

Summer Institute on Policy Evaluation - Using Logic Models to Evaluate Social Programs: Before, During, and After Program Operations

Tentative Syllabus

Course concept

This course provides an introduction to the use of logic models in program planning, program evaluation, and performance measurement. In the course, students will learn how to develop a logic model for a real-world program, including how to identify logic model elements for scientifically rigorous process and impact evaluations, and for practical performance measurement systems. Pragmatic applications are emphasized throughout. Lecturers for the course include internationally renowned experts in the field of program evaluation and performance measurement.

Course credit

Students will have the choice of taking the course for one ECTS credit and a Certificate of Completion from Central European University, a Certificate of Completion from the University of Maryland, or both.

Classroom procedures

All students should come to class prepared, having read and digested the readings. (Supplemental readings are optional.) If some unavoidable circumstance prevents them from being prepared, they should inform the instructor. If they have not done so before class begins, faculty will assume that students are affirming that they are fully prepared to participate in the class discussion.

Assignments

Logic models. Before the course begins, students prepare logic models of social programs (either administered by the government or an NGO), using the template provided. The purpose of the assignment is to give students a head start on the course and to provide an enriched basis for class discussion in the first class. The logic model selected can be of any social program in which the student is interested. (For employed students, the logic model could be of a social program related to their employment.) Logic models should be submitted via email and are due on **July 13** by 5:00 p.m.

Logic model revision. To demonstrate how well students have absorbed the concepts covered in the course and to give them practical experience applying them, students revise their initial logic models---and present them at the last class. The revised logic models should be submitted via email and are due on **July 22** by 8:00 a.m.

In addition to the two logic model assignments, students also complete one of the two following assignments that are due on **July 22** by 8:00 a.m.

1. *Design an impact evaluation.* Students prepare three-to-five page papers describing the method for identifying the counterfactual that they propose to use to evaluate the social program they selected for their logic model. The papers should include a discussion of the methods of data collection; selection of control/comparison groups; possible threats to causal validity; and any practical, political or normative obstacles to the implementation of the evaluation.

OR

2. *Design performance measures.* Using the template provided, students design a set of performance measures for the social programs they selected for their logic models. Each performance measure should include a title, a definition, and a data source. In addition to filling in the template, students include (1) a one-to-two paragraph description of the data sources for the performance measurements, including any possible difficulties in obtaining data and (2) a one-to-two paragraph description of the method for identifying the counterfactual for outcome measures, including, possible threats to causal validity, and any practical, political or normative obstacles to the implementation of the evaluation.

Grading

Students will be graded pass/fail, on the basis of attendance and participation.

Required texts and assigned readings

Douglas J. Besharov, *Program Evaluation in a Nutshell* (College Park, MD: Center for International Policy Exchanges, January 2015)

Students should bring a printed copy of *Program Evaluation in a Nutshell* to class to facilitate class discussion and note taking.

Classes and Topics

Class #1. July 18. Logic models and the counterfactual (Douglas Besharov, University of Maryland). To facilitate and enrich class discussion and to make efficient use of the first class, before the start the program, students prepare a logic model of a program in which they are interested or in which they are working.

Class # 2. July 19. Process evaluations (with Anu Rangarajan, Vice President and Managing Director, International Research Division, Mathematica Policy Research). How to design, conduct, and assess different forms of process evaluations (including descriptive studies, implementation evaluations, and continuous monitoring); how logic models can be used as a template for doing so; and the practical, political or normative obstacles to conducting of process evaluations.

Class #3. July 20. Identifying the counterfactual: RCTs and other methodologies (with David Myers, President & CEO, American Institutes for Research). The different methods of identifying the counterfactual will be explicated. Possible topics include comparisons-to-self/intertemporal comparisons (single pre/post comparisons, single post-only studies, and interrupted time series studies), comparison groups (simple differences, matching studies, difference-in-differences, and propensity score matching studies), randomized control trials (lottery designs, phase-in designs, repeated [or rolling] randomization designs, rotation designs, randomization at the margin, encouragement designs, and randomization across units/staff persons), econometric evaluations (basic correlational analyses, simple linear regressions, multivariate regressions, fixed effects, and factor analyses), and instrumental variable designs (regression discontinuity designs and pipeline studies); also, a discussion of the various threats to causal validity, how they apply to each method of identifying the counterfactual and the practical, political and normative obstacles to conducting of impact evaluations.

Class #4. July 21. Performance measurement (with Douglas Call, University of Maryland). How to design and evaluate performance measures, including the different types of performance measures; options for data collection, their validity and reliability; the practical methods of identifying the counterfactual for outcome and impact measures; and the practical, political, and normative obstacles to implementing performance measurement systems.

Class #5. July 22. Wrap up and presentation/discussion of student reports (with Neil Gilbert, University of California, Berkeley). This will be an opportunity for students to demonstrate how well they have absorbed the concepts covered in the course by describing the changes they have made to their logic models and by presenting their reports on either impact evaluations or performance measurement. In addition, this session will review any remaining questions from previous classes.