

Worked Example

B: An evaluation plan for a disability service

This example is taken from Colorado State University's campus-wide continuous improvement system known as PRISM (Plan for Researching Improvement and Supporting Mission), which is used by both academic and student affairs units. As well as demonstrating how impact evaluations are undertaken, it shows how PRISM emphasises the linkages of the goals of specific service areas, which are being evaluated, with those of the wider department's and the university's mission.

University mission:	<p>How does the work of the centre 'fit' with the university's mission? For example,</p> <p>The service supports the university in fulfilling its desire to provide fair and equal learning opportunities accessible to all applicants with the ability to succeed irrespective of background. The service also ensures the university is in compliance with disability legislation.</p>
Strategic plan:	<p>How does the work of the centre 'fit' with the university's strategic plan? For example,</p> <p>The disability service will support the university's strategic plan in ensuring that the needs of disabled students will be taken into account with respect to access to the curriculum, assessment and examinations, and student support.</p>
Student Services strategy:	<p>How does the work of the centre 'fit' with the overall strategy of the Student Services department? For example,</p> <p>The activities of the disability service supports the department by ensuring that the needs of disabled students are taken into account with respect to access to the curriculum, assessment and examinations, and student support (accommodation, financial support and allowances, and other support services).</p>
Service purpose:	<p>The service ensures that students with disabilities are not discriminated against due solely to their disability from participation in, or benefit from, any course of the university.</p> <p>The service works in partnership with other student service areas, other university departments and academic units to ensure that courses and services promote student access, learning, personal development, and retention.</p>
Monitoring:	<p>Data are available from a number of sources: the university's student records, feedback from students who seek support from the service through satisfaction surveys; staff meetings where problems are identified and discussed; and at departmental staff meetings.</p>

Improvement plan and desired outcome

Outcome description:

Determine whether or not the referral process between student service areas, other departments and academic units is working or if another strategy needs to be created to support disabled students in their academic progress and success. Two measures will be considered:

- effectiveness will be determined by the number of students (more than XX%) who complete the referral process;
- impact will be determined by an overall equivalent or higher academic performance/achievement of those students completing the referral process in comparison to those who do not complete the process.

Strategy to demonstrate outcome:

Effectiveness of process: during a meeting with a student, disability counsellors will determine whether or not students need a referral to other student services areas or university departments based on a self-reported check list and other information provided by the student.

Impact: a referral is evidence of a student who is significantly at risk in terms of academic performance.

Evaluation method:

Effectiveness: each student will be identified in a database whether or not they completed the check list / were referred. For those students referred, feedback from the referred area will be sought to determine the outcome. The total number of students referred will be compared to the number of students who subsequently completed the process to determine a percentage for measuring effectiveness.

Impact: academic performance/achievement will be retrieved from student records on all disabled students each semester and entered in the database. A comparison will be made between completed referrals and those students who did not complete the process to determine whether or not the referral made an impact on student performance/achievement.

Expected outcome:

Effectiveness will be measured by more than XX% completion rate of referrals. If not effective, reasons why will be explored.

Impact will be measured by an equivalent or higher academic performance/achievement for the completed referrals as compared to students who did not complete the process. If the referral process does not demonstrate an impact, possible reasons why will be explored.

Derived from Colorado State University.