

## Access and Participation Evaluation Glossary

Note: this glossary is not intended to be fully comprehensive, but provides simple definitions of some terms you may come across in access and participation work or evaluation reports.

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**Access (as a student lifecycle stage):** Students progressing from school/college into higher education; particularly, those from under-represented groups progressing at equal rates to their peers.

**Attainment:** The degree classification awarded to a student. This is also sometimes referred to as 'awarding'.

**Awarding gap:** The gap between rates of 'good' degrees – a First or 2:1 among different student groups.

**BAME:** Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) – but note this acronym is less common in recent discourse. The limitation of this definition tends to result in the assumption that minority ethnic students are a homogenous group. Use ethnicity, and specify on any groups.

**BME:** Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) - see above.

**Comparison group:** A group of similar students to compare outcomes to. It's important to specify how this group was chosen, which characteristics were matched, etc. Note, this is different to a **control** group (this is only when participants were randomly assigned to a group), because it uses available data to construct the group after the activity has happened.

**Completion:** Whether a student completes their course and graduates.

**Continuation:** Whether a student is still on-course 1 year and 15 days after they enrol.

**Evaluation type (1,2,3):** Refers to the standards of evidence (see entry for *standards of evidence*), so what type of data was collected and which evaluation methodology was used.

**FSM:** Eligible for Free School Meals; a proxy measure of disadvantage.

**Graduate outcomes:** Gathered via a survey, to see what graduates are doing 15 months after graduating.

**Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT):** [HEAT](#) is a national database system to keep a record of the young people who have taken part in outreach activities.

**IAG:** Information, Advice and Guidance about all aspects relating to university.

**Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintiles:** An English governmental [measure of deprivation](#) based on postcode, that combines several factors such as crime rates, education and employment. There are 5 quintiles, with 1 being the most deprived and 5 the least.

**Intervention strategy:** An explicit strategy for how an APP objective will be reached; activities form part of an intervention strategy.

**LAC:** Local authority care.

**Mature students:** Home undergraduate students who are aged 21 or over at the start of their course.

**Non-parametric test:** The equivalent statistical test for when distributions are non-normal.

**Normal distribution:** The bell-shaped curve. If you want to learn more about the stats behind it, you can [read more here](#).

**POLAR:** Participation of local areas ([POLAR](#)) classification; this groups areas across the UK based on the proportion of young people who participate in higher education. Five quintiles are ordered from quintile 1 (those areas with the lowest rate of participation) to quintile 5 (those areas with the highest rate of participation).

**Positive Graduate Destinations:** An [OfS classification](#) of the destinations students go on to after graduating. [See more here](#).

**Progression (as a student lifecycle stage):** Students' [progression](#) into the labour market and other destinations after leaving higher education. It reports on whether they are employed in managerial or professional roles, undertaking further study or in other positive outcomes.

**Standards of Evidence (OfS):** These are [guidelines about the type of evidence produced](#) by an evaluation. Briefly:

*Type 1* – narrative or coherent theory about what the activity is and why it is done

*Type 2* – empirical enquiry, meaning there is some data and evidence indicating whether the activity results in specific outcomes (though it's not causal)

*Type 3* – the impact evaluation provides **causal** evidence of the effect of an activity.

**Statistically significant:** Basically, whether the difference between two means is due to a real effect or likely due to chance. We use the 5% level – which means that if a result is statistically significant there is **less than 5%** chance that the result occurred randomly. The lower the p value, the lower the chance of it occurring randomly (therefore, lower p values are better!)

**Success (as a student lifecycle stage):** The measurement of key indicators from when a student is in higher education; in the APP, the measures for Success typically include non-continuation rates, retention rates and attainment gaps from underrepresented groups.

**Theory of change:** [Essentially](#) a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. You can see more about this on [the TASO website](#).

**T-test:** A test of whether two means are statistically significantly different. A [t-test](#) has several assumptions, including that the distribution is normal.

**Unexplained gaps:** Some of the factors that contribute to the non-continuation and attainment gaps are structural, such as entry qualification, subject of study or age of students. However, once such structural factors are taken into account, there remain significant unexplained differences which are referred to as unexplained gaps.

**Validated scale:** A survey that contains questions which have been tested on thousands of students. They are tested for the age range the survey is intended for. The surveys have been statistically analysed for internal reliability; therefore, these surveys are preferable to bespoke surveys where possible.

**Whole provider approach:** A whole provider approach requires alignment and consistency across the institution to create an inclusive approach which all students benefit from, irrespective of their position in the provider.