



The Royal College of **Pathologists**

Pathology: the science behind the cure

**Guidelines for  
Evaluation of Public Engagement**

**The Royal College of Pathologists**

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## 1. Introduction

Evaluation is a crucial part of the Royal College of Pathologists' public engagement work. It enables the College to capture the true scale and impact of public engagement undertaken by members and the public engagement department and captures feedback that will help us all to improve the quality of future public engagement activities.

Please take time to read through these evaluation guidelines notes and take all steps to make evaluation a key part of your event planning and delivery. In doing so you will help the College to develop a body of evidence which will enable us to:

- a) Assess progress against stated its public engagement aims
- b) Identify impacts from its public engagement
- c) Create a reputation for PE excellence within the PE community and among wider stakeholders.

We aim to capture the broadest spectrum of feedback possible – including positive and negative views and suggestions for improvement. This is not about proving success but accurately recording what has been achieved and the lessons you have learnt from the experience. Therefore it is important that contributors are encouraged to be honest and objective in their views.

## 2. Audience questionnaires

We have developed a series of hard copy feedback forms for audience members to complete at your events. These questionnaires explore:

- Audience demographics, including background knowledge of pathology
- How adult audiences heard about events
- Audience ratings of events,
- Impacts on audience enjoyment, learning and understanding of pathology and role of pathologists
- Impacts on secondary school students', sixth formers' and medical students' intentions to study science or work in pathology.

### 2.1. Questionnaire types

There are four versions of the audience feedback questionnaire for different audience groups:

1. **School and public audiences age under 12** – a simple form for children age under 12
2. **Secondary school students up to year 11** - a one-page form for use at secondary school pre- sixth form
3. **6<sup>th</sup> Form and medical students** - a one-page form for use at events that target sixth formers and medical students
4. **Public age 12 and over** – a one-page form for use with most audiences age 12 and over (including general public)

Word and PDF versions of all these can be downloaded from the Royal College of Pathologists website <https://www.rcpath.org/discover-pathology/discover-pathology-resources/for-event-organisers.html>

You may also create online versions of these forms if you prefer using free survey software such as Survey Monkey.

Please note that relevant adult permission should be sought for **individuals who are age under 16** prior to the latter answering a questionnaire.

## 2.2. Optimising completion rates

To ensure that as many audience members as possible complete questionnaires, we recommend:

- Using **well-briefed volunteers** to hand out and collect questionnaires and encourage audience members to complete them
- Having **pens / pencils** on hand for those who need them
- Using **event closing comments** to mention the forms (and any incentive e.g. prize draw) and invite people to complete them
- Informing people that the **evaluation is confidential** and that their **feedback is anonymous** and they will not be identifiable in any reports
- Providing a visible '**post box**' type container where people can leave completed forms.

## 3. Alternatives to questionnaires for audiences

You may also want to tailor your approach to gathering evaluation data to suit specific events and audiences. We recognise that there may be instances in which questionnaires are not appropriate or the best means of gathering data. In these instances, we can recommend some alternative methods that can be used instead of or in addition to questionnaires.

### 3.1. Audience interviews

Interviews should be conducted using a schedule (guide) that sets out the questions you want to ask. Semi-structured interviews use these guiding questions as a framework but respondents are encouraged to expand on their answers, allowing for deeper feedback to be drawn out.

To provide the most accurate record, interviews should be audio-recorded using smartphones or digital voice recorders. Make sure interviewees are happy to be recorded and ensure you explain about who will listen to the interview and anonymity. Recordings can be transcribed word-for-word, or you can make notes of relevant points. If you prefer not to record interviews, you or an observer can take notes.

To optimise the effectiveness and usefulness of interviews, we recommend:

- Using **well-briefed and ideally trained interviewers**
- **Stick to the questions** in the interview schedule and ask them clearly and succinctly
- **Do NOT lead interviewees** towards 'preferred' answers. Use non-leading prompts such as 'why do you feel that way?' or 'tell me more about that'.
- Explain that you **welcome positive and negative feedback** and **ask people to be honest** in their views
- Explain that the interview will **only take a few minutes** of interviewees' time
- Inform interviewees that the **interview is confidential** and that their **feedback is anonymous** and they will not be identifiable in any reports.

As with questionnaires, adult permission must be sought for **young people age under 16** to be interviewed.

### 3.2. Creative evaluation methods

#### *Quantitative*

**Stickers** – Handing out stickers to visitors to exhibits or stands gives an indication of the number of audience members you interact with.

**Value lines** - In a value line, audience members position themselves along a line to denote their position about an issue or topic. Signs can be posted on a wall or along a line on the

floor to provide the rating scale, e.g. strongly agree to strongly disagree about a statement that clearly relates to pathology and what you want to measure. You can use a value line at the end of an event; or at the beginning and again at the end to collect pre-and post-event data.

**Penny drops** – ask a simple ‘yes’/‘no’ question by inviting people to drop tokens into colour-coded yes or no buckets at the end of an event. The question asked here should be simple and appropriate for ‘yes’/‘no’ answers, e.g. did you enjoy the event? Did you learn something new at this event? Alternatively you could label the buckets “learned a lot”, “learned a little”, “didn’t learn anything”, or whatever response options fit your question.

**Voting games** – which invite people to vote upon or score their event or views about a statement. Even a simple show of hands can be effective.

### Qualitative

**Comments boards**– a helpful means of gathering qualitative comments about an event or activity can be to set a blackboard, whiteboard flip chart, or large sheet of paper on which audience members can write comments or draw feedback anonymously using pens that you provide. Having a blank page on which to scrawl can be liberating! If you like (and depending on the size of your comments board) you could write different questions in different corners to explore more than one idea.

**Visitors’ books** – a traditional way of gathering qualitative responses to installations and exhibitions.

**Word association** – a simple way of capturing audience understanding or feelings about a topic. Give people a post-it note or piece of paper and ask them to write down three words that come to mind when they think of pathology. Collect the post-it notes /pieces of paper. You can type the words into [www.wordle.net](http://www.wordle.net) to create word clouds.

**Drawings** – these can be useful for very young children and audience members who prefer not to write responses. You can ask a simple question like: ‘Draw how this event has made you feel about [pathology or science]’ or ‘draw what has amazed [or surprised] you most about this event’.

## 4. Volunteer questionnaires

This is one-page form designed to capture feedback from volunteers who present or otherwise help out at events.

## 5. Reporting your event feedback

The data you collect from feedback you receive is very useful, especially when thinking about organising another event. Think about what you have learned, and what you will change for next time.

The public engagement team will email online surveys after national activities such as National Pathology Week to assess work done across the whole of the country. Here, you can input some of the data you have received.

If you want to tell us how your event went more qualitatively, please think about submitting an article to us so that we can include it in *the Bulletin*. If you're wondering how to write an article, please follow our Bulletin guidelines found under Resources > For event organisers.