

## The benefits and challenges of developing surveys for evaluating widening participation activities and student experience.

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### Abstract

This paper reports on the use of surveys in an evaluation of university widening participation (WP) activities, exploring the benefits and challenges associated with their development. It draws from the experience of, firstly, using surveys to evaluate across diverse activities and, secondly, to explore changes over time in the student experience. The starting point is discussion of the challenges associated with these uses, including the need to reach a shared understanding of terminology and attempting to achieve a balance between competing objectives, such as achieving comparability while allowing for specificity. Such issues frequently revolve around seemingly small details which usually remain invisible to the users. The paper argues that resolving these issues is invariably difficult and time consuming but that this process needs consideration to highlight its importance and the payoff in terms of the benefits that can be accrued for the WP students themselves in achieving more robust results.

### Reference

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### Project:

This paper was based on research undertaken by REAP (Researching Equity, Access and Participation) as part of its evaluation of Lancaster University's Access Agreement Outreach Activities.

For further information including project report [Access Agreement Evaluation Project Outputs](#)