

Creating a Strategy to Evaluate Student Placements in Your Long-Term Care Home

Evaluations should be focused on assessing the established goals of your partnership and student placements, and the level of progress that has been achieved in relation to these goals ^(Anderson, 2017).

To do this, a recommended choice is what’s known as a ‘net impact evaluation’ or ‘outcome-based evaluation’, which can help your LTC home identify whether an experiential learning opportunity has achieved the desired results, as well as other impacts it may have had ^(Evaluation western Australia). This evaluation data can be used to inform future action and improvements to an experiential learning placement in your LTC home ^(Evaluation western Australia).

‘Pre’ and ‘post’ evaluations can also help your LTC home measure the impact of secondary school student placements by comparing participants’ responses before (pre) and after (post) implementing these placements in your LTC home.

Use the following template to develop your evaluation strategy.

<p>Evaluation method(s): (e.g. questionnaire, interviews, pre and post, etc.)</p>	
<p>Participants: Who is completing the evaluation? (e.g. residents, team members, students)</p>	
<p>Time frame: When will you start and finish your evaluation?</p>	
<p>What will you measure? Use goals and indicators that are relevant to your LTC home (outlined in Step 2 of the guidebook) to inform what your evaluation will measure.</p>	
<p>Other considerations:</p>	
<p>Will participants need extra support to complete the evaluation? If so, is that available?</p>	
<p>Once the evaluation has been completed, who is responsible for looking at the data and informing next steps?</p>	

Writing Your Evaluation

Different evaluation methods can help you gather a range of useful information from your participants.

Quantitative methods: gather numerical data that is precise, objective, and can be analyzed mathematically (McGill Qualitative Health Research Group [MQHRG], n.d.). This data is easily measurable and comparable, and is aimed at conclusive results. One way to obtain quantitative data is by using questions with a rating scale.

Qualitative methods: gather written data to enhance your understanding, or to collect participants' perspectives (MQHRG, n.d.). This data is descriptive and is not measurable in a mathematical way, but can be analyzed in other ways, such as grouping similar responses into categories or themes (MQHRG, n.d.). Using open-ended questions is a way to collect qualitative data.

Rating scales

Sample **rating scale:**

Please rate the following items by circling a number based on how you currently feel at work.

[E.g. I feel that I have the time to practice person-centered care effectively during my workday.]

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

Statements that can be used for a pre/post evaluation

Ensure that your statements align with and relate to your goals. Additionally, consider using a mix of positive and negative statements to ensure participants are completing the scales or questions thoughtfully.

Examples of statements to measure participant attitudes:

Positively-framed

- Older people are interesting.
- Younger people contribute to their community.
- I feel that I have the time to practice person-centered care effectively during my workday.
- The contributions of a secondary school student through an experiential learning placement would improve my work day.

Negatively-framed

- Older adults are tired and inactive most of the day.
- Younger people are not interested in interacting with older people.
- I feel stressed/overwhelmed during my workday.
- Supervising a secondary-school student during my workday would add to my stress and workload.

Examples of statements to measure skills, abilities, or knowledge:

Positively-framed

- I understand the meaning of the term “personal expressions.”
- I know what life was like for Canadian citizens during the Second World War.
- I am able to contribute to the lives of those around me.
- I have sufficient knowledge to practice person-centered care.

Negatively-framed

- I am unable to communicate with residents living with dementia.
- I do not know how to respond when a resident expresses that they are upset.
- I do not know how to properly assist residents with eating or drinking.

Open-ended questions

Open-ended questions and statements can be used to gather participant perspectives, which can then be analyzed qualitatively.

For example:

How do you feel about spending time with, and receiving support from, secondary school students?

Open-ended questions can also be asked in a pre/post format so that answers can be compared before and after student placements.

For example:

Pre-

Explain what obstacles, if any, Maple LTC home may face by offering experiential learning opportunities for secondary school students.

Post-

Explain what obstacles, if any, Maple LTC faced when offering experiential learning opportunities for secondary school students from September to January.

Combined

Open-ended questions can be used in combination with a rating scale to allow you to collect easily measurable and comparable data, as well as a deeper understanding of participants' answers.

For example:

Please rate the following items by circling a number based on how you feel before participating

1. The contributions of a secondary school student through a cooperative education placement would improve my work day.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

Please explain your answer:

How to make questionnaires anonymous

In order to make questionnaires anonymous so no participants can be identified, yet still be able to compare their pre and post responses, an individual who is **not** part of the evaluation team will need to assign each person completing the survey a participant identification code. This can be an identifying number, letter or combination of letters and numbers (such as p1, p2, etc.). The participant should use the same identification code on both their pre and post questionnaires so that they can be matched up afterwards. If you choose to make your questionnaires anonymous, a sample participant identification code recording table is included on the following page.

References

- Anderson, H. K. (2017). The impact of the APIE process on the service delivery of inclusive recreation. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/openview/9a67c6b0aa1360bd7957606cfd2c13e6/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>
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