

The six-point scale

The six-point scale is a tool for grading the quality indicators. It is mainly used by Education Scotland, local authorities and other governing bodies for the purpose of national and/or local benchmarking across a number of establishments. It is not necessary for individual schools to measure themselves against the six-point scale although they may choose to do so. It should be noted that, when a grading is applied, it is for the whole quality indicator. Individual themes should not be graded. In education, an evaluation can be arrived at in a range of contexts. We need to bear in mind that awarding levels using a quality scale will always be more of a professional skill than a technical process. However, the following general guidelines should be consistently applied.

Excellent	An evaluation of excellent applies to services which are a model of their kind. An evaluation of excellent represents an outstanding standard of provision which exemplifies very best practice. It is characterised by professional understanding which is being shared to support system-wide improvement. It implies that very high levels of performance are sustainable and will be maintained.
Very good	An evaluation of very good means that there are major strengths. There are very few areas for improvement and any that do exist do not significantly diminish the service user's experience. An evaluation of very good represents a high standard of provision and is a standard that should be achievable by all. There is an expectation that the organisation will make continued use of self-evaluation to plan further improvements and will work towards improving provision and performance to excellent.
Good	An evaluation of good means that there are important strengths, yet there remains some aspects which require improvement. The strengths have a significantly positive impact on almost all service users. However, the quality of service users' experiences is diminished in some way by the aspects in which improvement is required. It implies that the organisation should seek to improve further the areas of important strength, and also take action to address the areas for improvement.
Satisfactory	An evaluation of satisfactory means that the strengths within this aspect of the service's work just outweigh the weaknesses. It indicates that service users have access to a basic level of provision. It represents a standard where the strengths have a positive impact on service users' experiences. However, while the weaknesses are not important enough to have a substantially adverse impact, they do constrain the overall quality of service users' experiences. It implies the organisation needs to take action to address areas of weakness by building on its strengths.
Weak	An evaluation of weak means that there are important weaknesses within this aspect of the organisation's work. While there may be some strengths, the important weaknesses, either individually or collectively, are sufficient to diminish service users', experiences in substantial ways. It implies the need for prompt, structured and planned action on the part of the organisation.
Unsatisfactory	An evaluation of unsatisfactory means there are major weaknesses within this aspect of the organisation's work which require immediate remedial action. Service users' experiences are at risk in significant respects. In almost all cases, this will require support from senior managers, or, in some cases, at corporate level, in planning and carrying out the necessary actions to effect improvement. This may involve working alongside other staff or agencies in or beyond the organisation.