

TEACHING EVALUATION

Criteria for Accrediting Graduate Programs in Evaluation

WILLIAM M K TROCHIM

William Trochim reports on the interim results of a project to help develop accreditation standards for graduate-level programs in evaluation in the United States. The project has used concept mapping, and input from across the world on the Internet, to first brainstorm and then group and prioritise criteria. Preliminary results suggest a useful taxonomy for the AEA accreditation standards with three clusters referring to the evaluation training program context, including qualifications of staff and program resources, and five clusters relating to the curriculum and the student learning experience.

Purpose

The purpose of this concept-mapping project is to articulate a set of standards for AEA (American Evaluation Association) accreditation of graduate programs and specialisations in evaluation. Since there are not likely to be many graduate degree programs that focus entirely on evaluation alone, we include in this project standards for specialisations that may be associated with other degree programs. For instance, accredited evaluation specialisations may be established in graduate programs in education, health and mental health, psychology, sociology, economics, policy analysis, public administration, and more.

Process

The first phase of this project is already complete. The first phase involved brainstorming a large set of potential accreditation standards, based on the focus statement and prompt described below. An unknown number of people accessed the Web page, viewed statements and added more.

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The second phase in the process – the sorting and rating of the statements – originally ended on 30 August 1996, and was then extended until Friday, 4 October 1996. As only 23 people participated in this stage, details of the ratings given to each statement have not been reported in this article but can be viewed at the Web site:

http://trochim.human.cornell.edu/AEA/aea_res.htm

In the third phase the collected data was analysed and used to generate concept maps. Preliminary analysis was done between 31 August and 9 September with preliminary results posted to the Web site. The final analysis was conducted between 4 October and 11 October 1996, and posted by 11 October.

The fourth phase has provided an opportunity for all Web browsers to see map results, comment on them, raise questions, discuss substantive implications, and so on. The results of this concept-mapping exercise were presented to the AEA Board and as a conference paper at the AEA Annual Conference in Atlanta in November 1996.

For general information about concept mapping, see the Introduction to Concept Mapping in the Knowledge Base Web site (<http://trochim.human.cornell.edu>). For several published and unpublished articles about concept mapping, see the Trochim Research Page or refer to Trochim, W M K 1989, 'An introduction to concept mapping for planning and evaluation', *Evaluation and Program Planning*, No 12, pp 1–16 or see the paper at the Web page:

<http://trochim.human.cornell.edu/research/epp1/epp1.htm>

If you would like to learn more about *The Concept System* software used to accomplish this project or would like to order the software, contact Concept Systems Incorporated at:

concepthelp@conceptsystems.com

or 118 Prospect Street, Suite 309, Ithaca, NY, 14850 or see their Web page on:

<http://www.conceptsystems.com/>

Proposed Criteria

Participants were given the following instructions:

Generate statements (short phrases or sentences) that constitute specific standards that you believe AEA should include in its Standards for Accreditation of Graduate Programs and Specialisations in Evaluation.

To help assure that the statement set was homogeneous with respect to grammatical structure, each statement was created so that it could be logically read following the following brainstorming prompt:

One specific standard I believe AEA should include in its Standards for Accreditation of Graduate Programs and Specialisations in Evaluation is that ...

The proposed criteria are shown grouped into the 10 clusters suggested by those who participated in the sorting and rating phase (see the diagram on the next page). The diagram also shows the average importance rating (on a five-point scale) for all clusters across all participants, although care should be taken in interpreting this, given the small number of respondents.

This map shows the labels that were selected for each of the eight clusters. In general, the labels were suggested by an analysis of the sort pile labels of all participants. This map no longer shows the statement points because all of the individual points tend to make the map harder to read.

One interesting feature of this map is the clear split between the three program-related clusters on the top and left and the other curriculum-related clusters on the right and bottom. This suggests that if we had to put all of the statements into two broad accreditation categories, it might be

sensible to label them 'Program' and 'Curriculum'.

Details of the statements in each cluster are listed below. The numbers refer to the label given to each statement as it was generated in the initial brainstorming.

Cluster 1: Program Philosophy

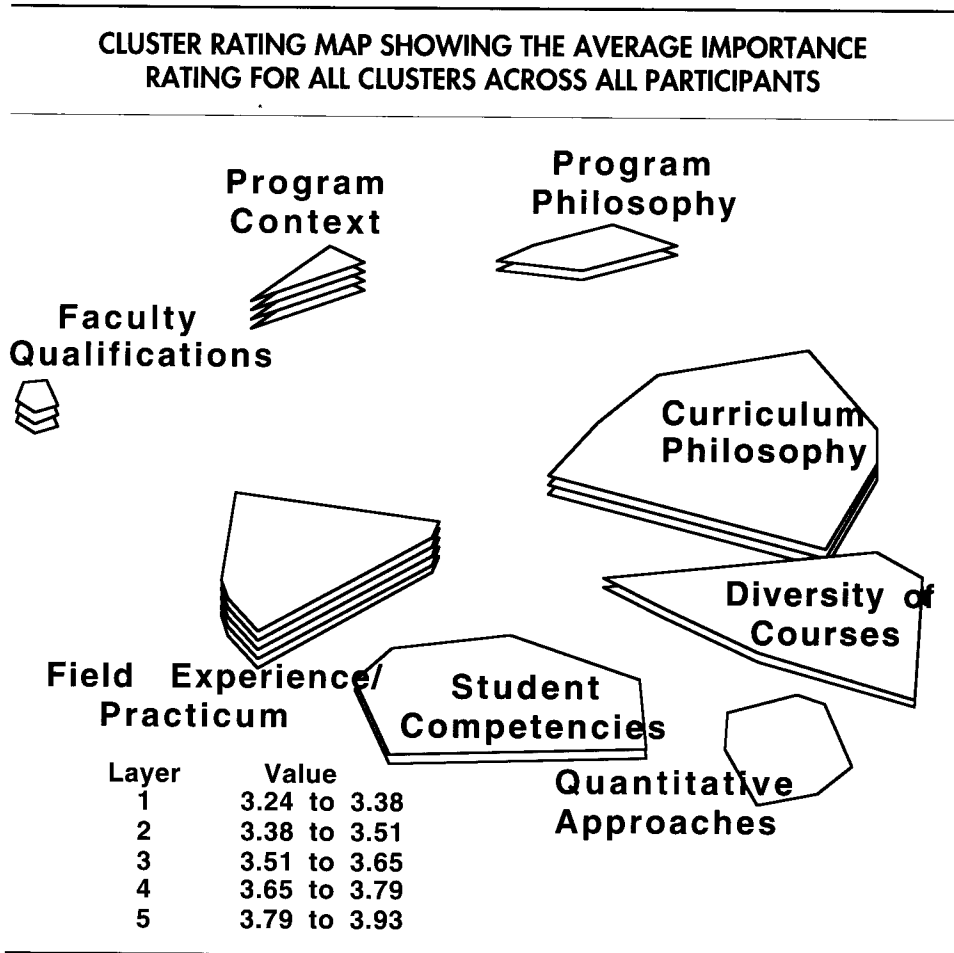
- 1) The program publicly states an explicit philosophy of education by which it intends to prepare students for the practice of evaluation.
- 9) The program's philosophy embraces real programs, and real people in the real world.
- 10) The program eschews simple answers to complex problems.
- 41) The program evaluates itself for results.
- 42) The program publishes a mission objective which serves as the foundation of planning and doing.
- 80) The program recognises the importance of cultural and individual differences and diversity in the training of evaluators.
- 81) The program demonstrates that its education, training, and socialisation experiences are characterised by mutual respect and courtesy between students and faculty and that it operates in a manner that facilitates students' educational experiences.
- 82) The program demonstrates its commitment to public disclosure by providing written materials and other communications that appropriately represent it to the relevant publics.

Cluster 2: Faculty Qualifications

- 2) The program has at least two full-time faculty members who are members of the American Evaluation Association.
- 4) The faculty has conducted a substantial number of evaluations in the areas in which students are trained.
- 18) Courses are taught by faculty staff with experience in the subject matter of the course (for example, qualitative methods is NOT taught by someone who has conducted only quantitative analyses).

Cluster 3: Program Context

- 77) The program must be pursued in an institutional setting appropriate for graduate-level training of evaluators.
- 78) The program has an identifiable body of students who are of quality appropriate to the program's goals and objectives.



- 79) The program has appropriate resources to achieve its training goals and objectives, including financial support, clerical and technical support, materials and equipment, physical facilities, and access to practicum training sites and facilities.

Cluster 4: Curriculum Philosophy

- 5) There are a sufficient number of courses offered that focus specifically on evaluation.
- 8) The program curriculum includes 'communicating the results' of evaluation.
- 11) The program emphasises diverse methodologies responsive to a range of stakeholders and programs of varying levels of development.
- 14) The program addresses the theoretical underpinnings of evaluation as well as the methodological tools.
- 17) The program specifies a rational set of required and elective courses, with some that are prerequisite to others.
- 23) The program addresses the relationship between design (and/or needs assessment) and evaluation.
- 27) The program covers the professional

program evaluation standards.

- 29) The program addresses ethical analysis (for example, of services to clients, with respect to confidentiality, discrimination, abuse, triage).
- 35) The program covers various models of evaluation as a basis for justifying various evaluation designs.
- 36) The program addresses the validity and utility of evaluation itself (that is, metaevaluation), since that issue often comes up with clients and program staff (it includes psychological impact of evaluation).
- 38) The program presents and contrasts different theories and systems of evaluation.
- 39) The program has a core curriculum with optional specialties in different schools/traditions of evaluation.
- 47) While the program addresses the local context for evaluation, it also presents a wide range of national and international examples of evaluation practice.
- 52) The program includes a review of the historical development of evaluation as a profession and its relation to other disciplines.

- 58) Students are exposed to a full range of evaluation types and practices, (for example, rapid feedback evaluation).
- 59) Programs expose students to a utilitarian focus in evaluation theory and practice.
- 66) The program grounds students in the principles of sound evaluation, that is, the program and personnel evaluation standards.
- 68) The program includes both public sector evaluation as well as private sector (business and industry) performance measurement concepts and practices.
- 69) The program addresses both process as well as outcome evaluation concepts and methods.

Cluster 5: Field Experience/ Practicum

- 3) The program has a supervised practicum experience for course credit that involves students in an evaluation field experience.
- 26) The program covers legal constraints on data control and access, funds use, and personnel treatment (including the rights of human subjects).
- 40) The program demonstrates clear linkages with evaluation consumers for student field placements.
- 44) The program includes a component of real-life evaluations where students visit (or are visited by) organisations that have evaluation work/units.
- 50) The program contains a field-based element in which students apply and reflect on conceptual knowledge.
- 60) Students are exposed to exemplary and not-so exemplary evaluations and evaluation reports.
- 61) Students are exposed to the politics of evaluation in their coursework and field experiences.
- 64) The program helps the students examine the potential roles and responsibilities of an evaluator concerning the conduct and use and/or misuse of evaluation findings.
- 65) The program requires (and provides opportunities for) students to be involved in more than one evaluation from the proposal stage through the final report and follow-up, preferably as part of a team of experienced and recognised evaluators.

Cluster 6: Student Competencies

- 21) The program teaches how to focus an evaluation.

- 22) The program teaches how to engage stakeholders in all stages of the evaluation.
- 37) The program addresses evaluation-specific report design, construction, and presentation.
- 46) The program offers students an opportunity to develop skills in self-evaluation and internal evaluation, as well as external evaluation consulting.
- 48) The program develops students' skills in clarifying, analysing and articulating the different espoused-values and values-in-action of relevant stakeholders.
- 51) The program includes instruction in grant writing, budgeting, contract negotiations, report writing, and presentation skills.
- 55) The program provides students with training on locating, evaluating, accessing, and using relevant, appropriate secondary data sources, such as government databases or existing institutional databases.
- 62) The program ensures that students are able to design and carry out a quality evaluation.
- 63) The students are able to assess trade-offs in design given time and resource constraints with the least compromise to the quality of the evaluation.
- 71) The program addresses alternative assessment of learning outcomes as a result of educational interventions, including performance on authentic tasks, portfolio review, and assessing higher level learning outcomes.
- 75) The program requires students to conduct a metaevaluation.
- 76) The program offers a course in training others how to conduct program evaluation.

Cluster 7: Quantitative Approaches

- 6) The program has at least one required course in multivariate statistical analysis that covers multiple regression and the general linear model.
- 16) The program includes an introduction to basic operations, research concepts and techniques that are usefully applied to program evaluation; for example, the study of queues; allocation of resources when a utility function is/is not defined.
- 20) The program includes a comprehensive course on survey research with instruction on sample selection.
- 25) The program covers validity theory

and generalisability theory and their implications.

- 31) The program covers cost analysis.
- 45) The program reviews research and models of organisational change.
- 49) The program offers students an opportunity to study organisational learning.
- 54) The curriculum includes a basic introduction to computerised information systems and their role in providing feedback to consumers of evaluation information.
- 56) Coursework in cost analysis includes cost-benefit, cost-utility, and cost-effectiveness analysis.
- 67) The program provides a solid grounding in psychometrics.
- 70) The program includes at least one module on program logic (logical analysis, strategic linkages, and program logic models [design, review, and application]).
- 72) The program requires a survey course in research design and highlights the designs' relevancy to program evaluation.
- 73) The program requires a course in survey design and implementation and includes analysis of survey data.
- 74) The program requires a course in sampling theory.

Cluster 8: Diversity of Courses

- 7) The program includes courses in qualitative as well as quantitative approaches to evaluation.
- 12) The curriculum includes a diversity of courses to cover aspects of the major tools of the practice of evaluation; namely – theory, methods, and statistics – and the practical application of those tools.
- 13) The program requires a course on ethics that deals in real-world issues.
- 15) The program includes management-oriented evaluation tools (for example, performance-based program budgeting) as well as traditional science-oriented evaluation tools (for example, quasi-experimentation).
- 19) The program includes a course on evaluation design.
- 24) The program covers basic qualitative and quantitative methodologies (including survey and observation skills, bias control procedures, practical testing and measurement procedures, judgement and narrative assessment, standard-setting models, etc).
- 28) The program addresses personnel evaluation (since a program can hardly be

said to be good if its evaluation of personnel is incompetent or improper).

- 30) The program covers needs assessment, including the distinctions between needs and wants, performance needs and treatment needs, needs and ideals, met and unmet needs, etc.
- 32) The program covers synthesis models and skills (that is, models for pulling together subevaluations into an overall evaluation, subscores into subevaluations, and evaluations of multiple judges into an overall rating or standard).
- 33) The program covers the difference between the four fundamental logical tasks for evaluation (of either (a) merit, or (b) worth), namely grading, ranking, scoring, and apportioning, and their impact on evaluation design.
- 34) The program covers the technical vocabulary of evaluation (including an understanding of commonly discussed methodologies such as performance measurement and TQM).
- 43) The program shows students how evaluation can be a part of organisational strategic change management.
- 53) The curriculum includes coursework that emphasises the importance of the evaluation of program implementation, and provides methods for evaluating program implementation and providing rapid feedback.
- 57) Coursework exposes students to organisational behaviour theory.

Responses and comments to these criteria are welcome. Please contact Bill Trochim on:

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'I have lived in this world just long enough to look carefully the second time into things that I am most certain of the first time.'

— Josh Billings

'Economics and Evaluation: Economic Evaluation of Research Performance in Universities' continued from p 53

STRATEGIC RESPONSE TO NEW SYSTEM

Researcher	Research Output	% of Funds
A	126.5	67.3
B	50.0	26.6
C	11.5	6.1
Total	188.0	100.0

The effects of this strategic response has been to inflate research output even more and to improve the allocation to researcher A, even though it is not possible to regain the original position when researcher A obtained all the research allocation. The dynamics of the system does not provide incentives to seek good research outcomes and research impact but, on the other hand, does provide an incentive to produce inconsequential papers and to engage in anti-social activities by wasting resources. This case study illustrates why it is necessary to consider research outcomes and research impacts in evaluating research performance.

Conclusions

The evaluation of research performance in universities is in a relatively primitive state as a complete evaluation procedure would require systematic use of economic and evaluation concepts. Definitions of the concepts of research inputs, output, outcomes and impact have been given but the problem of measurement of these concepts in an unambiguous and non-illusory way remains.

References

- Duhs, LA & JD Stanford 1996, 'Distorted incentives in the tertiary education sector,' in Nguyen, Duc-Tho, *Queensland, Australia and the Asia-Pacific Economy*, papers from the Third International Conference on Economics in Business and Government, Economic Society of Australia (Qld) Inc, Brisbane.
- National Board of Employment, Education and Training 1994, *Quantitative Indicators of Australian Academic Research*, Commissioned Report No 27, AGPS, Canberra.

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HEALTH PROGRAM EVALUATION COURSE BY DISTANCE EDUCATION

The Centre for Health Program Evaluation will offer a new distance education course in 1997 which provides an introduction to health program evaluation theory, research and practice. The Centre for Health Program Evaluation consists of the Health Program Evaluation Unit of the University of Melbourne and the Health Economics Unit of Monash University. For further information, contact Distance Education in Health Program Evaluation, Centre for Health Program Evaluation, Yarra House, Fairfield Hospital, Yarra Bend Road, Fairfield, Vic Australia 3078.

Please provide information about other courses and training in evaluation for a feature on this topic in the next issue of Evaluation News & Comment. Please send your contributions to the Editor, Patricia Rogers, c/- one of the following postal addresses or by e-mail to the address below.

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