

Since the 1990s evaluation research has been a key tool in developing services and development programmes within a wide range of areas, including health, social services, education and environmental change, assuring and heightening quality, reliability and accountability. In this context there is a growing discourse on the importance of ascertaining the 'value' of interventions and programmes, and on 'what works' in policy or practice, based on empirically informed knowledge.

This short postgraduate module is offered as an introduction to research in the field of policy and programme evaluation. While primary orientation of the teaching and learning is the role and nature of evaluation in public sector and social interventions in the UK, we will also draw from international programmes and themes. A particular emphasis is on the evaluation of interventions directed at social care, health and wellbeing and on research utilisation in programme, policy and practice development.

This module will provide students with an understanding of what is involved in programme evaluation, and how evaluations are affected by the politics and people that drive them. We will identify and discuss critically the main approaches taken to evaluation; the key design challenges that evaluation researchers must resolve in various areas of intervention and policy; and provide the tools for planning and conducting an evaluation project. We will also examine what values, assumptions and perspectives underlie evaluative discourse and its methods, and their implications. Examining evaluation as a 'transdiscipline' analytical tool will allow us to explore major themes within evaluative research from a critical and applied perspective.

By the end of the module, a successful student should be able to:

- Distinguish different theories, models and methodologies of policy and programme research evaluation.
- Reflect critically on the relationship between political and organisational priorities, stakeholder and user interests and the evaluation research agenda.
- Recognise and explain the relative merits and limitations of a range of different strategies and methods of evaluation research, and design and measurement problems.
- Apply their knowledge and skills in designing strategy appropriate to the objectives, conditions and priorities for evaluating a particular programme or area of policy or practice and for research management and utilisation.
- Critically appraise the epistemological, methodological and ethical aspects of evaluative research

Assessment:

This module is assessed by an essay of 2000 words, requiring the student to propose and plan an evaluation project, reflecting critically on the political and organisational issues which will affect the work.

Indicative reading

- Auspos, P. and Kubisch, A. (2005) *Building Knowledge about Community Change*, Washington DC, The Aspen Institute.
- Clarke, A. and Dawson, R. (1999) *Evaluation Research: an introduction to principles, methods and practice*. London: Sage.
- Ghate, D. (2001) 'Community-based evaluations in the UK: scientific concerns and practical constraints'. *Children and Society*, 15(1), pp. 23-32.
- HM Treasury (2011) *The Magenta Book*,
http://issuu.com/hmtreasury/docs/magenta_book_combined/15
- Holden, D., & Zimmerman, P. (2008). *A Practical Guide to Program Evaluation Planning Theory and Case Examples*. Thousand Oaks Cal: Sage
- Kazi. M. (2003) *Realist Evaluation in Practice*. London: Sage.
- Ling, T (2012) 'Evaluating complex and unfolding interventions in real time' *Evaluation Vol. 18* pp79-90
- Newburn, T. (2001) 'What do we mean by evaluation?' *Children and Society*, 15(1), pp. 5-13.
- Owen, J.M. and Rogers, P. (1999) *Program Evaluation: Forms and Approaches*. London: Sage.
- Patton, O. (2011) *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use*. London: Guildford Press
- Pawson, R. and Tilley, N. (1997) *Realist Evaluation*. London: Sage.
- Rossi, P.H., Freeman, H.E., Lipsey, M.W. (1999) *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach*. 6th Edition. London: Sage.
- Sanderson, I. (2002) 'Evaluation, Policy Learning and Evidence-Based Policy Making', *Public Administration*, Vol. 80, No. 1. pp.1-22.
- Shaw, I.; Greene, J C; Mark, M M (2006) *Handbook of Evaluation*. London: Sage
- Stufflebeam, D. L.; Shinkfield, A. J. (2007) *Evaluation: Theories, Models, and Applications*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Taylor, D. and Balloch, S. (2005) (eds) *The Politics of Evaluation*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Tilley, N. (2000) 'Doing realistic evaluation of criminal justice', in Jupp, V., Davies, P. and Francies, P. (eds) *Doing Criminological Research*. London: Sage.

Key journals

- ☐ Evaluation
- ☐ Evaluation Review
- ☐ Policy & Politics