Measuring progress on equality: qualitative evidence
With thanks to Kath Bridger from BSV Associates for her input into this guidance.

Further information

Freya Douglas
info@ecu.ac.uk
Measuring progress on equality: qualitative evidence

Contents

Introduction 1
Why measure progress with evidence? 1
Quantitative and qualitative approaches 2
Steps for measuring progress using qualitative evidence 5

1 Establish: qualitative baselines 6
How can we identify qualitative baselines? 6

2 Formulate: qualitative indicators 9
How can indicators measure progress over time? 9
How can we identify qualitative indicators? 10
Impact indicators 11

3 Review: qualitative monitoring 13
How can we monitor progress using qualitative evidence? 13

4 Analyse: evidence of progress 16
How can we draw conclusions? 16

5 Report: create a picture of progress 19
How can we report change at institutional and individual level? 19
How can we use qualitative evidence in reporting? 20

Toolkit 22
Analysing qualitative evidence 22
Considerations 25

Glossary of terms 26

© Equality Challenge Unit, April 2014
Introduction

Identifying and measuring the impact of equality activity on the working and learning environment of a higher education institution or college can be complex. It may take several years before a benefit is realised, and there is often more than one stage and level of impact. Pinpointing a direct relationship between specific activity and a specific impact is therefore challenging, particularly for equality areas where there is little quantitative data.

Qualitative evidence can be used either on its own or in conjunction with quantitative data to help identify and measure progress on equality, and ultimately impact.

This guidance sets out five steps to gathering, analysing and using qualitative evidence to help measure progress on equality and the impact of specific initiatives. It focuses on sources of evidence that are already generally widely available across institutions, and builds on approaches already being applied to monitoring and evaluation.

Why measure progress with qualitative evidence?

Meeting equality legislation

Measuring progress on equality work is central to demonstrating that an institution is undertaking work to meet the public sector equality duty (PSED) of the Equality Act 2010. Institutions in England, Scotland and Wales need to ensure they have systems in place to capture evidence of how they are meeting this duty across their functions.

In Scotland, using both quantitative and qualitative evidence to measure and demonstrate progress can help to show that an institution is meeting the Scottish specific duties of the PSED. This includes the need to report on progress in mainstreaming equality and achieving equality outcomes.

For more information on the PSED see: www.ecu.ac.uk/subjects/equality-act-2010
**Illustrating a case for change**

An evidence based approach to measuring progress on equality can provide the basis of a rationale for making changes. It can highlight areas of policy or practice that need to be developed and where action is required, so that appropriate action can be taken.

**Quality assurance and an inclusive culture**

The evidence gathered to measure progress on equality will support the development and delivery of inclusive practice, helping to deliver the best experience and outcomes for both staff and students.

**Demonstrating impact**

In the current environment, institutions are increasingly required to demonstrate the impact of their work. Measuring progress with qualitative evidence will provide a richer picture of the impact your work has had on people’s experiences, which can be more personal and engaging than high-level statistics.

**Quantitative and qualitative approaches**

Social research is typified by two approaches: quantitative and qualitative. A quantitative approach focuses on quantification and measurement. As such, turning information into numbers, and statistical analysis of usually large datasets is a central part of this approach. There is a focus on the reliability and validity of the results.

A quantitative approach allows us to quantify and measure factors such as ‘who,’ ‘what,’ ‘where’ and ‘when.’ For example, statistical data collected at key points, such as at student enrolment and graduation, would allow us to analyse the number of students who enrolled and in which subjects, their continuation and degree attainment rates. This might also include using inferential statistics to identify statistically significant factors affecting progress and predict future results on the basis of this information.
In contrast, a qualitative approach seeks to collect and analyse information that is generally in a non-numerical form – for example, personal narratives or accounts of experiences. Qualitative research tends to be relatively small-scale in terms of the number of participants involved and collected through such methods as focus groups, interviews, or open text in surveys. As such, qualitative evidence is more descriptive in nature than quantitative data, providing fuller, richer information that can help us to better understand less quantifiable aspects, such as ‘how’ and ‘why’.

Qualitative evidence is an important tool for steering work undertaken to tackle inequality and for demonstrating the results and impact of the work that is undertaken to advance equality. Qualitative information enables us to develop an in-depth understanding of what progress has been made and the reasons it is happening by taking account of people’s thoughts and experiences. For example, a qualitative approach may be useful to gain insight into:

- perceptions
- attitudes
- behaviour
- experiences
- awareness
- knowledge and skills

Qualitative evidence can reveal issues or inequalities experienced by protected characteristic groups, provide an indicator of the levels of awareness and knowledge of equality and diversity among staff and students and how they implement this in their practice or dealings with others.
### Advantages/disadvantages of quantitative and qualitative data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quantitative data</strong></td>
<td>= Objective and replicable</td>
<td>= A minimum frequency of participants is needed, which may not be available (especially for underrepresented groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>= Able to summarise information across a large range of factors</td>
<td>= Results are rarely in detail and can sideline minority views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>= If the data is from a representative sample, the results can be generalised to the wider population</td>
<td>= Methods of data collection may not be suitable for subjective or sensitive information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>= Able to determine statistical significance eg whether a result is likely or not due to random chance</td>
<td>= Can be inflexible in design – eg survey questions will be created before collecting data so it is important to get them right as they cannot be adjusted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>= Able to model and predict future results based on known information</td>
<td>= Requires a certain level of user understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>= Can easily monitor change or progress over time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualitative data</strong></td>
<td>= Information gathered is from the point of view of the target group(s)</td>
<td>= Difficult to quantify the number of respondents who hold one view or another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>= Results are fine-grained and provide a rich narrative</td>
<td>= Snapshot in time – limited replicability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>= Able to effectively capture differences in views</td>
<td>= Cannot be certain that the findings can be extended to wider population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>= Able to adapt to capture different groups/needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>= Relatively small number of participants required (an appropriate approach if target groups are underrepresented)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Using quantitative and qualitative evidence together

Both quantitative and qualitative data are important to demonstrate and measure progress across areas such as attitudes and experience, opportunity and outcome, and participation and relationships.

Quantitative evidence can tell us how many people took part in an activity and were broadly satisfied (‘hard’ outcomes). Qualitative evidence can gauge how their participation or experience affected their individual perceptions, attitudes or understanding (‘soft’ outcomes).

When evaluating equality work, combining qualitative with quantitative evidence can give both a statistically reliable measure of the magnitude of the impact as well as a greater depth of understanding of how and why progress was made.

For example, statistical data showing the change in the number of women at senior level could be supported by qualitative evidence showing perceptions of whether and how women are supported to progress to senior levels in the institution.

Steps for measuring progress using qualitative evidence

The task of measuring progress on equality should be regarded as an ongoing activity that is best achieved through embedding it into the planning, monitoring, and reviewing activities of an institution.

The following five steps can be incorporated into a planning cycle at institutional or departmental level:

1. **establish**: qualitative baselines
2. **formulate**: qualitative indicators
3. **review**: qualitative monitoring
4. **analyse**: evidence of progress
5. **report**: progress at all levels
1 Establish: qualitative baselines

Baselines formed of quantitative and qualitative evidence provide the starting point needed to identify changes and assess future progress.

Baselines give a snapshot of performance or a situation at a particular point in time which allows measurement of distance travelled. They give a basis for:

= comparing the situation before and after action
= measuring the level and direction of change
= gauging progress towards overall aims or intended results

Qualitative evidence can give context to baseline quantitative data, for example, views of the causal or contributory factors of a situation. It can also fill in gaps where quantitative data doesn’t exist, such as relating to the newer protected characteristics (eg sexual orientation). This is important to be able to fully understand the baseline and effectively plan interventions to make improvements.

How can we identify qualitative baselines?

Qualitative baseline evidence will be available from evidence-gathering exercises prior to developing equality initiatives.

Sources that can provide qualitative baseline evidence include:

= open questions from survey responses
= results of equality impact assessments
= evaluation and feedback from equality and diversity training and events
= records from involvement, engagement and consultation exercises, such as focus groups and interviews
= views of experts, equality groups and communities
= staff exit interviews
= complaints, grievances, issues and feedback to students’ unions, representatives and other student services
= internal research
= external research that considers internal practices
= anecdotal evidence collected from conversations, ad hoc meetings and discussions with staff and students
Table 1: examples of baseline evidence from selected sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of evidence</th>
<th>Baseline qualitative evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Equality impact assessments (EIAs)       | Formal or anecdotal reports of low staff engagement in undertaking EIAs and of it being a ‘tick box’ exercise  
                                           | Published EIAs show consideration of equality impact in some areas                           |
| Equality and diversity training          | Formal or anecdotal reports of low staff engagement in training  
                                           | Reports of lack of awareness of availability of training  
                                           | Feedback that training has not impacted on practice or behaviour                             |
| Surveys and questionnaires               | Responses around experiences, attitudes, behaviour, culture  
                                           | Responses on how disabled staff and students’ needs are being met  
                                           | Responses from students on how equality features in their learning experiences               |
| Focus groups                             | Comments from staff on experiences, behaviours, attitudes, inclusivity, institutional culture.  
                                           | Personal comments/quotes to illustrate current position/situation                            |
| Annual course reviews                    | Responses regarding how equality is considered in curriculum design and learning, teaching and assessment practice  
                                           | Experiences of students relating to their progression and achievement and their protected characteristics |

Evidence gaps

Once you have established baselines, it is helpful to check that all relevant qualitative evidence has been taken into account.

You may find that there are gaps in the evidence base for an initiative or activity and so you may need to seek additional specific qualitative evidence. For example, you could develop an online survey related to the topic of the work, or add questions to a wider survey or engagement exercise.
1 Establish: qualitative baselines

Establishing qualitative baselines checklist

- Baselines describe the current situation and the qualitative factors (e.g., experience, knowledge, attitudes, practices, skills) that the work seeks to address.

- Baseline evidence is collected (or will be collected) within a timeframe close enough to the implementation of an activity so that meaningful conclusions can be reached.

- Baselines accurately reflect the situation for the target staff/student protected group/s and have been checked with representatives of these groups.
2 Formulate: qualitative indicators

Indicators of success express what the achievement of an activity or initiative will look like, and identify change from the baseline situation. A combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators will generally be needed to effectively assess impact and change. This will enable you to cross-check information from a variety of sources to ensure your conclusions are correct.

Indicators will measure change at different stages of delivery:

- **short-term** – what we deliver: often described in terms of outputs
- **medium-term** – immediate results of what we deliver: demonstrate response to an activity and growth in knowledge and skills
- **longer-term** – impact or outcome of what we deliver: show change in behaviour and culture

### Table 2: short (S), medium (M) and long (L) term indicator examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
<th>Qualitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low levels of staff awareness and confidence in dealing with equality and diversity issues</td>
<td>S New training and support programme implemented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor uptake of equality and diversity training</td>
<td>M Proportion of staff uptake of training</td>
<td>Increase in staff awareness directly after training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality-related complaints from students</td>
<td>L Number of equality-related complaints from students (could increase initially)</td>
<td>Changes in staff behaviour Increased staff confidence Positive relationships between staff and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational commitment to equality and diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of awareness among staff/students of institution’s equality and diversity values</td>
<td>S Institutional values re-launched; used in team building/induction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate behaviour of staff/students towards protected characteristic groups</td>
<td>M Proportion of staff aware of values</td>
<td>Increase in awareness of values directly after activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High level of complaints that relate to equality</td>
<td>L Proportion of staff understand and implement values Number of equality-related complaints</td>
<td>Changes in behaviour Improved relationships Improved experiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How can we identify qualitative indicators?

Questions to ask in the design and review stages of developing qualitative indicators include:

= what change in factors (experience, attitudes, confidence, behaviour) do you want to see?
= what would success look like and how should it be measured?
= who should be involved in defining the vision of change and determining the indicators?

These questions will inform the indicators that you formulate and help to identify the type of qualitative evidence needed to assess whether progress has been made.

Qualitative indicators can be developed to express changes to the institution as a whole, to departments or functions, and to the behaviours or experiences of staff or students.

At institutional/departmental/functional level they can express:

= how far equality is mainstreamed/embedded
= whether attitudes towards equality have become more positive
= a belief that equality is taken into account at senior strategic level
= progress or good practice in an area or department

At an individual level, indicators can articulate how far equality is a part of, or affects:

= knowledge and understanding of institutional values
= quality of practice and expected behaviour
= the way staff and students engage and interact with each other
Impact indicators

Measuring progress and success can be achieved by identifying progression through levels of impact, supported by relevant indicators. The following model is used by ECU to analyse responses to its annual sector survey.

The survey focused on the process by which change is achieved. Impact measurements within the survey were based on the premise that outputs translate into results through a series of ‘impact levels’:

- **input**: the initial resources (time, staff, costs) required to produce ECU’s outputs
- **foundation**: the activity or output produced as a result
- **reaction**: the response to the activity or output
- **learning**: the initial impact of the activity or output – such as a growth in knowledge and skills
- **behaviour**: any change in behaviour that follows
- **results**: how the change in behaviour has furthered overarching goals (so, for example, improved equality and diversity for students and staff)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Amount of activity</td>
<td>Improved equality and diversity for students and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>Response to activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>Knowledge and skills grow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change in behaviour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Impact levels**
This model uses a system of four impact levels that outline a process of change and which can be supported by relevant quantitative and qualitative indicators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundation</th>
<th>Short-term indicators or results (quantitative)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reaction</td>
<td>Medium-term indicators of success (quantitative and qualitative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Long-term indicator of impact (quantitative and qualitative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualitative indicator checklist

- The link between the indicator and the ultimate aim or intended result being sought is clear and meaningful
- Indicators take account of all protected characteristics where possible or appropriate
- Indicators can be measured with appropriate evidence reasonably frequently for monitoring purposes
- Indicators are relevant and legitimate as they are endorsed by the people who will be most affected by change
3 Review: qualitative monitoring

How can we monitor progress using qualitative evidence?

Monitoring progress involves collecting evidence at key stages during the life of an initiative, and reviewing this evidence against baselines and indicators to identify change. The methods for monitoring progress need to be appropriate for the timelines of the initiative. They should also enable evidence to be compared across the short, medium and longer term indicators you formulated.

It is helpful to use sources of evidence that are the same, or similar, to those used for the baseline evidence. For example, if a baseline has been established based on qualitative evidence from staff surveys, you should repeat the surveys, asking similar questions.

This avoids creating additional monitoring and review activity and contributes to the embedding of equality in established systems and processes.

Table 3: sources and types of qualitative evidence for monitoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of evidence</th>
<th>Qualitative evidence of change/progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equality impact assessments</td>
<td>Published EIAs show greater consideration of equality than previous EIAs, or show consideration of equality taking place in new areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal or anecdotal reports of greater staff engagement in undertaking EIAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qualitative evidence of how policies/services/practices have improved as a result of EIAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality and diversity training</td>
<td>Evaluation and/or follow-up survey of participants:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- reports of impact on confidence and knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- reports of changes in practice as a result</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Source of evidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of evidence</th>
<th>Qualitative evidence of change/progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Surveys and questionnaires   | Responses to open text questions designed to measure results of individual initiatives. For example:  
  - responses to staff survey around improvements that have been made to the working environment  
  - responses from disabled students on how their needs are being met in comparison to previously, and the impact of this on their likelihood to withdraw or succeed  
  - responses from students on how equality features in their learning experiences in comparison to previously |
| Focus groups                 | Responses to specific questions as above  
  More detailed evidence of the impact of institution’s activities on the experiences of target groups  
  Personal comments or quotes to illustrate change/progress                                                                                                                                 |
| Annual course reviews        | Responses regarding changes in how equality is considered in curriculum design and learning, teaching and assessment practice  
  Changes in experiences of students relating to their progression and achievement and their protected characteristics |
Review and monitoring checklist

- Existing review and evaluation mechanisms across functions can be used to monitor progress on an activity or initiative. For example, inclusion of specific questions in established surveys.

- Additional or new monitoring mechanisms may also be needed, for example consultation exercises or surveys.

- Mechanisms should test change, for example, questions that ask for staff or students’ experiences in comparison to before the activity or initiative.

- Compare ‘like for like’ where possible – draw evidence from the same or similar sources as used for baselines or using similar methods.

- Link-up with wider research activities – measurements of progress can be built into the design and delivery of research activities being undertaken elsewhere in the institution.

- Assign responsibility – agree who will be involved and a schedule for the monitoring methods/process over the life of the initiative.
4 Analyse: evidence of progress

Analysis involves working through the evidence collected to understand what change or impact it demonstrates.

Evidence gathered should be analysed at periodic intervals during an activity or initiative as well as after it is complete. This will allow conclusions to be drawn as to the progress made against overall aims as an iterative process at appropriate stages in delivery, review and reporting.

Analysis requires evidence to be organised and sorted so that you can identify themes and patterns. Refer to the toolkit on page 22 for approaches to analysing qualitative evidence and key considerations.

How can we draw conclusions?

Analysis will enable you to draw conclusions on:

- what has changed from the baselines
- to what extent the indicators have been reached

It is important that the conclusions that are drawn can be shown to have a direct and explicable link to the evidence. To help with this, qualitative studies often use an analytic framework to sort and present evidence of change against baselines and indicators.
### Table 4: an example of a simple analytic framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of evidence</th>
<th>2013 baseline</th>
<th>Qualitative indicator</th>
<th>2014 evidence</th>
<th>Short/medium term conclusions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aim: increased retention and success for disabled students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student satisfaction survey</td>
<td>Disproportionately low levels of retention and achievement for disabled students</td>
<td>Greater satisfaction/ improved experience/ outcomes for disabled students</td>
<td>Some improvement in satisfaction with learning and teaching experience</td>
<td>Progress made towards aim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support service user feedback</td>
<td>Disproportionately low satisfaction of disabled students</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reported better use of inclusive materials</td>
<td>Staff development activity having an impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aim: staff in all operational areas have a greater understanding of their responsibilities in equality and diversity, and apply this in their practice to respond to the needs of their colleagues and students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course/ service review</td>
<td>Low awareness and understanding</td>
<td>Increase in staff and student understanding and awareness of equality and diversity</td>
<td>Staff and students reporting an increase in awareness</td>
<td>Progress made towards aim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff appraisal</td>
<td>Negative attitudes to equality and diversity work</td>
<td>Perceptions/ attitudes/experience are positive</td>
<td>Dialogue on equality issues being recorded in staff appraisals</td>
<td>Activities undertaken are beginning to have a positive impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff/student surveys</td>
<td>Anecdotal/ formal reports of discrimination or harassment by staff and students</td>
<td>Staff and students feel they are treated with dignity and respect</td>
<td>Focus groups highlight gaps in actions/further areas for development</td>
<td>The level of dialogue about equality issues is increasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Staff and students are more confident in discussing issues in order to find positive solutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Analysing evidence of progress checklist**

- Let the evidence speak for itself rather than looking for what is assumed or expected.
- Guard against bias in any analysis.
- Aim to analyse evidence at periodic intervals during an activity or initiative as well as after it is complete to enable tracking of progress over time.
- Compare key findings from the analysis against baselines and indicators to identify change and progress towards indicators.
- Draw conclusions that are based on analysis of the evidence.
- Methods can be as simple as looking for recurring patterns, key words or themes and types of experience, e.g., negative, positive, neutral.
- Where possible, disaggregate evidence by protected characteristic and look for themes relating to each protected group.
- Consider the balance of the evidence in terms of who was involved, the protected groups they may represent etc.
- Seek advice and guidance from a research or analytical colleague. Academic staff can offer helpful guidance.
5 Report: create a picture of progress

Reporting should bring together your evaluation of the evidence and present the results and impact achieved. Reporting on equality work usually forms part of an institution’s reporting and planning cycle. Evaluation of specific activities can be used both to demonstrate impact and to develop future work if integrated into a planning and development cycle.

In reporting, qualitative evidence can again add weight to quantitative data. For example, key statistics can be used to establish an objective outcome, for which qualitative evidence can describe the story of progress in compelling detail.

How can we report change at institutional and individual level?

Some reporting may focus on specific initiatives or activities while others may require an institutional approach to reporting, for example to demonstrate mainstreaming. It can be helpful to structure such a report to demonstrate progress in embedding equality at both the institutional and individual level, or across different departments or functions of the institution.

At institutional, departmental or functional level, qualitative evidence of change in perceptions, attitudes and views can be used to show how equality is embedded in:

= governance and senior management
= strategy
= policies
= systems, processes and procedures

At the individual level, it can demonstrate change in how equality is a part of or has had an impact on:

= knowledge, understanding and attitudes
= practice and behaviour
= communication and engagement
How can we use qualitative evidence in reporting?

Qualitative evidence in the form of themes identified in the analysis, quotes, case studies and examples can engage readers through powerful narratives or personal stories. These are effective tools for reinforcing specific statistics to show progress.

**Quotes**

Illustrative quotes can be particularly powerful, however, it is essential to consider whether or not the person is identifiable.

For example, citing a quotation from a senior female academic from a particular department with few women in senior academic roles would be unacceptable. In such circumstances, it might be appropriate to state that it is from a ‘senior female academic’ without mentioning the department.

Quotes can be abbreviated using ellipses to avoid publishing information that could identify people. It is good practice to obtain the consent of individuals participating in the qualitative research before publishing their comments.

**Case studies**

Case studies help to capture the complexities of the impact of initiatives or activities.

For example, detail on departmental activities and progress could be given as an example of work towards a wider institutional initiative, to demonstrate how it works in practice.

**Using supporting evidence**

It can be beneficial to supplement qualitative evidence with other sources of information to increase confidence in the conclusions that are drawn.

For example, evidence from student focus groups that suggests better inclusion of disabled students after particular initiatives have been delivered could be supplemented by external research into the impact of similar activities.
Reporting checklist

- Present progress against the established baselines and indicators.
- Draw conclusions from both quantitative and qualitative evidence sources.
- Use a range of qualitative evidence to enhance reporting and illuminate quantitative data.
- Include evaluation of progress at both institutional and individual levels.
- Use the reporting process to plan future work as well as look back on progress.
Analysis of qualitative data will be required when identifying qualitative baselines (step 1) and when identifying progress and change (step 4). Both an advantage and a disadvantage of qualitative data sources is the wealth of comments they produce. This provides a rich source of data; however, depending on staff resources or time, it may not be possible to analyse in full.

The first step is to prepare the data into a format that is easy to work with. This means, for example, transcribing any interviews and focus groups or collating information from surveys, both from the responses given to questions and any additional comments that have been made. There are then a variety of approaches that can be used to analyse the data.

Thematic coding

This involves examining the qualitative data collected, and identifying words, phrases, or paragraphs (often described as ‘chunks’) that represent a particular concept of interest. These chunks can then be labelled, a process called coding. These codes can then be organised into broader themes, and relationships between both codes and themes identified.

However, there are a number of other approaches that may be worth exploring depending on the nature of your data. For example, you may wish to take a more quantitative approach whereby the frequency of words and phrases are counted so as to ascertain relative importance of concepts.

Thematic coding can be performed manually, using tables similar to those below.

The first example organises the data gathered using both a number and a theme. Using both can be useful when dealing with large quantities of information which may be broken down further into subthemes if required.

The second example uses protected characteristics as the coding theme. However, it would also be possible to used themes highlighted by the complaint, grievance or issue – for example inappropriate use of language or behaviour – or the type of complaint – for example, disability discrimination.
Example 1: coding technique for an open interview/focus group question

Can you describe what an inclusive culture means to you here at Newtown College?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code no.</th>
<th>Code theme</th>
<th>Respondent/group ID</th>
<th>Example response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1        | Lack of understanding                         | MD                  | I'm not sure what that means  
I don't know what it has to do with me                                            |
| 2        | Embraces diversity but disaffected/negative   | FC                  | It should mean a lot but I don't think the college acts in an inclusive way       |
| 3        | Limited understanding but positive            | AM                  | I'm not sure what an inclusive culture means but  
I think the college does everything it can to make sure it helps everyone             |
| 4        | Good understanding and positive               | JP                  | I think the college states its commitment to equality very clearly and I think this backed up by its policies and actions |

Example 2: coding technique for documented data

Analysis of complaints, grievances or other issues reported by students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code no.</th>
<th>Code theme</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Type of complaint/grievance/issue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1        | Gender        | MT, KB     | Use of inappropriate language/behaviour by other students  
Overlooked for promotion                                                                |
| 2        | Disability    | LO, CD     | Lack of appropriate placement opportunity  
Exclusion from activities due to physical disability                                       |
| 3        | Religion or belief | MC        | Sectarian views expressed by a member of staff  
Inappropriate learning and teaching materials used                                          |
| 4        | Sexual orientation | FM        | Use of inappropriate language and behaviour                                                        |

The tables also include identification of the respondents. This can be anonymised by the use of a numerical or alphabetical code which can indicate protected characteristics.
Computer assisted qualitative data analysis software

It is increasingly common to use computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) to help with the process of qualitative data analysis, but it is not essential.

These software packages can help you to organise and analyse your data systematically, which is particularly helpful if you have a large volume of data. Most software packages also have functions to count or search for words, attach notes, and create visuals to aid analysis.

Commercial packages such as Atlas.ti, NVivo and QDA Miner may be available at your institution. There are also a number of open source packages available at no cost.

List of open source CAQDAS resources:
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer-assisted_qualitative_data_analysis_software

Sample focus group transcript excerpt coded in Atlas.ti

Facilitator: Can you describe what equality means to you?

Participant A: I don’t really know. It’s a word that is used a lot but it’s hard to pin down what they actually mean.

Participant B: Well, I think it’s just being fair, isn’t it? Treating everyone exactly the same… as long as you do that, people will get what they deserve.

Participant C: I disagree with you there. I don’t think it’s just about treating everyone exactly the same – it’s about establishing an environment where everyone has an equal opportunity to achieve their potential.

Participant D: Yeah, and I think beyond that it’s also about celebrating our differences. You know, not just pretending everyone is exactly the same, and have come from the same types of backgrounds, but actually recognising that we are all different and that’s OK. And making sure that there aren’t any discriminatory practices that would disadvantage certain people over others.
**Visual analysis tools**

Common visuals used in qualitative analysis include:

- **word clouds** – simple graphics that give a visual sense of what words or phrases occur in the evidence sources with more/less frequency

- **co-occurrence matrix** – a grid showing the frequency to which certain codes overlap with others (this can be very useful when looking at the frequency of codes and protected characteristics)

- **network maps** – a visual tool to map out how codes relate to each other

**Considerations**

As respondents will have their own particular perspective and views, it is important that they are considered alongside other opinions and are not used in isolation.

Comments may single out individuals and groups of people as having been responsible for inappropriate or discriminatory behaviour. These comments are important, but you should take care that no one can be identified through them.

Consultation and involvement are important aspects of ensuring that staff and students engage with the work that is being carried out to advance equality. It is often helpful to carry out ‘stakeholder checks’ with relevant individuals or organisations to ensure that interpretation of the evidence is correct and that appropriate meanings and themes have been captured.

For some protected characteristics, particularly where there are likely to be small numbers of people who hold a specific characteristic, it may not be possible or practical to consult with or involve them in this process. Consider whether there are other local or national organisations that represent that characteristic who could offer a view on the evidence that you have, or the work that you are undertaking.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Glossary of terms</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hard outcomes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Soft outcomes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Impact</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mainstreaming</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protected characteristics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualitative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quantitative</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Baselines</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Glossary of terms</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statistical significance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptive statistics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Triangulation</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Equality Challenge Unit

ECU works to further and support equality and diversity for staff and students in higher education across all four nations of the UK, and in colleges in Scotland.

ECU works closely with colleges and universities to seek to ensure that staff and students are not unfairly excluded, marginalised or disadvantaged because of age, disability, gender identity, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity status, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or through any combination of these characteristics or other unfair treatment.

Providing a central source of expertise, research, advice and leadership, we support institutions in building a culture that provides equality of both opportunity and outcome, promotes good relations, values the benefits of diversity and provides a model of equality for the wider UK society.

Did you find this publication useful?

Your feedback will help us to improve and develop our publications and resources, and help us to ensure that we produce materials that support your work.

Please take a few minutes to complete our publications feedback survey: www.surveymonkey.com/s/ecu-publications-feedback

You can also email us with your feedback: pubs@ecu.ac.uk