>> *This case study describes the approach the Career Centre at Trent University has used to evaluate their career counselling service.*

This case addresses the evaluation of

Inputs	no
Processes	yes
Outcomes	yes
• Learning outcomes	yes
• Personal attribute outcomes	yes
• Impact outcomes	yes

Evaluating Career Counselling at the Career Centre, Trent University

Our main goal in developing a tool to evaluate our career counselling service was to measure change for a student, be it learning, confidence or impact on future actions. We were trying to understand if our services were having an impact on students in some way. We also felt this knowledge would also help us, as facilitators, understand if we were covering the necessary material and providing the appropriate activities to facilitate change. In the career counselling process, we also used this process as a training/professional development opportunity with the counselling staff. The discussions helped us to better understand the common approach the Centre used and develop a Counselling Approach training/PD tool. This information is also useful in final reports and marketing materials, but we were not being asked for it specifically.

We use the data to inform quality improvements and in individual case consultation discussions. Decisions about continuing a service have tended to be based more on attendance statistics.

The Evaluation Tool

We developed and used the Career Counselling Evaluation – Individual Appointment tool.

The process of developing this tool began by first developing outcomes for career counselling. These outcomes consisted of broad educational outcomes, competencies (based on the Blueprint for Life/Work Designs) and specific outcomes (learning, personal attribute and outcome). This was a challenging exercise as each individual session will be unique. We ended up approaching it from the standpoint of what overall change/impact would we like to see in each session. Our outcomes (which are constantly being edited) are:
- Learning:
  - Importance of self knowledge
  - How to find relevant information
  - Strategies to take the next step
  - Connection between your education and career
- Personal Attribute (confidence in)
  - Making career related choices
  - Ability to take the next step
  - Managing your career
- Impact
  - Has what you learned been useful/or will be useful in managing your career

From there we used these specific outcomes to develop the survey. In the career counselling survey there was more emphasis placed on process as well. This was a team effort.

Career Counselling Evaluation – Individual Appointment

Logistics

Who the tool(s) were used with	Students
When the tools were administered	At the end of each term.
How the tools were administered	Online Zoomerang survey.
Response rate	5%
Summarizing and analyzing data	The counsellor reviewed and summarized the data. We use a 5 point scale and collapse our results into two categories (scores of 1 or 2 are considered unacceptable; scores of 3, 4, or 5 are considered acceptable). This collapsed data and key highlights are summarized in a shared word document. In December and April, we meet as a team to review this document and discuss any potential changes in service.

Our Results and Learnings

To review our results, as mentioned above, the collapsed data and key highlights are summarized in a shared word document. In December and April, we meet as a team to review this document and discuss any potential changes in service. Highlights from these summaries are also incorporated into the final report.

The strength of this tool is that this evaluation encourages us to be thoughtful and reflective in our approach. The weakness is that students are survey fatigued already, and it is challenging to measure a counselling session.

Looking at our overall approach, the strengths are that we can conduct the evaluation online, and that it is quick and requires no data input by staff. Two weaknesses are that students are inundated with emails and may ignore us, and that completing it at term-end may be too late to be relevant for students

Our main learning has been how challenging it is to measure counselling sessions. We revisit this survey annually and look at the language and results to see if we need to make further edits. It has also allowed us to see if/where we are having an impact/facilitating change for a student.

We have become very familiar with the three types of outcomes and have found that that is where our emphasis is in our process. We do include questions that look at process and it was very helpful to be able to differentiate them from outcomes to ensure we were using an outcomes-based approach. Lastly, I would say that we continue to grapple with inputs and how/when to incorporate them into the survey process.

As with any initiative, there have been growing pains in implementing this. With the counselling survey, it has taken significantly more discussion and reflection to come to a place where we are comfortable. If there were more time, I would have liked to have been able to have more time understanding inputs and their role in the survey process.

Over the last 3 years, we have made many changes to our survey, based on what we learn each year. It has been helpful for us to remember that surveys do evolve and what you put on paper/online one year can be adapted the next. This perspective may help in moving from a draft to finalized survey for distribution. The other thing we have found is that consistency between surveys, where appropriate, makes it easier for staff and students.