Education Endowment Foundation

Evaluation Summary

Age range	FE College Students
Number of students	Around 1,200
Number of schools	6
Protocol date	16/03/2018
Version	1

This document outlines the proposed methods to understand if the Assess for Success intervention is ready to be trialled at the efficacy level.

Summary

The Assess for Success intervention is a professional development programme aimed at improving student attainment for those resitting their English GCSE examination in college. Delivered by The Manchester College (TMC), it aims to improve attainment by supporting teachers and students to better understand the gaps in their knowledge, and take ownership over these, through strong formative assessment procedures. It is one of the post-16 trials funded by a partnership between J.P.Morgan and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF).

The first year of the study will be a pilot, to understand if the programme is ready for trial. This document outlines our proposed methods for the research we will conduct to ascertain if the programme is ready for trial.

For the research, we will use a convergent parallel mixed method design, where data are formatively collected across the year and triangulated during the final analysis phase. This will enable the findings from one source of data to be confirmed or refuted by the other sources of data. These will be as follows:

- Self-report survey with teaching staff who helped develop the training
- In-depth interviews with students, teachers and Senior Leadership Teams (SLT)
- Observations of the intervention, including training and delivery in schools
- Administrative Data of attendance and online metrics

With a focus on feasibility, evidence of promise and participant experience, using our findings we will work with the delivery team to refine the pilot so it is of maximum benefit. In summer 2019 we will present these findings to the EEF. In addition, an

ongoing dialogue between the delivery team and evaluation team will be established to provide timely feedback from the pilot.

This work is part of a specific round of funding looking at post-16 education which is being co-funded with JPMorgan Chase as part of their commitment to expanding the technical and professional education of young people to expand access to economic opportunity.

Intervention

Background

The Manchester College has developed an assessment model for GCSE English resit students that is teacher-driven and focuses on identifying gaps in English skills. The assessment model includes a paper-based diagnostic, to identify the baseline level of English attainment of the students and further 'bite-sized' online assessments to monitor and track their progress. Assessments are managed and internally moderated by teachers and progress is monitored through a holistic Learner Progress Review tool that also considers students' wider skills for learning applicable to subjects beyond English. Learning from within Manchester College suggests that this teacher-led assessment process has improved teachers' skills in using formative assessment to plan future lessons. The programme aims to develop a culture of formative assessment across English departments, as well as help students, through assessment feedback, to understand and take ownership of their development needs.

Studies on the effect of feedback on student attainment have reported mixed results. One study of Assessment for Learning (AfL) estimated a large positive effect (up to half of a GCSE grade per student), and a meta-analysis of studies on this approach suggests, 'that an improvement of about three months' additional progress is achievable in schools or nearer four months' when the approach is supported with professional development.'[1] However, some studies have also estimated negative effects[2] and recent research funded by the EEF has shown that effective formative assessment practices can be difficult to implement.[3] The quality of the evidence on written marking in particular (relating to both formative and summative assessment) is lower and, whilst some 'best practices' are suggested, more studies are required to improve our understanding of this field.[4] This research aims to contribute to the wider

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[1] Educational Endowment Foundation (2015). Feedback. Available from www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/toolkit-a-z/feedback/.

[2] Educational Endowment Foundation (2015). Feedback. Available from www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit/toolkit-a-z/feedback/.

[3] Gorard, S., See, B. H., & Siddiqui, N. (2014). Anglican Schools Partnership: Effective Feedback, p.6. Education Endowment Foundation. Available from https://educationalendowmentfoundation.org.uk/uploads/pdf/FINAL_EEF_Evaluation_-_Anglican_Schools_Partnership_-_February_2014. pdf.

[4] Elliott, V., Baird, J. A., Hopfenbeck, T. N., Ingram, J., Thompson, I., Usher, N., Zantout, M., Richardson, J., & Coleman, R. (2016). A marked improvement?. *A Review of the Evidence on Written Marking,* p.5. Education Endowment Foundation.

literature by supporting the development of an intervention and assessing its promise, with a view to conducting an efficacy study in the future.

Intervention Development Support

In advance of the pilot, the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) will offer support to TMC, to help them refine and develop the intervention so it is ready to be piloted.

This phase involves three core components:

1) Arranging for experts in Assessment and FE to review TMC materials and collating their feedback
2) Observing a pre-pilot training session run by TMC
3) Synthesising these findings into a 2-3 page report for TMC and the EEF

This phase is running from January-April 2018.

Pilot description

The pilot will be implemented over the academic year 2018-19. Assess for Success is focussed on improving outcomes for learners taking GCSE resits through the use of diagnostic formative assessment.

English resit teachers will be trained within college in the Assess for Success materials, assessments and be supported by a programme of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) across the academic year by TMC. This will take place across approximately six large sites with a minimum of two teachers, but ideally the whole English department, in each site. The practitioners will use the assessment materials and revised schemes of work with their students who will re-sit their GCSE English examination in summer 2019. Throughout this process, the teachers will attend multiple types of training (an introductory whole group training, and then within-college small group booster training) and login online to use the formative assessments which informs the students Learning Progress Review. On a termly basis the teachers will deliver a handwritten diagnostic assessment from which they will evolve their planning to address the student areas for development.

- Assess for Success key elements will include:
  - Initial diagnostic assessment of 20 minutes reading, 20 minutes writing marked by tutors
  - Diagnostic tool with skills-focussed bite-size assessments
  - Learner Progress Review tool for students
  - CPD programme and resources and on-going booster sessions
  - Online forum for staff (Moodle) to share practice and facilitate access to resources

Students will re-sit their English examinations in summer 2019.

Research questions
The pilot aims to address three research questions, which hope to address the pilot's overarching purpose: *whether the intervention is ready for trial*:

1. **Evidence of promise** – does it appear that this intervention could improve GCSE attainment of FE learners?
2. **Feasibility** – can the intervention be delivered in a way that is effective for FE Colleges and FE English teachers?
3. **Readiness for trial** – is enough in place to allow the intervention to take place the following year at scale (i.e. have enough participants been trained to act as trainers, are the programme materials and training suitably defined and developed)? And are the data collection methods suitable, feasible and readily available?

Outcomes

Research question	Indicator	Method
Evidence of feasibility ***Can the intervention be delivered practically and are the systems in process to enable the intervention to be easily scaled?***	Staff attendance at training and CPD sessions: 80%	Admin data
	1. All participating students successfully complete a diagnostic assessment 2. 85% of tutors use the bitesize skills assessments 3. 85% participating students are fully integrated into the LPR tool	Administration data
	4/6 colleges (at both the SLT and teacher level) perceive that the approach is feasible to deliver and continue to implement.	Self-report survey Case study Interviews
	4/6 SLT perceive that there is value in this intervention (compared to traditional methods of assessment).	Case study Interviews
Evidence of promise ***What evidence is there that the intervention can have a positive impact on student outcomes?***	70% of interviewed students can articulate their personal development priorities and strategies in English	Case study Interviews
	70% of surveyed teachers report that they can articulate the individual development priorities and strategies of their students – able to monitor and track progress and adjust curriculum to meet the needs of their students, provide timely intervention for students.	Survey Case study Interviews

	4/6 SLT feel they are more able to effectively monitor progress, in-year, in the delivery of quality teaching, learning and assessment.	Survey and Case study Interviews
Readiness for trial *To what extent is the intervention used as anticipated and is the programme sufficiently codified to operate at scale?*	1. 100% of TMC Champions feel the training equips and empowers them to roll out the intervention 2. 100% Pilot College Coordinators feel the training equips and empowers them to roll out the intervention	Admin data (MOUs) Survey
	80% of PC coordinators are willing and able to continue the programme in colleges	Survey
	1. 70% of pilot teachers highly rate programme materials overall; 2. 70% of pilot teachers feel resources are easy to access on-line 3. 70% of pilot teachers feel resources are easy to use	Survey Interviews
	3/5 non-intervention colleges perceive that A4S is a valuable and feasible intervention to support their GCSE re-sit students.	Non-intervention senior staff interviews

Method

For the Assess for Success pilot, a convergent parallel mixed method design[5] will be employed, where data are collected formatively across the year and triangulated during the final analysis phase. This design will enable the findings from one source of data to be confirmed or refuted by the other sources of data. It will be important to capture how the materials were developed and then delivered to teachers who then use the materials with their students.

Recruitment

All colleges who meet the recruitment criteria (over 200 students or multi-site, and with at least 2 teachers per setting) and are signed up by TMC, will participate in the pilot study. Through their Memorandum of Understanding we will obtain consent for their participation in the pilot.

Across the colleges, we will purposively select three colleges to work with closely for the case studies. This comprises interviews with four teachers, five students and one member of the SLT per college. We will also interview the relevant Pilot College Project Coordinator and TMC Champion. We will purposively select students to interview. Informed opt-out consent will be sought from the FE Learners (over 16 years of age) via their teachers. The non-intervention colleges will be selected from a list of colleges which are involved in the Study Supporter Trial. We are aware that these may already be more motivated colleges as they are engaged in another trial.[6]

Data Collection

To explore the factors outlined above, several types of data collection methods need to be conducted and triangulated. As no two studies are the same, data collection methods will be finalised once we have obtained an in-depth understanding of the intervention. We will use a sequential design, where quantitative data will inform the sampling of the subsequent qualitative data, and will be supplemented with further quantitative data at the end of the programme. We will purposively sample from a range of stakeholders to ensure we are mapping how the types of participant interact with the intervention. We envisage using the following methods, but will need to test their feasibility with the delivery organisation.

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[5] Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2007). Designing and conducting mixed methods research.
[6] https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/texting-students-and-study-supporters

In summary, pilot data will be captured through:

Data Collection Method	Sample Size	Collection Date
Self-reported surveys	All teachers and delivery staff	April 2019
Case studies (semi-structured interviews and observations of lessons and community of practice session)	3 colleges. Per college: ● 4 teachers ● 5 students ● 1 SLT ● 1 project coordinator ● 1 TMC mentor	March 2019
Observations of different types of training	All teachers in the training sessions	Across the year
Administrative data 1. Website metrics 2. Training and CPD attendance lists 3. Recruitment data	1. All teachers 2. All colleges 3. All colleges 4. All delivery staff	April 2019
Interviews with non-pilot colleges	4 colleges (2 that have expressed an interest in future participation, 2 that have declined an offer to participate) 1 SLT member per college 1 English teacher per college	March 2019

Administrative data

Working closely with the delivery partners, we will assess which administrative data are most appropriate for answering the research questions outlined above. We anticipate that this will at least include training attendance, student attendance and intervention materials usage data (both online and offline).

Case studies

Case studies are a powerful research strategy to use within mixed method designs as it adds completeness to the exploration of complex issues in situ.[7] The case studies will involve *observations* and *interviews* with a combination of teachers, project delivery team, students and senior college leaders. Individuals will be selected based on certain characteristics that aims to capture the overall sample (such as ethnicity, gender, prior GCSE resit results, or other characteristics considered relevant by the delivery partner). The case studies will be conducted at different time points in the programme to understand the changes in engagement and participant experience. Additionally, we will conduct observations of the different types of training to understand how feasible and impactful they are.

Online Surveys

To gather data from all participating schools, we propose that an online survey of all colleges be carried out to understand issues of feasibility, readiness for trial and evidence of promise. To encourage participation and minimise the burden on respondents it is expected that the survey would take individuals no more than 15 minutes to complete. We would welcome input from the project team in the design of the survey questions.

Approach to analysis

For each of the three research questions (on promise, feasibility and readiness) quantitative metrics will be triangulated with the relevant qualitative findings from interviews and observations. This combined analysis will produce an answer to each research question. In some cases, the quantitative targets may be met or exceeded, but qualitative data may reveal issues that suggest the project is not yet ready to progress to an efficacy trial. Conversely, for a given research question, one or more quantitative targets may not be met, but qualitative data may suggest that the project is ready to progress in spite of this. Finally, findings from across all three research questions will be assessed together to produce an overall recommendation as to whether the project is ready to progress, along with more detailed recommendations in relation to each research question. The findings of the study should also be actively evaluated with the developers, who will be undertaking their own process of continual review during the pilot.

Ethics and registration

We will seek informed opt-out consent for students involved in the trial - the teachers will take responsibility for this. Teachers will consent to participate as part of their memorandum of understanding when recruited by Manchester College. For detailed information on how we protect data, please refer to our security policy in annex 1.

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[7] Yin, R. K. (2013). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Sage publications.

Personnel
Evaluation Team
- Jessica Heal – Pilot evaluation and IPE
- Patrick Taylor – Pilot evaluation and IPE
- Pantelis Solomon - Oversight and Quality Assurance
- Louise Jones – Evaluation coordinator

Delivery Team
- Gill Scott
- Hilda Koom

Risks
This section outlines the risks to the pilot that we anticipate may arise and steps we are taking to mitigate against these.

Risk	Mitigation
Colleges are unable or unwilling to support research administration.	Consider practicability as an important criterion in choice of assessment tools and data collection design.
Teachers are unwilling to participate in research	Oversampling strategies and asking for a minimum of 4 teachers will increase our chances that we will find consenting participants. It will also be part of the MoU signed by SLT when they sign up to participate in the study.
Students opt-out of participating in research	In the case that students opt-out of participation, observations will take place of the teachers delivering the materials to understand how students engage in the lessons.
Teachers fail to provide data on time to the evaluation team.	If the teachers have difficulties collecting data in the baseline data collection stage, we will move the latter data collection dates forward by 1 month to ensure the data are collected in time to feed into the June report.

Timeline

The outline timeline below is purely illustrative; it is flexible and we would expect to identify realistic timings in collaboration with the EEF and the delivery team.

Phase	Timing	Lead
Refine evaluation design	November 2017 - February 2018	BIT
Intervention development support	December 2017-May 2018	BIT
Finalise delivery resources	January - April 2018	TMC
Recruit Pilot colleges	November 2017 - March 2018	TMC
Train pilot college staff	June - September 2018	TMC
Programme delivery in pilot colleges	September 2018 – June 2019	TMC
Refinement of training, CPD and teaching resources	April 2018 - June 2019	TMC
Pilot report	June 2019	BIT