

Evidence rubric



A rubric to help you evaluate the effectiveness of a new or existing policy, program or practice

What is the *Evidence rubric*?

The *Evidence rubric* supports education practitioners and policymakers to apply AERO's *Standards of evidence* to new and existing approaches for their context.

The *Evidence rubric* assists education practitioners and policymakers in:

1. self-assessing how confident they can be that a certain approach is effective in their context
2. deciding how to implement the approach given their level of confidence
3. collecting evidence that may increase their confidence in the effectiveness of the approach.

How do I use the *Evidence rubric*?

The *Evidence rubric* can be used to analyse a particular approach in two ways: to decide whether or not to implement a certain approach in your context or to assess your confidence in the effectiveness of an existing approach.

In either case, first identify the statement in the rubric that best describes the evidence you currently have on the particular approach you are analysing, to assess the confidence you can have in its effectiveness. Once you have identified the level of confidence, you can analyse the suggested guidance on how to proceed. This may include discontinuing the practice in favour of others in which you can have greater confidence or collecting further evidence that may increase your level of confidence. Remember to consult with those who will be affected before you begin or discontinue an approach.

How much confidence is enough?

Although high or very high confidence in practices, programs and policies is preferable, sometimes there is not enough evidence available to achieve these standards.

In such cases, education practitioners and policymakers must weigh the potential benefits and costs of implementing an approach without full confidence in its effectiveness.

For example, potential benefits could outweigh the costs when inaction may cause greater harm, or the consequences of implementing an ineffective approach are small and/or have been appropriately mitigated. In such circumstances, it may be acceptable to implement an approach that only provides low or medium confidence.

Which rubric should I use?

AERO has developed three rubrics to ensure that the *Standards of evidence* are appropriately contextualised to the various roles in the Australian education system. You should use the rubric that best applies to your role.

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Evidence rubric for policymakers

	 Level 1 Low confidence	 Level 2 Medium confidence	 Level 3 High confidence	 Level 4 Very high confidence
How confident can I be in the effectiveness of a particular approach in my context?	I can hypothesise why the approach works. I can explain step by step how the approach will lead to positive effects in my system.	Early adopters in my system think the approach is successful, and can show me data that suggest there have been positive effects. AND/OR I have read research that suggest high-performing systems use this approach.	I have read research conducted by trustworthy sources such as AERO that evaluate this approach. This research shows this approach causes positive effects.	I have conducted a rigorous causal evaluation of the approach as implemented in my system. This evaluation shows that the approach causes positive effects. AND/OR I have read research conducted in system contexts similar to mine that show this approach causes positive effects.
Given this level of confidence, how should I implement this approach	I should prefer other approaches that I have more confidence in. If I decide to trial it, I should run a small-scale pilot until I have better evidence of its effectiveness. The pilot should be led by experienced leaders, teachers, and/or educators who want to trial out the approach. I should undertake a risk assessment to plan for and mitigate any consequences should the approach not work. I should closely monitor implementation to identify whether the approach is working and manage any unintended negative consequences.	I should allocate limited resources to the approach. I should ensure that any resources allocated are diverted from other approaches that I have less confidence in. I should replicate what has been done in other systems where the approach is associated with positive effects. I should undertake a risk assessment to plan for and mitigate any consequences should the approach not work. I should closely monitor implementation to identify and manage any unintended negative consequences.	I should allocate resources to the approach. I should ensure that any resources allocated are only diverted from other approaches that I have less confidence in. I should replicate what has been done in other contexts where the approach has been proven to have positive effects. If I need to adapt the approach for my system, I should first seek insights from the research about why the approach was found to be effective. I should then design any adaptations based on these research insights. I should begin implementation in places in my system that are most similar to those where the approach was found to be effective. I should undertake a risk assessment to plan for and mitigate any consequences should the approach not work. I should closely monitor implementation to identify and manage any unintended negative consequences.	I should allocate resources that support implementation of the approach at scale. I should collect data on how and why the approach works in my system to support ongoing improvement. I should continually monitor the approach to ensure ongoing effectiveness.

Evidence rubric for policymakers (continued)

	 Level 1 Low confidence	 Level 2 Medium confidence	 Level 3 High confidence	 Level 4 Very high confidence
How can I collect evidence that may increase my level of confidence?	<p>I could undertake a review of the research literature to identify whether there is any evidence from other systems that the approach is associated with positive effects.</p> <p>I could collect data on early adopters of the approach in my system and assess whether the approach is associated with improvements in outcomes.</p>	<p>I could undertake a review of the research literature to identify whether there is any evidence from other systems that the approach causes positive effects.</p> <p>I could commission an evaluation of the approach to generate evidence that it causes positive effects. This evaluation could be of a small-scale pilot in my system, or it could be conducted in a different system where the approach is already well-established.</p>	<p>I could compare the longitudinal outcomes of schools or services that have implemented the approach, with similar schools or services that have not.</p> <p>I could randomly stagger or stage implementation of the approach and then compare the outcomes of schools or services that start implementation at different times.</p> <p>I could determine a school's or service's eligibility based on a particular standard or cut-off, and then compare the outcomes of those who are just above and just below the cut-off.</p> <p>I could use statistical techniques to ensure that any effects identified using the above methods are not simply due to chance.</p> <p>I could commission an evaluation of the approach to generate evidence that it causes positive effects in my system.</p>	<p>I could conduct or commission an evaluation to better understand: why the approach is effective; for whom it is most effective; and/or, the conditions that enhance its effectiveness.</p>