SUMMARY
This guide provides an overview of considerations necessary in the planning and
carrying out of measuring impact studies on either individual activities or whole
programmes. It shows how to integrate the aspects delat with in the other guides in
this series.

INTRODUCTION
If you want to measure the impact of a study support activity or programme, you need to consider
how data will be collected and analysed during the planning stage. The way that data needs to
be collected may impact on the way in which the activity or programme is run, and if you don’t
think how to measure impact in advance, it may be impossible to do it successfully after the event.
The chart on the next page shows the stages in planning for measurement of impact.
Remember that measurement of impact is not the same as evaluation. It feeds in to the process
of evaluation, along with other factors such as pupil enjoyment, effectiveness of methodology,
value for money etc. A positive impact does not mean that improvements cannot be made and
this will be shown up by other elements of evaluation.

STRATEGIC ASPECTS
These notes refer to the chart on the following page.

[1] It is impossible to measure impact without clear intended outcomes for the activity or
programme. The outcomes identify the anticipated impact. It is, of course, possible that
outcomes other than those intended may occur. See guide no. 1 - “Getting Started”

[2] It is not necessary for all outcomes to be quantitative - qualitative assessments are valid in
many cases, but impact can be clearer to outsiders if figures can be given, and it is useful to
have some qualitative measure if possible. Impact of a whole programme should always
generate some qualitative data, individual activities may not. See guides nos. 5 and 6 -
“Statistics and Presentation” and “Qualitative Data and Surveys”

[3] Any given outcome may be influenced by a number of factors apart from the targeted activity
or programme. In some cases the outcome is clearly linked to the activity - if a pupil improves
her ability at chess after attending a chess club, there is likely to be a cause and effect
relationship. Improved attainment in GCSEs, though, could be affected by many school
initiatives as well as personal factors. See guide no. 3 - “Drawing Conclusions from Data”

[4] See guide no. 4 - “Sample Size and Control Groups”

[5] Sometimes it is not possible to form a valid control group. It is still worth measuring impact,
but the conclusions will be more tentative than if a proper control was used. See guide no. 4
- “Sample Size and Control Groups”

[6] It is important that an outcome is accurately measured - for instance, self-reported outcomes
may be subject to bias and may report what the pupil thinks is ‘required’. Some internal tests
may be related inaccurately to National Curriculum levels, etc.
Measuring Impact Guide 7 - A strategy for measuring impact

PLANNING FLOWCHART

Study support activity or programme

What are the outcomes? [1]

Can these be quantitatively measured? [2]

How will they be measured?

Are the measurements valid?

How can accuracy and reliability be assured? [6]

Could timing or method introduce bias? [7]

How and when will the measurements be taken?

RESULTS OBTAINED

Are any differences significant? [8]

Is statistical analysis necessary?

Do the results appear reliable? [9]

Consideration of variation

Is any further data required? [10]

CONCLUSIONS DRAWN

Number in parentheses refer to notes on previous and following page
[7] Progress in any activity is not always linear and testing too early or establishing baselines too late may influence conclusions, a test question may be ‘leading’ in some way, etc.

[8] See guide no.3 - “Drawing Conclusions from Data”

[9] A high degree of variation in the results, particularly if the sample is small, could well indicate that the results are not reliable. Sometimes the outcomes are unexpected or even the reverse of those intended. It should not be automatically assumed that this means that they are not reliable!

[10] Further data may be needed to establish whether the results are reliable, to increase the sample, or when differences seem to be marginally significant.