## Inspiring Learning

**Strengths of different research methods in generating statements about learning**

With all these methods you will need to consider the language and literacy levels of users and find the most appropriate way of helping them to articulate their learning experiences.

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<th>Method</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Things to consider</th>
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| Response cards          | - Are a flexible way of engaging with users  
- Can be used to stimulate a response linked to a specific Generic Learning Outcome or be open ended  
- Can be used as part of a display and other people can be encouraged to read them - it can be made “fun” and interactive to catch users’ attention (see Graffiti Walls)  
- Need minimal administration as users can complete the card or write in a comments book themselves  
- Can encourage users to write, draw or record their comments about learning in their own way and take into account different levels of ability  
- Can target people engaged in particular activities or in different parts of a site depending upon where the response cards or comment books are placed | - Posing questions in a comments book or on a card will improve the quality of the comments relating to learning  
- Provide good quality pens and paper to indicate to users that their comments are being taken seriously  
- Place comments cards so that all users can see them and are encouraged to share their views |
| Comments cards          |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                       |
| Comments books          |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                       |
| Questionnaires          | - Are good for large-scale collection of evidence of learning outcomes where broad information is required rather than in-depth exploration  
- Are flexible and can be used in a variety of formats - on-site, by email or post  
- Can be framed around the GLOs to collect evidence of learning outcomes  
- Can include closed or multiple-choice questions to collect broad evidence of learning for computer analysis  
- Can be open-ended to collect more general comments from users about their learning  
- Can be used flexibly - they can be self-completion or administered by a staff member who can help explain questions that may not be straightforward for some users  
- Collect demographic information comparison of learning outcomes across age / gender  
- Have the potential to collect information from participants over time about their learning experiences | - Questions need careful phrasing to reflect age, language and ability levels of the target group  
- The ‘look’ of the questionnaire is important and good design is crucial  
- Be aware of questionnaire ‘overload’ - is this method suitable for the users you are trying to reach?  
- It can be difficult to control who completes self-completion questionnaires  
- Make them manageable so that users are not put off by (perceived) length or difficulty of questions about learning  
- It is essential to develop skills in using spreadsheets to analyse information especially for large-scale collection of questionnaires |
Inspiring Learning
IMPROVEMENT TOOLKIT FOR MUSEUMS, LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES

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| Interviews   | ■ Can take place face to face or on the telephone  
■ Can help you to explore learning outcomes in more depth around the GLOs  
■ Conducted by peers, may be good for eliciting learning outcomes following a shared learning experience  
■ Used one to one, can provide good information about learning, attitudes, feelings, opinions and behaviour  
■ Have the potential to collect information from participants over time about their learning experiences  | ■ Find ways of setting participants at ease - they need to feel comfortable about sharing their experiences with the interviewer  
■ If language is an issue use a translator or peer interviews where one person could translate for the other  
■ Plan how you will analyse the data in advance - an interview may produce a large amount of evidence that may be time-consuming to analyse unless the interview is structured (then answers may be more predictable)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Focus groups | ■ Can elicit in-depth information from participants about their views and experiences of learning in museums, archives and libraries.  
■ May encourage people to share their attitudes, beliefs and experiences more openly through group interaction  
■ Can be structured around the GLOs to focus discussion although experience suggests a broader discussion on learning will often flow better  
■ Are a good way of collecting and reinforcing evidence of learning from groups participating in a learning experience  
■ Enable you to collect different perspectives of the same topic/experience or at different time periods if focus groups are carried out at different stages in a learning experience.  
■ Can involve activities that could help participants to convey their learning experiences in different ways  | ■ The facilitator needs to be skilled in leading the discussion and keeping the group focused. He/she needs to ensure that everybody feels comfortable about sharing their experiences and opinions equally  
■ Make practical arrangements clear for all involved including location, maps, furniture and refreshments  
■ You may need to pay for participants attending a focus group or provide an incentive  
■ It may not be easy to extract the individual's learning outcomes from the group learning outcomes  
■ You will need to take notes (which may require a second moderator) or record the discussion  
(See downloadable guide to setting up a focus group for more guidance)  |
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| Graffiti walls | ■ Are interactive as comments can be made to look attractive as part of a display - people can read others’ comments and may be encouraged to add their own  
■ Can include a single question based on the GLOs so that people’s responses are focused on learning  
■ POST IT notes can be used as a colourful / cheap way of getting people to share their comments | ■ Comments need to be fixed strongly to the wall or they might be lost  
■ Provide a posting box for respondents wanting to keep their comments anonymous |
| Drawings       | ■ Are useful when writing skills are limited and may be more “fun” or engaging  
■ Can be used in combination with written comments to aid analysis | ■ These are challenging to interpret without questioning and mediation               |
| Observation    | ■ Observation can work well if participants “talk out loud” about their experiences while the observer walks around with them - an accompanied visit | ■ Observation without explanation shows what people do but not why they do it so evidence of learning outcomes may be limited  
■ May need to be combined with interviews or questionnaires  
■ If people know they are being observed their behaviour may be affected  
■ If the observer is hidden it may be complex to recognise learning from people’s actions / speech |
| Video          | ■ A Video box/booth  
■ Could be used with a single question based on the GLOs as a prompt to record people’s learning  
■ Is an appealing alternative to traditional comments cards - may be more fun and engaging for some users than writing comments  
■ Is potentially a powerful tool for gathering evidence for advocacy purposes | ■ Analysis of video may be time-consuming with too much material e.g. from a discussion  
■ Needs to be edited properly if material is used to show learning outcomes  
■ Not easy to set this up unless integrated into the design of a space |
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| Role-play / acting             | - Can invite participants to act out a role in order to facilitate discussion about learning. Could be a good way to introduce positive and negative experiences of learning or act as an icebreaker to engage people through activity  
- It may stimulate people’s memories of a learning experience by asking them to re-live it | - Some participants may be reluctant to act out their experiences so you need to introduce the idea of role-play carefully  
- Requires a skilled moderator to carry out |
| Photographs and images         | - Can be used to stimulate discussion about learning outcomes in a focus group or interview, as a memory aid or to represent new concepts of learning to participants  
- Can be used by participants to convey their learning experiences creatively  
- Can be used with speech bubbles in a display to convey learning experiences to others | - May be difficult to analyse if the context for the photograph is unknown |
| Artworks / sculptures and things produced from visits to MAL | - Help individuals express their learning  
- Can be used in conjunction with other methods e.g. interviews and focus groups with participants to obtain the context and help articulate the learning | - As for images, it may be difficult to interpret and analyse if the context is not known |
| Letters, emails                | - Letters and emails to museums, archives and libraries can show evidence of learning | - Unpredictable and ad hoc source or learning outcomes  
- Analysis may be time-consuming |
| Vignettes                      | Vignettes/case studies could be used as a stimulus to  
- Present different learning experiences to participants in interviews or focus groups  
- Explore participant’s perceptions, beliefs and experiences in relation to a specific situation  
- Get people talking and to present a broader view of learning  
- Introduce the GLOs as a tool for analysis - using vignette with highlighter pen method of analysis | Vignettes need to be  
- Chosen carefully so that participants can relate to the learning experience  
- Not used in isolation as it may only give participants’ views about the experience contained within it rather than a reflection of their own experiences |