEPPP.

At the university level, the SEHEEF includes: Continuous Quality Improvement and Impact Evaluations (including Quantitative Impact Evaluation and Theory-based Impact Evaluation).

Continuous Quality Improvement: These activities aim to improve the design, implementation and performance of activities and programs. Continuous Quality Improvement involves a 3-staged process of planning, data collection, and reporting.

Impact Evaluation. Encompassing *Quantitative Impact Evaluations* and *Theory-based Impact Evaluations*, with a set of criteria to support universities to make an informed assessment of what programs they will prioritise for impact evaluation, and why.

Quantitative Impact Evaluations aim to produce robust estimates of the impact of a program on target beneficiaries. They do this by comparing outcomes in the group receiving an intervention to a so-called counterfactual, a control group that did not receive the intervention.

Theory-based Impact Evaluations are focused on mapping out the causal chain from a program's inputs to outcomes, recognising that the program is likely to be a 'contributory cause'. This contrasts with the attribution framing inherent in Quantitative Impact Evaluation approaches.

In this manual, a number of tools are provided to support best practice evaluation using the SEHEEF components. The CQI Planning, Data Collection and Reporting tools are likely to be most relevant for practitioners and program managers. The guidance on selecting and commissioning specialist evaluators (where required) is likely to be more relevant for program managers and university equity leaders.

In addition, a prioritisation tool is provided to support universities in prioritising their HEPPP-funded projects for evaluation to ensure the best use of the more intensive resourcing required. The prioritisation tool is led by four criteria that universities should consider: Evaluation Feasibility; Program Cost; Program Maturity, and Program Profile.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In 2010, the Australian Government established the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP), with the key objective of promoting equality of opportunity in Higher Education (HE). An evaluation of the HEPPP in 2017 highlighted the many positive outcomes that HEPPP-funded¹ programs and activities being delivered by universities were having. The overarching recommendation was to continue with HEPPP funding. Another key recommendation was the development of a national evaluation framework to collect information for overall program evaluation of the HEPPP and to guide universities in quality improvement and impact evaluations. This recommendation was informed by observations that there was a lack of consistent, rigorous collection of data across HEPPP-funded projects, but also that there was strong support for such a framework from universities.

The Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework (SEHEEF, or the Evaluation Framework) was commissioned by the Australian Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE, or the Department) in response to the ACIL Allen recommendations. It has been developed by the Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR) at The University of Queensland (UQ) through a process of evidence assessment and synthesis, and extensive stakeholder consultation and feedback.

This SEHEEF Guidance Manual accompanies a Final Report on the SEHEEF (Robinson et al., 2021), submitted to the Department in November 2021. The report provides further detail on the foundations of the SEHEEF, the stakeholder co-design activities and a detailed description of the components of the SEHEEF. It also includes a section on implementation challenges (such as timeframes and resourcing), informed by stakeholder feedback, and recommendations for a staged implementation of the SEHEEF, including further socialisation and feasibility testing.

The SEHEEF Guidance Manual has been designed to provide practical support for universities to implement the evaluation components detailed in the SEHEEF by setting out best practice. Over the long-term, this will

lead to increased efficiency and less burden for universities.

1.2 Benefits of the SEHEEF

In the absence of a national framework, evaluation of equity projects has been understood and undertaken in different ways within and between universities. This is apparent in the diversity of findings included in the sample of annual reports reviewed as part of the development of the SEHEEF. Often, there is a lot of information submitted; yet, it can be difficult to fully understand the methods used to obtain the information and, in turn, to assess its rigour. Furthermore, there is often an emphasis on describing what was done, with fewer insights into the impact of what was done on intended program outcomes.

The SEHEEF has been designed to:

- Improve the level of consistency in how the evaluation of equity activities is understood, described, and implemented within and across HEPPP-funded universities.
- Maximise the usefulness of data collected by equity program practitioners.
- Embed evaluative thinking within the sector, highlighting and supporting the critical role of program staff in collecting data and recording their observations and experiences and those of participants.
- Explain how the collection of data at the activity level informs and complements other evaluation components at the university and national level.
- Support the use of in-depth impact evaluation to strengthen understanding of what works, for whom, in what circumstances, how and why.
- Support the building of an evidence base to inform better equity policies and practices and deliver better higher education outcomes for people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

1.3 Who is the SEHEEF Guidance Manual for?

This Guidance Manual is designed for senior leaders responsible for student equity, equity practitioners working in universities and other relevant stakeholders. While monitoring and evaluation of HEPPP at the national level is a core component of the overarching

designed to be flexible and accommodate future sources of Commonwealth funding for equity programs.

¹ Due to the timing of this project, this Guidance Manual refers to HEPPP-funding. However, the SEHEEF is

SEHEEF, the purpose of this Guidance Manual is to assist people who are responsible for designing, implementing, managing, evaluating and/or reporting on HEPPP-funded programs and activities at a university level. The manual provides a foundation for the adoption of best practice in relation to evaluation.

1.4 Structure of the Guidance Manual

The SEHEEF Guidance Manual defines key concepts that are important when implementing the SEHEEF, including activity types, student life stages, a Student Pathway Map, and HEPPP Program Logic. It then presents an overview of SEHEEF components relevant at the university level, before describing how these should be put into practice through tools.

2. Defining Key Concepts

2.1 Activities and Programs

It is important to distinguish between equity activities and equity programs. For the purposes of the SEHEEF, these are defined as follows.

Activity: An individual component of work funded (wholly or partially) by HEPPP (or through other relevant Commonwealth funding) that either stands by itself or is an individual part of a program with other substantial components.

Program: A set of activities managed together over a sustained period of time funded (wholly or partly) by HEPPP (or through other relevant Commonwealth funding).

Unlike a program, an activity is an appropriate unit of measurement in the context of developing an evaluation framework as it can be standardised within and between universities.

2.2 Activity Typology

It is important to understand how HEPPP funding is being used across the sector. This requires consistency in how activities are categorised both within and across universities. The SEHEEF categorises HEPPP-funded activities into four types: Information and Experiences; Skills; Resources; and Institutional Development. See Box 1-Box 4 for indicative examples of activities for each category². These categories are important for reporting.

Box 1. Activity Type: Information and Experiences	
<i>What is delivered?</i>	Activities that primarily focus on providing information and/or related interactions/experiences.
<i>Who is targeted?</i>	Students are primarily targeted (including school students, prospective students and current tertiary students), as well as parents and communities.
<i>When are they delivered?</i>	During all stages of the student life course.
<i>Examples</i>	Exhibitions, in-school visits, pathways planning, HE campus visits, HE subject insights, residential camps, career advice, HE application support, transition programs, mentoring, academic advice, career advice, career events, employability workshops, advice on transitioning to employment.

² The examples provided in Boxes 1-4 are for illustrative purposes and institutions are responsible for ensuring all activities delivered

under HEPPP (or other relevant Commonwealth-funding) are eligible for funding.

Box 2. Activity Type: Skills

<i>What is delivered?</i>	Activities that primarily focus on developing individual attributes and/or skills.
<i>Who is targeted?</i>	Students (including school, TAFE, university students) and non-students (after leaving school).
<i>When are they delivered?</i>	During all stages of the student life course.
<i>Examples</i>	Tutoring, pathway, bridging, foundation, and enabling programs, life skills tutorials, academic skills workshops, internships/placements, employability skills workshops.

Box 3. Activity Type: Resources

<i>What is delivered?</i>	Activities that provide physical goods or financial assistance to recipients in support of HEPPP objectives.
<i>Who is targeted?</i>	Mainly students
<i>When are they delivered?</i>	During all stages of the student life course.
<i>Examples</i>	Equity scholarships, bursaries, free or discounted study resources (particularly to support participation in pathway programs or work integrated learning), vouchers, grants, fee exemptions (e.g., for services, amenities), resources for/during participating in pathway programs, dedicated uses/access (e.g., to a special student lounge, library spaces, accommodation, child care).

Box 4. Activity Type: Institutional Development

<i>What is delivered?</i>	Activities that primarily focus on developing institutional systems including processes, structures, cultures, values, and professional practices.
<i>Who is targeted?</i>	Existing educational and service delivery structures. Teachers, lecturers and other education professionals
<i>When are they delivered?</i>	During all stages of the student life course.
<i>Examples</i>	Equity awareness training for school and tertiary institution staff, curriculum enhancement and support, HEPPP program monitoring, evaluation, and improvement, pathways, alternate selection criteria, establishing partnerships, inclusive course design and pedagogies, work integrated learning, alternative exit programs.

2.3 Student Life Stages

For the purposes of the SEHEEF, the student life course model proposed by Bennett et al. (2015), building on earlier work by Naylor et al. (2013), is used. The stages relate to the point in the student life course **when activities are delivered**. Stages 1 and 2 occur before university; stages 3 and 4 occur during university.

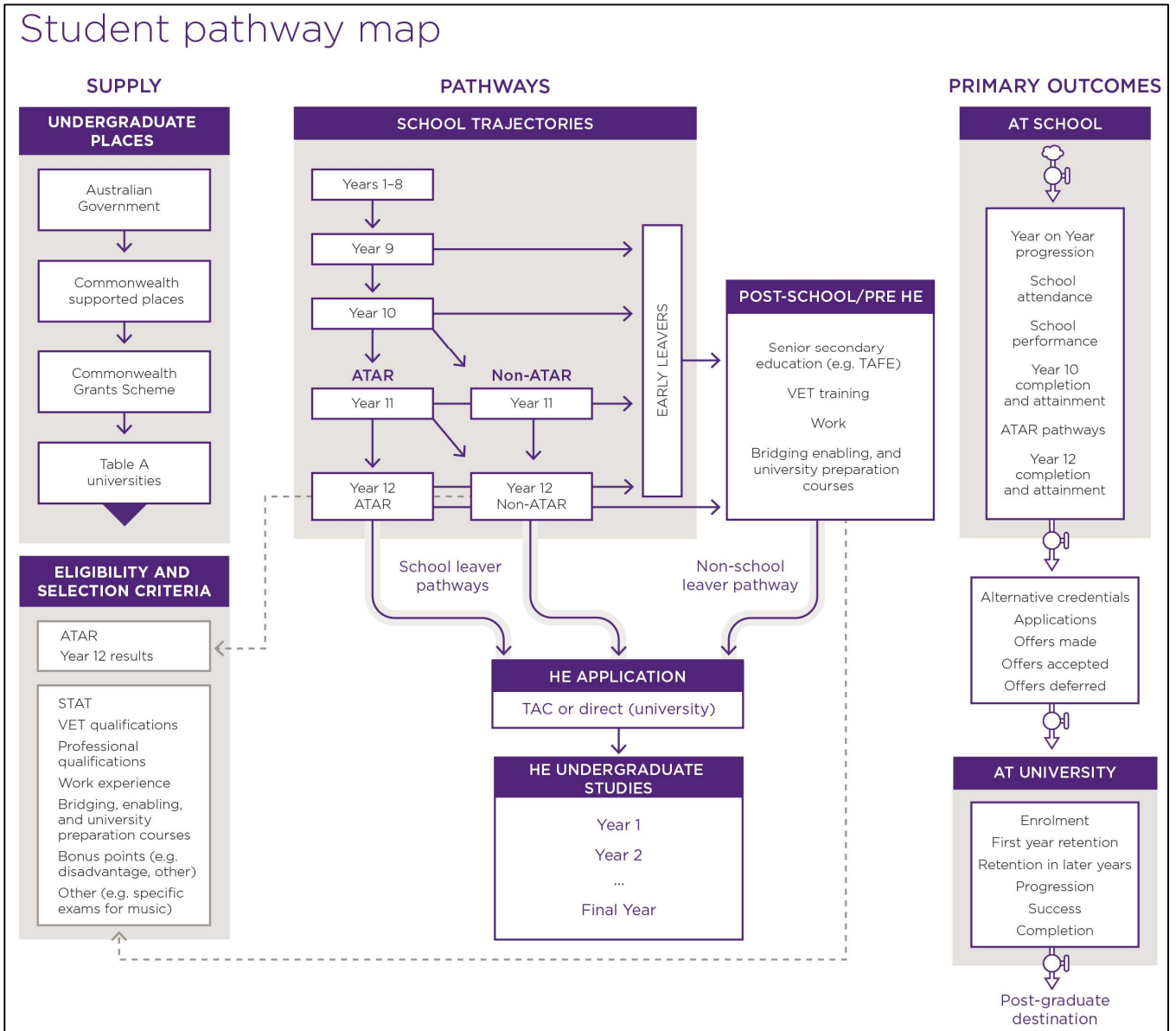
1. Pre-access (outreach to schools and communities)
2. Access (pathways and admissions, including enabling pathways)
3. Participation (transition, engagement and progression)
4. Attainment and Transition Out

2.4 Student Pathway Map

A Student Pathway Map (see Figure 2) was developed for the SEHEEF. The purpose of this was to clarify the **primary outcomes** that the HEPPP is intended to influence based on **student level administrative data**. These primary outcomes represent those that can be measured using routinely collected data and are therefore most feasible for Quantitative Impact Evaluation (QIE), discussed in Section 4.2.2. It is worth noting that primary outcomes do not always occur in the same student life stage as when activities are delivered. For example, employability skills workshops delivered during the Participation Stage would be expected to affect primary outcomes aligned with the Attainment and Transition Out Stage.

The Student Pathway Map was informed by earlier work on a System Map by Enzyme Consulting Group of the higher education system, commissioned by the Department. This is provided in the Final SEHEEF Report.

Figure 2. The Student Pathway Map



2.5 Program Logic

A Program Logic for the HEPPP was also developed as part of the SEHEEF following consultation with stakeholders. The Program Logic brings together the concepts already described in this section of the manual, but includes **supporting outcomes** for each activity type in each stage of the student life cycle. These are the outcomes that are expected shortly after an activity is delivered (e.g., increased knowledge of higher education pathways); they provide the link between the delivery of activities and the achievement of **primary outcomes**. The primary outcomes are the important milestones for achieving successful HE studies (e.g., educational progression, attainment, and graduate destinations) or precursors of successful HE studies. The Program Logic is provided on page 7.

The Program Logic is therefore a tool that can be used to support application of this Guidance Manual. By locating the activity type(s) and student life stage(s) that a program involves, the supporting and primary outcomes that might be expected can be identified and indicators for these outcomes selected. This is particularly important for the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Planning and Reporting described later. It is worth noting that the supporting outcomes identified are not exhaustive, particularly for those programs that involve co-design with participants and where outcomes (or what constitutes success) may be self-determined. The primary outcomes, on the other hand, can be considered standard as they are consistent with the main objectives of the HEPPP.

University program designers and practitioners are encouraged to develop program-specific logics to promote a shared understanding of how HEPPP funding will be used to design the program's activities, and the changes that are expected through their implementation.

3. SEHEEF Overview

Figure 3 provides an overview of the SEHEEF. The visual intends to be simple enough to facilitate widespread use and understanding, while capturing the core components that form the basis of the SEHEEF. It shows a clear delineation between evaluation activities to be delivered at the university level and those to be delivered at the level of the Australian Government. It also shows that university and national SEHEEF components must be linked to enable a comprehensive evaluation of the national HEPPP.

University level activities are the focus of this Guidance Manual and are segmented into CQI and Impact Evaluation. The latter is further divided into Quantitative Impact Evaluation (QIE) and Theory-based Impact Evaluation (TBIE). A summary of each of these is provided in Table 1 before they are described further in the next section of the manual.

National level activities involve routine reporting of equity data, as well as reporting and analysis of sector level data on HEPPP programs, and the synthesis of Impact Evaluations conducted at the university level. Further detail on these elements is provided in the Final Report submitted to the Department.

Figure 3. The SEHEEF Overview (duplicated in Figure 1).

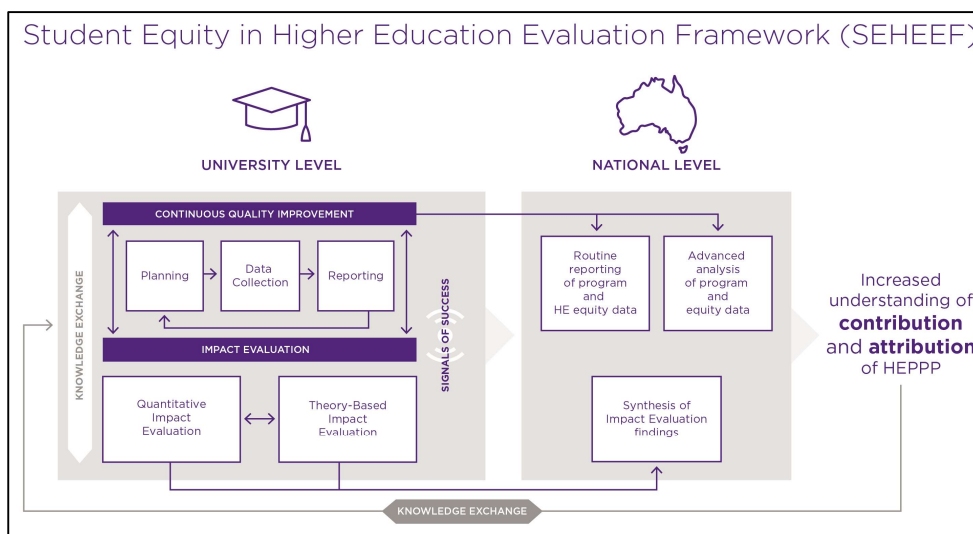


Figure 4. The Program Logic

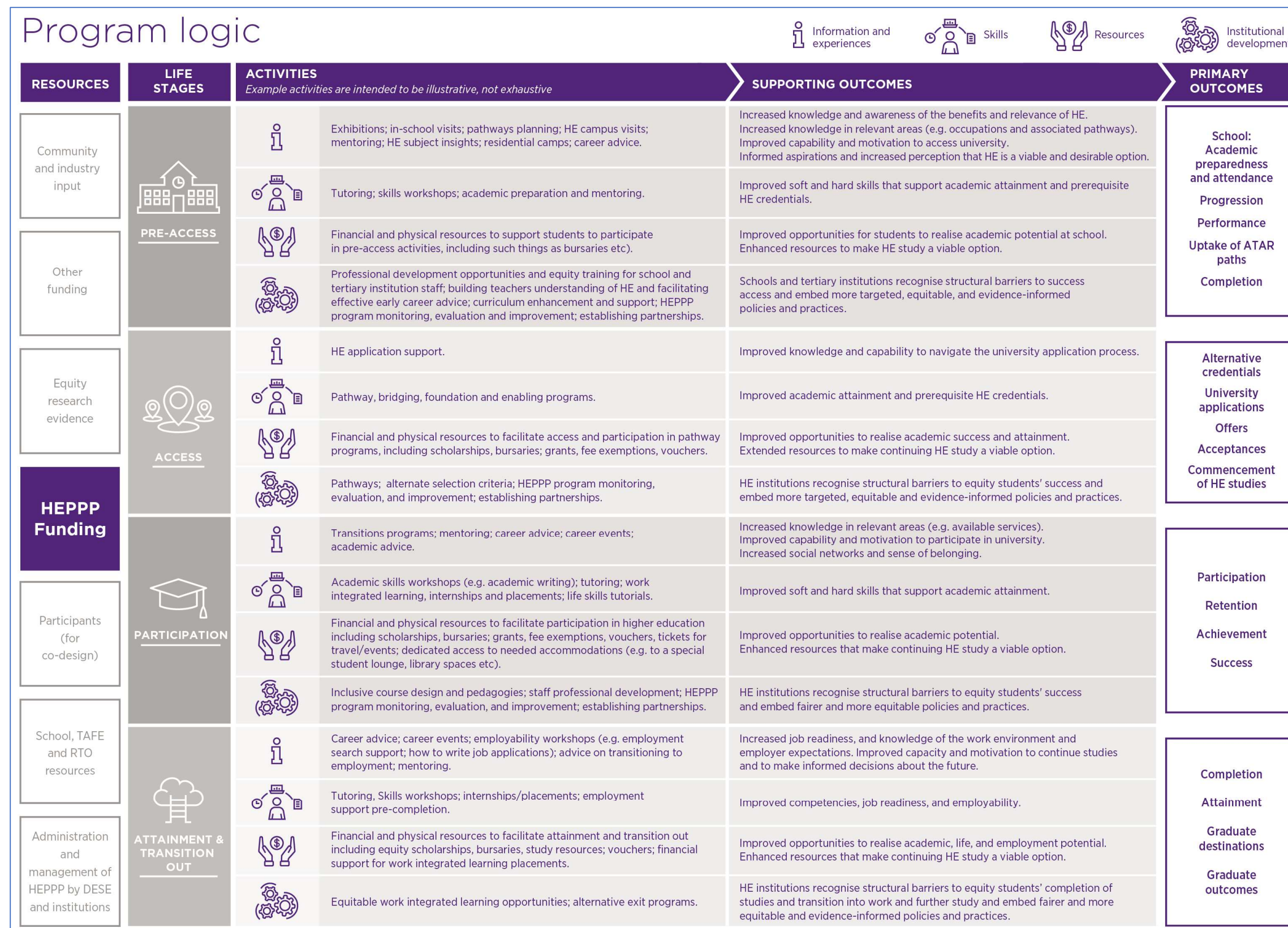





Table 1. Key features of Continuous Quality Improvement, Quantitative Impact Evaluation and Theory-based Impact Evaluation.

	 CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT	 QUANTITATIVE IMPACT EVALUATION	 THEORY-BASED IMPACT EVALUATION
Purpose >	<p>To improve the design, implementation and performance of activities/programs through systematic planning, data collection and reporting</p> <p>Addresses <i>how much did we do, and how well did we do it, and what outcomes were achieved</i> questions</p> <p>Cannot indicate causality</p> <p>E.g. monitoring the number of activities delivered and number of participants reached; assessing barriers to implementation</p>	<p>Specifically focused on quantifying and attributing a particular effect to a particular cause</p> <p>Addresses the question, <i>Did the program work</i>, i.e., the extent to which change in outcomes is attributable to the program</p> <p>E.g. examining the amount of academic improvement (GPA points) in students who receive mentoring versus those who do not participate</p>	<p>Focused on assessing the causal contribution that a program makes to multiple effects, or that multiple programs contribute to an overall effect</p> <p>Addresses <i>how</i> and <i>why</i> questions; places high importance on context</p> <p>E.g. establishing which program components are responsible for improvements in course completion</p>
Focus >	Usually focussed on activities and outputs, although indicators of outcomes can also be used primarily supporting outcomes	Focused on primary outcomes at the student level using administrative data	Focused on a wide range of outcomes at different system levels (student, family, community, institution)
Data Collection (frequency and staff) >	Regular and timely using data gathered routinely or readily obtainable by program staff in real-time to inform small, iterative changes	Infrequent, discrete and usually conducted by evaluation specialists	Infrequent, discrete and usually conducted by evaluation specialists
Results >	<p>Enables internal and external staff to assess how to improve the design, implementation or performance of program/ activities</p> <p>Useful for compliance and accountability purposes</p> <p>Can inform impact evaluation by helping to understand why a specific change has come about</p>	Provides a robust estimate of the impact of a program compared with a counterfactual to inform substantive decisions	Provides multiple lines of evidence using different methods to understand what works, for whom, and in what circumstances, to inform substantive decisions
Evaluation level (program or activity) >	Primarily conducted at activity level across most programs	Conducted at program level for a selection of programs	Conducted at program level for a selection of programs
Program Maturity >	All (new and ongoing) projects	More likely for mature projects with established data systems and a sufficient time period for primary outcomes to have emerged	More likely for mature projects where it is timely to conduct an in-depth analysis of how it is working
Time and Resources >	Relatively low cost so funding is typically allocated within program's operating budget	Resource- and time-intensive so must be purposefully budgeted for	Resource- and time-intensive so must be purposefully budgeted for
Method of data collection >	Involves data collection tools that allow simple recording and reporting of information	Involves complex data analysis, synthesis and interpretation	Involves methods of data collection and synthesis that require high levels of expertise

4. Implementing the SEHEEF

This section describes each of the university level components of the SEHEEF in order to enhance understanding of why they are important, and how they should be implemented (refer to Table 1). This includes, where relevant, guidance on the use of tools. Table 2 provides an overview of the evaluation approach (CQI or IE), along with the relevant tools and outputs.

Table 2. A Summary of the Approach, Relevant Tools and Outputs for SEHEEF Implementation

Continuous quality improvement and impact evaluation			
Evaluation approach, relevant tools and outputs			
SEHEEF COMPONENT	APPROACH	TOOLS	OUTPUTS
CQI Planning >	For new projects funded by HEPPP, define and document intended activities, progress and outcome indicators, and associated data sources for the next year.	SEHEEF Program Logic CQI Planning Tool	Completed CQI Planning Tool with documentation of project features and parameters for CQI
	For continuing projects funded by HEPPP, review and update, if applicable, information on intended activities, progress and outcome indicators, and associated data sources for the next year.	SEHEEF Program Logic CQI Planning Tool	
CQI Data Collection & Reporting >	For each project funded by HEPPP, undertake CQI by documenting how much was done, how well it was done, what outcomes (including unintended) were achieved/generated, and what lessons were learned.	SEHEEF Guidance Manual CQI Reporting Tool CQI Program Data Reporting Tool	Completed CQI Reporting Tool Completed CQI Program Data Reporting Tool
	At times it may be beneficial to share CQI information. Refer to DESE program requirements.	DESE Program Requirements	
Impact Evaluation >	Select project(s) for impact assessment. Determine if impact evaluation is Quantitative Impact Evaluation or Theory-based Impact Evaluation or both.	Impact Evaluation Prioritisation tool CQI Planning Tool	Completed CQI Planning Tool with indication of programs to undergo impact evaluation
	Share information on selected projects via central evaluation registry.	Registry Tool/ interface	Updated central registry
	Decide upon specialist evaluator (as required) to plan and undertake impact evaluation.	SEHEEF Guidance Manual	Impact Evaluation Plan Impact Evaluation Findings Report
	Share information via central registry with information about the evaluation including evaluation findings.	Registry Tool/ interface	Updated central registry

4.1 Continuous Quality Improvement

Currently, universities undertake continuous improvement activities as a standard part of program delivery. However, stakeholder consultations have identified that this is sometimes undertaken on an ad hoc basis. The SEHEEF provides a consistent, streamlined, best practice approach to applying CQI across HEPPP-funded programs as a fundamental part of delivering effective, high-quality activities and programs.

The CQI can routinely monitor aspects such as participant reach, acceptability of the program to participants, enablers and barriers to implementation to ensure activities and programs are well-conducted and participated in. CQI can also focus on the non-causal assessment of the effect of a HEPPP-funded project on supporting outcomes. A supporting outcome could include improved knowledge of opportunities to participate in higher education. In essence, the CQI component of the SEHEEF introduces structure and consistency to existing university practices.

It aims to improve the design, implementation and performance of activities and programs. At the university level, systematic CQI can be applied through consistent approaches to data collection, planning, and reporting, and an appreciation of the

key initial outcomes that program activities are intending to achieve.

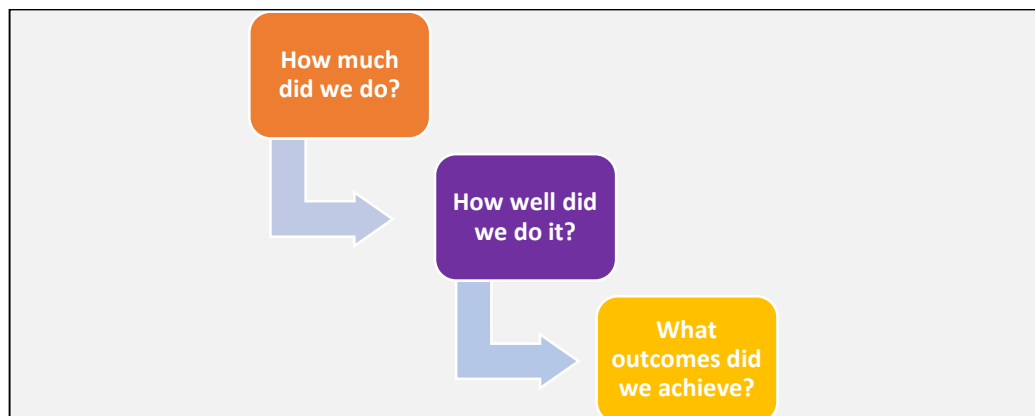
For the CQI component of the SEHEEF, an approach known as Results Based Accountability (RBA™) provides a useful framing (Friedman, 2009). RBA™ is a quality improvement approach that involves embedding three main questions into planning and reporting mechanisms (Figure 5).

4.1.1 What are the Benefits of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)?

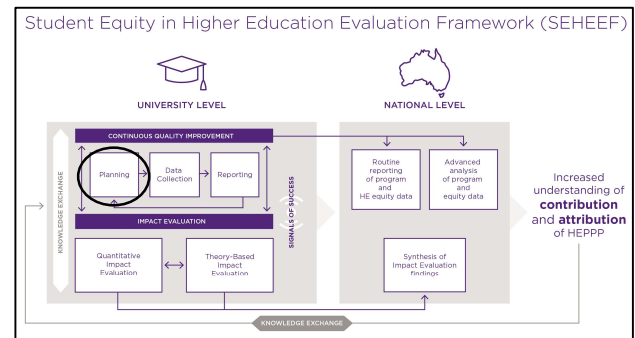
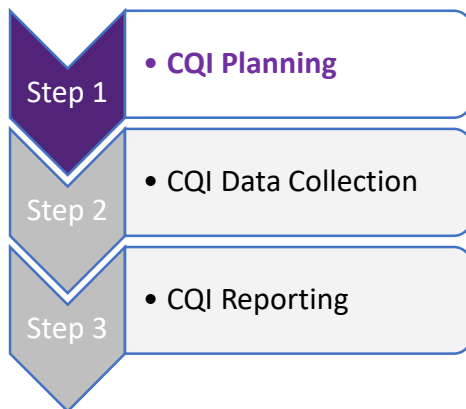
CQI enables a:

- Clearer articulation and more systematic reflection on what programs will do, who they will affect, and the intended outcomes.
- Streamlined process for identifying what universities are planning to deliver and how they intend to collect information to inform CQI within those plans.
- Process for ongoing reflection of successes and challenges, including enablers and barriers to program implementation.
- Reduced reporting burden on universities through a streamlined, consistent approach to the collection of high-quality data and information that is collected once and used many times.

Figure 5. Three Guiding Questions in CQI Planning and Reporting.



The CQI component of the SEHEEF requires three main steps.



Step 1: CQI Planning

Establishing clear, unambiguous and measurable outcomes, as well as ensuring appropriate alignment between outcomes, activities and data collection methods is a crucial part of effective CQI.

The CQI Planning Tool provides a standardised approach to CQI planning. See Box 5 for more information about the detail to be entered in the tool, as well as Figure 6 for an outline of the tool³. Appendix B provides populated examples for reference.

The CQI Planning Tool presents multiple benefits:

- Ensuring there is a clearer articulation of what programs will do, who they will affect, and what outcomes they intend to achieve.
- Ensuring that CQI planning is considered alongside program planning, defining data requirements for performance measurement and data collection methods.
- Providing universities with a systematic, consistent, and logical tool that is informed by (and links to) other components in the SEHEEF, thereby helping to embed evaluative thinking.
- Aligning plans with CQI reporting, supporting improved accountability.

Why CQI ?

CQI aims to improve the design, implementation and performance of activities and programs. At the University level, systematic CQI can offer more consistent approaches to:

- Planning, articulating:
 - What programs will do;
 - Who they will affect, and
 - What outcomes they intend to achieve.
- Data collection
- Reporting

It can focus on those aspects of program performance typically assessed in a process evaluation (e.g., participant reach; acceptability of the program to participants; enablers and barriers to implementation), AND on the non-causal assessment of the effect of a HEPPP-funded program on initial outcomes.

³ The proposed Planning and Reporting tools are illustrative to highlight the key information that is

required, rather than being a finalised template that must be used by all universities.

Box 5. What information is entered in the CQI Planning Tool?

Program Details

This section essentially covers the overarching program elements, including description, resources, equity groups being targeted and the relevant stakeholders.

- **Program name:** The name of the program.
- **Program resources:** The anticipated budget for the program (including the total amount that is HEPPP funded).
- **Program description:** A description of the program, including its rationale.
- **Program maturity:** An indication of whether this is a new or continuing program and whether the program has been evaluated before.
- **Equity group(s):** All of the equity groups that the program is primarily designed to support.
- **Stakeholders and partners involved:** All stakeholders and partners that will be involved in the program.

Activities

This section is intended to capture detailed information about the program activities, including delivery, participants, methodology and/or data source.

- **Planned program activities:** Provide a list of the activities that make up the program. Specify the activity type. Try to include details such as intended number, duration, and modality of the activities.
- **Progress indicator(s):** Specify indicator(s) of progress for each activity. Indicators should be based on what you expect to happen and should help to answer the questions:
 - How much did we do?
 - How well did we do it?
- **Data source(s)/method(s):** Describe how the indicator(s) will be measured including the source of the data and, if relevant, the method and mode of data collection.

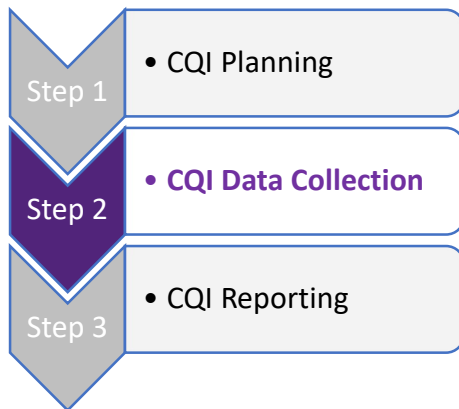
Outcomes

- **Outcomes:** Consider the changes that the program is intending to bring about. Refer to the SEHEEF Program Logic to distinguish between supporting and primary outcomes.
- **Outcome indicators:** Specify indicator(s) for the intended outcomes. Indicator(s) should help to answer the question:
 - What outcomes did we achieve?
- **Data source(s) / method(s):** Describe how the indicator(s) will be measured including the source of the data and, if relevant, the method of data collection. It is likely that most of the focus will be on supporting outcomes unless you intend to monitor trends in primary outcomes.
- **Impact Evaluation:** Specify whether the program will undergo impact evaluation and, if so, how? Detail the plan or intended steps.

The CQI Planning Tool is provided in the accompanying file entitled, *SEHEEF Tools*. The department will consult on future Access and Participation Plans separately.

Figure 6. The SEHEEF CQI Planning Tool.

SEHEEF CQI Planning Tool												
Program name	Program resources	Program description	Program maturity	Equity group(s)	Stakeholders and partners involved	Activities			Outcomes			Impact Evaluation
						Planned program activities	Indicator(s)	Data source(s) / method(s)	Outcomes	Outcome indicator(s)	Data source(s) / method(s)	
Enter program name	Enter the anticipated budget (Total (HEPPP funded)) and other expected resources (e.g. staff time)	Provide a brief description of the program, including its rationale	Indicate whether the program is 'New' or 'Continuing'. Please also indicate whether the program has been evaluated before	List the equity group(s) that the program is primarily designed to support	List any stakeholders and partners that will be involved in the program	Provide a list of the activities that make up the program. Specify the activity type. Try to include details such as intended number, duration, and modality of the activities.	Specify indicator(s) of progress for each activity. Indicator(s) should help to answer the questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How much did we do? How well did we do it? 	Describe how the indicator(s) will be measured including the source of the data and, if relevant, the method of data collection	Consider the changes that the program is intending to bring about. Refer to the SEHEEF Program Logic to distinguish between supporting and primary outcomes	Specify indicator(s) for the intended outcomes. Indicator(s) should help to answer the question: What outcomes did we achieve?	Describe how the indicator(s) will be measured including the source of the data and, if relevant, the method of data collection. It is likely that most of the focus will be on supporting outcomes unless you intend to monitor trends in primary outcomes	Specify whether the program will undergo a separate Impact Evaluation (Yes/No). If Yes, please provide further details (e.g. what type of Impact Evaluation and why).



Step 2: Data Collection

After planning, the next step is data collection. This step refers to the continuous process of collecting and analysing information regarding the performance of activities and programs.

University staff routinely employ various methods to collect data on the implementation of HEPPP-funded programs and their effect on supporting outcomes. This is mostly done at the activity level using the following quantitative and qualitative methods: participant surveys; (including pre- and post-activity); feedback forms; interviews; focus groups; and tracking of student retention, performance, and other academic outcomes. These methods were frequently used by universities, as identified in our review of a sample of HEPPP Annual Progress reports.

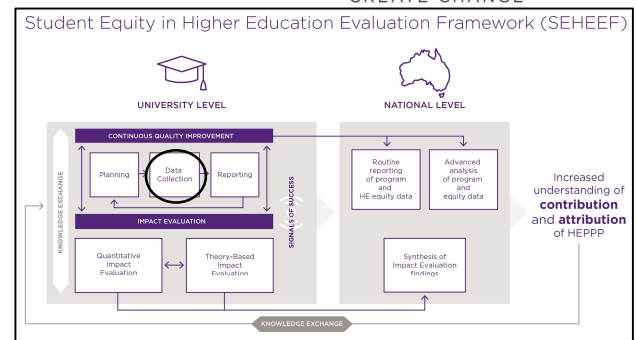
Such methods remain an important part of the CQI component as they provide the information needed to respond to the three CQI questions: *How much did we do? How well did we do it? What outcomes did we achieve?*

Figure 7 provides illustrative examples of indicators and data collection methods that could be used for each activity type against these questions. This should be used as a guide; the specific indicators used will be program- and activity-specific.

Capturing HEPPP participation information

One crucial piece of information required to support ongoing performance monitoring, as well as more specialised impact evaluations of specific programs, involves collecting data on individuals participating in those programs.

The SEHEEF Report extensively details why capturing data on individuals participating in HEPPP-funded programs is important and how it might be done.⁴ The principal priority is for



universities to establish a link between HEPPP program participation and primary outcomes.

Over the short term, this should be most feasible for universities to incorporate into their routine data collections for programs operating at the Participation/ Attainment & Transition Out stages, since these programs target current students, while other data collection methods (see Figure 7) could be considered for the Pre-access stage.

Further, while universities may be at different levels of readiness to integrate individual HEPPP participant data with other centrally collected student data, the process for such an approach could be as follows:

1. HEPPP-funded programs are each assigned a Program ID.
2. A new variable is created in the university data systems to 'flag' if students have participated in a HEPPP-funded program.
3. Individual student IDs are used to link individual participants to individual programs.

Table 3 provides an example of capturing program level information about HEPPP participants. Although more challenging, collection of data regarding participation in Pre-access and Access programs should be also considered. Retrospective data captured at the Access stage (e.g. questions on enrolment forms) may be an option for this.

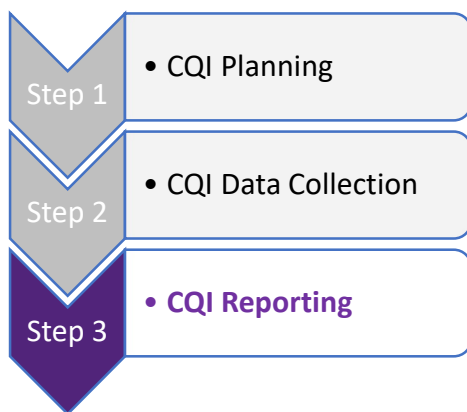
Table 3. Data Table: Individual Level HEPPP Participant Data (Linking to Programs).

Student ID (unique)	Program ID (unique)	Program name
0000001	01	Program A
0000001	02	Program B
0000002	01	Program A
0000003	01	Program A
0000004	01	Program A
0000005	01	Program A
0000005	02	Program B

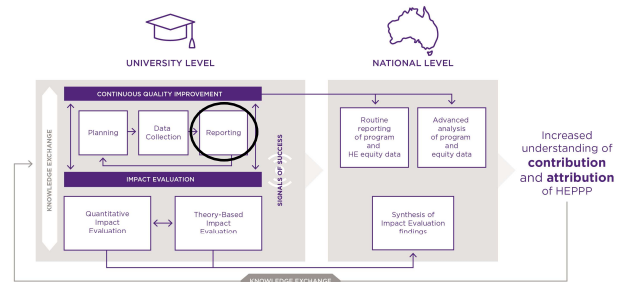
⁴ This is provided in Section 5.2.2.2 in the SEHEEF Final Report.

Figure 7. Example Indicators and Data Collection Methods for Continuous Quality Improvement of HEPPP-Funded Activities.

Category	Information and Experiences	Skills	Material Resources	Institutional Development	Data source/ Methods
How much did we do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and reach of HE campus visits Number and reach of information sessions with parents/carers Number of current students taking part in mentoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and reach of skills-based workshops Number and reach of revision sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of scholarships available Number and nature of other resources made available (e.g. bursaries, free or subsidised resources, vouchers etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and reach of staff development sessions on equity / inclusive teaching practice Number and type of alternative pathways into university that are offered Number of industry partners willing to place students 	University HEPPP admin data
How well did we do it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant's feedback on quality, appropriateness, and usefulness of the information-based activity Stakeholder feedback on how well the activity was delivered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant's feedback on quality, appropriateness and usefulness of the skills-based activity % of participants who completed all sessions (for multi-session activities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of participants who agree that additional resources were sufficient to fully participate in university % of students from equity groups who believe that additional resources are there for them if they need them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness among stakeholder groups of available entry programs Student feedback on cultural appropriateness of course design and teaching 	Participant surveys, interviews and focus groups Stakeholder surveys and interviews
What outcomes did we achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in participant's levels of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> knowledge and awareness of HE and career pathways knowledge of available student support services, perception that HE is a viable option 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in participant's levels of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> confidence, self-efficacy, communication skills academic ability credentials to access HE studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of scholarships awarded to students in equity groups Take-up of available resources by students in equity groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in levels of understanding of structural barriers to equity students' success Change in number of teachers/ lecturers reporting more equitable teaching practice 	Participant surveys, interviews and focus groups University admin data Staff surveys and interviews



Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework (SEHEEF)



Step 3: CQI Reporting

Plans and performance reports should speak to each other to enable an assessment of progress against stated purpose. The CQI Reporting Tool links to the CQI Planning Tool.

The **Data Reporting Tool** (see Box 6 for information to be entered, as well as Figure 8 for an overview) has been designed to provide universities with a streamlined mechanism for monitoring and reporting the number, type and reach of the HEPPP-funded activities they deliver. This, in turn, allows these important attributes, defined clearly, to be routinely aggregated and reported at the sector level.

What is the CQI Annual Reporting Tool?

The **CQI Annual Reporting Tool** (see Box 7 for information to be entered, as well as Figure 9 for an overview) is directly linked to the CQI Planning Tool. It aims to capture key information, in a succinct way, that enables a robust understanding of the three RBA™ based questions: *How much did we do? How well did we do it? What outcomes did we achieve?*

In doing so, the tool should enable universities when completing, and reviewing, to better understand:

- Whether the program is meeting its goals and objectives.
- Any implications for the program in terms of its design and implementation.
- The quantitative and qualitative methods that were used to collect the performance measurement data.

- The supporting outcomes that the program, and its activities, are contributing towards.

This is important to create a stronger connection between planning and reporting, which has been encouraged from previous HEPPP investigations as well as SEHEEF stakeholder consultations. Stakeholders identified challenges in determining appropriate or sufficient levels of reporting for activity data given the diversity of programs and activities delivered by universities under the HEPPP. In addition, the review of literature and sample of submitted HEPPP Annual Progress Reports highlighted opportunities to:

- Provide more specific information on the methods (both quantitative and qualitative) used to support the findings presented, to ensure consistency in reporting both within and between universities.
- Check for congruence between the data reported in the data reporting section and the data reported in the main report.
- Collect and report systematic information on the barriers and enablers to program implementation.
- Document how the insights gained from different quantitative and qualitative components were used.

Box 6. What information is entered in the Data Reporting Tool?

Overarching Program Details

- **Program Name:** The name of the overarching program.
- **Program ID.**
- **Project Initiation Date:** The commencement date of the program.
- **Project Completion Date:** Date of completion, or expected date of completion.
- **Actual Program Expenditure:** The total amount spent on the program.
- **Actual HEPPP Expenditure:** The total amount of HEPPP funding that was spent on the program.
- **Program Budget:** The total amount allocated to the program.
- **HEPPP Funding Component:** The portion of expenditure that was funded by HEPPP.
- **Other Funding:** The total amount of other funding that was spent on the program.
- **Source of other funding:** Provide details of where additional funding came from, e.g., university funds, or other source.
- **If more than 10% difference between planned & expected expenditure, describe:** Provide a brief overview as to why there has been a discrepancy, consider: the need for additional resources, more attendees than expected and/or the program increased in size.

Activity-specific details

- **Activity name:** Title or name used to label activity.
- **Activity description:** The name of the activity delivered as part of the larger program.
- **Activity Type:** Predetermined list of the type of activity based on the SEHEEF Activity Typology (information & experiences; skills; resources; institutional development).
- **Activity Mode:** Predetermined list of how the activity was delivered (e.g., workshop; presentation, open day etc).
- **Duration of activity:** The duration of the activity.
- **Equity Group(s):** The equity group(s) being targeted in the activity.
- **System level:** The level of the system the activity was delivered at (individual; family and community; institutional).
- **Number of times activity delivered:** The total number of times the activity was delivered
- **Number of stakeholder organisations involved (e.g. schools)**
- **Total number of participants completing the activity**
- **Total resource (\$) spent on the activity**

Figure 8. The SEHEEF Data Reporting Tool.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1											
2	SEHEEF Program Data Reporting Tool										
3											
4											
5	Program Name					Program Budget					
6	Program ID					HEPPP Funding Component					
7	Project Initiation Date					Other Funding Component					
8	Project Completion Date					Source of other funding					
9	Actual Program Expenditure					If more than 10% difference between planned and expected expenditure, describe reasons					
10	Actual HEPPP Expenditure										
11											
12	Activity Name	Activity description	Activity Type	Mode of activity delivery	Total duration of activity	Equity group(s)	System level (i.e. student, family, community, institution)	Number of times activity delivered	Number of stakeholder organisations involved (e.g. schools)	Total number of participants completing the	Total resource spent on activity (\$)
13											
14											
15											
16											
17											
18											
19											
20											

Box 7. What information is entered in the CQI Reporting Tool?

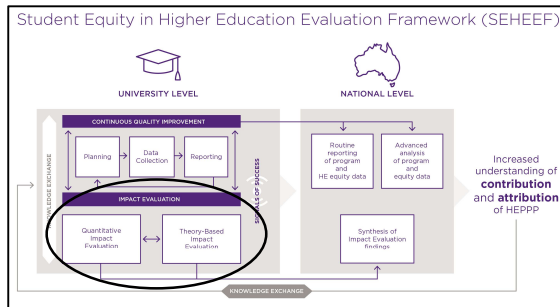
Program Name and ID: Enter Program Name and ID

- **What did the program involve?** Describe the program/summarise what it involved
- **How much did we do?**
 - *Progress Indicator(s): Refer to the indicator(s) in your CQI Planning Tool and add any additional indicator(s) that you did not plan to measure.*
 - *Data source / Method: Describe how the indicator(s) was measured including the source of the data and, if relevant, the method of data collection.*
 - *Findings: Provide quantitative data on how much was delivered as part of this program.*
- **How well did we do it?**
 - *Indicator(s): Refer to the indicator(s) in your CQI Planning Tool and add any additional indicator(s) that you did not plan to measure.*
 - *Data source / Method: Describe how the indicator(s) was measured including the source of the data and, if relevant, the method of data collection, sample size and response rate.*
 - *Findings: Provide quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of how well the program was designed and delivered, and how well it was received.*
- **What outcomes did we achieve?**
 - *Outcome indicator(s): Refer to the outcome indicator(s) in your CQI Planning Tool and add any additional indicator(s) that you did not plan for.*
 - *Data source / Method: Describe how the outcome indicator(s) was measured including the source of the data and, if relevant, the method of data collection, sample size and response rate.*
 - *Findings: Provide quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of the outcomes that the program achieved. It is likely that most of the focus will be on supporting outcomes unless you monitored trends in primary outcomes (see Program Logic for more information).*
- **What were the key findings?** Summarise the three take-home messages from the program.
- **What were the main lessons learnt about the program?** Provide details on what worked well and what didn't work well. This might include any factors that may have supported or constrained the implementation or outcomes of the program.
- **What changes, if any, will you make to the design or delivery of the program?** Describe what changes should be made in response to your findings and lessons learnt
- **What resources did the program use and how efficiently were these used?** Enter the resources used as part of the program. This includes HEPPP funding and other resources (e.g., staff time). Provide any reflections how efficiently resources were used (e.g., compared to other approaches; how well the intervention was managed).
- **Overall, what do you think was the most significant change that resulted from the program, and why?** Describe the situation before the change, the nature of the change, and how the program contributed to that change. This could be in relation to the lives of the program beneficiaries or the wider institutional or policy environment, or something else.

Figure 9. The CQI Reporting Tool.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
1																
2																
3																
4	SEHEEF Continuous Quality Improvement Reporting Tool															
5																
6	Program Name and ID	What did the program involve?	How much did we do?			How well did we do it?			What outcomes did we achieve?			What were the key findings?	What were the main lessons learnt about the program?	What changes, if any, will you make to the design or delivery of the program?	What resources did the program use and how efficiently were these used?	Overall, what do you think was the most significant change that resulted from the program, and why?
Indicator(s)			Data source / Method	Findings	Indicator(s)	Data source / Method	Findings	Indicator(s)	Data source / Method	Findings						
7	<i>Enter Program Name and ID</i>	<i>Summarize what the program involved</i>	<i>Refer to the indicator(s) in your CQI Planning Tool and add any additional indicator(s) that you did not plan to measure</i>	<i>Describe how the indicator(s) was measured including the source of the data and, if relevant, the method of data collection</i>	<i>Provide quantitative data on how much you delivered as part of this program</i>	<i>Refer to the indicator(s) in your CQI Planning Tool and add any additional indicator(s) that you did not plan to measure</i>	<i>Describe how the indicator(s) was measured including the source of the data and, if relevant, the method of data collection, sample size and response rate</i>	<i>Provide quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of how well the program was designed and delivered, and how well it was received.</i>	<i>Refer to the indicator(s) in your CQI Planning Tool and add any additional indicator(s) that you did not plan for</i>	<i>Describe how the indicator(s) was measured including the source of the data and, if relevant, the method of data collection, sample size and response rate</i>	<i>Provide quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of the outcomes that the program achieved. It is likely that most of the focus will be on supporting outcomes unless you monitored trends in primary outcomes</i>	<i>Summarize the three take-home messages from the program</i>	<i>Describe what changes should be made in response to your findings and lessons learnt</i>	<i>Enter the resources used as part of the program. This will include HEPPP funding and other resources (e.g. staff time). Provide any reflections on how efficiently resources were used (e.g. compared to other approaches; how well the intervention was managed)</i>	<i>Describe the situation before the change, the nature of the change, and how the program contributed to that change. This could be in relation to the lives of the program beneficiaries or the wider institutional or policy environment, or something else.</i>	
8																
9																
10																

4.2 Impact Evaluation



The OECD has defined impact as “*the positive and negative, intended and unintended, direct and indirect, primary and secondary effects produced by an intervention*”. In the context of the SEHEEF, Impact Evaluation refers to any evaluation that systematically and empirically assesses the effect of an intervention on outcomes. The defining feature of an Impact Evaluation is that it attempts to establish **the extent to which an intervention has caused, or contributed towards, observed outcomes**.

Impact evaluations are crucial as they can:

- Provide a robust estimate of whether, and to what extent, a program has affected an outcome (i.e. establishing what works).
- Disentangle the effects of various factors that may affect equity group members, and explore and explain the causal chains thought to bring about change by a program (i.e. establishing what works, for whom, in what circumstances, how and why).

The four high-level key evaluation questions typically asked in impact evaluations are:

1. To what extent can a specific impact be attributed to the program?
2. Did the program make a difference, for whom, in what ways and in what circumstances?
3. How has the program made a difference?
4. Will the program work elsewhere?

The answers to these questions provide evidence for universities to review their current investments in equity programs and ensure funding is allocated to maximise effectiveness. They also allow consideration of how programs implemented elsewhere might be successfully translated, with appropriate modifications, to a new setting.

As noted earlier in the Guidance Manual, there are two types of Impact Evaluation included in the SEHEEF:

1. **Quantitative Impact Evaluation (QIE)**
2. **Theory-Based Impact Evaluation (TBIE)**

Impact evaluations require substantial resource and specialist expertise. It is recommended that planning for Impact Evaluation occurs in the program design stage. This may involve consultation with stakeholders, assessing the purpose and scope of the evaluation and identifying parameters. Several considerations should also be made before conducting a QIE (see Box 8) or a TBIE (see Box 9). If the answers to the questions neither qualify for QIE nor TBIE, reconsider these questions for the program at a later point (or consider these questions for another program).

It is also suggested that Impact Evaluations would be designed and led by a specialised evaluator, not program staff. However, specialist expertise will only be maximised if the perspectives of those responsible for planning, managing, and delivering the programs are incorporated in the evaluation design. For this reason, the evaluation team should work closely with the teams of practitioners involved in the programs being evaluated.

4.2.1 What are the Benefits of Impact Evaluations?


Quantitative Impact Evaluations:

- They can provide a robust quantitative means to address the question, “*did the program work?*”
- They provide rigorous estimates of how much of an observed outcome(s) can be attributed to a program or the average additional or net change caused by the program.

Theory-Based Impact Evaluations:

- They offer enhanced insights into: *what works, for whom, in what circumstances, and how and why.*
- They can help assess if the program is likely to work in other contexts.

Box 8. Criteria for conducting a Quantitative Impact Evaluation.



QUANTITATIVE
IMPACT EVALUATION

- Is the main question being addressed, **did the program work** (i.e., did it achieve its intended primary outcomes)?

- Has sufficient time gone past for primary outcomes of the program to emerge?

- Is there quantitative data available on primary outcomes for program participants?

- Is it possible to identify a counterfactual and to obtain equivalent quantitative data on their primary outcomes?


- Are participant and counterfactual groups of sufficient sizes to support a robust estimate of the program's impact using quantitative data?

- Are there sufficient time and resources to undertake the evaluation?

- Can sufficient evaluation expertise be sourced to undertake complex quantitative data analysis, synthesis and interpretation?

Note: All the above criteria need to be satisfied to maximise the chances of a successful QIE.

Box 9. Criteria for conducting a Theory-based Impact Evaluation.



THEORY-BASED
IMPACT EVALUATION

- Are the main questions being answered, **how and why did a program work** (i.e., what works for whom and in what circumstances?)

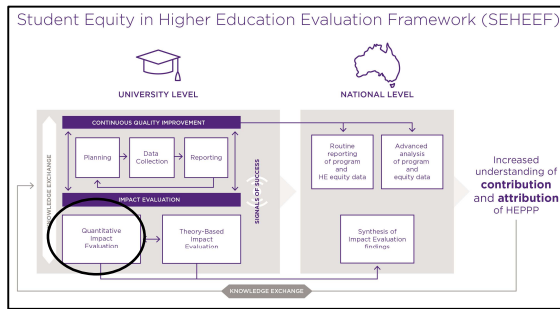
- Are a range of methods required to assess the contribution that a program makes to one or more outcomes?

- Are there sufficient time and resources to undertake the evaluation?

- Can sufficient evaluation expertise be sourced to undertake advanced methods of data collection, synthesis and interpretation?

Note: All the above criteria need to be satisfied in order to maximise the chances of a successful TBIE.

4.2.2 Quantitative Impact Evaluation (QIE)



QIEs aim to produce robust estimates of the impact of a program on target beneficiaries. They do this by comparing outcomes in the group receiving an intervention to a so-called counterfactual, a control group that did not receive the intervention.

Experimental designs involve a process whereby exposure to intervention and control groups is randomly assigned. Such Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) are generally considered to offer the most robust QIE design because the randomisation process helps to minimise differences between groups. However, their usefulness for evaluations of interventions taking place in a complex real-world social context has been questioned.

Given the specialised requirements and ethical issues of setting up and implementing evaluations with randomised experimental designs, the SEHEEF places emphasis on quasi-experimental designs. Quasi-experimental designs do not require randomisation but attempt to mimic an experimental approach by comparing observed outcomes with another broadly comparable group, or by analytically creating a 'counterfactual' that is as close to the intervention group as possible.

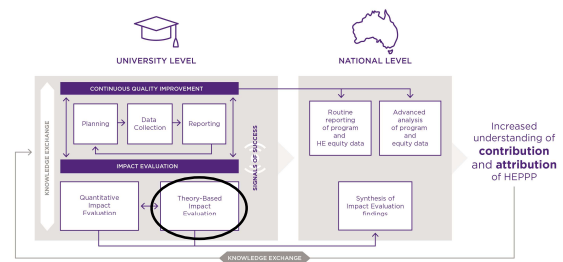
One example of a counterfactual may involve comparing achievement data for a student cohort that participates in a mentoring program in Semester 1 with those of a cohort that did not participate until Semester 2. The control group is thus not excluded from the opportunity, but the timing difference allows a quantitative comparison. For example, $x\%$ more students completed units for semester when mentored; mean GPA for the mentored group was y points higher than the 'delayed' group, with student pairs matched across the two groups for demographic characteristics. Any differences in delivery of the intervention (mentoring program) between semesters must also be accounted for.

The extent to which QIE is possible for an individual program will therefore depend on the ability to identify meaningful counterfactuals and control groups, and on the availability of the outcome data for the intervention and/or control group to ensure that comparisons. For the purposes of the SEHEEF, the use of QIEs is considered appropriate for assessing the impact of an equity program on **primary outcomes**, thereby relying on the use of administrative data.

QIEs require specialist evaluation and research methods expertise, taking into account the design of a program in terms of how the intervention is delivered and the data that would be needed to capture information on outcomes. Detailed information based on different scenarios of programs being delivered at schools before higher education, and at universities during higher education are presented in Appendix A, along with proposed statistical methods. It is suggested that specialist evaluators will use this information as a guide to the methodological issues that need to be considered when designing a QIE of a HEPPP-funded program. Those commissioning QIEs should consider consulting the SEHEEF when preparing the commissioning documentation.

4.2.3 Theory-based Impact Evaluation (TBIE)

Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework (SEHEEF)



TBIE approaches are focused on mapping out the causal chain from a program's inputs to outcomes and capturing robust evidence to explain them. This is particularly important for programs being delivered in complex, real-world settings, where the impact of a program can depend on a multitude of contextual factors. This is highly relevant in the case of HEPPP-funded programs and activities.

Equity group members are often exposed to multiple equity initiatives, alongside external factors such as changes in governmental policy and changes to their own personal circumstances.

Disentangling the potential effect of such factors and isolating the contribution of a specific program requires thorough testing of the program's logic against other plausible explanations (i.e., exploring the causal chains thought to bring about change by a program).

As noted by HM Treasury (2020, p43), "*For many of these (theory-based) methods, the aim is not to provide definitive evidence that the entirety of any measured change can be attributed to the intervention. Rather, they aim to explore whether the intervention definitively contributed to the measured change*".

Without such evidence, the attribution of observed changes to specific interventions (as opposed to external changes such as government policy) can be difficult if not impossible. The risk of not pursuing this attribution is that universities continue to allocate significant resources to ineffective programs or activities, or do not balance program resource allocations to meet the needs of specific groups. For example, if a program was found to be effective for students from remote areas but not regional students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, it could be targeted to those students only, and other resources diverted to programs effective for other target groups.

There are several different TBIE designs, but they share some common factors. They tend to involve a two-step process: an initial conceptual phase followed by an empirical stage (Mohammed & Bladon, 2017).

Conceptual phase

The conceptual phase of TBIE approaches involves the development or refinement of a Theory of Change. A Theory of Change describes *how* an intervention is proposed to bring about intended outcomes. It is often used interchangeably with the term Program Logic. However, a good theory of change provides a fuller explanation of the *mechanisms* underpinning the boxes or stages presented in a program logic; it doesn't just describe the sequence of expected short and longer-term outcomes flowing from activities, but also *how* and *why* these outcomes will occur, including any assumptions that have been made. These assumptions and 'logical chains' can then be tested during the evaluation to support robust attribution of changes to the activities undertaken.

The development of a Theory of Change can draw on multiple sources including prior research, program documentation, observations or evaluations of similar programs, and the perspectives of program planners and staff. It is recommended that a diverse mix of stakeholders is involved in developing a 'plausible, doable, and testable' Theory of Change to determine the intended outcomes of the program, potential unintended outcomes, and the influence of contextual factors (Rogers, 2012)(Rogers, 2012)(Rogers, 2012)(Rogers, 2012)(Rogers, 2012)(Rogers, 2012)(Rogers, 2012)(Rogers, 2012)(Rogers, 2012)(Rogers, 2012).

If possible, the voices and experiences of intended beneficiaries should be included and represented as part of the co-development process.

Empirical phase

A good Theory of Change provides a conceptual framework for designing the data collection methods needed for evaluation. The Theory of Change is validated by looking for empirical evidence to test its underlying assumptions, and hypotheses that represent alternative causal explanations.

Importantly, TBIE are 'methods neutral'. In other words, they do not favour one method over another and can incorporate a range of methods considered most appropriate in the context of the program, its participants, and the evaluation questions being asked. Typically, however, they require mixed-methods approaches drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data collection activities. Although presented separately, this means that TBIE can incorporate QIE; indeed, they will often be strengthened in doing so. This planning ensures that the data available for analyses are appropriate to support the required analytical methods.

Regardless of the specific methods used, the level of confidence in the causal claim depends on the level of detail in the evidence collected. This can be structured through the use of specific TBIE designs, the most common of which are Contribution Analysis, Realist Evaluation, and Process Tracing. A summary these methods is provided in Table 4.

Table 4. Common Designs used in TBIE.

<p>Contribution Analysis</p>	<p>A theory-based approach to verify the contribution a program has made to a change or set of changes by exploring a range of evidence. In Contribution Analysis, it is proposed that it is reasonable to conclude that an intervention is contributing to outcomes if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a reasoned Theory of Change. • The activities were implemented as intended. • The Theory of Change (or key elements) is supported and confirmed by evidence and the chain of expected results occurred and has not been disproved. • Alternative explanations and other contextual factors that are known to affect the desired outcomes have been assessed and either shown not to have made a significant contribution or their relative role acknowledged. <p>A particular advantage of contribution analysis is that many of the steps can be undertaken in a participatory mode (Mayne, 2008).</p>
<p>Realist Evaluation</p>	<p>Realist evaluation is specifically focused on understanding what works, in what situations, for whom and why. As noted in the Magenta Handbook (HM Treasury, 2020), it is based on the premise that “understanding why a participant decides to take advantage of a programme (or not) is key to causal inference and is known, in Realist terms, as the ‘mechanism’. Realist evaluation recognises that context determines how, or if, this causal mechanism operates.”</p> <p>A set of specific context-mechanism-outcome (CMO) statements are identified and articulated based on prior research, knowledge and experience and then tested and refined based on the evidence collected during the evaluation. Statements are broadly structured as follows: “In this context, that particular mechanism fired for these actors, generating those outcomes. In that context, this other mechanism fired, generating these different outcomes” (Westhorp, 2014).</p>
<p>Process Tracing</p>	<p>Process tracing is a structured case-based approach to drawing causal claims about how a particular outcome(s) has arisen. It involves identifying possible causal mechanisms through developing a Theory of Change. These causal mechanisms are then tested by collecting evidence that would only be present if a particular causal theory were true or false. These so-called causal tests are characterised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straw in the wind, which lends support for an explanation without definitively ruling it in or out, • Hoop, failed when examination of a case shows the presence of a necessary causal condition, when the outcome of interest is not present. • Smoking gun, passed when examination of a case shows the presence of a sufficient causal condition. • Doubly definitive, passed when examination of a case shows that a condition provides both necessary and sufficient support for the explanation. These tend to be rare. <p>The above description of the causal tests is taken from BetterEvaluation where further information on the approach can be found (Westhorp, 2014).</p>

4.2.4 Prioritisation of Programs for Impact Evaluation

Impact evaluations are crucial for obtaining a robust measure of the impact of a program on target beneficiaries, and for understanding why and how particular outcomes are brought about. They can also enable an understanding of what works, for whom, in what circumstances, how and why. However, these evaluation approaches are resource-intensive, requiring strong expertise in evaluation design, theory, and methods. In most cases, they are likely to require commissioning of specialist evaluators. It is important that universities adopt a systematic and rigorous approach for selecting programs to undergo QIE or TBIE. This will also involve balancing cost and resourcing requirements with Department expectations. Questions to consider are:

- How many programs should be evaluated?
- How often should programs be evaluated?

A standard set of criteria is recommended for use by universities to make an informed assessment of which programs they will expose to impact evaluation, and why (see Table 5). This is an approach used in other public sector evaluation contexts.

What is the purpose of the SEHEEF Prioritisation Tool?

The purpose of the prioritisation tool is to support universities in prioritising their HEPPP-funded projects for evaluation in order to ensure the best use of the more intensive resourcing required.

How does the prioritisation tool work?

The prioritisation tool is led by four criteria that universities should consider:

1. Evaluation Feasibility
2. Program Cost
3. Program Maturity
4. Program Profile

Applying these criteria to all HEPPP-funded programs within a university will enable a shortlist to be developed. This is important to ensure that there is variability in the programs nominated should more than one program undergo advanced evaluation.

This shortlist can then be stratified according to:

- Broad program characteristics such as the student life stage at which the program is implemented.
- Program size (defined as % of overall HEPPP funding).
- The primary equity group targeted.

Evaluation feasibility

To what extent can you conduct a rigorous, timely and meaningful QIE? Consider:

- Are there data available to enable a QIE of the program's outcomes?
- Are there enough participants in the program to enable robust QIE?

Program cost

What was the amount of HEPPP funding used to support the program? Consider:

- What is the total cost of the program, including staff and non-staff costs?
- How does the cost of the program compare to other HEPPP-funded programs being delivered by the university?

Program maturity

To what extent is the program new and innovative or a continuation of an already established program? Consider:

- Is this a new and previously untried project?
- Is this program similar to other programs you have delivered?
- Does the program contain innovative approaches?
- Is there uncertainty about program outcomes?
- If not new, how long has this program been delivered?
- Has the implementation and impact of this program been evaluated before?

Program profile

To what extent is the program well known and well regarded by internal and external stakeholders? Consider:

- Is this program deemed of high importance within the university and to other stakeholders?
- Are there high expectations about the success of this particular program?
- How many stakeholders and partners are involved in the program?

What is the key criterion for QIE?

As QIE should be prioritised, the key criterion is QIE feasibility.

If administrative data to enable QIE are not available, an in-depth TBIE should be considered.

A key issue to consider in the context of QIE is the ability to identify meaningful control groups, and the data needed to source the information about the outcomes for the control groups.

However, in-depth TBIE of a particular program for which QIE is not feasible should not be prioritised over another program for which QIE is feasible. An ideal situation would be an in-depth TBIE that incorporates QIE as this will provide the most instructive evaluation findings.

Can I obtain a prioritisation score to decide what to evaluate?

Yes, while prioritising programs is ultimately a matter of judgment, universities can develop a tool for the calculation of a prioritisation score to support decision making, such as the example provided in Box 10.

The implications of adequately resourcing evaluation on both the distribution of funding to universities, and the management of funding by universities, is a key consideration during the implementation phase of the SEHEEF. This is further detailed in Chapter 8 within the final SEHEEF Report submitted to the Department.

Confirming selected programs

The list of selected programs, and the rationale for their selection, will be submitted to DESE as part of the SEHEEF CQI Planning Tool.

Table 5. Criteria to Support the Prioritisation of Programs for Advanced Evaluation.

Criteria	Description	Prompts to guide prioritisation
Program maturity	This concerns the extent to which the program is new and innovative or a continuation of an already established program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this a new and previously untried project? • Is this program similar to other programs you have delivered or are delivering? • Does the program contain innovative approaches? • Is there uncertainty about program outcomes? • For how long has this program been delivered? • Has the implementation and impact of this program been evaluated before?
Program profile	This concerns the profile of the program in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program cost; • Number of participants; • Number of partners and stakeholders involved, and • Stakeholder importance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many participants will be involved in this program? • To what extent are partners and stakeholders involved in this program? • What is the total cost of the program, including staff and non-staff costs? • How does the cost of the program compare to other HEPPP-funded programs being delivered by the university? • Is this program deemed of high importance within the university and to other stakeholders?
QIE feasibility	This concerns the availability of data that facilitates robust QIE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data on participation in HEPPP activities; • Data on equity characteristics of participants and non-participants (for generating control groups); • Data on relevant outcomes for participants and potential control groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the collected data reliably identify who has participated in a HEPPP funded activity (and when and in which way)? • Has there been enough time for primary outcomes to accrue and become measurable? • Is there reliable data available on such outcomes for each participant but also for potential control groups? • Do sizes of participant and potential control groups allow robust estimates of differences in outcomes?

Box 10. Example Prioritisation Scoring Tool for Selecting Programs for Impact Evaluation.

Prioritisation Tool

Scenario

Program A accounts for the highest share of University X's HEPPP allocation. It is a relatively new program, having only been implemented for the first time 2 years ago. It is delivered to a large number of students and uptake has been good. The program's design has been informed by available evidence, but it also contains some innovative elements and some of the underlying theory is speculative. The program steering committee involves numerous senior leaders from the University and the number of external stakeholders involved in supporting the program has grown year-on-year. Monitoring of student progression suggests the program is making a difference; however, no formal evaluation has been conducted. The university collects data on the student ID of program participants and this can be linked to outcomes on the university's main data system.

Step 1: Determine whether there is a need for Impact Evaluation

(by discussing the criteria of Program Maturity, Program Profile and QIE)

If there is a clear need for Impact Evaluation, please complete Step 2 to prioritise the evaluation of the program against other programs.

If there is not an identified need for Impact Evaluation, the program will be assessed using the continuous quality improvement activities.

Step 2: Calculate a prioritisation score

	Yes (2)	To some extent (1)	No (0)
Program profile			
The amount of HEPPP funding for this program is high compared to others within the university	2		
The program reaches a high number of participants / students compared to others in the university	2		
HEPPP is the main funding source for this program	2		
The program involves a large number of internal and external stakeholders / partners	2		
		Subtotal	20
Program maturity			
The program has not been evaluated before	2		
There is uncertainty about the program's impact on intended outcomes		1	
There is uncertainty about how the program will bring about its intended outcomes		1	
There is a lack of evidence to support the program's design		1	
		Subtotal	12.5
QIE feasibility			
It is likely possible to undertake QIE of the program	2		
		Subtotal	20
		TOTAL	52.5 / 60

Note: Each prioritisation category accounts for an equal weight. Category subtotals have been calculated by totalling the category score, dividing by the number of items, and multiplying by 10.

4.2.5 Commissioning an Impact Evaluation

Where Impact Evaluations of HEPPP-funded programs are to be designed and delivered by specialised evaluators, the planning and managing of this commissioning process should be done in a structured and systematic way. Critical to the success of the commissioning process is establishing strong relationships and understanding between the staff responsible for the HEPPP

program and the evaluators, while maintaining independence and integrity of enquiry. Where such evaluations are carried out within the university, these formal commissioning processes are still essential to maintain the robustness of the evaluation, and potentially more so to maintain its independence and integrity.

The benefits and potential challenges associated with internal vs external specialist evaluators are detailed in Box 11.

Box 11. Benefits and Challenges of Internal vs External Specialist Evaluators.

Internal	External
Benefits:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has detailed knowledge about program and activity objectives, design, implementation, and outcomes. • Can be less costly. • Can help to build evaluation capacity, knowledge and skills within the institution. • May be able to achieve better stakeholder 'buy-in' for the evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception of independent insight and perspective, as well as reputational benefits. • Offers specialist technical skills, expertise, experience, and increase capacity. • Can deliver more timely, efficient and effective evaluation activities.
Challenges:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of independence may reduce the actual or perceived validity of the evaluation's results. • Capacity - may draw resources away from activity/program delivery. • Can take longer due to resourcing constraints. • May have less evaluation experience and expertise. • May limit the candour of stakeholder consultation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be more costly. • Can still be resource intensive, particularly where procurement is required. • May not have an adequate understanding of the program, its objectives, target cohorts, implementation context or outcomes. • May have difficulty engaging employees and stakeholders in the evaluation process.

Source: (Queensland Treasury, 2020)

Step 1: Prepare the tender documentation

In advance of preparing a commissioning document (a Request for Quotation or RFQ if this is to be external), there must be clarity on:

- the program and its objectives under the HEPPP
- its policy context
- the evaluation's scope
- objectives
- timeframes
- methodological preferences
- any other expectations

Table 6 expands on many of these issues and provides a useful guide for assessing proposals, whether internal or external. Proposals should make it clear how outcomes will be linked to the activities that the program delivered and the methodological means through which these links will be explored.

Once an evaluator has been selected (see Box 12 for guidance), the commissioning document (RFQ if external) and responding proposal (see Box 13) become the basis of a formal contract, which should include:

- The roles and responsibilities of all persons involved;
- Specifications of the arrangement, including costs, agreed outputs and delivery dates;
- Governance procedures, including an approach for identifying and managing risks and opportunities, and
- Agreed dispute resolution arrangements.

(Queensland Treasury, 2020)

Step 2: Manage the impact evaluation

Effective project management will ensure that impact evaluation that has been commissioned stays on time and within scope. Even if the evaluation is to be carried out in-house, these processes are vital, both to maintain the effectiveness of the evaluation project and to maintain a stringent independence of the evaluators from the program staff.

This process requires robust governance mechanisms to be set up, typically including a formal inception meeting, detailed evaluation plan, regular progress meetings, open communication, diligent documentation and a progress reporting schedule. This will help to ensure that:

- Risks or changes to the evaluation contract can be detected and managed early.

- Key evaluation documents, questions, models and frameworks can be revised where required (and changes documented) to ensure the most effective, appropriate and efficient impact evaluation is delivered.
- Expectations of the evaluation are clearly understood by all parties and managed across the evaluation.

Box 12. Guidance on Selecting a Specialist Evaluator.

What competencies should a specialist evaluator have?	
Formal qualifications and technical expertise directly relevant to the proposed evaluation work.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extensive demonstrated expertise and experience in developing and implementing evidence-based investigative studies.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extensive demonstrated program evaluation expertise, experience, and capacity.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Demonstrated understanding of relevant topics such as the higher education sector, university student data, student equity in higher education etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Demonstrated excellent project management skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Demonstrated ability to deliver high quality evaluation reports.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Demonstrated ability to engage with a diverse range of stakeholders in a culturally appropriate way.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Box 13. Suggested Content for Impact Evaluation Proposals.

What should a proposal include?	
The overall purpose of the evaluation, connection with evaluation questions, as well as program context.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identification of the impacts of activities on outcomes, including impacts for different equity groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>
A sound project plan that is achievable within available time, resources and budget.	<input type="checkbox"/>
A description of a robust and appropriate evaluation design and methods that can answer the key evaluation questions.	<input type="checkbox"/>
A demonstration of value for money/ outcomes commensurate with the level of investment.	<input type="checkbox"/>
A portfolio of relevant evaluation work and details of referees.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Table 6. Key Considerations when Commissioning an Impact Evaluation.

Design issues	Specific questions	Rationale	Implications
Identifying impacts	How should program impacts and effects be identified?	Conceptualising and identifying impacts can be difficult, and sometimes data are unavailable. When to assess impacts, and which impacts affect whom, are also design issues. Stakeholders' participation helps identify valid impacts.	Proposers ⁵ should indicate how they understand and will identify impacts – including impacts for different groups. When responding, commissioners should indicate data availability problems.
Building on what is known	Is there already substantial knowledge about how these kinds of programs work, perhaps a credible theory of change?	If much is already known there might both be risks of duplication and waste; and advantages building on existing knowledge.	Proposers should demonstrate familiarity with current state of evaluation/research knowledge and indicate how this will shape their use of theories of change.
The overall purpose of the evaluation	What kind of use for whom is envisaged – demonstrating past effectiveness; scaling-up and replication; improvement; learning for future policy and practice?	Purposes of IE may differ. It is important to identify main purposes as this determines evaluation questions and choice of methods able to answer these questions.	Proposers should be expected to discuss how overall purpose connects with evaluation questions – and show an awareness of design and method implications.
Program attributes, scale and complexity	Is the program made up of a single intervention or several? What is the program 'architecture'?	Program attributes constrain the choice of IE designs and methods. Multi-level or decentralised programs offer opportunities for nested designs.	Proposers should be asked to demonstrate understandings of program attributes and the implications for designs and combinations of designs.
Context and contribution	How important is context and how far are different causal and contextual factors likely to influence impacts?	Programs that are open to multiple influences -complex, embedded rather than simple and self-contained – will need to focus on the contribution of program interventions rather than attribution.	Proposers should be asked to discuss the program context including the importance of multiple causal factors; and how this relates to a contribution or attribution focus.
Measurement and extent	Does the Impact Evaluation set out to measure how much of an impact a program has had – and is this feasible? <i>Source: Stern (2015)</i>	Sometimes it is possible to assess contribution but not extent (how much?). Whether the program has impacts for large numbers of households, or few, will also determine the possibility of statistical designs and methods.	If appropriate, proposers should be asked to discuss their approach to measurement and extent.

⁵ Note: Proposers = those who are tendering to conduct the evaluation work. This includes specialist evaluators who could be located within the institution that is implementing the project or they could be an external evaluator. Commissioners = those who are commissioning the evaluation, assessing the tender applications, and deciding upon who will conduct the evaluation work.

Step 3: Assess the quality of the Impact Evaluation

Reports that include substantive findings from impact evaluation should be assessed against the evaluation plan, as well as the features in Table 6. The questions in Box 14 should also be considered by those responsible for the management of the evaluation when reviewing the substantive findings report.

Box 14. Reviewing Evaluation Findings

Questions to consider by those managing the evaluation when reviewing findings.

- Does the report make it clear how causal claims have been arrived at?
- How have different types of theory been used – testing programme assumptions or building on wider research?
- Is the report clear about when and where impacts can be observed?
- Does the report convincingly identify contextual and causal factors and take them into account?
- Is the chosen design able to support explanatory analysis (answering how and why questions) if this was required?
- Is there a consistent link between evaluation questions asked, overall design, data collection and analytic methods used?
- Have alternative explanations that do not depend on programme effects been considered and systematically eliminated or accounted for?
- Have beneficiaries and other stakeholders been involved in scoping the evaluation and validating and interpreting results?
- Are the ways methods were applied and data collected clearly described and well documented?

Source: Stern (2015)

Step 4: Structuring reports on Impact Evaluations

A suggested structure for reports on Impact Evaluations is as follows (Salom et al., 2021):

Cover Page and Title

The title should be descriptive of the project; you may want to relate it to the project's overall goals.

An Executive Summary

This is a summary of the purpose of the evaluation, the methodology, the main findings, lessons, and recommendations from the evaluation. It should not be longer than 1-2 pages.

Introduction

This should include an overview of the project that is being evaluated, including the timeframe, main stakeholders, institutional mission, policy context, purpose and objectives. You may want to describe in greater detail any specific components that were critical in delivering outcomes.

Evaluation Overview

This should outline the purpose of the evaluation, including the key evaluation questions, scope, cohorts of interest, the parameters of the evaluation and what is in scope for evaluation and what is not being evaluated. It may include the full monitoring and evaluation plan as an appendix. This section should include an overview of Activities/Programs that are being evaluated.

The Program Logic

This is the program logic underpinning the evaluation, that outlines what it sought to achieve and what was done along the way.

Methodology

A good way to present your methodology is to begin with an outline of the design, the approach, the data collected and timeframes, participants, caveats and assumptions, available data / program evidence base, known gaps or issue, as well as well as any ethical (or cultural) considerations

Evaluation Findings

In this section you would present the results, their interpretation, limitations, opportunities for improvement.

A good way to present your evaluation findings is to use the key evaluation questions as the main sub-headings (e.g. Was the program effective in changing students' outcomes?).

It would then use the information collected through data collection to make a judgement and answer the key question. Remember here that you do not want to simply present information, but rather interpret the information and make a value judgement. Some of the information from the data collection can be presented in an appendix.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This is where a high-level summary of the success and lessons of the project based on the evaluation findings is helpful. You may want to also communicate how the evaluation findings will be used (in terms of information future projects, or changes in policy, etc.). It should also include a list of key recommendations (which are also presented in the executive summary).

References

Provide details of any other publications or sources of information that were used in the report.

Appendices

This is the place to provide detailed information that some of the audience members may want to refer to. This includes diagrams of the program logic, questionnaires that were used, detailed results and information, statistical analyses, etc.

Step 5: Acting on Findings

Evaluation findings can be used in any number of ways (Salom et al., 2021), with several benefits of sharing evaluation findings (see Box 15):

Make changes to the program/activity

Continuous feedback is essential to make necessary changes/improvement. A well-designed evaluation may find that the program is not meeting its purpose. This is a chance to find out what worked and what did not, and to respond accordingly, potentially by making adjustments to the program, or developing a new type of project.

Facilitate funding/resourcing decisions

Evaluations can be used to determine whether additional resources (e.g. funding and time) are needed to achieve the desired results and/or whether aspects of the program are not cost-effective and may be removed, or whether the program needs to continue or not.

Improve communication among stakeholders

Evaluations can be used to engage more stakeholders to achieve the desired outcomes of a project. Evaluations may also be important to ensure their continued support into the future.

Modify the evaluation plan

An initial stage of an evaluation can indicate whether the chosen indicators, methods and timelines are valid and feasible. These findings will show which need to be removed, added or modified to make future data/findings more meaningful and relevant.

Box 15. Benefits of Sharing Evaluation Findings.

What are the benefits of sharing findings?

- To assist in building the evidence base available to equity practitioners, researchers and university leadership.
- To promote transparency and accountability of equity programs both in terms of outcomes and expenditure of public money.
- To allow for intra-institutional and sector wide outcome analysis/comparison and knowledge sharing across similar programs and institutions— learn once, share often.
- To facilitate adjustment of activities and leveraging of synergies in response to evaluation findings.

Registration of Impact Evaluations

A national registry of HEPPP-funded projects that have been selected for Impact Evaluation would facilitate the monitoring of evaluation activities across the sector, providing information about the features of the projects that have been selected for Impact Evaluation, and basic information about the proposed evaluation design.

Information on HEPPP-funded projects selected for Impact Evaluation is already collected as part of the CQI Planning Tool. In fact, the CQI Planning Tool already indicates which HEPPP projects are marked for Impact Evaluation. Indicative contents and descriptions are provided in Table 7. Refer to DESE program guidance for further information.

Table 7. (Illustrative) Key Detail included as part of the National Register of Impact Evaluations

Information	Format/examples/notes
HEPPP-funded project details	
Project ID	Standardised format
Project name	Open format
Project start date	Standardised format
Project end date	Standardised format
Intervention stage (student stage)	SEHEFF standardised stages
Type of activity(ies)	SEHEEF Standardised types
Sub-type of activity(ies)	Open format (<i>potential for later standardisation</i>)
Target group(s)	Partial standardisation (based on equity groups)
Intended outcomes	Partial standardisation plus open format
(Lead) University	Standardised list
Description of project	Open format
Evaluation details	
Year selected for IE	Standardised date format
Key evaluation questions	Open format (<i>potential for later partial standardisation</i>)
(Intended) Evaluation period	Standardised date format
Evaluation status	e.g. commissioned, started, completed (<i>potential for later standardised more detailed status options</i>)
Considered cohorts/groups	e.g. low SES students who commenced undergraduate studies in 2019 or 2020 at university X (<i>potential for later partial standardisation</i>)
Key outcome measures	e.g. probability of continuing studies in second year, median end of Year GPA (<i>potential for later partial standardisation</i>)
Evaluation/analysis design	e.g. quasi experimental design [comparisons of intervention cohorts with 2017/18 commencing student cohorts at uni x] (<i>potential for later partial standardisation</i>)
Evaluation findings (if applicable)	Open format
Evaluator	Open format

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Abbreviations

Commonly used abbreviations in this Guidance Manual

Abbreviation	Definition
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
CQI	Continuous Quality Improvement
DESE	The Department of Education, Skills and Employment
GPA	Grade Point Average
HE	Higher Education
HEPPP	Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program
IRLSAF	Indigenous, Regional and Low SES Attainment Fund
ISSR	Institute for Social Science Research
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
QIE	Quantitative Impact Evaluation
RBA	Results Based Accountability
RCT	Randomised Control Trials
RFQ	Request for Quotation
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SEHEEF	Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework
STAT	Special Tertiary Admissions Test
TAFE	Training and Further Education
TBIE	Theory-Based Impact Evaluation
The Department	The Department of Education, Skills and Employment
The Evaluation Framework	Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Appendices

Appendix A. Selecting data for Intervention Designs for QIE

Figure 10. Data Selection based on Intervention Design before Higher Education.

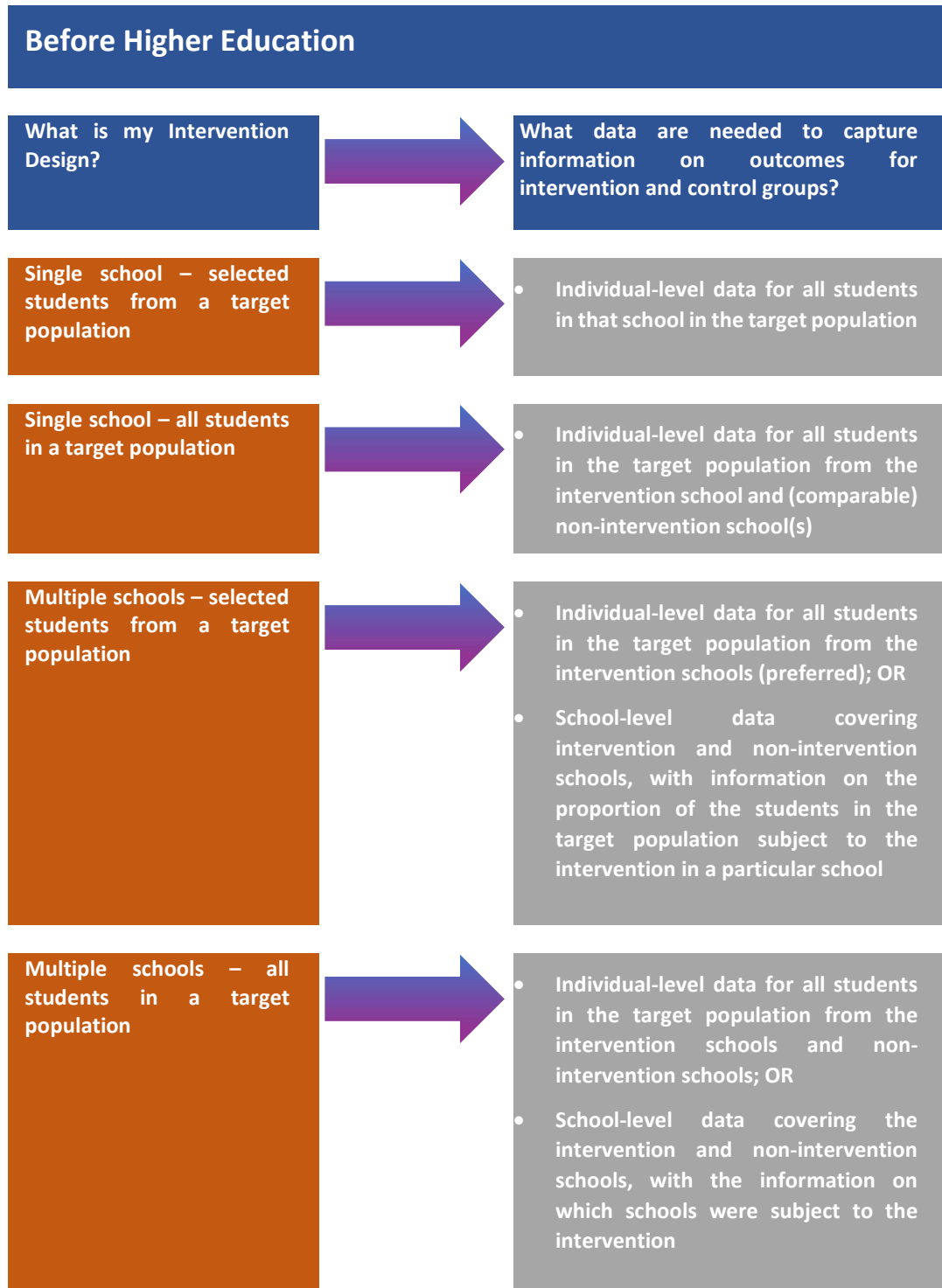
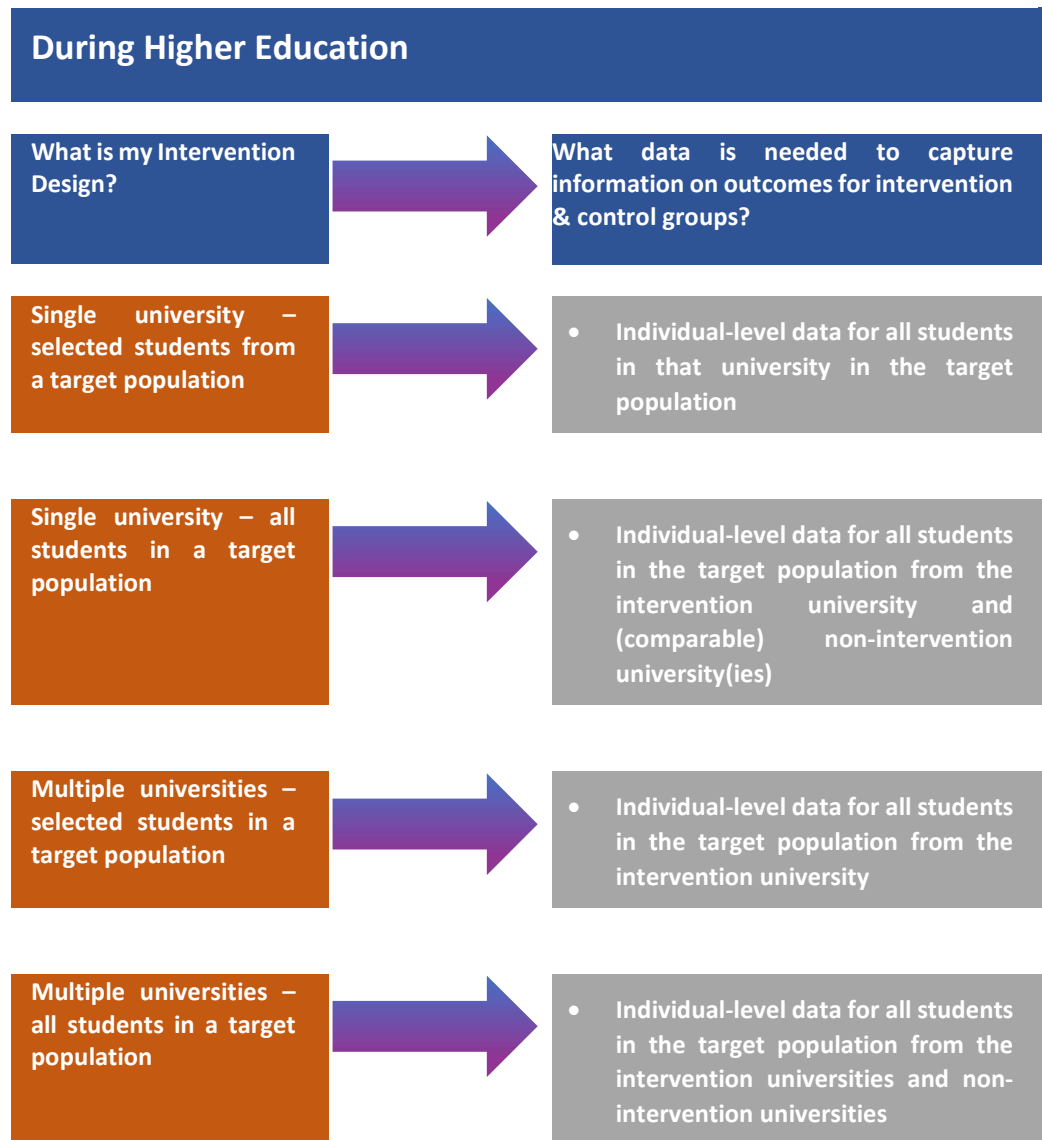


Figure 11. Data Selection based on Intervention Design during Higher Education..



Appendix B. Populated (example) Tools.

Box 16. Example Information for the CQI Planning Tool

Program Details

This section essentially covers the overarching program elements, including description, resources, equity groups being targeted and the relevant stakeholders.

- **Program name:** The name of the program.
Secondary Student Education Program
- **Program resources:** The anticipated budget for the program (including the total amount that is HEPPP funded).
\$40,000
- **Program description:** A description of the program, including its rationale.
A program to improve the pathways of children from the completion of their basic education to further education. It offers the opportunity to experience university and the university culture, through building career and higher education aspiration and pathway knowledges. The program is targeted to students in disadvantaged communities where the rates of university attendance of children are low.
- **Program maturity:** An indication of whether this is a new or continuing program and whether the program has been evaluated before.
*Continuing.
Three years of delivery.
Not been evaluated before.*
- **Equity group(s):** All of the equity groups that the program is primarily designed to support.
*Low SES backgrounds.
Regional and remote areas.*
- **Stakeholders and partners involved:** All stakeholders and partners that will be involved in the program.
*Year 11 and 12 students.
Multiple secondary schools in regional and remote areas.
University campuses.
TAFE and other training providers.
University students as mentors.*

Activities

This section is intended to capture detailed information about the program activities, including delivery, participants, methodology and/or data source.

- **Planned program activities:** Provide a list of the activities that make up the program. Specify the activity type. Try to include details such as intended number, duration, and modality of the activities.
 - *Face-to-face delivery of education program to ~300 Year 11 and 12 students in 30 low-SES school.*
 - *Year 11 and 12 students attend one of 6 on-campus experience days.*

Example information for the CQI Planning Tool (cont....)

- **Progress indicator(s):** Specify indicator(s) of progress for each activity. Indicators should be based on what you expect to happen and should help to answer the questions:

- How much did we do?
- How well did we do it?

Number of participants in education program.

Number of participants attending on-campus experience days.

Positive response to resources.

- **Data source(s)/method(s):** Describe how the indicator(s) will be measured including the source of the data and, if relevant, the method and mode of data collection.

Administrative data.

Survey data for all Year 11 and 12 students attending the education program.

Focus groups with students attending on-campus experience days.

Outcomes

- **Outcomes:** Consider the changes that the program is intending to bring about. Refer to the SEHEEF Program Logic to distinguish between supporting and primary outcomes.

School-age children increase their awareness and knowledge of educational and occupational pathways.

School-age children increase their skills in how to apply for tertiary study.

School-age children indicate their intentions to move from secondary education onto further education, training and employment.

- **Outcome indicators:** Specify indicator(s) for the intended outcomes. Indicator(s) should help to answer the question:

- What outcomes did we achieve?

Measures of awareness of educational pathways and HE study options.

Increased completion of schooling.

Increased alternative credentials for entering HE studies.

Increased university applications.

- **Data source(s) / method(s):** Describe how the indicator(s) will be measured including the source of the data and, if relevant, the method of data collection. It is likely that most of the focus will be on supporting outcomes unless you intend to monitor trends in primary outcomes.

Sample survey, focus groups, telephone interviews, administrative data

- **Impact Evaluation:** Specify whether the program will undergo impact evaluation and, if so, how? Detail the plan or intended steps.

Yes, there is available data that facilitates robust QIE

Box 17. Example information for the Data Reporting Tool

Overarching Program Details

- **Program Name:** The name of the overarching program.

Secondary Student Education Program

- **Program ID.**

CODEUNI

- **Project Initiation Date:** The commencement date of the program.

1 Jan 2021

- **Project Completion Date:** Date of completion, or expected date of completion.

31 December 2021

- **Actual Program Expenditure:** The total amount spent on the program.

\$42,000

- **Actual HEPPP Expenditure:** The total amount of HEPPP funding that was spent on the program.

\$40,000

- **Program Budget:** The total amount allocated to the program.

\$40,000

- **HEPPP Funding Component:** The portion of expenditure that was funded by HEPPP.

\$95%

- **Other Funding:** The total amount of other funding that was spent on the program.

5%

- **Source of other funding:** Provide details of where additional funding came from, e.g., university funds, or other source.

University Grant.

- **If more than 10% difference between planned & expected expenditure, describe:** Provide a brief overview as to why there has been a discrepancy, consider: the need for additional resources, more attendees than expected and/or the program increased in size.

NA

Activity-specific details

- **Activity name:** Title or name used to label activity.

Uni Experience

- **Activity description:** The name of the activity delivered as part of the larger program.

Site visits to offer the opportunity to experience university and the university culture as well as to interact with current university students.

- **Activity Type:** Predetermined list of the type of activity based on the SEHEEF Activity Typology (information & experiences; skills; resources; institutional development).

Information & Experiences

- **Activity Mode:** Predetermined list of how the activity was delivered (e.g., workshop; presentation, open day etc).

Face-to-face

- **Duration of activity:** The duration of the activity.

Whole day

- **Equity Group(s):** The equity group(s) being targeted in the activity.

*Low SES Background
Regional and remote areas*

- **System level:** The level of the system the activity was delivered at (individual; family and community; institutional).

Secondary students in years 11 and 12

- **Number of times activity delivered:** The total number of times the activity was delivered

6

- **Number of stakeholder organisations involved (e.g. schools)**

*30 schools
6 university campuses*

- **Total number of participants completing the activity**

299 students

- **Total resource (\$) spent on the activity**

\$25,000

Box 18. Example Detail for a CQI Reporting Tool

Program Name and ID: Enter Program Name and ID

Secondary Student Education Program

- **What did the program involve?**

Describe the program/summarise what it involved

The program provided a series of activities that focused on giving students the opportunity to learn about pathways and career options. This program operated both on university campuses and in secondary schools within low-SES and regional and remote areas.

- **How much did we do?**

- *Progress Indicator(s): Refer to the indicator(s) in your CQI Planning Tool and add any additional indicator(s) that you did not plan to measure.*

Number of schools visited.

Number of education programs delivered.

Number of participants in education programs.

Number of on-campus experience days.

Number of participants attending on-campus experience days.

- *Data source / Method: Describe how the indicator(s) was measured including the source of the data and, if relevant, the method of data collection.*

Paper survey completed by all students attending an education program.

Administrative data.

- *Findings: Provide quantitative data on how much you delivered as part of this program.*

40 schools visited.

28 education programs delivered.

321 participants in education program.

6 on-campus experience days.

299 participants attending on-campus experience days.

- **How well did we do it?**

- *Indicator(s): Refer to the indicator(s) in your CQI Planning Tool and add any additional indicator(s) that you did not plan to measure.*

- Participant satisfaction with activities. Participants feedback on quality, appropriateness, and usefulness of the activities.

- *Data source / Method: Describe how the indicator(s) was measured including the source of the data and, if relevant, the method of data collection, sample size and response rate.*

For those who participated, content found to be very valuable (% of respondents rating high/very high was 92% for quality; 89% for appropriateness; and 95% for usefulness).

Provision of information was more important than anything else; tangible experience was important and facilitated imagination of self as uni student.

Involvement of former HEPPP participants worked well.

- *Findings: Provide quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of how well the program was designed and delivered, and how well it was received.*

Measures of awareness of educational pathways and HE study options.

Increased completion of schooling.

Increased alternative credentials for entering HE studies.

Increased university applications.

Example Detail for a CQI Reporting Tool (cont)

- **What outcomes did we achieve?**
 - *Outcome indicator(s): Refer to the outcome indicator(s) in your CQI Planning Tool and add any additional indicator(s) that you did not plan for.*

Paper survey.
Students had to complete reflections of what the on-campus experience meant to them (focus groups).
Follow up telephone interviews.
Administrative data.
 - *Data source / Method: Describe how the outcome indicator(s) was measured including the source of the data and, if relevant, the method of data collection, sample size and response rate.*

85% of participants reported increased awareness.
78% reported better familiarity with the entry requirements.
Themes from focus groups included greater confidence and increased sense that HE was a desirable and viable option.
Schools reported 79%-85% Year 12 completion rates.
92% of Year 12 participants completed Year 12.
46% applied for university.
35% applied to TAFE and other training providers.
7% applied to the armed forces
12% chose to obtain FT work
 - *Findings: Provide quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of the outcomes that the program achieved. It is likely that most of the focus will be on supporting outcomes unless you monitored trends in primary outcomes (see Program Logic for more information).*
- **What were the key findings?** Summarise the three take-home messages from the program.
 - 1. Overall, most students were positive about their experience and were planning to progress to further studies and had developed increased confidence and awareness.*
 - 2. Most students valued the opportunity to meet others in same situation.*
 - 3. Involving former HEPPP program participants worked well for the on-campus experience days.*
- **What were the main lessons learnt about the program?** Provide details on what worked well and what didn't work well. This might include any factors that may have supported or constrained the implementation or outcomes of the program.

Availability of university students as mentors and their capacity to contribute to the on-campus experience days.
Having a strong school-university partnership.
Having support for teachers and students at school.
Remotely based schools were not sufficiently engaged due to extent of unanticipated remote travel.
Low motivation to participate by some students due to language barriers.
Students would prefer an online survey.
- **What changes, if any, will you make to the design or delivery of the program?** Describe what changes should be made in response to your findings and lessons learnt

Budget parameters and priorities.
More time needed to identify uni application rates of the Year 11 participants.

Example detail for a CQI Reporting Tool (cont)

- **What resources did the program use and how efficiently were these used?** Enter the resources used as part of the program. This includes HEPPP funding and other resources (e.g., staff time). Provide any reflections how efficiently resources were used (e.g., compared to other approaches; how well the intervention was managed).

*\$43k HEPPP funding.
7.5% budget over-run due to unexpectedly high uptake
School professional staff time.
School teachers time.
University professional staff time (estimated at 15 WTE)
University mentors' time.
University mentors training resources plus t-shirt.
Student university survival pack (pamphlets, pen, lanyard)*
- **Overall, what do you think was the most significant change that resulted from the program, and why?** Describe the situation before the change, the nature of the change, and how the program contributed to that change. This could be in relation to the lives of the program beneficiaries or the wider institutional or policy environment, or something else.

The activities included in this program have been well received by participants in previous years. However, we had noticed that, while participants had better knowledge about entry requirements and study options, their scores on university being a viable option were lower. This year we invited current students taking part in HEPPP-funded programs while at uni to share their experiences. This seemed to resonate well with participants and it was a theme that emerged a lot in the focus group sessions.