

ERA Indicator Principles

The ERA Indicator Principles were developed by the ARC in accordance with international best practice and informed by the ERA Indicator Development Group with analytical testing of data from the Australian higher education sector. In developing the principles, it was recognised that there is a wide range of discipline-specific behaviours and norms. The ERA indicator development process was underpinned by the objective of minimising the burden on researchers, administrators and institutions.

The ERA Indicator Principles were released in December 2008. They underpinned the ERA 2009 trial and the first full ERA evaluation in 2010. While the ERA indicators were refined after the 2009 trial, the Indicator Principles remained the same for ERA 2010.

Specific information about ERA 2010 indicators is provided in the *ERA 2010 Submission Guidelines*. The *ERA 2010 Discipline Matrix* shows the indicators that apply to each unit of evaluation.

The Indicator Principles

In identifying and developing appropriate indicators for each discipline, the ARC considered that they must be:

1. **Quantitative** – objective measures that meet a defined methodology that will reliably produce the same result, regardless of when and by whom the principles are applied.
2. **Internationally recognised** – while not all indicators will allow for direct international comparability, the indicators must be internationally-recognised measures of research types, including research relevant to different audiences (e.g. practitioner focus, internationally relevant, nationally and regionally-focused research).
3. **Comparable to indicators used for other disciplines** – while ERA evaluation processes will not make direct comparisons across disciplines, indicators must be capable of identifying comparable levels of research quality across disciplines.
4. **Able to be used to identify excellence** – indicators must be capable of assessing the quality of research, and where necessary, focused to identify excellence.
5. **Research relevant** – indicators must be relevant to the research component of any discipline.
6. **Repeatable and verifiable** – indicators must be repeatable and based on transparent and publicly available methodologies. This should allow institutions to reproduce the methodology in-house. All data submitted to ERA must be auditable and reconcilable.
7. **Time-bound** – indicators must be specific to a particular period of time as defined by the reference period. Research activity outside of the reference period will not be assessed under the ERA other than to the extent it results in the triggering of an indicator during the reference period.
8. **Behavioural impact** – indicators should drive responses in a desirable direction and not result in perverse unintended consequences. They should also limit the scope for special interest groups or individuals to manipulate the system to their advantage.