# A STRATEGY FOR MEASURING IMPACT

**SUMMARY**
This guide provides an overview of considerations necessary in the planning and carrying out of measuring impact studies on either individual activities or whole programmes. It shows how to integrate the aspects delat with in the other guides in this series.

## INTRODUCTION

If you want to measure the impact of a study support activity or programme, you need to consider how data will be collected and analysed during the planning stage. The way that data needs to be collected may impact on the way in which the activity or programme is run, and if you don't think how to measure impact in advance, it may be impossible to do it successfully after the event. The chart on the next page shows the stages in planning for measurement of impact.
Remember that measurement of impact is not the same as evaluation. It feeds in to the process of evaluation, along with other factors such as pupil enjoyment, effectiveness of methodology, value for money etc. A positive impact does not mean that improvements cannot be made and this will be shown up by other elements of evaluation.

## STRATEGIC ASPECTS

These notes refer to the chart on the following page.

[1] It is impossible to measure impact without clear intended outcomes for the activity or programme. The outcomes identify the anticipated impact. It is, of course, possible that outcomes other than those intended may occur. See guide no. 1 - "Getting Started"

[2] It is not necessary for all outcomes to be quantitative - qualitative assessments are valid in many cases, but impact can be clearer to outsiders if figures can be given, and it is useful to have some qualitative measure if possible. Impact of a whole programme should always generate some qualitative data, individual activities may not. See guides nos. 5 and 6 - "*Statistics and Presentation*" and "*Qualitative Data and Surveys*"

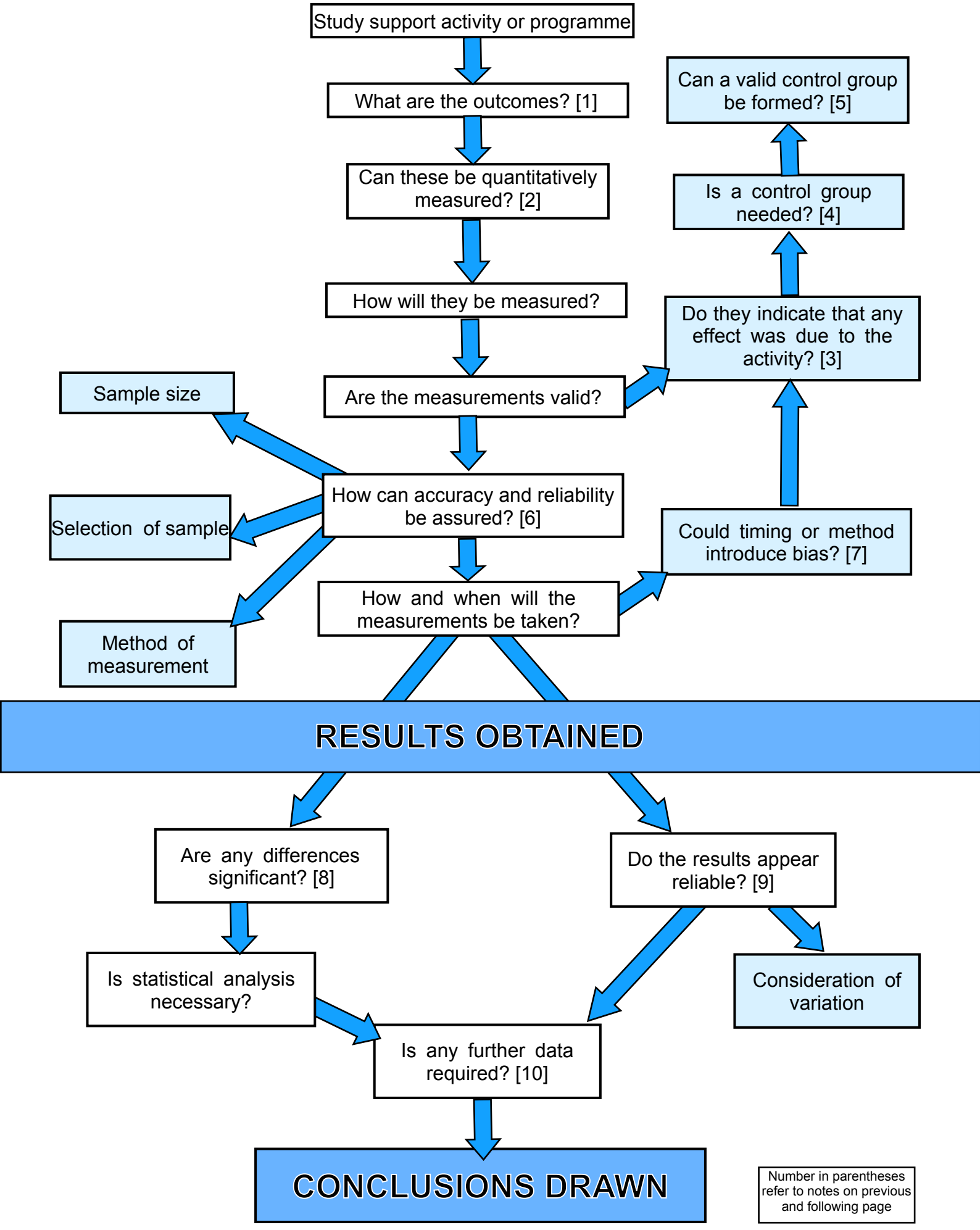
[3] Any given outcome may be influenced by a number of factors apart from the targeted activity or programme. In some cases the outcome is clearly linked to the activity - if a pupil improves her ability at chess after attending a chess club, there is likely to be a cause and effect relationship. Improved attainment in GCSEs, though, could be affected by many school initiatives as well as personal factors. See guide no. 3 - "*Drawing Conclusions from Data*"

[4] See guide no. 4 - "*Sample Size and Control Groups*"

[5] Sometimes it is not possible to form a valid control group. It is still worth measuring impact, but the conclusions will be more tentative than if a proper control was used. See guide no. 4 - "*Sample Size and Control Groups*"

[6] It is important that an outcome is *accurately* measured - for instance, self-reported outcomes may be subject to bias and may report what the pupil thinks is 'required'. Some internal tests may be related inaccurately to National Curriculum levels, etc.

# PLANNING FLOWCHART




Number in parentheses refer to notes on previous and following page

[7] Progress in any activity is not always linear and testing too early or establishing baselines too late may influence conclusions, a test question may be 'leading' in some way, etc.

[8] See guide no.3 - "*Drawing Conclusions from Data*"

[9] A high degree of variation in the results, particularly if the sample is small, could well indicate that the results are not reliable. Sometimes the outcomes are unexpected or even the reverse of those intended. It should not be automatically assumed that this means that they are *not* reliable!

[10] Further data may be needed to establish whether the results are reliable, to increase the sample, or when differences seem to be marginally significant.