



Evaluation Practicalities Information: Categories for collecting data **6C**

Categories for core participant data

There are a number of options about how you might collect and record core participant data. Some are more straightforward than others for instance gender (male / female) or in the case of Date of Birth (DoB) HEFCE have specified a standard format (dd/mm/yyyy).

Other data categories are more complex and as yet there is no common agreement about the level of detail or the categories to use. For instance, schools, Further Education colleges and Higher Education institutions use different categories for both disability and ethnicity. Both these pieces of data are dependent on an individual participant's views about disclosing the information.

Participants' decisions about answering questions is influenced by how you ask the question, what they think you will do with the information, or the extent to which they identify with the labels and options provided.

Disability

At a simple level you could ask

- Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person? Providing the option of Yes / No

You could add to the information you collect by asking

- If yes, please give details about the nature of your impairment

Alternatively, you could give a short description of who might typically fall within the disability category and then ask them to answer the question above, or to tick a box that they feel most closely describes them. The current UCAS categories which the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) also uses are:

- 0 None
- 1 Specific learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia)
- 2 Blind or partially sighted
- 3 Deaf
- 4 Wheelchair or mobility difficulties.
- 5 Autistic Spectrum Disorder or Asperger Syndrome.
- 6 Mental Health Difficulties.
- 7 Unseen Disability (e.g. diabetes, epilepsy, heart condition)
- 8 Two or more of the above.
- 9 Disability, special need or medical condition not listed above.

When working with pupils in school and liaising with school staff it is important to remember that they tend not to use the term disability, instead they use the term SEN (Special Educational Needs) which includes pupils who do not have a disability. As part of their PLASC (Pupil Level Annual Schools Census) they collect data using a different set of categories.

For a list of SEN categories see <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/datatypes/> You will see there are some natural overlaps, however the differences can make it confusing and somewhat frustrating.

This is a case of where data collection can be a basis of information exchange between participant and provider. It is possible to use this question to raise awareness that disabled students attend university and as a basis for discussion about the support that is available for disabled students.

Evaluation Capacity Building in Widening Participation Practice



Answering participants' questions about disability and higher education

Action on Access Disability: http://www.actiononaccess.org/?p=1_3

Skill national disability organisation: <http://www.skill.org.uk/>

Aimhigher Lancashire Disability project:
<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/projects/LAHDisability.htm>

For an on line explanation of the social model of disability that informs current practice see:
<http://www.selfdirection.org/dat/training?cmd=guest&p=%2Fcourse01%2Fwelcome.html>

Ethnicity

Another source of participant data that you can use different data collection categories is ethnicity. It is important to remember everyone has an ethnicity, whether they wish to disclose this or which category they feel best describes themselves will depend on the individual. As with disability, the collection of this data can also be the basis of discussion about identity.

The number of categories used varies according to context and has changed over time. There are different categories used in individual Local Education Authority and the data collected by the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) differs again and has also changed over time.

- ✓ It is therefore worth talking to partners and trying to agree a set of categories which it is practical to collect and record as well as how or if you will merge specific sub-categories.

The Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) list for 2006-07 and their notes are included in table 1 for access to excel spreadsheets of data see:

www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_datatables&Itemid=121&task=show_category&catdex=3

It is HESA's intention to adopt national classifications where they exist and are appropriate. However, in this instance, there is no coding structure for ethnicity that is applicable throughout the UK, as variations to the Census 2001 ethnicity coding were adopted in both Scotland and Northern Ireland. To accommodate requirements for institutions in these regions to report locally to their devolved administrations, the coding frame has been revised. ...

The following entries have been grouped together and this may mean that the ethnicity groupings used in previous years may not now be comparable:

The ethnic category 'White' includes the entries:

White (only available for continuing students who commenced their programme of study before 1 August 2001 or for students admitted via UCAS who commenced their programme of study after 1 August 2005)

White – British

White – Irish

White – Scottish

Irish Traveller

Other White background

The ethnic category 'Other (including mixed)' includes the entries:

Mixed - White and Black Caribbean

Mixed - White and Black African

Mixed - White and Asian

Other mixed background

Other ethnic background

HESA 2006-07 Table 1



Ethnic Minority Achievement Data

The Ethnic Minority Achievement site includes Frequently Asked Questions and hosts a wealth of resources that can be adapted to suit individual circumstances.

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/collecting/763919/>

Some of the resources available include:

- An excel spreadsheet listing all Local Authorities and the ethnicity categories they currently use. <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/resources/LAcategoriesV1Mar08.xls>
- A sample letter for parents (available in different languages) that explains the reason for collecting ethnicity and also explains what will be done with the data. http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/collecting/763919/764063/English_form.doc
- Information leaflets (available in different languages) about ethnicity categories and how and why data about ethnicity is collected. This leaflet includes answers to a number of FAQ that those new to collecting data have asked. http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/collecting/763919/764063/English_leaflet.pdf



How to ... monitor race and disability

Aimhigher Greater Merseyside Evaluation Toolkit developed by Laura Grant

See pages 4-12 that explains the use of monitoring data about race and disability and includes examples of codes to use for recording ethnicity and a form for access requirements for disabled participants. Page 18 includes an A4 sheet which provides an extended list of ethnicities and an open disability question

http://www.ahgtm.ac.uk/uploads/documents/oct_07/aim_1192025996_Evaluation_Toolkit_Web.pdf

Version 1: June 2008