

Consultation Design and Evaluation Toolkit



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Introduction

This document provides a toolkit to help with designing and evaluating the quality of consultations. It is based on findings from the project *Improving Deliberation, Improving Copyright*, in which copyright stakeholders, other media stakeholders, and members of the public collaborated to develop a new approach to copyright consultations that would complement existing government guidelines but also address some of their limitations in practice¹.

This toolkit provides guidance that draws on the project findings, but is applicable to consultations generally². It should be used to assess the whole range of activities that might take place during the design and execution of a consultation, from formal and informal meetings with stakeholders, to framing and question development, evidence-gathering through written submissions and other practices, and analysis. The tools are designed to help those running consultations ensure that they meet the **key purposes and principles of good policy consultation**, as identified in our project. Table 1 summarises these purposes and principles³.

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- 1 The project website contains a full summary of the outcomes from the research, as well as the content of this report. It can be found at <http://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/research/research-projects/improving-deliberation-and-copyright/Improving-Deliberation-Improving-Copyright>
 - 2 While the project was focused on copyright, the participants discussed many generic aspects of consultations, and so the findings apply to consultation practices generally as well as to the copyright context.
 - 3 See the full project report for detail, available at <http://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/research/research-projects/improving-deliberation-and-copyright/Improving-Deliberation-Improving-Copyright>



Table 1: Consultation purposes and principles

| | |
|---|--|
| Purposes: | Democratic purpose – consultations have a democratic purpose by enabling stakeholders to contribute to and improve the accountability of policy decisions |
| Why consult? | Epistemic purpose – consultations have an epistemic purpose by developing knowledge to improve policy decisions |
| Principles: How should we consult? | Inclusive – consultations should be inclusive by ensuring equal access for all stakeholders and addressing significant inequalities in the capacity to participate |
| | Well-informed – consultations should be well-informed by promoting robust, wide-ranging evidence and mutual understanding among stakeholders |
| | Equitable – consultations should be equitable by providing stakeholders with an equal opportunity to influence outcomes, striking a balance between different perspectives, and facilitating compromise |
| | Accountable – consultations should be transparent in key areas and justify processes, decisions and outcomes to stakeholders |

In addition to these purposes and principles, the tools are based on:

- **a systemic perspective**, treating consultations as **an overall system of connected methods** (Mansbridge et al. 2012)⁴ where the quality of the consultation depends on whether it contains the right combination of methods, and whether the links between different methods can be improved to achieve better outcomes.

⁴ Mansbridge, J., Bohman, J., Chambers, S., Christiano, T., Fung, A., Parkinson, J., . . . Warren, M. (2012). A systemic approach to deliberative democracy. In J. Parkinson & J. Mansbridge (Eds.), *Deliberative systems: deliberative democracy at the large scale* (pp. 1-26). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



- a **stakeholder-centric approach**, focused on the **needs and perspectives of stakeholders** who participate in consultations, rather than those of the institution leading the consultation.

The toolkit contains four templates designed to be used at key stages in the consultation design and evaluation process:

- 1 A consultation design aid (pre-consultation)
- 2 An evaluation survey (post-consultation)
- 3 An evaluation interview/focus group schedule (post-consultation)
- 4 An internal evaluation (post-consultation)

The templates are designed to be practical tools that can be used to design and evaluate the quality of consultations. They contain questions that cover all the topics that could be addressed to assess how well a consultation has realised its democratic and epistemic purposes, as well as the principles of being inclusive, well-informed, equitable and accountable. They should be tailored to the specific context of their application and can be used separately or in conjunction with each other. They do not address formal objectives that may have been set for a consultation, only the underpinning purposes and principles, which can be applied to all consultations.

For more information about the project, or the toolkit and its application, please contact Dr Lee Edwards (l.edwards2@lse.ac.uk) or Dr Giles Moss (g.s.moss@leeds.ac.uk).



Consultation Design Aid (pre-consultation)

This template will help you to assess how the overall design of a policy consultation - including written submissions and other elements such as face-to-face meetings or roundtable sessions - facilitates the principles of being inclusive, well-informed, equitable and accountable. It encourages you to think about how well the consultation works as a whole, and about the value contributed by particular parts of the process or methods of engagement. It also helps you think about how different parts of the consultation will work together, and how their complementary or contradictory nature might affect the outcomes of the consultation process.

Part A: Identifying design strengths and weaknesses

- 1** Considering the overall range and mix of activities that will be used in the consultation, how effectively will the consultation:
 - a** ensure all stakeholders have equal access?
 - b** address inequalities in the capacity of different stakeholders to participate?
 - c** promote robust, wide-ranging evidence?
 - d** promote mutual understanding among stakeholders?
 - e** ensure stakeholders have an equal opportunity to influence outcomes?
 - f** achieve balance and/or promote compromise among stakeholders where consensus is not possible?
 - g** ensure the consultation is transparent in key areas?
 - h** ensure that consultation processes, decisions and outcomes are justified to stakeholders?



-
- 2 In light of question 1, where are the strengths and weaknesses in the consultation design, in relation to realising particular principles?

Part B: Identifying design changes

- 3 In light of question 2, how could we change the consultation design to better realise particular principles? [See also *Part C, targeted enhancements*]
- 4 How much difference will the proposed changes make? Are there alternative changes that would enable the same outcomes but demand less of organisers and stakeholders?
- 5 If we implement a particular change to improve one principle, might it enhance or conflict with our achievement of other principles? Who/what is the source of any possible tension? Is there a way of reducing tension but still achieving similar outcomes?





Part C: Targeted enhancements⁵

| Objective | Target areas to address |
|--|--|
| Ensuring equal access | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identification of stakeholders (map stakeholders, target groups and access barriers at each stage of the process)• Promotion (wide range of channels to ensure awareness in target groups)• Presentation and communication (accessible language, multiple formats)• Consultation environment ('safe' spaces for discussion, multiple formats for submission, enquiry line for queries and feedback) |
| Ensuring equal capacity to participate | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding and engagement (public information campaigns, explaining importance of participation)• Consultation environment ('safe' spaces, broad discussions, incorporating all perspectives)• Stakeholder resources (adequate time, training in consultation processes, background information about the topic) |
| Ensuring robust, wide-ranging evidence | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Range and type of evidence (full range of stakeholder perspectives, different formats for submissions, qualitative and quantitative evidence included)• Analysis (range of analytical approaches, use of software, integration of evidence types)• Trust (independent research, independent scrutiny of evidence and analysis)• Resources (support stakeholders with fewer resources, tailor evidence requirements to maximise participation) |

⁵ See the full project report for a wider range of more specific suggestions proposed by our participants



| Objective | Target areas to address |
|--|---|
| Facilitating mutual understanding among stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information exchange (informal discussions, relationship-building)• Dialogue and deliberation (public deliberative events, 'town hall' meetings, workshops)• Framing and questions (broad topics, open discussion)• Creativity (games, sliding scales showing trade-offs, voting technologies) |
| Ensure equal opportunity to influence outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Framing and questions (broad, same issues addressed by everyone)• Targeting (relevant stakeholders identified, authenticity checks used)• Decision-makers (including policy decision-makers throughout the process)• Follow up (feedback about how submissions were used) |
| Achieving balance and/or promoting compromise among stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Setting stakeholder expectations (about objectives, inclusivity, importance of compromise/balance)• Processes (trade-off scales, indicative preference voting, balance public/private events to preserve scrutiny but maximise negotiation) |
| Ensuring transparency in key areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Setting stakeholder expectations (knowing what/who to expect and why)• Public records (transparency register, funding sources, data sources, meeting minutes)• Scrutiny (accessible and understandable information) |
| Ensuring processes, decisions and outcomes are justified to stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Benchmarking (aims, objectives, inclusivity, evidence, other evaluation criteria)• Setting stakeholder expectations (process, participation, input, influence, limitations)• Explanation (rationales for processes, decisions, outcomes)• Follow up (channels for feedback on submissions, responding to feedback)• Scrutiny (independent oversight for process/evidence/analysis, opportunities for stakeholder challenges) |



Evaluation Survey (post-consultation)

The survey obtains feedback from external stakeholders who have contributed to the consultation process. It is divided into six sections: the introduction collects relevant stakeholder details; four subsequent sections each address one of the four principles; a concluding section completes the survey.

The easiest way to administer it would be through an online tool such as SurveyMonkey, which is accessible for respondents and will automatically collate responses for analysis.

Not all questions need to be used; you should tailor the questions asked to the objectives of your evaluation (for example, you may only want to evaluate how inclusive the consultation was, or how equitable, so only questions relating to those topics should be asked).

Section 1: Introduction

This survey is designed to gather your feedback about your recent participation in the *[insert name of consultation]*, which we will use to improve future consultations. We are interested in your opinions, based on your experience of participating in the consultation. There are no right or wrong answers. Please just note the answer that is closest to your opinion in each case. The survey will take approximately *[insert number]* minutes to complete.

- 1 Please tell us the sector you work in:
[insert multiple choice plus 'other' category]
- 2 Please tell us your location:
[insert list of UK regions]



3 Please tell us why you took part in this consultation.
[Tick all options that apply]

The consultation topic is relevant to my day to day life

☐

The consultation topic is relevant to my work

☐

I wanted to influence policymaking in this area

☐

I made a submission on behalf of my organisation/
sector/employer

☐

I have experience and/or knowledge that is relevant
to the consultation

☐

I wanted to ensure my opinions were included in the
consultation evidence

☐

Other (please give details)

☐

4 Have you submitted to policy consultations before?
[Tick one option only]

Yes, frequently

☐

Yes, occasionally

☐

No

☐

5 How well do you understand how the consultation process works?
[Tick one option only]

| 1 Do not understand it at all | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Understand it extremely well |
|---|----------|----------|----------|---|
| | | | | |



Section 2: Inclusivity

- 6** How would you rate the information you received about the consultation from the government and/or organisations in your network? Please rate your answers on a scale of 1-5, where 1=completely insufficient and 5=completely sufficient.

[Tick one option only for each item]

| | 1 Completely insufficient | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Completely sufficient | Don't know/ Not applicable |
|---|--|----------|----------|----------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a Information about how to access the consultation | | | | | | |
| b Information about how to contribute to the consultation | | | | | | |
| c Information about what kind of contribution was required | | | | | | |





7 Please tell us which parts of the consultation process you participated in.
[Tick all that apply]

Scoping discussions (e.g. about the topic/questions for the consultation)

☐

Informal meetings/discussions with other stakeholders and/or consultation leaders/designers

☐

Formal meetings/discussions with other stakeholders and/or consultation leaders/designers

☐

One-to-one informal meetings with policy-makers/consultation leaders/designers

☐

Written submissions

☐

Post-submission follow-up discussions with consultation leaders/designers

☐

Other (please explain)

☐

8 How would you rate your access to the parts of the consultation process that you wanted to engage with? (e.g. making written submissions, meeting with other stakeholders)? *[Tick one option only]*

| 1 Access was very difficult | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Access was very easy |
|--|----------|----------|----------|-------------------------------------|
| | | | | |



- 9** How would you rate the following aspects of the consultation process?
Please rate your answers on a scale of 1-5, where 1=extremely difficult and 5=extremely easy. *[Tick one option only for each statement]*

| | 1 Extremely difficult | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Extremely easy | Don't know/ Not applicable |
|--|------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a Understanding the language used in the consultation | | | | | | |
| b Providing the kind of evidence the consultation was asking for | | | | | | |
| c Discussing the topic with other stakeholders during the process | | | | | | |
| d Discussing the topic with government representatives during the process | | | | | | |

- 10** To what extent did you feel your contributions were valued by the following groups during the consultation process? Please rate your answers on a scale of 1-5, where 1=not valued at all and 5=valued very highly. *[Tick one option only for each group]*

| | 1 Not valued at all | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Valued very highly | Don't know/ Not applicable |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a Government representatives | | | | | | |
| b Other stakeholders | | | | | | |



- 11** Approximately how much time did it take to put together your submission?
Please calculate the time from the point at which you began preparing it, to the point you submitted. *[Tick one option only]*

| 1 Less than a month | 2 1 month | 3 2 months | 4 3 months | 5 More than 3 months | Don't know/ Not applicable |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | | | | |

- 12** How would you rate the resources you had available (e.g. financial resources, access to experts, access to data) to contribute to the consultation? *[Tick one option only]*

| 1 I had far too few resources | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 I had more than enough resources | Don't know/ Not applicable |
|---|----------|----------|----------|--|-------------------------------|
| | | | | | |



Section 3: Well-informed

13 How would you rate the evidence submitted to the consultation, in relation to the following criteria? Please rate your answers on a scale of 1-5, where 1=very poor and 5=excellent. *[Tick one option only for each statement]*

| | 1 Very poor | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Excellent | Don't know/ Not applicable |
|--|-----------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| a The range of stakeholder perspectives it included | | | | | | |
| b The variety of evidence collected (e.g. visual, written, case studies, quantitative data) | | | | | | |
| c The quality of the underpinning data (e.g. robustness of survey data, richness and clarity of case study content) | | | | | | |

14 How would you rate the range of evidence that the consultation outcomes are based on? *[Tick one option only]*

| 1 Very limited range | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Very wide range | Don't know/ Not applicable |
|--------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | | | | |



15 How would you rate the opportunities you had for learning about other perspectives on the consultation topic? Please rate your answers on a scale of 1-5, where 1=very limited and 5=very extensive. *[Tick one option only for each statement]*

| | 1 Very limited | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Very extensive | Don't know/ Not applicable |
|---|--------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a Opportunities to think about other stakeholders' perspectives | | | | | | |
| b Opportunities to meet and discuss the consultation topic with other stakeholders | | | | | | |
| c Opportunities to negotiate and reach a compromise with other stakeholders about the consultation topic | | | | | | |
| d Opportunities for government representatives to hear the range of stakeholder views on the topic | | | | | | |
| e Opportunities to reflect on my own position in light of other perspectives | | | | | | |



Section 4: Equitable

16 How would you rate your opportunities for influence in the consultation process, in terms of the following criteria? Please rate your answers on a scale of 1-5, where 1=very limited and 5=very extensive. *[Tick one option only for each statement]*

| | 1 Very limited | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Very extensive | Don't know/ Not applicable |
|---|--------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a Opportunity to influence the consultation outcomes | | | | | | |
| b Opportunity to influence the discussions during the consultation process | | | | | | |

17 How would you rate the importance attached to your contributions by the consultation staff you engaged with? *[Tick one option only]*

| 1 Not important at all | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Extremely important | Don't know/ Not applicable |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | | | | |



18 How do you think the outcomes of the consultation process reflect stakeholder positions? *[Tick one option only]*

The outcomes reflect a limited number of stakeholder positions

☐

The outcomes reflect a consensus or compromise among stakeholder positions

☐

The outcomes tried to reflect all stakeholders, but without requiring consensus or compromise

☐



Section 5: Accountability

19 How would you rate your understanding of the following aspects of the consultation process? Please rate your answers on a scale of 1-5, where 1=do not understand at all and 5=understand extremely well. *[Tick one option only for each statement]*

| | 1 Do not understand at all | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Understand extremely well | Don't know/Not applicable |
|---|--|----------|----------|----------|---|------------------------------|
| a How different types of stakeholder engagement are used in the consultation | | | | | | |
| b How my contribution is assessed as part of the consultation analysis | | | | | | |
| c Why particular stakeholders are involved in consultation processes | | | | | | |
| d How decisions were made during the consultation process | | | | | | |
| e How outcomes were reached based on the evidence submitted | | | | | | |



20 Do you know which stakeholders were invited to participate throughout the consultation process? *[Tick one option only]*

Yes

☐

Only those stakeholders who made written submissions

☐

No

☐

Not sure

☐

21 Do you know how to provide feedback about the way the consultation was conducted? *[Tick one option only]*

Yes

☐

No

☐

Not sure

☐

22 Do you know who to ask if you have questions about how the consultation was conducted? *[Tick one option only]*

Yes

☐

No

☐

Not sure

☐



Section 6: Conclusion

23 Overall, how satisfied were you with your experience of participating in the consultation process? *[Tick one option only]*

| 1 Not satisfied at all | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Extremely satisfied |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|------------------------------------|
| | | | | |

24 If you are happy to be contacted for a follow-up discussion please insert your contact details below.

Name

Telephone number

Email

Thank you for your feedback!



Interview/Focus group schedule (post-consultation)

Interviews and/or focus groups will deliver a more detailed and personal understanding of how stakeholders have engaged with the consultation process, and what their experience was like. You could source participants through those who completed the survey, or you can reach out to a separate group of people.

Interviews give you the opportunity to hear about one individual's experience, and delve more deeply into their thoughts and feelings about it. They may be particularly useful for using with key stakeholders, or representatives from particular groups. They also have the advantage of being able to be carried out face-to-face, over the phone or via video-conferencing software. In focus groups, the group dynamic can bring to light common experiences and prompt interesting discussions among participants. They are best carried out face to face, but video-conferencing software can be used. Focus groups have to be moderated carefully to manage group dynamics, to avoid situations where a few people dominate the discussion, and to ensure all questions are addressed. Moderation also helps ensure that discussion stays reasonably focused, while still allowing for digressions that could bring new and important information to light.

In both cases, care needs to be taken that participants are not simply telling you what they think you want to know. There should be an emphasis on the confidentiality and anonymity of their feedback, and on the fact that you are only interested in their experiences and opinions.



The schedule starts with general questions to put the participant at ease, followed by more specific questions relating to the four principles and concluding with an open invitation to mention anything that hasn't been covered in the exchange. The same schedule can be used for both types of research.

Note that depending on how long participants talk, it may not be possible to ask more than 6-8 questions in an hour. Priority questions should be identified in advance, and most time should be spent on the specific questions, rather than the more general ones at the beginning and end of the schedule.

Schedule

1 Please tell me a bit about you, your work, and why you are interested in
[insert consultation topic]

2 Have you participated in consultations before?

Probe: *If so, which ones?*

3 Why did you decide to participate in this consultation?

4 How did you participate? What did you do?

Probe: *How did you find out about the consultation? What were the steps in the process of participation? What type of participation was it? Was it easy for you to participate? Why/why not? Were there aspects of the process that were harder to navigate? Why? Would you have liked to participate in a different way? Why/Why not?*

5 What kinds of resources did you use to participate?

Probe: *Did you have enough time/financial support/expertise? Were there points where you felt you could have done with more support during the process, or where the process felt uncomfortable? Why/Why not?*

6 What response did you get to your contribution?

Probe: *What kinds of responses – email? Personal conversation? Did you feel that it was valued by the people you spoke to? Why?*



7 How did you engage with other stakeholders during the consultation process, and how useful was it?

Probe: *When/where did you encounter other stakeholders? What kinds of conversations/discussions did you have? What was the outcome of those discussions? What effect, if any, did that have on your contributions?*

8 After the consultation process, how had your understanding of the views of other groups about [insert consultation topic] changed?

Probe: *Was it better/worse? Why/Why not? Did other groups understand your view better/worse too? Why/Why not?*

9 How do you think different stakeholders' contributions were valued or taken account of during the consultation process?

Probe: *What makes you think this? What processes demonstrated this? If it was unequal/unfair, explain why?*

10 What kind of influence do you feel you had on the outcomes of the consultation through your participation?

Probe: *What makes you think this? What evidence of influence do you look for? Would you have liked more/less/different influence?*

11 How would you assess the range of evidence that the consultation generated?

Probe: *Was it broad/narrow? Which interests/perspectives were included? What form did the evidence take and what was good/bad about that? What kinds of evidence were left out?*

12 Do you feel the consultation outcomes reflected the views of all stakeholders?

Probe: *Why/Why not? What interests had to be balanced? Where was compromise reached (if it was)?*

13 What communication did you receive about the decisions made and outcomes of the consultation?

Probe: *Were they explained clearly to you? Why?/Why not? What made them easy/difficult to understand? How were they communicated?*



14 How would you describe the consultation design?

Probe: *What different elements can you identify? How do they fit together/work together as a whole process? Are there activities that you feel are more/less useful? Why?/Why not?*

15 Did you know how to give feedback about your experience, or ask questions about the decisions or outcomes?

Probe: *How did you know? How good was the communication? Were the responses satisfactory?*

16 How could the consultation have been improved, in your opinion?

Probe here by referring back to previous answers and making sure all issues are covered

17 Is there anything else you'd like to add that we haven't discussed?

Thank you for your time



Internal evaluation (post-consultation)

The internal evaluation enables you to assess how well the internal management of the consultation has facilitated the principles of being inclusive, well-informed, equitable and accountable (it does not focus on the formal consultation objectives, which will differ in each case). It can be used to reflect on the decisions made about consultation design, to consider how different parts of the consultation worked together in practice, and how they affected the consultation outcomes. As with the other templates, not all questions need to be asked of all stakeholders; questions should be tailored to the role of the respondent in the consultation process and to the focus of the evaluation (e.g. quality of stakeholder engagement/quality of policy input).

Evaluation questions

- 1 Overall, how did the range and mix of activities ensure the consultation was inclusive, well-informed, equitable and accountable? What do stakeholders' opinions tell us about how well the process lived up to these principles?

Probe: *What parts of the consultation process supported each principle? Where are the weaknesses in the consultation design, in relation to realising the different principles?*

- 2 Have we successfully involved stakeholders in policymaking through the consultation, so that they had a genuine opportunity to influence outcomes?

Probe: *How have we done this? Were there ways we could have enhanced their opportunities?*



3 Have we generated solid evidence that will contribute to better policymaking?

Probe: *What evidence have we provided? What was received well by policymakers and what was less convincing? Was the range and type of evidence adequate, in terms of the stakeholder input we received and the stakeholders we were trying to include?*

4 Which stakeholders were not included in the end, and how have we addressed their absence?

Probe: *What can be done differently next time, to avoid their omission?*

5 Were the different consultation activities we chose efficient and effective?

Probe: *Were the activities able to address multiple outcomes that could realise the principles? Were we duplicating effort or investing too much in one area at the expense of others? Did we do too much or too little?*

6 Were there any unexpected outcomes of our activities that limited their effectiveness?

Probe: *Did any activities create contradictory outcomes? Which activities enhanced each other and which conflicted? What can we do differently/how can we change the mix or sequence of activities to minimise the conflict next time?*

7 How did we explain our decisions during the consultation process to stakeholders?

Probe: *Do stakeholders understand the value of our different activities and the overall process of consultation? Can we explain them more clearly?*



8 How did we explain to stakeholders the policy decisions made following the consultation?

Probe: *Did we explain gaps/omissions/changes as compared to the evidence collected? Did stakeholders feel the explanations were sufficient? Did we explain to all stakeholders or only a few?*

9 Have we asked stakeholders for their feedback? Have we taken their feedback into account and do they know how we have used it?

Probe: *What opportunities to provide feedback are available? Who has given us feedback? Are there stakeholders we need to reach out to? How can we obtain their views and use them to improve our approach?*

