

how to...

...use the AHGTM attitude scale

The AHGTM attitude scale is included in this section of the evaluation toolkit. An attitude scale is a set of statements that respondents may agree or disagree with. Using the same attitude scale with different groups of respondents can give an idea of differences in attitudes between the groups. Using the scale with the same group over a period of time, or before and after an intervention, can give an idea of how attitudes change over time. Because the attitude scale is a quantitative instrument, it allows changes in attitudes to be measured statistically. This is a valuable way of measuring the impact of AHGTM programmes.

Like the generic questionnaire, the attitude scale is designed for use with learners in the 14-19 age group that are at school or college. It is not appropriate for use outside these groups.

How was the scale developed?

The attitude scale was developed after a review of the literature, and requests for similar scales that were already in use across the partnership. Where possible, existing items were included in order that data can be benchmarked. For example, data collected from students that had not been on a summer school could be compared with students that had attended, because some of the attitude scale items are the same. Sources of items for the scale included the Aimhigher national evaluation and the HE summer school evaluation questionnaires. A large list of items was developed, and piloted with school students. The list was found to be too long, so it was shortened to produce the final scale.

Items on the attitude scale

The items on the attitude scale fall into several groups that explore different aspects of attitudes towards school, college and higher education. Some items may be familiar to colleagues that have used similar tools to evaluate activities such as summer schools. The items from each group are mixed on the questionnaire to encourage respondents to carefully consider each item individually, rather responding similarly to every item in a group. However, it makes more sense to report results according to the thematic groups.

Items about school/college

Interest

Overall, I enjoy school/college

I find school/college boring

Motivation

I really want to do well at school/college

I find it difficult to get myself motivated to study

Influencers

My friends aren't really interested in school/college

I often discuss my school/college work with members of my family

My friends want to do well at school/college

At what age are you currently planning to leave full time education?

16	<input type="checkbox"/>	i.e. at the end of Year 11
17	<input type="checkbox"/>	e.g. at the end of Year 12
18	<input type="checkbox"/>	e.g. at the end of Year 13
20+	<input type="checkbox"/>	e.g. after college or higher education/university
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Items about higher education:

Decisions	
I want to go to university or college to study for a degree or higher education qualification	+
I feel I know enough about higher education to help me make a decision about going	+
I know what I want to study in higher education	+
I don't know enough about higher education to decide whether it's for me	-
I have decided not to go to higher education	-
I probably won't go straight to higher education when I leave school, but I may go in the future	+/-
Perceptions of HE	
Higher education sounds exciting	+
I think I would 'fit in' if I went into higher education	+
I would improve my chances of getting a better job if I went into higher education	+
Higher education broadens your outlook on life	+
I am interested in the subjects I could study in higher education	+
Higher education sounds boring	-
Going into higher education offers the chance to meet many interesting people	+
Higher education really helps you develop your skills	+
Influencers	
Most of my friends will probably go on to higher education	+
My teachers have encouraged me to aim for higher education	+
My parents/carers want me to go into higher education	+
None or not many of my friends will go on to higher education	-
My parents/carers are against the idea of higher education	-
Barriers to HE	
I want to start earning a proper income as soon as I leave school	-
I don't think my results will be good enough to get into any higher education course that interests me	-
The cost of university fees may stop me attending higher education	-

Each item has been assigned as positive or negative towards school/college or HE (+ or -). Some items are deemed neutral (+/-). It is possible to assign an average score for each individual who completes the scale. For positive items, score 5 for 'strongly agree' to 1 for 'strongly disagree'. For negative items, score 1 for 'strongly agree' to 5 for 'strongly disagree'. Add the scores up then calculate the average by dividing by the number of items the individual answered (i.e. remove items to which they ticked the 'don't know' response). The larger the final score, the more positive the overall attitude towards school and HE.

Using the attitude scale

The attitude scale is a flexible instrument that can be used in a number of ways, not just for the evaluation of AHGTM programmes. These include (but are not limited to):

- As an activity for learners at the start of a programme, to identify their attitudes towards HE and help provide more tailored activities.
- As an evaluation tool applied before and after an intervention such as a summer school or HEI visit.
- Support workers or Graduate Mentors working in schools and colleges might use the scale annually with their cohorts. As well as providing a way to track attitudinal change over time, learners could compare their responses from the previous year as a reflective exercise.
- As a research instrument, the attitude scale could be used with different groups of learners to explore differences in their attitudes towards learning and HE.

As with an evaluation questionnaire, learners should complete the attitude scale in examination-type conditions, where they do not discuss their answers. Discussion could take place after the questionnaires are completed.