

# SUPPORTING RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT:

Imperial and Cambridge approaches to using the  
Impact Framework as a tool for practical evaluation  
and programme development

**Katie Anders**

Consultant, Postdoc Development Centre

**Imperial College**  
London

**Natacha Wilson**

Evaluation Associate



**UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE**

# During this workshop

## **We will:**

- Outline the benefits of evaluating researcher development activity
- Give an overview of the Impact Framework (IF) and how it works
- Explain how the IF has informed evaluation at Cambridge and Imperial
- Explore key benefits and challenges of using the IF to evaluate researcher development activity

## **The group will:**

- Share strategies, solutions and good practices for doing evaluative research

# Why evaluate?

- Evaluate success of investment in researcher development
  - Report on quality and relevance of outputs
  - Internal and external reporting
  - Measure *impact*
- Inform planning and strategy
  - Support improvement/development of RD activity
  - Maintain relevance and stakeholder engagement

# Evaluation Frameworks

- CRAC/Vitae Project specific to Researcher Development

## [Impact Framework](#)

- HEFCE Project: Researching and developing a framework for the evaluation of academic and support staff learning and development in Higher Education

## [Evaluation Toolkit](#)

(online access)

- [National HE STEM project](#)  
(focus on teaching)

### **Benefits**

- ✓ *Provides structure*
- ✓ *Research-based*
- ✓ *Sector specific*
- ✓ *Recognised*

### **Limitations**

- *high level of resources and skills required*
- *role of evaluation can be unclear*
- *remains operational in most cases*
- *difficult to get internal buy-in*
- *evaluation is often an after-thought*

# The Impact Framework

LEVEL OF IMPACT	INDICATORS OF IMPACT AT EACH LEVEL
0 Foundations	Allocation of resources; development of infrastructure for L&D activity  e.g. funding, staff, training provision
1 Reaction	Participants' initial reactions to T&D activity
2 Learning	Changes in attitude, improved knowledge and increased skill (and extent to which these occurred)
3 Behaviour	Changes in behaviour ( and extent of change)
4 Effects/Outcomes	External impact: the 'final result' of T&D activity – have changes in attitude and behaviour yielded different outcomes?

# Postdoc Development Centre Impact Evaluation Project

## Remit

- Identify positive areas of impact, success and good practice
- To provide practical, data informed recommendations for growth
- To establish and facilitate on-going consultation with key stakeholders regarding the strategic development of PDC services
- Develop a system (and benchmark data) for on-going evaluation of PDC services

## Methodology/methods

- Impact Framework methodology informed study design
  - IF 'levels of impact' were used to develop 'indicators' (measurable signs) of impact for each core PDC service
  - Methods chosen to measure the impact each service had at all appropriate 'levels'
  - Methods included: pre- and post- course questionnaires, surveys (3 months following course attendance) and focus groups

## Operationalising the *Impact Framework*

Core Service	Indicator(s) of Impact	IF Impact Level	Method(s) of evaluation
<b>Courses/workshops</b>	<p>Gained useful/relevant information; improved knowledge of subject; likely to apply learning</p> <p>Changed behaviour; perceives tangible outcome(s) of behavioural change</p>	<p><b>1,2 (reaction, learning)</b></p> <p><b>3,4 (behaviour, outcome)</b></p>	<p>Evaluation form</p> <p>Survey questionnaire (3 months post attendance)</p> <p>Focus groups</p>
<b>Mock interviews</b>	<p>Better prepared for interview; increased confidence at interview; improved performance at interview</p>	<p><b>1 (reaction)</b></p> <p><b>2,3,4 (learning, behaviour, outcome)</b></p>	<p>Evaluation form</p>

## Key Findings

---

- High service take-up (aprox 65%)
- Self-reported impact (both attitudinal and behavioural) is high for all core services
- Identified services that postdocs value most
- Identified 'gaps' to address:
  - New provision (e.g. resilience, maternity)
  - Enhanced provision (e.g. fellowship applications)
  - Updated provision (e.g. academic career development material)

# Cambridge Evaluation Project

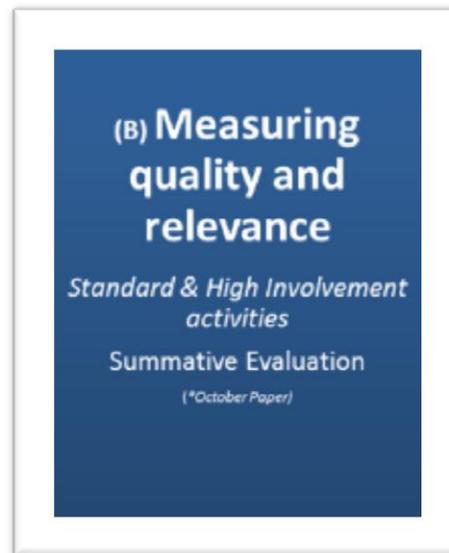
- Reporting to Researcher Development Committee (post-Roberts era)
- University-wide: 3500 postdocs and 4000 PhDs
- 3 main providers: Personal and Professional Development, The Career Services, Schools/Departments
- Developing a sustainable evaluation framework, fit for purpose and flexible;
  - get buy-in, clarify the role of evaluation
  - one solution does not fit all: split programmes/activities by type
  - appropriate to the level of resources available (systems and people)

# Cambridge RD evaluation framework

**Align with University's mission  
Encourage RD Innovation and promote collaboration**



Foundation, Formative



Levels 1, 2, (3)



Levels 3, 4

**Participation data, costs, resources**

# Cambridge GRADSchool: evaluation case study

## Full evaluation : formative, end of course and impact

- High-involvement course
- Large cohort, strong motivation (application process)
- RD programme preparing for career transition

## Methodology

- Pre-course survey (needs analysis and participant engagement)
- Post-course online survey (satisfaction and relevance)
- Post-course online tutor survey (satisfaction and reflection)
- Post-course online survey - 3 months later (reflection and impact)

# Key findings

## Stakeholder engagement

- Needs analysis (key challenges identified)
- Encourages participants' reflection

## Planning

- Inform new course development
- Measures quality and relevance

## Reporting

- Provide useful data to support strategic changes
- Look at impact from the perspective of the participant

# Benefits and limitations of using the Impact Framework

## Benefits

- Established model for assessing the impact of researcher development activity
- Provides scope to quantify outputs and outcomes of T&D activity
- Spot what's working and what needs work
- Provides potential scope for comparison with other institutions
- Offers opportunity to contribute to a growing evidence base

## Challenges

- Framework requires significant interpretation/operationalisation in practice
- In practice, indicators of 'impact' are often qualitative, not quantitative
- Collecting data relating to 'outcomes' is a major challenge

# Key insights

- Evaluation is about people
- One solution does not fit all
- Formative evaluation matters
- Evaluation needs to be embedded in programme design
- Work with existing resources
- Share key findings to inform planning and celebrate success

# **Plenary Activity: Evaluation and key challenges**

What is happening in your Institution?

- Make a list of current RD evaluation studies
- Make a list of evaluation studies you would like to develop in the next 6 months

**What is stopping you? What are the key challenges you are faced with?**

# Small Group Activity

- Which challenges would be most useful to work through today?
- One subgroup per topic: pick the most relevant to you
- Working as a group, discuss the issue and generate some potential solutions using real life examples
- Present your ideas to, and share best practices with, the group

# Links

- The Impact Framework 2012: Revisiting the Rugby Team Impact Framework  
[http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/IEG\\_Report\\_2012.pdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/IEG_Report_2012.pdf)
- Vitae Impact and Evaluation Group : Annual Report 2011  
[http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/IEG\\_Annual%20Report2011\\_Web.pdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/IEG_Annual%20Report2011_Web.pdf)
- The Evaluation cookbook  
<http://www.icbl.hw.ac.uk/ltdi/cookbook/cookbook.pdf>
- HEFCE Project- Evaluation toolkit  
<http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/hr/peopledevelopment/evaluation/hefce/>

## **Katie Anders**

Consultant, Postdoc Development Centre  
Imperial College London  
[c.anders@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:c.anders@imperial.ac.uk)

**Imperial College**  
London

## **Natacha Wilson**

Evaluation Associate  
University of Cambridge  
[Natacha.Wilson@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:Natacha.Wilson@admin.cam.ac.uk)



**UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE**