EdTech
Evidence Board

EdTech Evidence Evaluation Tool

A practical guide to help you make informed EdTech choices

DRAFT
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About the EdTech Evidence Evaluation Tool

The EdTech Evidence Evaluation Tool has been published by the Chartered College of Teaching as part of the EdTech Evidence Board Project, funded by the Department for Education.

It is designed to help you make more confident, evidence-informed decisions around EdTech. Whether you are a teacher, school leader or are working in a procurement or governance role, this tool provides you with practical questions that will help guide your thinking and research about EdTech products before you purchase or implement them in your setting.

- ✓ Ask powerful questions that help you really understand what a product is capable of.
- ✓ Focus your time on identifying products that offer the best fit for your needs.
- ✓ Avoid wasting time and money on EdTech products that are unlikely to make an impact.

How does the tool work?

Effective decision-making around education technology typically requires three key considerations:

1 Context and needs	2 Product features	3 Research and evidence
The context and needs of the teachers, learners and/or educational settings in which the product is intended to be used. *Including consideration of educational needs AND practical requirements.*	The purpose, features and specification of the product that is being considered. *Including what the product claims to do and how it is intended to be used, as well as awareness of technical, data, safety and security features.*	The extent to which research and evidence suggests that the product may be effective for teaching and learning. *Including whether evidence reflects a range of contexts and users.*

The EdTech Evidence Evaluation Tool will provide you with a structured framework to help you think about each of these considerations in turn.

There are three steps for you to follow:

You can also find a checklist and links to supporting resources on the final page of this publication.

Step 1: Identify your needs
Use the prompts on pages 3-5 to to help you clearly identify your product requirements.

Step 2: Find out about potential products
Use the questions on page 6 to find out more about any products that you are interested in. Use the comparison table on page 7 to help you choose a potential product.

Step 3: Critically evaluate the evidence
Take a deep-dive into the evidence-base for your chosen product to inform your decision and next steps.

Step 1: Identify your needs

Before you begin looking for potential digital solutions, it's important that you take some time to reflect on your context, needs and specific requirements.

The questions in this section are designed to aid your reflection and narrow your focus in terms of what you are looking for in an EdTech product.

Questions to consider

1. What is the problem that you are trying to solve (and how have you identified this)?

There are many reasons that we might look to technology to help us address a problem or overcome a particular challenge or enhance teaching in an innovative way. Perhaps you have identified an opportunity where you think digital tools may have the potential to reduce workload, enhance curriculum delivery or provide targeted support to specific learners. Whatever your reason, it's important that you have a clear rationale in mind.

Take some time to articulate and be clear about exactly what problem you are trying to solve. It's important that you have a sound basis for your reasoning so you should think carefully about how you have identified this problem, and the value technology might offer in terms of a solution. Have you got compelling evidence that ensures your rationale is grounded in a real educational need?

2. Who will be using the product (and what are their needs)?

Are you looking for something that will be used by students or just by teachers? Will you be using it yourself or will it be used by others within your setting? If you are looking for a product that will be used by others it is important that you consider *their* needs as well - is it something that everyone will benefit from? Will everyone be able to use it - are there any skills gaps or accessibility requirements you need to take into account?

If you haven't already done so, try to gain an understanding of any specific needs or requirements of any teachers or learners that will be using the solution before you identify potential products.

Questions to consider (continued...)

3. What factors do you need to consider around implementation?

The success of a product will be dependent on how well it is implemented in your setting and there are a number of contextual factors that will affect this. For example, these might include:

- Time - How much time is required to rollout this initiative? Will you launch it all at once or trial first? How will you build in time to review and adapt approaches as required? Are there any curricular / timetabling considerations you will need to think about? When is the optimum time to introduce this?
- Training - Will staff require any training or professional development to support implementation of this new initiative? How will this be delivered and planned in? Would ongoing training be helpful?
- Digital competence - Will those who are likely to use the solution feel sufficiently confident to do so in terms of their digital skills? How will those who are less confident be supported?

You may not be in a position to fully consider implementation factors until you have a specific product in mind, but it's worth reflecting in advance and keeping these in the forefront of your mind.

4. What would stop you from committing to a new EdTech product?

It's helpful to consider what your 'non-negotiables' would be when choosing an EdTech product. These may be informed by your answers to the previous questions - for example, if the solution will be used by students with special educational needs, specific accessibility features might be a non-negotiable; or if you have identified that a key group of staff lack confidence around technology, you may decide to avoid products that are overly technical. Cost, technical requirements, compatibility, data privacy, cyber security and safety are also important factors that you will need to consider.

If you haven't already done so, make sure you are aware of any cost, technical, data protection, safety or compatibility requirements for your setting before making any final decisions.

Questions to consider (continued...)

5. How will you know if a product has been successful?

It can be helpful to have a clear picture in mind of what 'success' looks like. Imagine that you have found the ideal EdTech solution and are a year into using it in your setting.

- How is the product being used?
- What difference is it making to teachers and/or students?
- What has gone well?

Try to jot down some key 'indicators' that you might expect to see if an EdTech product is effective. These can be helpful to refer to when evaluating products, but can also be helpful to revisit along your journey - reviewing these in a year's time may help you to confirm whether the product is working for you in the way you had originally intended!

Scan the QR code below to download a printable, editable version of this template and other resources found in this booklet.

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Step 2: Find out about potential products

Once you have a secure understanding of what your needs are, you will be ready to start looking at EdTech solutions that might meet your requirements.

The questions in this section offer a useful starting point for finding out more about specific products and their features - you may want to adapt these where appropriate, or add some questions of your own.

Key questions

These questions are intended to be posed to EdTech companies to help you understand more about their products. Evaluate their responses against the requirements you set out in section 1.

1. What educational need or problem does your product address and how does it do this?
2. How long will it take to implement the product and how easy it is to use?
3. What evidence do you have to support your claims and how strong is this evidence?
4. Do you have evidence to show your product working in settings like mine?
5. How does your product support accessibility and users with SEND?
6. How safe is your product to use? Does it use AI and what data does it collect from users?

You'll also want to understand about cost and if you have specific requirements for example around compatibility and technical requirements, be sure to ask about these too.

You can use the space below to jot down any other questions that will inform your decision.

You may find it helpful to use the table on the opposite page to note down any key points and compare different how different EdTech solutions align with your product needs.

Product feature comparison chart

Product name	How does it fulfil an educational need?	Implementation and ease of use	Evidence for claims	Effective use in similar settings	Supporting accessibility and SEND	Safety, data, AI use	Technical requirements

Step 3: Critically evaluate the evidence

This final section of the tool has been developed to help you undertake a critical evaluation of the evidence-base for a single EdTech product.

Your evaluation should help you to look holistically at any evidence that is available to you in order to build an evidence-informed picture of the product's potential for enhancing teaching and learning.

Utilising a range of evidence types

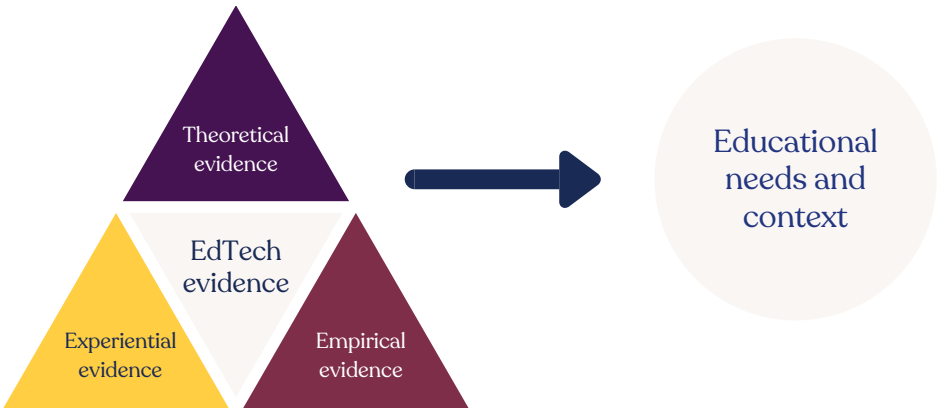
There is no single 'ideal' type of evidence for determining the effectiveness of an EdTech product. Typically, the 'best' type of evidence will depend on what it is you are seeking to understand, and it is often the case that we can gain the most helpful insights from looking at a range of evidence.

Is there evidence that shows us the product achieves what it sets out to do? Some EdTech products may be backed up by **empirical research** that shows measurable or observable effects on learners, but the process of gathering such evidence can be expensive and relies on participation from schools and colleges who may not always have capacity for engaging with formal studies.

Alternatively then we may look to more **theoretical evidence** that might help to show that, in theory, the product *could* work. For example, there is lots of evidence to suggest that retrieval practice can be a helpful strategy for improving knowledge retention, therefore a product that utilises retrieval practice to support knowledge retention - and deploys the approach in ways that align with the evidence-base - may be considered to have a fairly well-grounded theoretical basis.

We may also find that there is helpful **experiential evidence** that draws on the experiences of teachers and those who are using a product to give us an insight into whether and how the product can be used effectively in education settings.

With this in mind, this section of the EdTech Evidence Evaluation tool will encourage you to look at the breadth of evidence that is available to you, evaluate the credibility of that evidence, and consider its relevance for your specific needs and context.



Before you work through the questions on the following pages, try to gather as much evidence as possible about the product you are evaluating. You may find research and evidence published on the product website, but there are also other organisations that collate and publish evidence around EdTech effectiveness so take some time to look around and see what is available to you. You may also find it helpful to speak to educators in settings similar to yours to understand their experiences and use of the product, where relevant.

Once you are satisfied that you have found enough information, you should use the template provided on the following pages to conduct your evaluation.

EdTech Evidence Critical Evaluation template

Product name	

What does the product set out to do? *i.e. what 'claims' are made about the product?*

Based on the information that you have about the product, what do you hope the product's short and long term impacts could be for you / your setting / your students?

Potential short-term impacts i.e. what might this enable teachers or students to do? How might it enhance teaching and/or learning?	Potential long-term impacts i.e. how might this ultimately make a difference to teachers and/or students?

The following questions are designed to help you look critically at the evidence for the product in order to evaluate the extent to which it might actually achieve these aims.

Part 1: Theoretical evidence

Is there any evidence that tells you about the educational theory or research that underpins the design of the product?

If **yes**, what do you know about the quality of the underpinning theory or research?

For example:

- Are the ideas well-established?
- Are references provided? If so, do they show that the ideas come from high-quality published literature (e.g. peer-reviewed journals, literature from trusted organisations or experts)?
- How well does the product align with published literature around how children and young people learn effectively?
- Are the claims proportional to the strength of the evidence?

If **no**, are you aware of any theory or research that might be relevant to the product?

For example:

- Is the product design based on well-established educational ideas?

Notes about the theoretical evidence for the product:

EdTech Evidence Critical Evaluation template (continued...)

Part 2: Experiential evidence

Is there any evidence that captures users' experiences of the product?

This might commonly include evidence from surveys, user reviews and feedback, interviews, focus groups or case studies.

If **yes**, how robust is the evidence and what does it tell you? For example: • Is there information about who this information was gathered from, when it was gathered, how it was gathered and who gathered it? • How has the evidence been analysed? • Are you confident that the evidence has been gathered and analysed without bias? Is it trustworthy? • What does the evidence tell you about users' experiences of the product? Are the claims proportional to the strength of the evidence?	If **no**, are you able to find any evidence elsewhere about users' experiences of the product? For example: • Do you know anyone who uses the product? • Are you able to find any trustworthy reviews?

Notes about the experiential evidence for the product:

Part 3: Empirical evidence

Is there any evidence from formal research that studies the effectiveness of the product?

This might commonly include qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods research studies.

If **yes**, how robust is the evidence and what does it tell you? For example: • What was the research aiming to measure or observe? • Were the methods clear and appropriate for the aims? • Who conducted the research? When/where was it conducted? • Who paid for and published this research? • Who were the participants in the research? How were they selected? • How was data gathered and analysed? Were sufficient steps taken to avoid bias? • What were the findings? What conclusions were drawn? Are the claims proportional to the strength of the evidence? • What were the limitations of the study? Were these discussed? • Did the study consider or explore any potential negative effects of the product?	If **no**, are you able to find any evidence elsewhere about this product or similar products? For example: • Has the product been evaluated by the EEF or EdTech Evidence Board? • Are there any similar products that have an empirical evidence base that you could look at as a comparison?

Notes about the empirical evidence for the product:

EdTech Evidence Critical Evaluation template (continued...)

Part 4: Overall evaluation and conclusions

Thinking about the credibility and trustworthiness of the evidence you have seen for this product, consider the following questions:

	Yes	No	Not sure
Does some or all of the evidence you have seen relate to the current version of the product?			
Was some or all of the evidence gathered in collaboration with education settings?			
Does the evidence reflect a diverse range of participants, settings types and subjects/phases (where appropriate)?			
Did some or all of the evidence consider the effects of the product for different groups of users (e.g. learners with SEND)?			
Does any theoretical evidence suggest that the product design has been informed by robust educational theory and/or research evidence?			
Does any experiential evidence indicate that teachers and/or learners are able to use the product effectively			
Does any evidence indicate that the product might enhance teaching and/or learning in helpful ways?			
Does any evidence indicate that the product might enhance teaching and/or learning in helpful ways for particular groups of learners (e.g. those with SEND)?			
Does any evidence provide an indication of how the product might be used effectively as part of classroom practice?			
Does any evidence provide an indication of how the product might be implemented most effectively in education settings?			
Does any empirical evidence for the product demonstrate positive effects on specific outcomes for learners? [for example, on student attainment, cognition and learning, skills development, motivation, engagement, digital literacy, confidence or self-efficacy, wellbeing]			
Does any empirical evidence for the product demonstrate positive effects on specific outcomes for teachers? [for example, on teacher workload, teacher self-efficacy, teaching skill, digital competency]			
Does any of the evidence seek to understand any potential negative effects?			
Are findings or claims substantiated across multiple pieces of evidence and over a sustained period of time?			

Based on this information, consider the following five questions before making any decisions about the product's potential for meeting the needs of your context:

1. Has the evidence been gathered from teachers/students and settings similar to mine?
2. How confident am I that there is credible evidence to suggest this product might have the potential to meet our needs?
3. What have I learnt about how the product might be used most effectively in my setting?
4. What might I need to consider if I were to implement this product in our setting?
5. What are my key takeaways and next steps?

Quick checklist for EdTech Decisions

Now you have been through this process, you may find it helpful to keep this checklist to hand whenever you are considering a new EdTech solution.

Step 1: Identify your needs

Make sure you have asked yourself these questions before you look at potential EdTech solutions:

- [ ] What is the problem I am trying to address (and how have I identified this)?
- [ ] Who will be using the product (and what are their needs)?
- [ ] What factors do I need to consider around implementation?
- [ ] What would stop me from committing to an EdTech product?
- [ ] How will I know if a product has been successful?
- [ ] What are the technical / safety / data or other requirements I need to be aware of?

Step 2: Find out about potential products

Pose these questions to EdTech companies to help determine product suitability:

What educational need or problem does your product address and how does it do this?	How long will it take to implement the product and how easy it is to use?	What evidence do you have to support your claims and how strong is this evidence?
Do you have evidence to show your product working in settings like mine?	How does your product support accessibility and users with SEND?	How safe is your product to use? Does it use AI and what data does it collect from users?

Or if you only have time to ask one question, try this....

> If I was only using your product in my classroom - for 15 minutes a day - what outcome would I expect to see and what evidence do you have to support this?

Step 3: Critically evaluate the evidence

Before you make a decision about a specific product, use our critical evaluation tool to appraise the evidence-base and consider implications for your setting.

Scan the QR code to download a printable version of the EdTech Evidence Critical Evaluation Template and other resources linked to this evaluation tool.

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