Using focus groups to add value to evaluation of student learning programmes  
Kirsten Reid, Victoria University of Wellington

Student Learning Te Taiako at Victoria University of Wellington offers a wide range of workshops (a single event) and programmes (a cycle offered over several weeks) for students at all levels. We consistently evaluate these offerings by recording attendance and conducting a biennial Student Learning survey. Learning Advisers may also use one-off questionnaires, surveys and one-minute-papers to get an indication of students’ satisfaction with and perceptions of the value of workshops and programmes. These evaluation methods capture data on students’ perceptions of whether their needs have been met, but they do not tell us anything about the process or the impact. What did the students hope to improve? What did they learn? What helped the learning, and did they apply any new awareness to their academic study? This presentation will report on our approach to the challenge of conducting higher-level evaluation (ICALLD framework, 2019) on non-credit-bearing courses (see Gao & Reid, 2017). As well as continuing with one-minute-papers, we will run focus groups with students at the end of selected programmes. The focus groups will add value to our evaluation by eliciting feedback on the learning opportunities that work to raise awareness; the affective element of engaging in groups; the impact of collaborative vs individual work; and the enablers and obstacles to applying new awareness to practice. Such data goes well beyond satisfaction and provides information for programme improvement because they are drawn from the students’ own words and focus on the learning process itself.


Learning outcomes
- issues related to conducting robust evaluation of teaching programmes in student services contexts.
- a framework that could be useful for planning evaluation.
- evaluation Student Learning will carry out this trimester that includes the voices of our students.

Presenter  
Kirsten Reid, Victoria University of Wellington

Kirsten Reid is a Senior Learning Advisor at Student Learning Te Taiako, Victoria University of Wellington. She works mainly with postgraduate and international students. She offers academic skills development programmes to both these groups. Her recent collaborative research projects have involved investigating and evaluating the work of learning advising, and undertaking a stocktake of transition programmes for postgraduate students.