Creating great educational places and spaces

QIS BGA Post Occupancy Evaluation Toolkit for Schools

AUGUST 2025

Queensland Independent Schools
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Block Grant Authority

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Front Cover

Brisbane Boys Grammar
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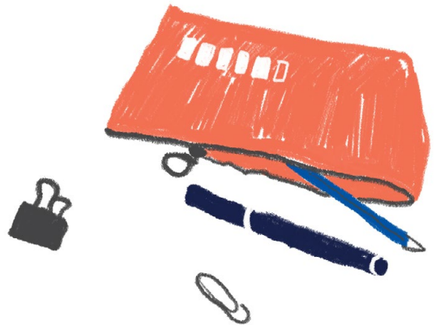

Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners

QIS BGA respectfully acknowledges past and present traditional owners and custodians, and the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-Indigenous Australians to the education of all children and people in this country that we all live in and share together.

QIS BGA also commits to supporting the ongoing journey of Reconciliation through education.

Creating great educational places and spaces
Resources for schools

About the BGA

Queensland Independent Schools Block Grant Authority (QIS BGA) is a not-for-profit organisation responsible for administering State and Australian Government funding for school facilities in Queensland's independent schools.

The BGA seeks to support the improvement of educational outcomes for young Australians, as represented by the Mparntwe Education Declaration's two interconnected goals:

Goal 1
The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity.

Goal 2
All young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community.

Empowering schools

QIS BGA recognises that an informed school leader and a student-centred approach to the delivery of the school-based built environment contribute to enhanced learning opportunities and the maximisation of educational outcomes.

QIS BGA seeks to support schools in creating learning environments that promote educational excellence and equity by providing funding, access to expert guidance and practical resources to help lift the capacity of school leaders to contribute positively to the design, construction, and activation of new or refurbished educational facilities.

A suite of resources

QIS BGA has created a suite of practical guides and resources for schools to help:

- Build knowledge and capacity
- Champion quality in the design and delivery of built assets that enhance learning outcomes and deliver value socially and economically to schools and their communities.

By fostering an accessible and supportive approach and providing tailored guidance for schools, the BGA encourages the active participation of schools in the process of shaping their built environments.

The activities involved in designing, developing, and delivering built infrastructure can often seem complex and overwhelming.

An understanding of the role, relationship, contribution and outputs of key stages in the design and delivery process will help schools navigate and contribute to this process effectively and ensure that their infrastructure investments support long-term educational goals as well as operational efficiency and durability.

The process and resource relationship diagram on the next page has been developed to provide a simple overview of the interrelationships between the key outputs and approaches that will inform and influence the development of a school's-built environment.

A suite of resources
QIS BGA has created a suite of practical guides and resources. To find out more follow the link below
www.bga.qld.edu.au

Process & resource relationships
Using the diagram below schools can understand where they are in the process and also the relevant resources provided by the BGA to support them on their journey.

Key Outputs

Strategic Plan

Should play a fundamental role in guiding the development and delivery of the built environment. It provides a long-term vision that aligns educational priorities, operational needs, and financial planning with physical infrastructure investments.

From a capital development perspective a school strategic plan should include a direction on the following at a minimum:

- Educational philosophy and pedagogical approach
- Curriculum areas (current & future)
- Student enrolment targets over the next 10 years
- The creation of safe and inclusive spaces beyond that required by law
- Sustainability
- How facilities will be used (or not) to support the School's engagement with the local community
- What financial ratios must be upheld to ensure the School's ongoing profitability, solvency, and sustainability.

Sustainability Strategy

Provides a structured plan to achieve long-term environmental, social, and economic sustainability and create healthier, more inspiring, and future-ready learning environments.

Master Plan

Provides a strategic framework to guide development, ensuring facilities align with educational goals, operations, sustainability, and future growth requirements.

Projects

Is a focused and physically deliverable project (building or infrastructure) aligned with the direction set out in the master plan.

Post Occupancy Evaluation (POE)

Collates insights that assess a building's performance, functionality, user and operational efficiency following completion and occupation.

Approach

The four step approach illustrated in the diagram is a process embedded in the development of all the 'Key Outputs' listed above. The steps reflect theories and approaches used in systems thinking, user-centred design, classical architectural principles, and integrated delivery methods.

Vision

To define purpose & ensure strategic alignment

Design

To translate the ideas expressed in a vision into feasible plans for place

Deliver

Advances the detail of the plans (for buildings, spaces and infrastructure) to implement designs and direct construction in a staged manner.

Evaluate & Learn

The assessment of the impact of a capital project (user value, functionality, build quality), enabling the collection of 'lessons learnt' to inform improve the design and delivery of future projects.

Part 01
Evaluating Impact

Part 01 of this guide describes what a Post Occupancy Evaluation is and the value to a school in undertaking one.

Sommerville House
Photographer -Scott Burrows
Architect -BSPN

1.1
What is POE?

Post-occupancy evaluation (POE) is a systematic process conducted after a building or facility has been completed and is occupied.

The POE process collects and combines information from qualitative and quantitative data sources to provide a structured, evidence-based approach to the assessment of how well a building or facility is technically performing and how well its design is meeting user needs.

POE bridges the gap between design intent and real-world performance and is an effective mechanism for identifying design and construction flaws, providing insights to help improve the functionality, environmental and economic efficiency and performance of established built projects as well as future projects.

Different types and sources of data used in the POE process:

Quantitative data

Sensor-based measurements
Can be used to source and collect data on energy use, indoor air quality, temperature, humidity, light and noise levels, and water consumption.

Operational records
Maintenance logs and facility management reports can be used to understand the performance and cost efficiency of facilities.

Qualitative data

Occupant feedback
Data can be collected through surveys, interviews, and focus groups with students, teachers, and parents using facilities to understand user experiences and levels of satisfaction with the facilities they are using.

Direct observations
Data can also be collected through on-site evaluations and usage studies.

1.2
What is the value of POE to schools?

A school's buildings and facilities are among its most significant financial investments, offering long-term educational and economic benefits when strategically located, thoughtfully designed, and effectively delivered.

Ensuring these investments achieve their intended educational role requires more than careful planning, good design and quality construction. It requires ongoing assessment to understand how well facilities are supporting teaching and learning objectives and the well-being of students and staff in everyday use.

By adopting POE, schools can evaluate and continuously refine their environments to ensure facilities are not only well-constructed but also responsive to evolving educational and community needs. POE can also help identify where investments generate tangible value and help illustrate how spending on school buildings and infrastructure directly supports educational success.

School leadership teams can use POE to:

1. **Evaluate educational impact –** Through the examination of how the physical environment influences student engagement, teacher effectiveness, and overall learning outcomes.
2. **Understand user experience & satisfaction –** By gathering feedback from students, teachers, and staff to understand how spaces impact learning and individual well-being.
3. **Assess building performance –** By evaluating the functionality, energy efficiency, maintenance needs, and sustainability of school facilities.
4. **Identify areas for improvement –** Highlighting opportunities to enhance existing spaces, optimise their use, and improve future designs.
5. **Support evidence-based decision-making –** By documenting and sharing data with school leaders, boards, and funding providers to guide future investment and policy decisions based on success.

Post-occupancy evaluation (POE) – the process and product of gathering systematic feedback about a building's performance – is a vital yet perpetually underachieved part of the design process.

Merrick Morley
AA Magazine, January 2025

1.3 When should you undertake POE?

Schools should consider conducting a POE after a building or facility has been completed and occupied. Ideally, the facility should be fully operational, with occupants having had sufficient time to use the facilities/ buildings and experience their strengths and weaknesses. Typically, this timing will be between one and twelve months after a project has been completed.

1.4 The power of POE

An informed and well-structured POE supports a process of continuous improvement, enabling schools with their architects, designers, and facility managers to deliver better-performing buildings. By adopting a program of effective POE schools can become living laboratories, leveraging real-time data, stakeholder feedback, and continuous assessment to maximize the impact and performance of their built assets into the future.

A key audience for the findings and recommendations of a school POE process will typically be the School Board, funding providers and facilities managers. The reports are also a useful resource of information for teachers, students, and the wider school community, by providing a better understanding of how school facilities can support education, well-being, and sustainability ambitions. The POE process can be utilised to:

- Empower teachers to adapt their teaching strategies
- Help students to appreciate and contribute to their surroundings
- Engage the broader community to participate in the continuous improvement of school spaces.

02

Part 02
POE toolkit and resources

Part 02 of this guide provides schools with a user-friendly, self-guided evaluation process .

Hymba Yumba
Photographer - Christopher Frederick Jones
Architect - Deicke Richards

2.1
POE Toolkit

This toolkit has been developed by the QIS BGA to encourage and facilitate the active participation of schools in the POE process.

While built environment professionals and project managers may have their own methodologies to undertake a POE, this toolkit has been developed by the QIS BGA to encourage and facilitate the active participation of schools. It provides schools with an easy-to-use self-guided evaluation process for collecting data, evaluating performance, and reporting on the effectiveness of their built assets to meet their strategic intent and educational needs.

The toolkit facilitates POE participation by educators, students, and built environment professionals and can be used to assess the performance of new buildings and facilities, or equally facilities that have been established for many years:

- At key stages following project completion, ensuring insights are gathered at defined intervals.
- Using evaluation perspectives tailored to schools and their educational needs, allowing for distinct analytic focus.

The adjacent diagram summarises the different stages and resources contained within the POE toolkit.

For more information about the documents development see appendix A.

	To be finalised March 2026	This document sets out Resource 2	To be finalised late 2025
	RESOURCE 1	RESOURCE 2	RESOURCE 3
	Early lessons learnt — Design and delivery	**Evaluating Educational Contribution**	**Technical performance — Building or facility**
Goal	To reflect on and record early insights and lessons learnt from the project design and delivery process, capturing the perspectives of the school as client and the design and delivery team.	To evaluate and understand how effectively a building or facility supports its intended educational purpose and contribution to learning from the perspective of its users.	To evaluate and understand the technical, operational, and functional performance of a building or facility to ensure it meets the design intent.
Potential participants	• Project manager • Design team members • Contractor • School representatives/ Project champions	• School POE Champion • School representatives • Educational staff • Students	• Relevant design team members • Facilities manager • School representatives/ Project champions • Contractor
Timing	Within one month of activation/ use of a facility	At least one-year post-activation/use	At least one-year post-activation/use
Steps		**A.** Prepare to Evaluate **B.** Evaluate • Activity 1 - Select, reflect and rate • Activity 2 - Expand the discussion and share your rationale • Activity 3 - Lessons learnt **C.** Dcument Findings	

2 Evaluating Educational Contribution

Role and purpose

The primary goal of this resource is to help schools determine how effectively their spaces contribute to educational outcomes and experiences, with a focus on the perspectives of the asset users.

How can this POE tool be used?

School leadership teams can use this POE process:

- Determine if a building is working well for staff and students.
- Review a current master plan to assess how effective it is in achieving defined strategic outcomes.
- Inform design briefs for future buildings and facilities, by adding to the understanding of the primary users' needs, to ensure new building designs or refits realise better outcomes.
- Gather student feedback on how a building supports their needs.
- Develop staff induction programs and user guides to ensure spaces are used as intended, connecting learning space theory to teaching practices.
- Use the data from the POE process as a comparative tool to support new QIS BGA applications.

Demonstration in practice

To illustrate how the Evaluating Educational Contribution POE tool can be applied in practice, the following pages provide a worked example based on a fictional school project. This example shows how each worksheet can be completed.

This worked example uses a fictional school, Riverdale Secondary College, to evaluate its new STEM Learning Hub, demonstrating the Post Occupancy Evaluation process in practice.

Clean, unfilled versions of all worksheets are available for schools to download and use for their own projects. These can be accessed via the QIS BGA website at www.bga.qld.edu.au/guidance/post-occupancy-guide.

Understanding the rating scale

For each selected theme, participants are asked to rate how well the space or facility meets the associated performance characteristics. Ratings are recorded using the following scale:

A – Strongly agree

B – Agree

C – Neither agree nor disagree/ neutral

D – Disagree

E – Strongly disagree

This scale is designed to make the evaluation process accessible and to capture a range of perspectives. Individual ratings are collected first, before moving into a facilitated group discussion to explore similarities, differences, and key areas for improvement – with ratings then aggregated.

Evaluating Educational Contribution - The Process

The 'Evaluating Educational Contribution' POE process consists of three simple sequential steps.

A Prepare to evaluate

This step is focused on gathering available background information about the space/s to be evaluated to ensure a good baseline appreciation is available, and against which performance can be assessed.

The information can be used to brief participants in the POE process.

B Evaluate

This step is the most important in the POE process and is focused on gathering insights and feedback from staff and students on the experience of using the selected space/s or building/s using. It involves a simple rating exercise that:

1. Allows individual participants to first independently and then collectively assess and share their perspectives on the educational performance of a space/ facility
2. Supports the consolidation and interpretation of insights gathered.

C Document findings

The final step in the process is focused on reporting to ensure the insights and recommendations generated through the POE process are effectively documented to support:

- Decision-making
- Guide future improvements
- Inform future project briefs.

A Prepare to evaluate

Objective

Establish a good baseline appreciation of the intended role and purpose of the space being considered.

Overview

Who should participate?	Designated project managers or project champions given responsibility to manage and lead the POE process.
Purpose	Collate background material to help brief participants who will take part in and contribute to the POE process.
Goal	Gather and collate background information about the space/s to be evaluated. This exercise provides the opportunity to establish a good baseline understanding of the strategic intent for the space being considered and its use, and against which performance can be assessed.
Key activities	1. Collect information aligned to the four categories set out in the **Briefing worksheet** on the opposite page 2. Summarise and share this information in advance of any wider group POE working session.
What are the deliverables?	A summarised resource of briefing information

Briefing worksheet

Project Name:	STEM Learning Hub – Riverdale Secondary College
Date of Evaluation:	March 2025
POE Champion:	Deputy Principal (Curriculum Innovation)

Category	Things to document if information is available.
Context, pedagogy and space	Briefly describe the physical character of the learning environment. The STEM Hub is a two-storey facility with six flexible labs, a makerspace, a robotics workshop, breakout study areas, and staff collaboration spaces.
	Make a note of the numbers of students who typically use the space. Approximately 480 students use the facility each week across Years 7–12.
	Describe the pedagogical approaches used in the space. Pedagogical approaches emphasise inquiry-based learning, cross-disciplinary projects, and integration of digital technologies.
The educational brief *If information is available briefly describe:*	The key priorities of the educational brief for the space. Enhance STEM engagement, support project-based learning, integrate technology seamlessly, and promote industry partnerships.
	The process adopted to develop the educational brief - who was involved and how it was led. Led by the Head of Science with input from curriculum leaders, student focus groups, and a parent advisory panel. Facilitated workshops with architects to align space design with future curriculum needs.
Creating the space – the design *If information is available briefly describe:*	The project design process. Design process involved architects, STEM teachers, and student reps from the school's STEM club.
	How users of the facility were engaged. User engagement sessions used VR walkthroughs to test space layouts. Accessibility consultant reviewed plans to ensure compliance and inclusion.
Evaluation *If information is available briefly describe any measures previously identified to be used to evaluate the effectiveness of:*	The educational brief. Pre-opening targets included increased STEM elective uptake, improved student collaboration skills, and integration of emerging technologies into teaching.
	Professional learning for the occupancy of the building. Professional learning sessions for staff on using flexible spaces and tech-rich environments were delivered pre-occupancy. No formal evaluation has yet been conducted until this POE.

(Note - The four categories identified align to catagories set out by the QIS BGA to assist schools in providing their educational rationale for a project – see Justification template insert web link).

Refer to the on-line toolkit for a clean, printable version of this worksheet

B Evaluate

Objective

Engage with students, educators and staff to gather data in response to two areas of focus - the 'Physical design' of spaces and 'Educational practice'.

Overview

Who should participate?	Staff and students who can provide insights and feedback on the experience of using the selected space/s or building/s.
Purpose	A simple rating exercise that: • Allows individual participants to first independently and then collectively assess and share their perspectives on the educational performance of a space/ facility • Supports the consolidation and interpretation of insights gathered.
Goal	Ensure a diverse range of user insights is captured, interpreted and translated into actionable recommendations to inform future improvements in learning environments and support evidence-based decision-making for projects: • **Individually.** First without the influence of group dynamics. • **Through group discussion** Then subsequently through facilitated discussion to explore and reconcile individual ratings, foster a deeper understanding of commonalities, differences, and key areas for further evaluation.
Key activities	This step involves 3 sequential activities: • **Activity 1** - Select, reflect and rate • **Activity 2** - Expand the discussion and share your rationale • **Activity 3** - Lessons Learnt
What are the deliverables?	User centric data on the functionality, design and impact on teaching and learning of a space/s

Activity 1 - Select, reflect and rate

Steps

1. **Choose a focus area.**
   Begin by selecting a focus for your evaluation:
   - Educational Practice or
   - Physical Design
2. **Select Evaluation Themes.**
   Review the list of available themes and shortlist those most relevant to your school's priorities and context. You may choose as many themes as you feel are appropriate to address your specific needs.
3. **Review Performance Characteristics.**
   For each selected theme, ask participants to familiarise themselves with the associated 'Performance Characteristics'. These are outlined on the pages 22 - 25 of this guide.
4. **Individual Reflection and Rating**
   Ask each participant to reflect individually on how the school environment performs in relation to each characteristic and then rate. A simple rating system is provided to make this process accessible and to help participants gradually build confidence and comfort with the evaluation process.
   A. Strongly disagree
   B. Disagree
   C. Neither agree nor disagree
   D. Agree
   E. Strongly agree

Goal

This initial simple rating exercise allows individual participants to independently assess their perspectives on the performance of the space/ facility before engaging in a group discussion. This approach ensures that a diverse range of insights is captured without the influence of group dynamics. A subsequent facilitated discussion then seeks to explore and reconcile these individual ratings, fostering a deeper understanding of commonalities, differences, and key areas for further evaluation.

Using the themes

The lists provided on the following pages offer a general overview of predetermined themes. While the themes offer a structured starting point for evaluation, they are intended to be used flexibly, allowing participants to adapt and interpret them based on the specific context, priorities, and unique aspects of the school and space being assessed.

Educational practice focus

The ‘Educational Practice’ focus themes have been designed to help schools evaluate how well the built environment supports all aspects of student learning and teaching, including pedagogy, curriculum, professional learning, inclusion, well-being, and community engagement.

Theme	Performance Characteristics
Thriving learners	Effective design shapes environments that nurture personal growth, confidence, and success. This theme explores and evaluates how spaces inspire curiosity, engagement, and holistic development, empowering learners to thrive.
Pedagogy and curriculum	Learning spaces directly influence teaching effectiveness and student outcomes. This theme examines how spaces support diverse pedagogical approaches, enhance curriculum delivery, and foster dynamic learning experiences.
Access and inclusion	Accessible and inclusive environments ensure every learner can fully participate and succeed. This theme evaluates how spaces remove barriers, accommodate diverse needs, and create equitable, welcoming learning experiences for all.
Diversity	Schools should reflect and celebrate the diversity of their communities. This theme explores how spaces can foster culturally responsive, inclusive spaces that honour different identities, values, and perspectives, creating a sense of belonging.
Wellbeing	Physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing are integral to effective learning environments. This theme examines how spaces contribute to comfort, safety, and positive experiences that support student and staff wellbeing.
Community and belonging	Schools are vital community hubs that connect students, families, and the wider community. This theme explores how spaces foster collaboration, engagement, and meaningful relationships, strengthening a shared sense of identity and belonging.

01

02

03

Understanding the themes that support the evaluation process

Themes

Predetermined themes establish categories for assessing and evaluating the educational and physical design focus areas in this user-centric POE process. While they offer a structured starting point for evaluation, they are intended to be used flexibly, allowing participants to adapt and interpret them based on the specific context, priorities, and unique aspects of the space being assessed.

Performance characteristics

The ‘performance characteristics’ provide tangible criteria to help POE participants assess the extent to which a theme has been achieved.

Questions to prompt discussion

A series of questions provide additional prompts to support and stimulate further discussion, to expand the conversation by encouraging deeper reflection and broader understanding of issues, opportunities and perspectives. See pages 29 to 39.

Print this spread to accompany the worksheets

Themes in action

01 - Thriving Learners

A large, tiered deck adjacent to a pond provides unique independent outdoor learning opportunities.

02 - Access and inclusion

The provision of spaces that allow students to choose the best location for an activity fosters a supportive environment and can enhance relationships with teachers.

03 - Pedagogy and curriculum

An interactive street immerses students in a tech-rich environment that nurtures creativity and imagination.

Physical design focus

The ‘Physical Design’ focused themes have been devised to support schools in reviewing and evaluating how well the spatial characteristics of their learning environments enhance educational outcomes.

Theme	Performance Characteristics
Responsiveness	This theme focuses on evaluating how well school spaces adapt to and support the needs of the community, rather than imposing rigid design solutions. It encourages an assessment of whether the built environment is flexible, inclusive, and aligned with the school's identity, values, and evolving requirements.
Collaboration	This theme emphasizes the importance of inclusive and participatory design, ensuring that all stakeholders have a voice at every stage of the process. It facilitates an evaluation of how effectively the design process engages students, staff, families, and the wider community, fostering a sense of ownership and shared vision.
Place, identity and innovation	This theme evaluates how well the school’s design integrates contemporary building principles while respecting and preserving its unique style and history. It encourages a balance between innovation and tradition, ensuring that modern advancements in sustainability, technology, and functionality enhance the learning environment without compromising the school’s identity.
Harnesses technology	Technology is a fundamental enabler of contemporary education. This theme evaluates how well school buildings integrate technology to support modern learners, ensuring spaces can accommodate current educational needs while remaining adaptable for future advancements.
Reconfigurability	Schools must be future-ready. This theme supports the assessment of how well the learning environment adapts to evolving needs, ensuring flexibility to accommodate future changes. It considers the ability of spaces to support projected shifts in student population, emerging technology demands, and evolving curriculum and pedagogical approaches.

Understanding the themes that support the evaluation process

Themes

Predetermined themes establish categories for assessing and evaluating the educational and physical design focus areas in this user-centric POE process. While they offer a structured starting point for evaluation, they are intended to be used flexibly, allowing participants to adapt and interpret them based on the specific context, priorities, and unique aspects of the space being assessed.

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Print this spread to accompany the worksheets

01

02

03

Themes in action

01 - Harness technology

A prototype classroom creates a contemporary learning environment with a choice of learning settings, transforming the engagement, flexibility and adaptability of the space.

02 - Reconfigurability

A constrained budget informed the decision to reuse existing classrooms rather than demolish them. Solid classroom walls and high-level windows were replaced with full-height glazing and louvres to support cross ventilation and increase transparency between the street, new courtyards and buildings.

03 - Responsiveness

A formerly uninspiring classroom building, previously occupied by conventional closed spaces, has been reimagined to create a vibrant student social hub.

Activity 1 worksheet - Select, reflect and rate

Educational practice focus

Participant Name:	George Dawes (Teacher)
Project Name:	STEM Learning Hub – Riverdale Secondary College
Date of Evaluation:	March 2025

Theme	Rating	Comment
Thriving learners	B	Students demonstrate greater confidence in group problem-solving tasks.
Pedagogy and curriculum	A	Spaces support interdisciplinary projects and diverse teaching modes.
Access and inclusion	B	Some challenges for wheelchair users in upper-level robotics lab.
Diversity	C	Limited cultural representation in environmental graphics and displays.
Wellbeing	B	Comfortable temperature, natural light, and quiet zones; noise spillover from robotics lab during exams.
Community and belonging	A	Industry mentors use the hub regularly; parents attend STEM showcase evenings.
Feel free to develop your own statements of performance that define what your team collectively feel to be characteristics of a learning environment aligned to the theme.....		
Student Agency & Voice	B	Evaluates how well spaces empower students to take ownership of their learning, make choices, and influence how spaces are used.
Creativity & Innovation	A	Assesses how environments encourage imagination, risk-taking, and experimentation in problem-solving and project work.
Sustainability Literacy	B	Looks at how spaces connect students with ecological awareness, sustainable practices, and climate-resilient behaviours.

Refer to the on-line toolkit for a clean, printable version of this worksheet

Activity 1 worksheet - Select, reflect and rate

Physical design focus

Participant Name:	George Dawes (Teacher)
Project Name:	STEM Learning Hub – Riverdale Secondary College
Date of Evaluation:	March 2025

Theme	Rating	Comment
Responsiveness	B	Spaces align with the school's strategic plan and provide a variety of indoor/outdoor learning areas. Some outdoor areas lack shade in summer.
Collaboration	A	Design process actively involved students, staff, and parents. Stakeholders feel a strong sense of ownership over the space.
Place, identity and innovation	B	Balances contemporary design with the school's existing brick heritage buildings. Some sustainability measures could be expanded.
Harnesses technology	A	Infrastructure supports advanced technologies, including VR, robotics, and AI-based environmental controls.
Reconfigurability	B	Furniture and partitions support multiple configurations, but some specialist equipment is fixed and limits flexibility in certain rooms.
Feel free to develop your own statements of performance that define what your team collectively feel to be characteristics of a learning environment aligned to the theme.....		
Sustainability & Resilience	A	Evaluates the environmental performance of the facility (energy, water, biodiversity, materials, carbon footprint) and resilience to climate impacts.
Safety & Security	B	Considers how design ensures physical safety, psychological safety, and secure access/egress while maintaining openness.
Community Adaptability	B	Examines how spaces flexibly serve school needs during the day and broader community uses after hours.

Refer to the on-line toolkit for a clean, printable version of this worksheet

Activity 2 - Expand the discussion and share your rationale

Steps

1. **Review Individual Ratings**
   Begin by reviewing the ratings collected in Activity 1. Ensure all participants have had a chance to contribute and clarify their reflections if needed.
2. **Summarise the Results**
   Compile the individual ratings to create a visual or numerical summary. This overview will help highlight areas where participants share similar views, as well as where their perspectives differ.
3. **Discuss Strengths and Weaknesses**
   As a group, discuss the key strengths and weaknesses of the school environment in relation to each performance characteristic. Encourage participants to explain the reasoning behind their ratings to uncover insights and shared experiences.
4. **Use Guiding Questions to Deepen the Conversation**
   If needed, refer to the prompt questions provided with each theme. These can help guide the discussion, draw out more detailed feedback, and ensure all relevant aspects are considered.

Goal

A facilitated discussion seeks to explore and reconcile individual ratings to generate a more comprehensive understanding of commonalities, differences, and key areas for further evaluation.

Through open dialogue and collective analysis, participants can uncover underlying reasons for varying perspectives, identify recurring themes, and gain deeper insights into how the space supports or challenges its intended purpose. This expanded conversation helps build consensus, refine assessment criteria, and enhance the overall clarity of findings, ensuring a more nuanced and informed evaluation process.

Supporting resources

Feel free to use the prompts to support your discussion as you advance the evaluation process.

Prompts for discussions

The following tables have been developed to provide prompts to aid individual evaluations and collective discussions, to help inform, expand or even start the conversation.

They are not intended to be prescriptive or to provide an exhaustive checklist. Instead, they are designed to act as conversation starters — helping participants in the process notice, question, and talk through what is working well, what could be improved, and what opportunities might exist for change.

Schools are encouraged to use the tables flexibly, adapting them to suit their individual needs and context. As part of the process, schools can use the tables to record key observations or discussion points. This might include written notes, photographs, sketches, or other visual references that capture insights and ideas as they emerge.

Activity 2 worksheet - Expand the discussion

Educational practice focus

Theme:

Thriving learners

Effective design shapes environments that nurture personal growth, confidence, and success. This theme supports the exploration and evaluation of how spaces inspire curiosity, engagement, and holistic development, empowering learners to thrive.

Participant Name:	George Dawes (Teacher)
Project Name:	STEM Learning Hub – Riverdale Secondary College
Date of Evaluation:	March 2025
Make a record of the groups aggregated score from Activity 1	B (Agree)

Does the learning environment	Rating	Comment
Support the development of all learners?	B	Facilities support a broad range of learners, including gifted programs and hands-on learners, but some quiet breakout areas are in high demand and not always available.
Encourage a student's sense of self, purpose and belonging?	B	Students report feeling proud to work in the hub; project displays boost confidence and visibility of achievement.
Prioritise the needs of all students?	C	Core areas work well, but minor accessibility limitations reduce full participation in the robotics lab for wheelchair users during lift maintenance.
Offer recreational, circulation and spaces between classrooms and buildings designed to challenge students and help them develop new skills and learning?	B	Outdoor deck used for independent study and STEM club meetings; however, weather protection could be improved.
Have adequate line of sight for teaching and learning?	A	Open lab layouts and glass partitions enable easy supervision and encourage peer-to-peer learning.

Participants should use the space below to record any key insights from their own rating for activity 2 or points of note from any group discussion:
- Students value opportunities to lead STEM projects and showcase them to the community. - Teachers have observed increased peer mentoring in the makerspace. - Potential to integrate more cultural and community-based STEM initiatives to broaden engagement.

Refer to the on-line toolkit for a clean, printable version of this worksheet

Activity 2 worksheet - Expand the discussion

Educational practice focus

Theme:

Pedagogy and curriculum

Learning spaces directly influence teaching effectiveness and student outcomes. This theme supports the exploration and evaluation of how spaces support diverse pedagogical approaches, enhance curriculum delivery, and foster dynamic learning experiences.

Participant Name:	George Dawes (Teacher)
Project Name:	STEM Learning Hub – Riverdale Secondary College
Date of Evaluation:	March 2025

Make a record of the groups aggregated score from Activity 1	A (Strongly Agree)

Does the learning environment	Rating	Comment
Support a student-centred approach?	A	Spaces allow for flexible grouping, individual work, and student-led projects.
Enable varied, challenging and engaging learning experiences?	A	Makerspace and robotics workshop enable practical, real-world problem solving.
Promote learning configurations for different pedagogical approaches?	A	Quick reconfiguration between lecture, group work, and lab activities is possible with mobile furniture.
Offer adaptable spaces for a range of learning scenarios?	A	Flexible partitions and movable benches facilitate rapid changes in setup.
Have adequate line of sight for teaching and learning?	B	Generally excellent; some equipment layouts create visual obstructions in robotics lab.
Promote engagement with Australian Curriculum General Capabilities?	A	Space actively supports digital literacy, creative thinking, and collaboration.
Do educators understand how to use learning spaces effectively?	B	Most teachers use the space well; further PD could enhance capability for newer staff.

Participants should use the space below to record any key insights from their own rating for activity 2 or points of note from any group discussion:

- Cross-disciplinary projects between science, technology, and art have increased significantly.
- Hub fosters an environment where experimentation and iteration are encouraged.

Refer to the on-line toolkit for a clean, printable version of this worksheet

B Evaluate

Activity 2 worksheet - Expand the discussion

Educational practice focus

Theme:

Access and inclusion

Accessible and inclusive environments ensure every learner can fully participate and succeed. This theme supports the exploration and evaluation of how spaces remove barriers, accommodate diverse needs, and create equitable, welcoming learning experiences for all.

Participant Name:	George Dawes (Teacher)
Project Name:	STEM Learning Hub – Riverdale Secondary College
Date of Evaluation:	March 2025

Make a record of the groups aggregated score from Activity 1	B (Agree)

Does the learning environment	Rating	Comment
Enable participation for all students?	B	Spaces are designed for universal access; however, lift downtime affects robotics lab access.
Enable authentic choice for all learners?	B	Flexible settings provide options; more variety in seating types could improve comfort for all.
Remove attitudinal, physical, visual, sensory barriers?	C	Sensory needs are considered, but acoustics could be further improved in open labs.
Entrance and circulation areas have enough space for safe movement?	A	Wide corridors and open plan support safe circulation.
Support personal circumstances/personal care requirements?	B	Accessible amenities on each floor; some signage could be clearer.
Offer access to external spaces to support choice?	B	Outdoor learning deck is well used; shade cover would enhance usability.

Participants should use the space below to record any key insights from their own rating for activity 2 or points of note from any group discussion:

- Students with mobility needs suggested having duplicate specialist spaces on both floors.

Refer to the on-line toolkit for a clean, printable version of this worksheet

Activity 2 worksheet - Expand the discussion

Educational practice focus

Theme:

Diversity

Schools should reflect and celebrate the diversity of their communities. This theme supports the exploration and evaluation of how spaces can foster culturally responsive, inclusive spaces that honour different identities, values, and perspectives, creating a sense of belonging.

Participant Name:	George Dawes (Teacher)
Project Name:	STEM Learning Hub – Riverdale Secondary College
Date of Evaluation:	March 2025
Make a record of the groups aggregated score from Activity 1	C (Neutral)

Does the learning environment	Rating	Comment
Reflect the diversity within the community?	C	Some representation in wall displays; could be expanded to reflect local cultural heritage.
Provide opportunities to develop knowledge of diversity?	B	Collaborative projects sometimes engage community experts, but scope could grow.
Reflect a process of co-design with parents/ carers, staff, and students?	A	Planning stages had broad stakeholder engagement.
Create culturally sensitive and responsive spaces?	C	No dedicated cultural space (e.g., yarning circle) within hub.
Include wayfinding in multiple formats?	C	Predominantly English signage; opportunity to add multilingual signs.
Offer places for cultural artefacts and acknowledgements?	C	Limited provision; digital display could showcase cultural artefacts and contributions.

Participants should use the space below to record any key insights from their own rating for activity 2 or points of note from any group discussion:
- Students expressed interest in integrating Indigenous STEM stories and local cultural heritage into displays.

Refer to the on-line toolkit for a clean, printable version of this worksheet

B Evaluate

Activity 2 worksheet - Expand the discussion

Educational practice focus

Theme:

Wellbeing

Physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing are integral to effective learning environments. This theme supports the exploration and evaluation of how spaces contribute to comfort, safety, and positive experiences that support student and staff wellbeing.

Participant Name:	George Dawes (Teacher)
Project Name:	STEM Learning Hub – Riverdale Secondary College
Date of Evaluation:	March 2025
Make a record of the groups aggregated score from Activity 1	C (Neutral)

Does the learning environment	Rating	Comment
Promote opportunities for social and quiet spaces?	B	Breakout areas are valued, but demand often exceeds availability.
Promote cultural and social/emotional safety?	B	Staff ensure safe, inclusive environment; more cultural recognition in design could strengthen belonging.
Promote physical and emotional wellbeing?	B	Good thermal comfort and natural light; noise from robotics lab can disrupt concentration.
Amenities positioned for easy access and supervision?	A	Well-located toilets and change rooms.
Have optimal learning conditions?	B	Well ventilated; lighting controls appreciated by staff.
Provide easy access to outside natural environment?	B	Outdoor deck is a positive feature, though lacks weather protection.

Participants should use the space below to record any key insights from their own rating for activity 2 or points of note from any group discussion:
- Students noted the hub feels "open and energising," but some prefer more enclosed study zones for focus work.

Refer to the on-line toolkit for a clean, printable version of this worksheet

Activity 2 worksheet - Expand the discussion

Educational practice focus

Theme:

Community and Belonging

Schools are vital community hubs that connect students, families, and the wider community. This theme supports the exploration and evaluation of how spaces foster collaboration, engagement, and meaningful relationships, strengthening a shared sense of identity and belonging.

Participant Name:	George Dawes (Teacher)
Project Name:	STEM Learning Hub – Riverdale Secondary College
Date of Evaluation:	March 2025

Make a record of the groups aggregated score from Activity 1	A (Strongly Agree)

Does the learning environment	Rating	Comment
Promote collaboration, participation and engagement with community?	A	Regular hosting of STEM showcase nights and industry mentor visits.
Promote sense of community and belonging within the school?	A	Hub is a central gathering place for STEM clubs and interdisciplinary events.
Promote partnerships and networks?	A	Active partnerships with local universities and tech companies.
Offer comfortable spaces for parents/carers?	B	Informal seating available, but limited enclosed meeting rooms.
Support use by community groups?	A	Makerspace used for weekend coding clubs.
Support access for parent/carer helpers?	A	Volunteers welcomed and supported.
Support community events?	A	Infrastructure supports large-scale events, with power and AV capabilities for outdoor spaces.

Participants should use the space below to record any key insights from their own rating for activity 2 or points of note from any group discussion:
- Positive feedback from local community members on visibility of student work.

B Evaluate

Activity 2 worksheet - Expand the discussion

Physical design focus

Theme:

Responsiveness

This theme focuses on evaluating how well school spaces adapt to and support the needs of the community, rather than imposing rigid design solutions. This theme supports the exploration and evaluation of the flexibility and inclusivity of the built environment, and its alignment with the school's identity, values, and evolving requirements.

Participant Name:	George Dawes (Teacher)
Project Name:	STEM Learning Hub – Riverdale Secondary College
Date of Evaluation:	March 2025

Make a record of the groups aggregated score from Activity 1	B (Agree)

Does the learning environment	Rating	Comment
Align with school master plan and strategic plan?	A	Facility directly supports STEM growth and aligns with curriculum expansion goals.
Provide adequately sized, comfortable external recreational space?	C	Deck is popular but unshaded; limits usability in summer.
Provide adequately sized, comfortable internal passive space?	B	Breakout zones are well-used; some students report they fill quickly.
Include conveniently located, accessible storage?	B	Adequate storage for equipment, but robotics tools are stored on a separate floor.
Provide clear, safe access to internal/external spaces?	A	Paths and entries are well-marked and accessible.
Include adjacency of related teaching/non-teaching spaces?	B	Science prep rooms located near labs, though some teachers suggest closer proximity to makerspace.

Participants should use the space below to record any key insights from their own rating for activity 2 or points of note from any group discussion:
- Weather protection and distribution of storage could improve usability

Refer to the on-line toolkit for a clean, printable version of this worksheet

Activity 2 worksheet - Expand the discussion

Physical design focus

Theme:

Collaboration

This theme emphasizes the importance of inclusive and participatory design, ensuring that all stakeholders have a voice at every stage of the process. This theme supports the exploration and evaluation of how effectively the design process engages students, staff, families, and the wider community, fostering a sense of ownership and shared vision.

Participant Name:	George Dawes (Teacher)
Project Name:	STEM Learning Hub – Riverdale Secondary College
Date of Evaluation:	March 2025

Make a record of the groups aggregated score from Activity 1	A (Strongly Agree)

Does the learning environment	Rating	Comment
Encourage input from students?	A	Students provided feedback via workshops and virtual design walkthroughs.
Encourage input from parents/community?	B	Parent advisory group contributed ideas for community use; uptake of suggestions varied.
Encourage input from teachers?	A	Teacher requests for flexible furniture and writable walls were incorporated.

Participants should use the space below to record any key insights from their own rating for activity 2 or points of note from any group discussion:
Stakeholder engagement created strong sense of ownership and pride in the facility

B Evaluate

Activity 2 worksheet - Expand the discussion

Physical design focus

Theme:

Place, identity and innovation

This theme supports the exploration and evaluation of how well the school's design integrates contemporary building principles while respecting and preserving its unique style and history. It encourages a balance between innovation and tradition, ensuring that modern advancements in sustainability, technology, and functionality enhance the learning environment without compromising the school's identity.

Participant Name:	George Dawes (Teacher)
Project Name:	STEM Learning Hub – Riverdale Secondary College
Date of Evaluation:	March 2025

Make a record of the groups aggregated score from Activity 1	B (Agree)

Does the learning environment	Rating	Comment
Address sustainability principles?	B	Energy-efficient lighting and ventilation included; opportunity to expand renewable energy use.
Work with natural environment and context?	A	Building orientation maximises natural light and views to green spaces.
Provide comfortable internal conditions?	B	Generally good; robotics workshop can overheat during extended use.
Consider natural disaster planning?	A	Flood-resilient ground floor design and robust materials.
Provide appropriate access for all ages and needs?	B	Lift access provided; redundancy in access routes could be improved.
Provide weather-protected outbuildings/ enclosures?	C	Limited covered connections between hub and nearby buildings.
Provide comfortable external spaces?	C	Seating areas exposed to weather; landscaping planned but not yet completed.

Participants should use the space below to record any key insights from their own rating for activity 2 or points of note from any group discussion:
Design blends modern elements with existing heritage aesthetic; sustainability measures could be more visible for educational purposes.

Refer to the on-line toolkit for a clean, printable version of this worksheet

Activity 2 worksheet - Expand the discussion

Physical design focus

Theme:

Harnesses technology

Schools are vital community hubs that connect students, families, and the wider community. This theme supports the exploration and evaluation of how spaces foster collaboration, engagement, and meaningful relationships, strengthening a shared sense of identity and belonging.

Participant Name:	George Dawes (Teacher)
Project Name:	STEM Learning Hub – Riverdale Secondary College
Date of Evaluation:	March 2025

Make a record of the groups aggregated score from Activity 1	A (Strongly Agree)

Does the learning environment	Rating	Comment
Support educators to lead on new technologies?	A	Teachers piloted VR and robotics programs during design phase.
Include technology infrastructure for all learners?	A	High-speed Wi-Fi, device charging, and assistive technology integrated.
Support AI in facilities management?	B	Lighting and temperature automation in place; AI usage expanding.
Capacity to accommodate current/emerging tech?	A	Spaces pre-wired for future upgrades.
Support increased energy requirements without major works?	A	Electrical capacity planned for expansion of tech-heavy spaces.

Participants should use the space below to record any key insights from their own rating for activity 2 or points of note from any group discussion:
Technology use is embedded in learning programs and seen as a core strength of the hub.

B Evaluate

Activity 2 worksheet - Expand the discussion

Physical design focus

Theme:

Reconfigurability

Physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing are integral to effective learning environments. This theme supports the exploration and evaluation of how spaces contribute to comfort, safety, and positive experiences that support student and staff wellbeing.

Participant Name:	George Dawes (Teacher)
Project Name:	STEM Learning Hub – Riverdale Secondary College
Date of Evaluation:	March 2025

Make a record of the groups aggregated score from Activity 1	B (Agree)

Does the learning environment	Rating	Comment
Anticipate projected changes in population/ needs?	B	Layout allows for addition of more classes; furniture storage space limited.
Allow for curriculum and pedagogy changes?	B	Open plan supports flexible delivery; some specialist equipment is fixed.
Suit age range/developmental stage of students?	A	Spaces accessible and engaging for Years 7–12.
Accommodate variations of group size?	B	Flexible, but some labs limited to 24 students for safety.
Support concurrent teaching practices?	B	Makerspace can host multiple small groups; noise can be a challenge.
Provide accessible learning spaces for all?	B	Overall inclusive; upper floor reliance on single lift could be a bottleneck.

Participants should use the space below to record any key insights from their own rating for activity 2 or points of note from any group discussion:
Opportunities exist to expand modularity of specialist equipment to improve adaptability.

Refer to the on-line toolkit for a clean, printable version of this worksheet

Activity 3 - Lessons learnt

Steps

1. **Record Participant Ratings**
   Document the ratings gathered in Activity 1. These provide a snapshot of how participants felt the space performed against each of the defined statements and performance characteristics.
2. **Summarise Key Insights**
   Reflect on the expanded discussion from Activity 2. Summarise the most significant insights, including any recurring themes, areas of consensus, or important divergences that emerged.
3. **Identify Future Opportunities**
   Use Activity worksheet 3 to document how your evaluation outcomes can be translated into practical actions. Use the table to help determine:
   - What has been learnt from the current evaluation
   - How these insights can inform future educational opportunities
   - How they may shape the design of future projects or updates to existing learning spaces

Goal

This step aims to consolidate and interpret the insights gathered.

- A record of the ratings from Activity 1 is reviewed to understand how well participants felt the space met the defined criteria.
- Key insights from the expanded discussion are summarized, capturing the collective perspectives and deeper reflections that emerged.
- The evaluation outcomes are analysed and documented to identify how the findings can inform future educational opportunities and project design briefs.

This step ensures that the POE process translates into actionable recommendations, guiding future improvements in learning environments and supporting evidence-based decision-making.

Activity 3 worksheet - Lessons learnt

Team Name:	Dream Team
Project Name:	STEM Learning Hub – Riverdale Secondary College
Date of Evaluation:	March 2025

Questions	Opportunities and improvements	
Performance characteristics Insert defined 'Performance Characteristic' here	**Education opportunities**	**Physical design**
Flexible learning spaces that support interdisciplinary projects	Expand cross-curricular STEM-Arts programs using makerspace and digital lab.	Install modular storage units to enable rapid reconfiguration between projects.
Inclusive design for all learners	Embed universal design principles in future refurbishments.	Ensure all specialist rooms have equitable access via redundant lift or ramp options.
Integration of industry and community engagement	Formalise industry mentorship program in timetable.	Upgrade entry foyer to include digital display wall showcasing student work and community projects.
Feel free to develop your own statements of performance that define what your team collectively feel to be characteristics of a learning environment aligned to the theme.....		

Refer to the on-line toolkit for a clean, printable version of this worksheet

C Document findings

Document findings step overview

Who should participate?	Designated project managers or project champions given responsibility to manage and lead the POE process.
Purpose	Create a structured report to ensure stakeholders have a comprehensive understanding of the evaluation findings and support the continued alignment of spaces with their intended educational purpose.
Goal	To ensure the insights and recommendations generated through the POE process are effectively documented so they can be used to support: • Decision-making • Guide future improvements • Inform project briefs.
Key activities	1. Collate content from the final activity 'lessons learnt' to generate a structured document that synthesizes key insights and recommendations against the selected focus and themes. This includes organizing findings from the ratings, summarizing discussions, and highlighting critical themes that emerged throughout the evaluation. 2. Make sure the information is clear, well-structured, and tailored to effectively communicate outcomes to stakeholders.
What are the deliverables?	Concise summary of the evaluation process. This could be a short report or presentation.

Appendix

Appendix A
About the development of this toolkit

The POE toolkit focusses on supporting the continued improvement of the user impact and educational value of capital assets.

In 2024, QIS BGA advanced its research to develop a school-focused resource aimed at supporting effective school engagement in POE, focusing on supporting the continued improvement of the user impact and educational value of capital assets.

In collaboration with an interdisciplinary team of experts led by academics from Queensland University of Technology (Dr Prue Miles and Dr Jeanine Gallagher), the project engaged a group of stakeholders, including school leaders and researchers in a co-design process. The co-design process facilitated the exchange of experiences, insights, and expertise to better understand the unique challenges and opportunities schools face in evaluating and optimizing their learning environments.

It was clear through this process that schools are keen to understand how to continuously reflect and improve their use of new and renovated school buildings. The insights from these discussions have been used and developed to inform and shape the structure and content of this POE toolkit.

Appendix B
Image references

Page	Image	Architect	Photographer
Cover		Hayball	Brody Grogan
6		BSPN Architecture	Scott Burrows
12		Deicke Richards	Christopher Fredrick Jones
23	01	Fulton Trotter	Taryn Blomfield
23	02	Bickerton Masters Architects	Scott Burrows
23	03	BSPN Architecture	Christopher Frederick Jones
25	01	Hayball	Brody Grogan
25	02	Cox Architecture	Toby Scott
25	03	Blight Rayner	Christopher Frederick Jones

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