Evaluating the design process

Evaluating the work you have done is important because it can help you understand how you can improve what you did and the way you did it. This is what learning is all about!

What can I evaluate?

Evaluation involves looking back over your work and asking yourself questions about how well you have fulfilled the requirements of the task. You will need to evaluate the design, development and testing of your database, as well as the final product.

Evaluating the design

You can only evaluate the design after you have developed your database. You can use these questions to help you.

- How well did my design match the final product?
- How useful was my design when developing the product?
- Did I have any problems normalising the data?
- Did I have any problems creating the ERD and data dictionary?
- What was good about my design (its strengths)?
- How could I improve my design to better meet requirements?
- Did my design fully cover the required functionality of the database? Did I miss anything out?

Why do the design first?

Isn't it easier to develop the database first, then do the design?

When creating a simple database it can be tempting to do this. However, this creates two problems:

- It is hard to evaluate the design if it has been created after the database is developed.
- You need to develop design skills which can be applied to more complex situations and this will only happen if you practise and get in the habit of creating the design first.

Tips for your evaluation

Writing an evaluation can be hard, so here are a couple of tips:

Keep a design and development diary

Taking notes while you design and create a database will help you a lot when you come to do the evaluation. Note down things you found hard and problems you came across. Without notes it can be hard to remember the earlier stages of the design and development.

Make sure you cover the following points

When evaluating each aspect of your work you need to do three things:

- Explain the good points.
- Explain the bad points.
- Draw a reasoned conclusion.

🔗 **Links** To revise evaluating the development and testing process, see page 79.

Now try this

Write up these diary notes as the first part of an evaluation.

Turn the notes into the 'story' of what you did and reflect on how well the process went and how you could have done it better.

Diary notes – design stage

Mon: Highlighted the repeating groups in the raw data. Attempted the normalisation process but got confused at the 3rd normal form stage.

Tue: Read the database scenario again and drafted the ERD. Went through the normalisation process again and compared it with my draft ERD – think it's correct now.

Wed Drew final version of ERD and started work on the data dictionary.