



Educational Gain: *The what, how, and why?*

A guide made by students, for students

As students, university life is incredibly busy! To balance the dizzying array of lectures, exams, clubs and societies, we often sacrifice hours of sleep and even social events with friends, to achieve our best in every dimension.

Yet, have you ever asked yourself — *what do I actually want to gain from attending university? How do I define my success in higher education?* These are all questions that are being addressed by a newly coined term: **Educational Gain**.

What is educational gain, and why should I care?

Educational Gain, or EG for short, is a **metric** to determine **how, and what**, students **gain** from their experiences in higher education (HE). Some things you should know about EG are:



EG was created on the premise that **students should be at the centre** of their HE experience.



It prompts **self-initiated reflection** from students about their HE journey



EG helps to **involve students in developing and shaping** their own university experiences

The end result?



By evaluating EG based on student input, we facilitate national/college-level evaluation of success of HE programmes to identify **areas for improvement** and examples of **good practice**



How is educational gain measured?

Over the past few years, educators, quality assurance bodies, and universities have trialled different methods of measuring educational gain. However, EG remains a difficult concept to measure, as it is often very **individualised** and **abstract**. This is why we are trying to create a **framework** that encompasses multiple elements of EG. Here are some of the proposed ways to measure EG:

Quantitative gain



- Academic attainment
- Salary post-graduation

v.s.

Qualitative gain

- Growth in personal identity
- Overcoming barriers and realising potential
- Achieving career aspirations



Gain for current job role

- Exam readiness
- Knowledge acquisition



v.s.

Gain for future job role

- Employability in desired field of work
- “Soft skills”, e.g. time management, teamwork, networking



Gain in terms of distance travelled



- Extent of improvement in one facet of gain (e.g. social mobility)

Skills-based gain

- Ability to perform specific tasks
- Hands-on/experiential learning



Values-based gain



- Defining a compelling vision for your own wellbeing in HE
- Exploring emotions and wellbeing in connection with student learning



How can I reflect on my own EG?

Monthly journaling



Keeping note of **major educational barriers** you've faced, such as a personal struggle with an exam, is a great starting point for EG reflections!

Some questions to ask yourself:

- What **skills** have I developed from this experience?
- How has this experience **shaped the person I am**?
- In what ways has this experience impacted my **perceived self-worth**?
- Going forward, how will this experience impact my **confidence** in believing that I can achieve my goals?

Life outside of Academics:

The scope of EG extends far beyond academic gain; examples of non-academic elements of EG include:

- Friendships
- Interpersonal relationships
- Extracurricular activities (clubs and societies)
- Major life events

Reflecting on these experiences are equally as valuable — *how have certain activities, relationships, or events shaped your personal growth?*



Wellbeing Tracker

- Emotions and feelings also important contributors to educational gain. By evaluating how **learning strategies/environments** evoke emotions and feelings, you can identify the most effective educational approaches to help you succeed.
- A great way to track your emotions and feelings throughout university is to make use of wellbeing trackers — many **commercialised mobile applications** exist for this.
- We know it's difficult to stay consistent with recording your wellbeing daily; but even just revisiting the wellbeing tracker during particularly stressful or emotional periods of university, can be useful — so we'd encourage as many of you to try this strategy as possible!



Vision Board

A crucial function of universities is to prepare you for life after HE. Although many students don't know exactly what they want to **pursue as a career**, it is useful to start planning potential career paths!



University is the **perfect opportunity** to explore different avenues for work. A powerful way to visualise such opportunities is to make a **vision board**.

There are so many ways to create a vision board, so don't let this guide restrict your creativity! Some starter elements to include are:

- Begin by mapping out where you're starting from: i.e. being a university student.
- Then, draw out where you envision yourself towards the **end of your career** — *how would you define success in your work?*
- Identify some **milestones** in between the start and end points, *how can you measure progress along your career path?*



What we've discussed above forms the **backbone** of your vision board; now comes the more difficult part of the reflective process:

- *What **skills or values** can you identify to help you achieve your goals?*
- *What **steps** can be taken to develop these skills and values during your time in HE?*



Lastly, don't forget to **periodically check in** on your vision board; your definition of success and perspectives on career path will evolve with time.

Resources



Want to learn more about educational gain? Scan the QR codes to find out more!



QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project on Educational Gain



Blog on Educational Gain

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