Guidelines for Inception Reports

An inception report is prepared by an evaluator shortly after reviewing relevant documentation and possibly visiting UNESCO and discussing the evaluation with relevant staff.

The inception report describes the conceptual framework the evaluator will use in undertaking the evaluation. It sets out in some detail the evaluation methodology, i.e. how each question will be answered by way of data collection methods, data sources, sampling and indicators. The report must also contain a work plan, which indicates the phases in the evaluation with their key deliverables and milestones.

The inception report will be reviewed and approved by IOS or the evaluation reference group for strategically significant evaluations.

1   Introduction

❑   **Describe the programme**[1] being evaluated, drawing from relevant documentation, particularly the desk study.

❑   **State the purpose and scope** of the evaluation as set out in the Terms of Reference. Include the complete set of evaluation questions and elaborate on them as necessary. Any questions added during the contract negotiations must be clearly indicated and any deleted questions must be mentioned with a reason as to their exclusion.

2   Evaluation framework

❑   **Discuss the overall approach** of the evaluation, highlighting the conceptual model(s) adopted. This should incorporate an analysis of the intervention logic of the programme.

❑   **Discuss risks and limitations** that may undermine the reliability and validity of the evaluation results.

3   Evaluation methodology

❑   **Specify an indicator or indicators** for each question that will be used as a guide in answering the question. Many indicators will serve as a measure of success.

❑   **Discuss the data collection and data analysis methods** that will be used for each question. State the limitations for each method. Include the level of precision required for quantitative methods and value scales or coding used for qualitative methods. Standard data collection methods for UNESCO evaluations are: surveys, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, document review and observation.

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[1] An activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institution can be evaluated. For simplicity, this document refers solely to programme.

- ❑ **Present the key data sources** that will be selected to answer each of the evaluation questions posed. Common sources include: programme recipients, programme deliverers, persons with knowledge of programme recipients, programme documents, programme records, databases, etc.

- ❑ **Discuss the sampling methods and details**. Include area and population to be represented, rationale for selection, mechanics of selection, sample size, sample precision and confidence and limitations.

- ❑ **Summarise the evaluation methodology in an evaluation planning matrix** containing the following column headings: evaluation question, indicator(s), data collection method(s), data source, sampling and comments.

Evaluation Planning Matrix

Evaluation Question	Indicator(s)	Data Collection method(s)	Data Source	Sampling	Comments

4   Work plan

- ❑ **Develop a timeline** which shows the evaluation phases (data collection, data analysis and reporting) with their key deliverables and milestones.

- ❑ **Specify responsibility for each evaluation phase**. Include any changes in the evaluation team.

5   Logistics

- ❑ **Discuss the logistics** of carrying out the evaluation. Include specific assistance required from UNESCO such as providing arrangements for visiting particular field offices or sites.

6   Appendices

- ❑ **Append relevant draft data collection instruments**, such as questionnaires and interview guides.

- ❑ **Append the Terms of Reference.**