3. NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD AND ASSESSMENT AND RATING

Guide to the National Quality Standard
Assessment and rating process

ICONS LEGEND

National Laws and Regulations

Sections of the Education and Care Services National Law (National Law) or regulations from the Education and Care Services National Regulations (National Regulations).

Offence

Offences against the National Law that attract a penalty, for example a fine.

Sight

Authorised officers will sight documentation provided as evidence to support particular practices at the service (for example, records of attendance, enrolment records, policies and procedures, meeting minutes, safety checklists, newsletters, photos, collections of children's work and documentation of child assessments or evaluations).

Centre-based service

An education and care service other than a family day care service which includes most long day care, preschool and outside school hours care services that are delivered at a centre.

Family day care service

An education and care service that is delivered through the use of two or more educators to provide education and care to children and operates from two or more residences.

Observe

Authorised officers will observe what children, families, educators, co-ordinators and staff members are doing (for example, engaging in caring, friendly and respectful interactions).

Birth to three

Children birth to three years of age.

School age children

Includes children attending school in the year before grade 1, and above.

Discuss

Authorised officers will discuss why and how particular practices occur at the service, with the approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators, family day care educators, assistants or staff members.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD AND ASSESSMENT AND RATING

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Information in this chapter was last updated **January 2018**

INTRODUCTION

The National Quality Standard (NQS) sets a national benchmark for the quality of education and care services and includes seven quality areas that are important to outcomes for children:

QA1	Educational program and practice
QA2	Children's health and safety
QA3	Physical environment
QA4	Staffing arrangements
QA5	Relationships with children
QA6	Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
QA7	Governance and leadership

In each quality area, there are two or three standards. These standards are high-level outcome statements. Under each standard are elements that describe the outcomes that contribute to the standard being achieved. Each standard and element is represented by concepts that support education and care services to navigate and reflect on the NQS.

The quality standards are also underpinned by regulatory standards. The NQS is a schedule within the Education and Care Services National Regulations.

See the ***Guide to the National Quality Standard*** for more information about the NQS and ***Operational Requirements*** for the underpinning regulatory requirements.

The rating system

Services are assessed and rated by their regulatory authority against the NQS, and given a rating for each of the seven quality areas and an overall rating based on these results.

The process of assessing and rating a service is a combined approach of quality assurance and regulatory compliance.

Quality ratings

The ratings are:

- Excellent rating, awarded by ACECQA
- Exceeding National Quality Standard
- Meeting National Quality Standard
- Working Towards National Quality Standard
- Significant Improvement Required

The quality ratings must be displayed at the service. These ratings are also published on the national registers on the ACECQA website (**www.acecqa.gov.au**).

> See more information about how ratings are determined and guidance on Exceeding NQS in the ***Assessment and Rating*** section.

Quality improvement

Ongoing self-assessment against the NQS drives continuous improvement and is essential to providing quality outcomes for children.

Each service must have a Quality Improvement Plan in place (QIP). The QIP identifies areas for improvement and includes a statement of philosophy for the service.

> See ***Assessment and Rating*** for more information about self-assessment and quality improvement planning.

Assessment and rating process

Authorised officers from the regulatory authority will:

- review service information (compliance history, rating and assessment history)
- review a service's QIP
- visit the service premises to assess and rate the service.

> See ***Assessment and Rating*** for more information.

When visiting the service, the authorised officer will collect evidence in the following ways:

- **Observe** – what children, families, educators, co-ordinators and staff members are doing (for example, engaging in caring, friendly and respectful interactions)

- **Discuss** – why and how particular practices occur at the service, with the approved provider, nominated supervisor, educators, co-ordinators, family day care educators, assistants or staff members

- **Sight** – documentation provided as evidence to support particular practices at the service (for example, records of attendance, enrolment records, policies and procedures, meeting minutes, safety checklists, newsletters, photos, collections of children's work and documentation of child assessments or evaluations).

Each service is unique and the ways in which the elements and standards are met will be determined by the service context, including the service environment; the needs, interests and abilities of the children attending the service; and the needs of families and the wider community.

REVISED NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD from 1 Feb 2018		
	Concept	**Descriptor**
QA1		**Educational program and practice**
1.1	Program	The educational program enhances each child's learning and development.
1.1.1	Approved learning framework	Curriculum decision-making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.
1.1.2	Child-centred	Each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.
1.1.3	Program learning opportunities	All aspects of the program, including routines, are organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning.
1.2	Practice	Educators facilitate and extend each child's learning and development.
1.2.1	Intentional teaching	Educators are deliberate, purposeful, and thoughtful in their decisions and actions.
1.2.2	Responsive teaching and scaffolding	Educators respond to children's ideas and play and extend children's learning through open-ended questions, interactions and feedback.
1.2.3	Child directed learning	Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and their world.
1.3	Assessment and planning	Educators and co-ordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child.
1.3.1	Assessment and planning cycle	Each child's learning and development is assessed or evaluated as part of an ongoing cycle of observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection.
1.3.2	Critical reflection	Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and implementation.
1.3.3	Information for families	Families are informed about the program and their child's progress.
QA2		**Children's health and safety**
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation.
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.1.3	Healthy lifestyle	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.
2.2.3	Child protection	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.
QA3		**Physical environment**
3.1	Design	The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service.
3.1.1	Fit for purpose	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child.
3.1.2	Upkeep	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.
3.2	Use	The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.
3.2.1	Inclusive environment	Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.
3.2.2	Resources support play-based learning	Resources, materials and equipment allow for multiple uses, are sufficient in number, and enable every child to engage in play-based learning.
3.2.3	Environmentally responsible	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.

	Concept	Descriptor
QA4		**Staffing arrangements**
4.1	Staffing arrangements	Staffing arrangements enhance children's learning and development.
4.1.1	Organisation of educators	The organisation of educators across the service supports children's learning and development.
4.1.2	Continuity of staff	Every effort is made for children to experience continuity of educators at the service.
4.2	Professionalism	Management, educators and staff are collaborative, respectful and ethical.
4.2.1	Professional collaboration	Management, educators and staff work with mutual respect and collaboratively, and challenge and learn from each other, recognising each other's strengths and skills.
4.2.2	Professional standards	Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.
QA5		**Relationships with children**
5.1	Relationships between educators and children	Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.
5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
5.1.2	Dignity and rights of the child	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.
5.2	Relationships between children	Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.
5.2.1	Collaborative learning	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other.
5.2.2	Self-regulation	Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.
QA6		**Collaborative partnerships with families and communities**
6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.
6.1.1	Engagement with the service	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.
6.1.2	Parent views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
6.1.3	Families are supported	Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.
6.2	Collaborative partnerships	Collaborative partnerships enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing.
6.2.1	Transitions	Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing information and clarifying responsibilities.
6.2.2	Access and participation	Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program.
6.2.3	Community engagement	The service builds relationships and engages with its community.
QA7		**Governance and leadership**
7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service.
7.1.1	Service philosophy and purpose	A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service's operations.
7.1.2	Management systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.
7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service.
7.2	Leadership	Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.
7.2.1	Continuous improvement	There is an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place.
7.2.2	Educational leadership	The educational leader is supported and leads the development and implementation of the educational program and assessment and planning cycle.
7.2.3	Development of professionals	Educators, co-ordinators and staff members' performance is regularly evaluated and individual plans are in place to support learning and development.

GUIDE TO THE NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

This chapter explains the National Quality Standard, includes questions to prompt education and care providers and services to reflect on their quality practice and provides guidance to assist services and assessors to consider whether a service is Exceeding the National Quality Standard.

A list of publications for further reading can be found on the ACECQA website at **www.acecqa.gov.au**.

QUALITY AREA 1
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND PRACTICE

Overview

Quality Area 1 of the National Quality Standard focuses on ensuring that the educational program and practice of educators are child-centred, stimulating and maximise opportunities for enhancing and extending each child's learning and development. It recognises that a quality program that builds on children's individual knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests is likely to have long term benefits for children and for the broader society.

In all settings, the approved provider, nominated supervisor and educational leader are responsible for ensuring that programs for all children are based on an approved learning framework and delivered in accordance with that framework.

The National Quality Standard is linked to two national approved learning frameworks that recognise children learn from birth. These are:

- **Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia** ('Early Years Learning Framework')
- **My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia** ('Framework for School Age Care').

The approved learning frameworks guide:

- the development of programs that promote children's learning and development
- the pedagogical practices of educators
- a planned and reflective approach to assessment and planning for each child.

A quality educational program views children as capable and competent learners who have agency and learn best through a play-based program. The learning frameworks also acknowledge the importance of intentionally including opportunities for children to progress towards the learning outcomes (for more information about learning outcomes, see **Element 1.1.1**.

Play provides a context for learning through which children organise and make sense of their social worlds as they engage actively with people, objects and representations (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 6).

Play-based learning:

- provides opportunities for children to learn as they discover, create, improvise, test theories and imagine
- enables expressions of personality and uniqueness
- promotes positive learning dispositions, such as curiosity and creativity
- enables children to make connections between prior experiences and new learning
- assists children to develop relationships and concepts

- supports a sense of wellbeing and promotes a valuing of diversity (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 9).

In school age care services, the educational program reflects an understanding of middle childhood. The program supports learning through play and leisure when educators act with intentionality to nurture the development of life skills and ensure that the program complements children's experiences, opportunities and relationships at school, at home and in the community.

In all services, educators draw on their pedagogy, knowledge of individual children, the approved learning frameworks, the National Quality Standard and the underpinning law and regulations when designing contextual programs and considering practices they will use. With their knowledge of the children and families using the service, and the community in which they are located, educators make informed decisions about how to meet the standards.

Educators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the educational program by using an assessment and planning cycle and engaging with critical reflection to improve the program and practice. Educators share the program with families and ensure families are informed of their child's learning and development progress.

Services facilitate children's learning and development through play by providing:

- educators with whom children can form attachments
- educators who use a range of intentional practices and interactions to encourage children's problem solving and thinking skills
- welcoming and inclusive learning environments that are flexible, responsive, and foster children's agency and engagement with the natural and built worlds
- access to a range of resources that children can use in a variety of ways to enrich and extend their play
- uninterrupted and prolonged periods of time to follow their interests.

Standards, elements and concepts

Quality Area 1 has three standards that focus on the educational program, educational practice, and assessment and planning for each child's learning and development. These standards are crucial to delivering quality outcomes for children under the National Quality Framework because:

- an educational program that is based on an approved learning framework, is child-centred and maximises learning opportunities strongly contributes to children's development as competent and engaged learners
- intentional teaching in early childhood settings (and intentionality in school age settings) is a recognised approach to facilitate each child's learning and development
- responsive teaching values, scaffolds and extends each child's strengths, skills, knowledge, interests and ideas, and child directed learning promotes children's agency
- critical reflection informs the assessment and planning cycle and

drives improvement in program and practice, resulting in continuous enhancements to children's learning

- families who are informed about the program and their child's progress are better equipped to engage with the service and collaboratively make decisions that strengthen their child's learning, development and wellbeing.

Standard/ Elements	Concept	Descriptor
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1.3.1	Assessment and planning cycle	Each child's learning and development is assessed or evaluated as part of an ongoing cycle of observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection.
1.3.2	Critical reflection	Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and implementation.
1.3.3	Information for families	Families are informed about the program and their child's progress.

STANDARD 1.1
PROGRAM

THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM ENHANCES EACH CHILD'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT.

How Standard 1.1 contributes to quality education and care

Quality educational programs use an approved learning framework to guide curriculum decision-making and facilitate a shared understanding of children's learning and development. This enables everyone involved in the service to share their perspectives, understanding of, and support for quality education and care practices.

With support from the approved provider and nominated supervisor, the educational leader collaborates with educators in designing an educational program that enables educators to work with children and families to achieve optimal learning and developmental outcomes for children.

With guidance from the educational leader, educators:

- use an approved learning framework to underpin their everyday practice. The framework guides interactions with children and families and provides the basis for educators' pedagogical decision-making, including the experiences that are planned for children and the teaching and learning that occurs
- develop the educational program based on their knowledge of each child so that the interactions, experiences, routines and events that each child engages in are relevant to them, respectful of their background and recognise and build on their current strengths, abilities and interests
- ensure that the interactions, experiences, routines and events included in the educational program maximise opportunities for children's learning.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for Standard 1.1 (for all services)

Educational program

- How do we develop our understanding of the approved learning framework that we use in our service to foster learning outcomes for all children?
- How do we support all children to progress towards the learning outcomes?
- How do we learn about each child's knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests?
- How do we make decisions about children's daily experiences and routines, and who is involved in making these decisions?

- How do we use the learning outcomes to guide our goals and subsequent planning for individual children and groups of children?
- How do we plan and implement educational programs that are relevant and engaging for children?
- How do we ensure that experiences and routines are child-centred rather than adult-directed or clock-driven?
- How do we support every child's participation in the program?
- What experiences do we provide for children to work independently and collaboratively?
- How do we use conversations and interactions with children to make routine times enjoyable and meaningful learning opportunities?

birth to three

- How do we develop a shared understanding of the learning outcomes and their importance to families?
- How do we ensure that children develop strong attachments and a sense of belonging in our service?
- How do we apply our knowledge of learning and development, and the content of the learning framework to this age group?

school age children

- How do we incorporate learning outcomes into leisure opportunities and the everyday experiences we provide?
- How do we provide problem-solving, inquiry and challenge based learning experiences for children to support their prior learning?
- How do we provide a differentiated curriculum that supports children's varying capabilities, learning styles and interests?

family day care

- How do we incorporate the learning outcomes into everyday activities that children experience in the residence?
- What other activities or experiences can be incorporated into our program to ensure a range of learning opportunities for all children?

ELEMENT 1.1.1
APPROVED LEARNING FRAMEWORK

CURRICULUM DECISION-MAKING CONTRIBUTES TO EACH CHILD'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES IN RELATION TO THEIR IDENTITY, CONNECTION WITH COMMUNITY, WELLBEING, CONFIDENCE AS LEARNERS AND EFFECTIVENESS AS COMMUNICATORS.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 1.1.1

Section 51(1)(b) Conditions on service approval (educational and developmental needs of children)

Section 168 Offence relating to required programs

Regulation 73 Educational program

What Element 1.1.1 aims to achieve

An approved learning framework guides the development of the curriculum at an education and care service and supports curriculum decision-making as an ongoing cycle of observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection. Curriculum decision-making is guided by the principles, practices and learning outcomes of the approved learning framework. This involves educators drawing on their pedagogy and their in-depth knowledge and understanding of each child.

The educational leader and educators use an approved learning framework and the service philosophy to consider the service's approach to learning, development and wellbeing, and the way in which these guide everyday practice and development of the education program.

Approved learning frameworks

The **Early Years Learning Framework** and the **Framework for School Age Care** (and other jurisdiction-approved learning frameworks) include principles, practices and learning outcomes that guide educational leaders and educators in their curriculum decision-making, and assist them in planning, delivering and evaluating quality programs in early and middle childhood settings.

A learning outcome is a skill, knowledge or disposition that educators can actively promote in collaboration with children and families. The **Early Years Learning Framework** and the **Framework for School Age Care** (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 8; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 6) promote five learning outcomes that are designed to capture the integrated and complex learning and development of all children. These are:

1. Children have a strong sense of identity
2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world

3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
4. Children are confident and involved learners
5. Children are effective communicators

The learning outcomes are broad and observable. They acknowledge that children learn in a variety of ways and vary in their strengths, (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 19; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 18) capabilities and pace of learning. The frameworks include examples of how children's progress towards the outcomes may be evident as well as suggestions for how educators could support and facilitate children's learning.

The **Early Years Learning Framework** aims to extend and enrich children's learning from birth through the transition to school. The **Educators' Guide to the Early Years Learning Framework** supports the educational leader and educators to deliver programs that enhance learning and developmental outcomes for each child.

The **Framework for School Age Care** is strongly linked to the **Early Years Learning Framework** and extends the principles, practices and outcomes to children and young people who attend school age care services. The framework is based on the notion that educators collaborate with children to provide play and leisure opportunities that are meaningful to children, and support their wellbeing, learning and development. The **Educators' Guide to the Framework for School Age Care** supports the educational leader and educators to deliver such programs.

Another approved learning framework is the **Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework**.

Curriculum decision-making

Based on knowledge gained from observing children and contributions from their families, educators (together with the educational leader) use the learning framework's principles, practices and outcomes to plan for each child's learning and development. Children's learning is ongoing and each child will progress towards outcomes in different and equally meaningful ways (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 19).

As children participate in everyday life, they develop knowledge and interests and construct their own identities and understandings of the world (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 7; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 5). Educators make curriculum decisions that uphold all children's rights including the right to have their identities, knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests acknowledged and valued in the context of their families and communities (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 13; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 11). Educators in school age settings recognise that children's learning, while participating in play and leisure opportunities, complements their learning at home and at school.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 1.1.1 (for all services)

Curriculum decision-making

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- children displaying behaviours and engaging in activities consistent with the evidence for outcomes described in the approved learning frameworks— for example, children:
  - » expressing a wide range of emotions, thoughts and views constructively
  - » exploring aspects of identity through role play
  - » expressing opinions in matters that affect them
  - » being empowered to make choices and solve problems to meet their needs
  - » working collaboratively with others
  - » moving around and through their environments confidently and safely
  - » being curious and enthusiastic participants in their learning
  - » using play to investigate, imagine and explore ideas
  - » conveying and constructing messages with purpose and confidence (*Early Years Learning Framework*, pp. 21–40; *Framework for School Age Care*, pp. 23–38).
- educators providing experiences for children that actively promote or initiate the investigation of ideas, complex concepts and thinking, reasoning and hypothesising by, for example:
  - » talking explicitly about phonological concepts, such as rhyme, letters and sounds when sharing texts with children
  - » engaging children in discussions about symbol systems, such as letters, numbers, time, money and musical notation
  - » supporting children to contribute constructively to mathematical and scientific discussions and arguments
  - » engaging children in exploration of creative arts such as musical rhythms or beats, or lines or shapes in visual arts
  - » using everyday events as a basis for children's exploration and learning about nature and science
  - » supporting children to take on roles that use literacy and numeracy in their play (*Early Years Learning Framework*, pp. 35–43; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 3).
- educators consolidating and extending children's communication by, for example:
  - » engaging children in singing songs and playing with words and sounds
  - » supporting children to convey and construct messages with purpose and confidence, building on home/family and community languages

- developing children's language and thinking by:
  - building vocabulary, having language-rich communication exchanges between educators and children
  - promoting expressive aspects of children's language
- providing opportunities for children to express ideas and make meaning using a range of media (*Early Years Learning Framework*, pp. 40–42; *Framework for School Age Care*, pp. 38–40).

- educators supporting children to be independent communicators who initiate English and home-language conversations, and who listen, respond and engage in conversation
- educators providing a literacy-enriched environment that includes displaying print in home languages and in English

birth to three

- educators:
  - supporting and promoting early attempts of children to initiate interactions and conversations
  - acknowledging and responding sensitively to cues and signals from children
  - initiating one-to-one interactions with children during daily routines
- children:
  - reaching out and communicating for comfort, assistance and companionship
  - being playful and responding positively to others
  - being given opportunities to learn and practice new skills

school age children

- the educational leader and educators:
  - acknowledging and planning opportunities for children to relax through play and leisure
  - incorporating children's diverse experiences, perspectives, expectations, knowledge and skills in the program
  - implementing a cross curricula approach to develop children's critical thinking and collaborative skills
  - empowering children to take a leading role in planning and delivering the program.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how educators make curriculum decisions
- how learning outcomes are promoted through the program and children's experiences
- how the service communicates learning outcomes for children with their families
- how the service's **philosophy statement** guides pedagogy and teaching decisions

school age children

- strategies:
  - » used by the service to ensure that all children have a sense of belonging in the service, including regular and occasional attendees
  - » used to ensure that the requirements and interests of children attending on an irregular basis are reflected in the program planning and delivery

school age children

- how activities outside the home are incorporated to provide a range of experiences to support children in achieving the outcomes of the approved learning frameworks.

sight ***Assessors may* sight:**

- documentation that has been gathered in a variety of ways about children's progress towards the learning outcomes and planning that establishes further learning goals
- documented programs that include planned experiences and/or strategies to support individual children's goals
- documented programs demonstrating that an assessment of the learning outcomes has led to goals being identified for the group of children that are designed to intentionally support aspects of learning

family day care

- documentation that:
  - » supports the development of programs in a variety of ways based on age of children, pattern of attendance and the grouping(s) of children
  - » demonstrates that an evaluation of the learning outcomes has led to goals being identified for the group of children that intentionally support aspects of learning.

ELEMENT 1.1.2:
CHILD-CENTRED

EACH CHILD'S CURRENT KNOWLEDGE, STRENGTHS, IDEAS, CULTURE, ABILITIES AND INTERESTS ARE THE FOUNDATION OF THE PROGRAM

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 1.1.2

Section 168 Offence relating to required programs

What Element 1.1.2 aims to achieve

Educators seek information from families and use a variety of methods to gather information about each child's knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests as the foundation of a child-centred educational program. The diversity of family experiences means that children experience 'belonging, being and becoming' in many different ways. Children's unique and diverse experiences, perspectives, expectations, knowledge and skills contribute to their learning (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 9; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 7).

As children participate in everyday life, they develop interests and build their identities and understanding of the world (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 7; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 5). Learning about these unique aspects of each child and identifying their individual strengths and capabilities assists educators to make informed decisions about how to further support children's learning. With support from the educational leader, educators plan and engage with children in a range of experiences where children are active participants and decision makers. This supports the achievement of child-centred learning outcomes and promotes children's learning and development.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 1.1.2 (for all services)

Child-centred program

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- educators:
  - » observing, listening and talking with children for sustained periods of time and paying close attention to what they are saying, thinking and doing
  - » demonstrating flexibility in program delivery to incorporate children's ideas, culture and interests to ensure that experiences are relevant and engaging
  - » integrating children's emerging ideas to support their participation in the program
  - » demonstrating that they know each child's individual learning style, temperament and interests

- children:
  - » initiating and contributing to play experiences that emerge from their own ideas and interests
  - » repeating, revisiting and adding to projects or experiences that they have initiated
  - » developing strong foundations in the culture and language of their family and in that of the broader community, without compromising their cultural identities
  - » indicating their deep involvement in experiences that are rich and meaningful to them through verbal and non-verbal responses, and sustained concentration
  - » exploring ideas and theories in play by using their imagination and creativity
  - » engaging in play during long periods of uninterrupted time.

discuss ***Assessors may* discuss:**

- educators' current understanding of individual children's knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests, and how they have developed this understanding of each child
- how educators' curriculum decision-making builds on each child's knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests
- how the educational leader and educators support decision-making, and review and discuss program planning
- how educators support children to actively participate in experiences and guide their own learning.

sight ***Assessors may* sight:**

- examples of how educators plan programs that are responsive to children's knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests
- evidence that information about each child, their family, culture and community is collected and used to plan programs
- *if required by the regulatory authority*, evidence that information about each child, their family, culture and community is collected and used to plan programs that promote children's learning, development and wellbeing.

ELEMENT 1.1.3: PROGRAM LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

ALL ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAM, INCLUDING ROUTINES, ARE ORGANISED IN WAYS THAT MAXIMISE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EACH CHILD'S LEARNING.

What Element 1.1.3 aims to achieve

All aspects of the educational program, including interactions, experiences, routines and events (both planned and unplanned) provide opportunities for children's learning and development (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 9; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 6), and for educators to interact with children in meaningful ways that empower children's choices and decision-making.

Educators adopt a holistic approach to planning and facilitating learning throughout the program, including during transitions and routines. Educators are alert to learning opportunities to extend children's learning during planned and unplanned experiences. They support children to follow their interests and to engage in uninterrupted play.

Effective routines and transitions are designed to support children and are regarded as equally important as planned or spontaneous play experiences or group times. Routines, such as mealtimes or toileting, provide predictability to assist children to feel safe, secure and confident to explore and learn. Effective transitions reduce stress and support children's sense of belonging.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 1.1.3 (for all services)

Program learning opportunities

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- children:
  - » participating collaboratively in events and experiences and having opportunities to contribute to decisions
  - » having opportunities to revisit and discuss their learning during routines
  - » being given choices during routines and transition times
  - » directing and initiating learning experiences
  - » engaged in a range of play experiences throughout the day
  - » having opportunities to extend their interests, experiences and activities, such as being able to continue working on a construction or artwork

school age children

- » developing autonomy by taking increasing responsibility for self-help and basic health routines
- » supporting younger children to organise equipment, participate in learning experiences and understand behavior expectations of the service

- educators:
  - » using all aspects of the program to undertake intentional teaching and support child directed learning
  - » making decisions based on best learning outcomes for children rather than convenient options suited to educators
  - » planning and implementing transitions and routines that support individual children's preferences and requirements
  - » minimising the times during which children are expected to do the same thing at the same time, or to wait for long periods without engaging in play or interactions

birth to three

- » using routines and play experiences to interact with children to build attachments
- » initiating one-to-one interactions with children during routine activities to ensure these provide opportunities for positive interactions and learning

school age children

- » collaborating with children about routines and procedures
- » encouraging children to guide younger children during routines

family day care

- » incorporating learning experiences into everyday activities that occur in the residence, such as meal preparation and packing up.

discuss — ***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how the service organises its program and routines to maximise opportunities for children's learning
- how children are involved in program decision-making, contributing to the learning environment, assisting in everyday routines and transitions including menu planning and food preparation

school age children

- strategies used by the service to encourage children to take a leading role in designing the program and organising the routines.

sight — ***Assessors may* sight:**

- policy documentation outlining routines and the written program, including examples of how educators plan programs that are maximising opportunities for learning.

EXCEEDING GUIDANCE FOR STANDARD 1.1
PROGRAM

Overview

The following guidance is provided to assist services and assessors to consider if practice for Standard 1.1 demonstrates the Exceeding themes at the level required for a rating of Exceeding NQS. The indicators provided are not exhaustive, and services may demonstrate Exceeding level practice for Standard 1.1 in a variety of ways that suit their particular operating environment and approach to practice.

Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 1.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- Educators, the educational leader, and co-ordinators demonstrate a deep understanding of the requirements of the standard, the concepts and the component elements, and a commitment to high quality practice at all times.
- All educators:
  - » work collaboratively with the educational leader to consistently make curriculum decisions, including the organisation of daily routines, that maximise learning and development outcomes for every child in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators
  - » work collaboratively with the educational leader to consistently develop and implement a purposeful and responsive educational program that reflects and builds on the knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests of each child
  - » confidently make curriculum decisions throughout the day, week or month to ensure each child's learning and development is maximised.
- All educators, the educational leader and co-ordinators are able to explain how their approach to curriculum decision-making connects to:
  - » the approved learning framework/s and enhances learning and development for each child
  - » the service philosophy and supports the service's broader vision for quality.
- The observed and discussed approach to curriculum decision-making:
  - » consistently aligns with the service philosophy
  - » consistently demonstrates a strong commitment to the principles and practices of the approved learning framework/s.

Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 1.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- The service's approach to curriculum decision-making:
  - reflects robust debate, discussion, and opportunities for input by all educators, and is informed by critical reflection and past incidents
  - is informed by current recognised guidance.
- Any change to the service's approach to curriculum decision-making is understood by all and implemented appropriately.
- All educators, the educational leader and co-ordinators regularly reflect, individually and with each other on:
  - opportunities to strengthen the educational program
  - implementation of changes to the program to enhance children's learning and development outcomes, including through the organisation of daily routines
  - the evolving knowledge, strengths, ideas, cultures, abilities and interests of children at the service, and how these inform the educational program
  - social justice and equity implications of curriculum decisions to ensure that the program considers the circumstances and rights of every child at the service
  - opportunities to cultivate deep respect for, and knowledge of, the cultural diversity of the broader community in the educational program, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures
  - the theoretical and philosophical influences on their curriculum decisions, including the theoretical perspectives identified in the approved learning framework/s
  - how they draw on theoretical and philosophical influences and how they have influenced practice over time.

Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 1.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- The service's approach to curriculum decision-making:
  - reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service;
  - welcomes, respects and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service;
  - reflects a strong commitment to meaningful, regular engagement with families and the community to promote strong connections between each child's various learning environments.

- All educators:
  - » consistently and meaningfully engage with children's families and/or the community to:
    - draw on family and/or community understanding of each child's knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities, interests and learning and development in order to develop a child-centred educational program, for example Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's ways of knowing and being;
    - regularly communicate about the educational program and children's evolving knowledge, strengths, ideas, abilities, interests and learning and development outcomes to support continuity of learning and development across children's various learning environments
  - » actively seek out the voices, perspectives, and views of children throughout the day, and draw on this input to develop a child-centred educational program and enhance children's learning and development;
  - » draw inspiration from the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service to enhance children's learning and development.

STANDARD 1.2
PRACTICE

EDUCATORS FACILITATE AND EXTEND EACH CHILD'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT.

How Standard 1.2 contributes to quality education and care

In their pedagogical practice, educators have a professional responsibility to build and nurture relationships with children and families, provide a play-based environment, and facilitate and extend children's learning and development. Educators are deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions and actions (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 15; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 41). They value and respond to children's ideas, and extend children's learning through open-ended questions, meaningful interactions and encouraging feedback. They promote each child's agency to help them make choices and decisions that influence their world (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 45; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 8).

Educators' professional judgments and curriculum decisions are central to their active role in facilitating children's learning, development and wellbeing. In making professional judgments, educators utilise their:

- professional knowledge, skills and experience
- knowledge of the children, families and communities attending their service
- awareness of how their own beliefs and values impact on children's wellbeing and learning
- awareness of their own biases and how these might impact on inclusive practice (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 11; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 7).

Educators also draw on their creativity, imagination and insight to help them improvise and adjust their practice to suit the time, place and context of children's learning.

Intentional and responsive educators actively engage in children's learning and share decision-making with them. They use everyday interactions with children during play, routines and ongoing projects to stimulate children's thinking and to enrich their learning.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for Standard 1.2 (for all services)

Educational practice

- How do we demonstrate intention in our practice and how does this impact on outcomes for children?

- How do we reflect on the range of intentional strategies suggested in the approved learning framework/s to support children's development and learning (for example, modelling and demonstrating, open questioning, speculating, explaining, engaging in shared thinking and problem solving – see *Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 15; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 14)?
- How responsive are we to children's ideas, thinking and interests?
- How do we demonstrate that we value children's ideas, thinking and interests?
- How do we extend the program and experiences being offered to each child and/or groups of children?
- How can we improve the ways in which we engage children in making decisions about their own learning?
- How do we arrange activities, routines and the physical environment to support children to make choices about what they would like to do and how they will do it?
- Do we provide children with the opportunity to make choices in circumstances where we promote their agency?

school age children

- How do planned or intentional aspects of the program support spontaneous play and leisure experiences initiated by children?

ELEMENT 1.2.1
INTENTIONAL TEACHING

EDUCATORS ARE DELIBERATE, PURPOSEFUL, AND THOUGHTFUL IN THEIR DECISIONS AND ACTIONS.

What Element 1.2.1 aims to achieve

Intentional teaching in the early childhood context (and intentionality in the middle childhood context) is being deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in decisions and actions (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 15; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 41).

In the middle childhood context, intentionality includes actively promoting children's learning through challenging experiences and interactions that foster high-level critical thinking skills. Intentionality includes engaging with children in meaningful ways that support and extend their thinking and learning (*Framework for School Age Care*, p. 14).

Intentional teaching utilises professional knowledge and strategies that reflect contemporary theories and research concerning children's play, leisure and learning (*Framework for School Age Care*, p. 14). Intentional educators are able to explain what they are doing and why they are doing it.

Intentional educators:

- recognise that learning occurs in social contexts and that interactions and communication are vitally important for learning
- use strategies (such as modelling and demonstrating, open-ended questioning, speculating, explaining and engaging in sustained shared conversations) to extend children's thinking and learning
- move flexibly in and out of different roles and draw on different strategies as the context of children's play changes
- use their professional knowledge to plan programs that support children's knowledge building (adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 15; and the *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 14).

Assessment guide for meeting Element 1.2.1 (for all services)

Intentional teaching practice

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- educators:
  - » providing time, space and learning experiences that facilitate thoughtful and challenging conversations with children
  - » engaging with children by listening, showing interest and asking open-ended questions to encourage thinking and conversation
  - » using a range of communication strategies that involve explanations, speculation and problem solving

- » collaborating with children to develop further knowledge and skills
- » using teaching strategies that complement the goals they have for children's learning
- » providing instructional/intentional support to children during play, routines and transitions
- » who are fully present and mindful of opportunities to provide children time and space to 'be'.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- the plans and strategies educators use to promote learning across all aspects of the program
- how intentional teaching strategies are used to extend children's play, including spontaneous experiences
- any changes in practices that have been implemented to support a child requiring additional assistance, and how those changes have been adapted and sustained over time to benefit the learning of other children and build respect for diversity
- how educators:
  - » decide when to use particular intentional teaching strategies, including the intentional positioning of resources or structuring of the learning environment

school age children

- » make conscious decisions in a leisure based program to promote learning and wellbeing.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- the written program
- team meeting minutes when intentional teaching strategies have been discussed
- documented examples of reflective practice
- planning documentation that identifies resources to support ongoing learning
- documentation that monitors children's learning, wellbeing and engagement.

ELEMENT 1.2.2
RESPONSIVE TEACHING AND SCAFFOLDING

EDUCATORS RESPOND TO CHILDREN'S IDEAS AND PLAY AND EXTEND CHILDREN'S LEARNING THROUGH OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS, INTERACTIONS AND FEEDBACK.

What Element 1.2.2 aims to achieve

Children's learning is extended when educators make decisions and implement actions that respond to children's ideas and play to enhance their learning. Responsive teaching and scaffolding involves:

- following up on children's ideas and interests with open-ended questions and providing positive feedback
- encouraging children to further explore their interests and stimulate their thinking
- considering how children are grouped for play
- implementing experiences that support peer scaffolding or extending children's learning through engagement with other children
- using spontaneous 'teachable moments' and incidental opportunities to enhance children's play and scaffold their learning (adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 15; and the *Framework for School Age Care*, pp. 14–15).

Responsive teaching is achieved by valuing and building on children's current and evolving strengths, skills and knowledge to ensure their wellbeing, motivation and engagement in learning. Children learn best when the experiences they have are meaningful to them and are focused on the here and now. Because children constantly learn new skills and gain new insights into their world, educators continuously assess, evaluate and implement responsive teaching strategies.

Educators reflect on the inclusiveness of their practices, including whether these are responsive to individual children and whether they acknowledge all children's contributions to the group. This updates their knowledge of individual children and helps them to plan new and follow-up experiences that are relevant to each child. All of these experiences are implemented within a social context where peer interactions are encouraged and supported, building a sense of belonging for all children.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 1.2.2 (for all services)

The assessment will be undertaken primarily through observation and discussion with educators.

Responsive teaching and scaffolding practice

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- educators:
  - » intentionally scaffolding children's understanding and learning
  - » making use of spontaneous 'teachable moments' to extend children's learning
  - » responding to children's learning dispositions by commenting on them and providing encouragement and additional ideas
  - » responding to children's ideas and using their interests as a basis for further learning and exploration
  - » creating opportunities for peer scaffolding
  - » noticing children applying their learning in new ways or between different contexts and talking about this with them in ways that build their understanding
  - » modelling mathematical and scientific language and concepts
  - » using language associated with the creative arts
  - » talking explicitly about phonological concepts, such as rhyme, letters and sounds when sharing texts with children
  - » joining in children's play when invited, taking on a range of roles and co-constructing materials, such as signs that extend the play and enhance literacy and/or numeracy learning (adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework*, pp. 15, 34–41; and the *Framework for School Age Care*, pp. 15, 36).
- children:
  - » being curious and enthusiastic participants in their learning
  - » using their own ideas to develop their play.

discuss

Assessors may* discuss *how educators:

- recognise and value children's involvement in learning
- provide learning environments that are flexible and open-ended
- plan learning environments with appropriate levels of challenge, where children are encouraged to explore, experiment and take appropriate risks in their learning
- support children's investigations and projects
- communicate with children about their learning and ideas and how they build on these.

sight

Assessors may* sight *the written program, including examples of:

- documented reflective practice
- documentation and monitoring of children's learning, development, wellbeing and engagement
- project or inquiry work where children are given the opportunity to take the lead in an investigation, or collaborate with peers, teachers, family members and other members of the community.

ELEMENT 1.2.3
CHILD DIRECTED LEARNING

EACH CHILD'S AGENCY IS PROMOTED, ENABLING THEM TO MAKE CHOICES AND DECISIONS THAT INFLUENCE EVENTS AND THEIR WORLD.

What Element 1.2.3 aims to achieve

When educators promote child directed learning, they foster children's agency, build on the key concepts of belonging, being and becoming, and support children to develop a strong sense of identity. Promoting children's agency recognises that children have a right to make choices and decisions, and are capable of initiating their own learning.

When children have opportunities to make choices, to attempt tasks, to make decisions for themselves, and to take on increasing responsibilities, they are able to recognise their influence and significance in the world and develop skills in assessing risk.

Educators who listen to and respect children's ideas recognise children's capabilities and help them develop the sense that their ideas and opinions matter. They support children to explore their world, to ask questions, to express ideas and to learn from their mistakes. Educators support children to develop decision-making skills to make appropriate choices for their own wellbeing and to realise that the choices they make may impact on others. When children are given choices and control, they begin to understand the connection between actions and consequences, and learn to assess what risks are appropriate and how they may be managed.

Educators promote child-directed learning by encouraging children to make decisions about, plan for and help set up their own play experiences or projects.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 1.2.3 (for all services)

The assessment will be undertaken primarily through observation and discussion with educators.

Child-directed learning

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- educators:
  - » arranging play experiences, routines and the physical environment so that children have a range of opportunities to make choices about what they will do and how they will do it
  - » encouraging children to make choices and decisions
  - » acknowledging children as capable and competent, and encouraging them to act autonomously
  - » providing children with strategies to make informed choices about their behaviours

- incorporating children's ideas and suggestions in planning and implementing experiences
- providing encouragement and displaying enthusiasm for children's attempts to gain new skills and knowledge
- embracing and supporting play experiences initiated by children, motivating children to persist and extend their learning
- noticing and listening carefully to children's concerns and discussing diverse perspectives on issues of inclusion and exclusion, and unfair behavior
- encouraging children to direct their own play and leisure experiences with their peers

- children:
  - making choices and decisions about matters that affect them (for example, whether they wish to play inside or outside, whether they want to play with other children or play independently, whether they are ready to eat, whether they are thirsty, and whether they need to sleep)
  - openly expressing their feelings and ideas in their interactions with others
  - initiating play
  - beginning to display understanding and willingness to negotiate and share with others
  - showing leadership, making decisions and following directions given by other children
  - leading their learning, designing experiences and freely making choices about participating in experiences
  - actively participating in decisions that affect them, including their learning and leisure
  - being supported to assess and manage risk (adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 21; and the *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 20).

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how educators:
  - support opportunities for children's decision-making that are appropriate for the child's age
  - provide opportunities for children to influence what happens to them and to exercise choice
  - support children to explore different identities and points of view through play and everyday experiences
  - reflect on what decisions children can make and the extent of those decisions (adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 23; and the *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 22)
- how children's interests are pursued and celebrated
- what responsibilities children have and how this contributes to their sense of agency

- whether educators have high expectations for all children (across ages, genders, abilities, and cultural, linguistic or family backgrounds).

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- the service's philosophy statement that recognises children's rights and describes their role in decision-making
- documented reflections that demonstrate changes in practice to support children's agency
- work developed by children with minimal educator input
- use of open-ended resources and materials that allow children to express themselves (rather than using templates, stencils or resources that limit children's capacity to create, interpret, experiment and explore).

EXCEEDING GUIDANCE FOR STANDARD 1.2
PRACTICE

Overview

The following guidance is provided to assist services and assessors to consider if practice for Standard 1.2 demonstrates the Exceeding themes at the level required for a rating of Exceeding NQS. The indicators provided are not exhaustive, and services may demonstrate Exceeding level practice for Standard 1.2 in a variety of ways that suit their particular operating environment and approach to practice.

Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 1.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- Educators, the educational leader and co-ordinators demonstrate a deep understanding of the requirements of the standard, the concepts and the component elements, and a commitment to high quality practice at all times.
- All educators:
  - » are consistently deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in all of their decisions and actions that impact on children's learning and development
  - » consistently and respectfully respond to each child's ideas and play to facilitate and extend each child's participation, learning and development
  - » consistently take every opportunity to extend each child's learning through open-ended questions, interactions, feedback and the provision of resources
  - » consistently consider and promote the agency of each child, and support each child to make a range of choices and decisions to influence events and their world
  - » confidently make curriculum decisions throughout the day, week or month to ensure each child's participation, learning and development is facilitated and extended.
- All educators and the educational leader are able to explain how their educational practice connects to:
  - » the approved learning framework/s and facilitates and extends each child's learning and development
  - » the service philosophy and supports the service's broader vision for quality.
- The observed and discussed approach to facilitating and extending children's learning and development:
  - » consistently aligns with the service philosophy
  - » consistently demonstrates a strong commitment to the principles and practices of the approved learning framework/s.

Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 1.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- The service's educational practice approach to facilitating and extending children's learning and development:
  - » reflects robust debate, discussion, and opportunities for input by all educators, and is informed by critical reflection and past incidents
  - » is informed by current recognised guidance.
- Any change to the service's approach to facilitating and extending children's learning and development is understood by all and implemented appropriately.
- All educators and the educational leader regularly reflect, individually and with each other on:
  - » their educational practice approach to facilitating and extending children's learning and development
  - » alternate practice approaches to facilitating and extending children's learning and development
  - » implementation of changes to strengthen their practice over time
  - » social justice and equity implications of their educational practice to ensure that practice considers the circumstances and rights of every child at the service
  - » opportunities to cultivate deep respect for, and knowledge of, the cultural diversity of the broader community in educational practice, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures
  - » theoretical and philosophical influences on their practice, including the theoretical perspectives identified in the approved learning framework/s
  - » how they draw on theoretical and philosophical influences and how they have influenced practice over time.

Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 1.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- The service's educational practice approach to facilitating and extending children's learning and development:
  - » reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service
  - » welcomes, respects and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service.
- All educators:
  - » consistently and meaningfully engage with children's families and/or the community to draw on family and/or community understanding of each child's knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities, interests and learning and development in order to facilitate and extend children's learning and development

- actively seek out the voices, perspectives, and views of children throughout the day, and draw on this input to facilitate and extend children's learning and development
- draw inspiration from the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service to facilitate and extend on children's learning and development.

STANDARD 1.3
ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

EDUCATORS AND CO-ORDINATORS TAKE A PLANNED AND REFLECTIVE APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM FOR EACH CHILD.

How Standard 1.3 contributes to quality education and care

Thoughtful and professional approaches to assessment and planning for each child and the group of children have the potential to enhance their learning, development and wellbeing.

The approved learning framework and the service's philosophy statement (see **Element 7.1.1**) guide educators in developing an educational program and practice that supports their beliefs and values about children's learning.

Educators collect information on each child, analyse what that information tells them about how to support the child's learning further, document, plan experiences to incorporate into the program, implement the program and then reflect on what has been learned.

Planning ensures that the educational program and practice responds to children's strengths, abilities and interests, and scaffolds and extends their learning. It ensures that educators' practice is intentional and supports children to progress towards the learning outcomes.

Critical reflection encourages educators to engage in analytical and diagnostic thinking to honestly and critically reflect in detail on all aspects of the program, their professional practice, and children's learning and development.

Educators work in partnership with families in collecting information and planning for each child's learning and development, and seek to keep families informed about the program and their child's progress. Children's views and opinions also inform this process.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for Standard 1.3 (for all services)

A planned and reflective approach to program implementation

- How do we ensure that the way we document and plan for children's learning aligns with current approaches?
- How can we work collaboratively with each family to share information about children's learning, development and participation in the program?
- How do we recognise and support continuity of learning at the service, and how does information gathered from each child's home, school or other support service inform planning for continuity of learning?
- What do we do to critically reflect on and evaluate the program, how is this documented and how are our evaluations used to make informed curriculum decisions to improve outcomes for children?
- How do we use critical reflection when discussing programs with colleagues?
- How do we critically reflect on all aspects of pedagogical practice so that quality improvements occur?

ELEMENT 1.3.1
ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING CYCLE

EACH CHILD'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IS ASSESSED OR EVALUATED AS PART OF AN ONGOING CYCLE OF OBSERVATION, ANALYSING LEARNING, DOCUMENTATION, PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION AND REFLECTION.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 1.3.1

Regulation 74 Documenting of child assessments or evaluations for delivery of educational program

Jurisdiction-specific provisions

NSW – Regulation 274A Programs for children over preschool age

NT – Regulation 289A Programs for children over preschool age

Qld – Regulation 298A Programs for children over preschool age

What Element 1.3.1 aims to achieve

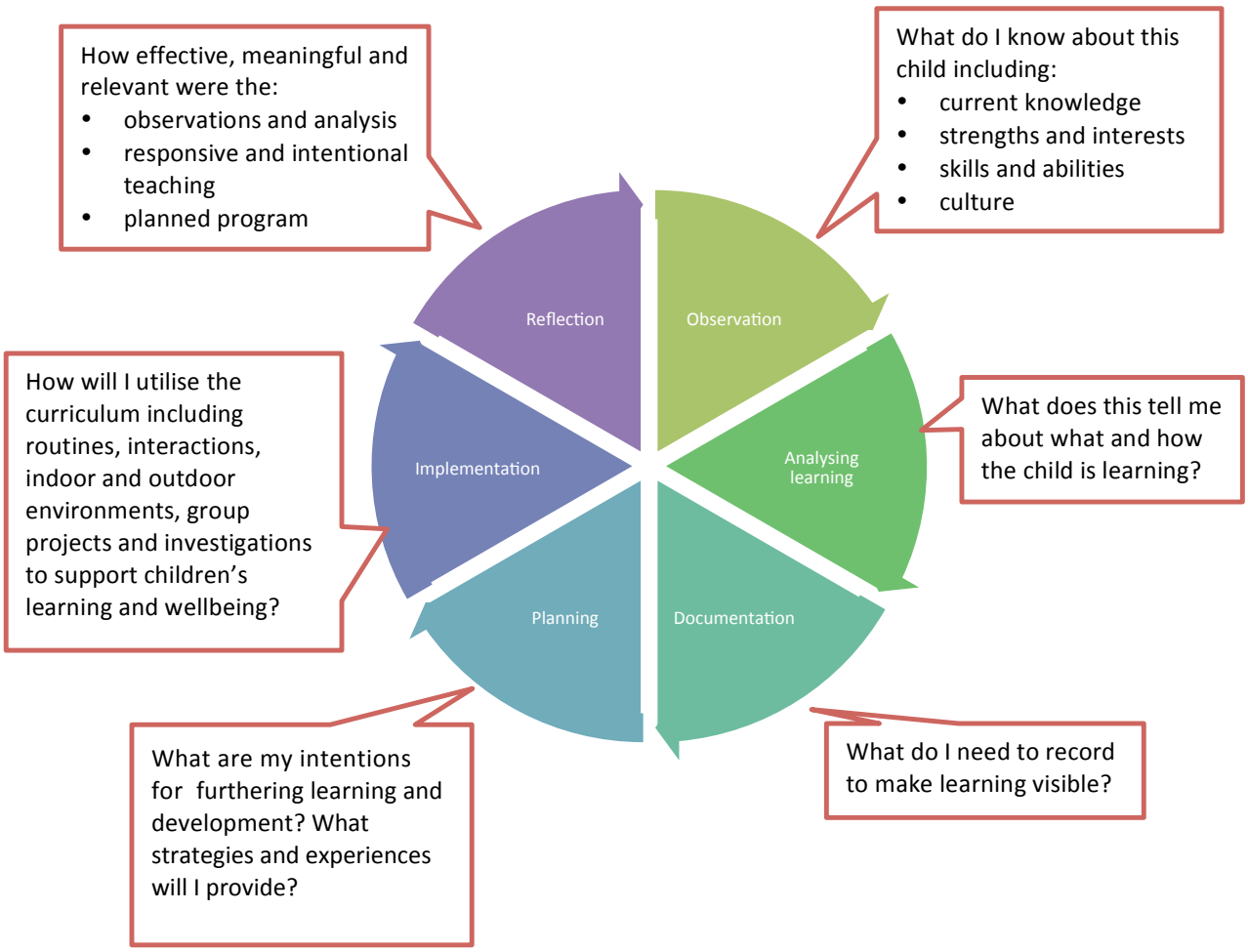
Planning and implementation

The assessment and planning cycle is the ongoing process used by educators (with support from the educational leader and in partnership with families and other professionals) to design programs that enhance and extend each child's learning and development. The planning cycle process includes: observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection.

In the early childhood context, analysing learning refers to assessment of children's learning. This involves a process of gathering and analysing information as evidence of what children know, can do and understand (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 15). For school age children, evaluation of wellbeing and learning refers to the process of scanning, monitoring, gathering and analysing information about how children feel and what children know, can do and understand (*Framework for School Age Care*, p.16).

Educators:

- understand the context of the service and how the service's statement of philosophy guides their decision-making
- collect information in a variety of ways about each child's knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests (gained from families as well as through observations and other data) that demonstrate the individuality of the child
- analyse each child's learning and development in relation to the learning outcomes of the approved learning frameworks (see **Element 1.1.1**), to



identify progress which can be shared with families and others and to assist in identifying goal(s) for further learning and development

- plan the program including:
  - » strategies and experiences for individual children (based on their goals)
  - » experiences to support achievement of group goals
  - » experiences to extend emerging strengths, abilities and interests
  - » experiences that follow up on input from families
  - » experiences related to relevant community events
- implement the planned experiences, and at the same time identify and utilise 'teachable moments' to respond to and support children's newly emerging strengths, abilities and interests
- reflect on individual children's learning and participation and the program as a whole, to support further planning for learning.

Some jurisdictions have different documentation requirements for educational programs for children over preschool age. See *Regulations 74, 274A, 289A* and *298A*.

Observation, analysis, reflection

Reflection occurs at every step of the planning cycle as educators think about their practice and decisions, and children's engagement with the program.

Educators reflect to:

- ensure that sufficient information has been collected about the child in order to provide an accurate record of their participation in the program, and what they know, can do and understand
- determine the extent to which each child is progressing towards the learning outcomes and identifying what might be impeding their progress
- identify children who may benefit from additional support to achieve particular learning outcomes, how the service can provide that support, or how the service can assist families to access specialist help
- plan for each child's future learning as well as for the group of children
- review the effectiveness of learning experiences, environments and approaches used to support children's learning
- ensure their pedagogical practices are appropriate for the service context, the philosophy of the service and the children with whom they are working (adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 17; and the *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 16).

Documentation

Documentation of children's experiences and their responses to the environment makes learning visible to children, educators and families and promotes shared learning and collaboration. It promotes relationships between children, educators and families and demonstrates professionalism. It also enables the assessment and planning cycle to be visible to educators and families.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 1.3.1 (for all services)

Assessment and planning cycle

observe

Assessors may* observe *educators:

- observing and recording information about what children know, can do and understand in ways that do not interrupt children's participation in their learning
- implementing the educational program based on program planning documentation

school age children

- educators being intentional in the strategies they use to plan leisure-based experiences to support children's learning, development and wellbeing.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- the effectiveness of the methods used to document information about children's knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities, interests, relationships, learning and participation over a period of time
- how educators encourage families to contribute information about their child
- how educational leaders support educators to understand all steps of the planning cycle when planning and implementing programs for each child and the group of children
- what strategies are used to record the voices of children in planning and seeking their feedback
- how educators analyse the information that is gathered about each child to make assessments of each child's progress towards specific learning outcomes

school age children

- *if required by the regulatory authority*, how educators analyse the information that is gathered about each child to make evaluations of each child's progress towards specific learning outcomes. For more information, see ACECQA's information sheet on **Documenting Programs for School Age Children**.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- information gathered about each child that shows that educators understand each child and their learning and development including their learning styles, and any identified support for that child
- the information collected is:
  - » in a form that can be accessed by children and shared easily with families
  - » appropriate to the age of the child and the time the child attends the service
- examples of children's representation of their learning and other work is documented and displayed in sensitive and respectful ways
- evidence that:
  - » families have been encouraged to contribute information about their child (see **Element 1.3.3**)
  - » children's ideas, interests and points of view are sought and respected during planning and implementing the program
  - » educators have reflected on each child's planned and unplanned/spontaneous experiences
  - » educators have reflected on the program and their practices, and identified any changes or improvements required (see **Element 1.3.2**)
- examples of families and children having opportunities to comment on or provide feedback about the program

- documented analysis of each child's learning and development, using the learning outcomes as points of reference, that assists in planning for each child information about what has occurred during the program so that families know the learning opportunities and experiences that have been offered to their children
- documented evidence of each child's developmental needs, interests, experiences and participation in the program

school age children

- *if required by the regulatory authority*:
  - » documentation about each child's participation in the program that is collected by the child and by educators in a format that is interesting for the child and their family and that can be shared with them
  - » documented evaluation of each child's wellbeing, learning and development, including how children feel and what children know, can do and understand, and further goals established with input from children
  - » documented programs that include planned experiences and/or strategies to support individual children's goals
- examples of children having opportunities to contribute to program planning and evaluation.

ELEMENT 1.3.2
CRITICAL REFLECTION

CRITICAL REFLECTION ON CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT, BOTH AS INDIVIDUALS AND IN GROUPS, DRIVES PROGRAM PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION.

What Element 1.3.2 aims to achieve

Reflective practice is a form of ongoing learning that involves educators thinking about all aspects of the program, the principles that guide them, the practices they use and the learning outcomes for children. It drives educators' program planning and implementation. Educational leaders support educators to become increasingly thoughtful about their work, to analyse their actions objectively and motivate them to reflect and explore new ideas and approaches as part of daily practice.

Reflective practice is an ongoing, dynamic process that supports educators to think honestly and critically about all aspects of professional practice, including whether all children and families are included. Reflective practice guides educators to gather information from different perspectives to gain insights that will support, inform and enrich their decision-making about each child's learning.

Critical reflection involves closely examining all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives, with a focus on implications for equity, inclusion and diversity. It takes reflective practice to a deeper level and includes educators analysing or diagnosing what happened and why. For example:

- why educators may have responded in the way they did
- how educators felt
- why educators made certain decisions
- what may have influenced educators' actions
- which theoretical perspectives educators draw on in their decision-making (whether deliberately or subconsciously).

Critical reflection helps educators to build on their knowledge and skills, identifying practice that can be continued as well as what might need to be improved or changed. It also helps educators to identify ways to improve opportunities for children's participation, learning and development.

Educational leaders support educators to consider questions such as:

- How do we currently examine our practices and decision-making, and identify improvements as well as successes?
- Have we considered which children may be advantaged and whether any child is disadvantaged?
- How do we use the approved learning framework/s to help us reflect?
- How are we creating opportunities for conversations, debates, and collaborative inquiries as a team, ensuring that all voices are heard and responded to with respect?

- What questions do I have about my work? What am I challenged by? What am I curious about? What am I confronted by?
- What strategies do I use to demonstrate that I value diversity and work to ensure all children have opportunities to fully participate in the program? (adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 13; and the *Framework for School Age Care*, pp. 11–12).

Assessment guide for meeting Element 1.3.2 (for all services)

Critical reflection

observe

Assessors may* observe *educators:

- working with children to document and reflect on their experiences and learning
- using a variety of methods, such as jottings, children's comments and conversations, photographs and examples of children's work, to assist their reflection on children's experiences, thinking and learning
- focusing on adapting the program to include all children, rather than adapting a child's routine or requirements to fit the program
- reflecting-in-action by changing or altering experiences which are not engaging children
- speaking briefly to one another during the day about aspects of practice that they have changed or need to change
- making brief notes when appropriate so that they can recall an aspect of practice that may be challenging them, or that they may have questions about.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how reflective practice, including critical reflection, is used as an ongoing process in the service
- how the educational leader supports educators to engage in reflective practice that is in line with current recognised approaches
- how educators use critical reflection to make changes to their program and practice
- the opportunities available for educators to reflect on the events of each day, including thinking about what happened and why, the successes and what can be extended or changed
- how educators reflect on whether the program is an inclusive learning environment and supports each child to participate fully or if there are barriers to participation
- how children's comments about their experiences of the program are recorded and considered as part of the reflection process

- whether information gathered provides insights about curriculum decision-making that supports and extends children's learning, development and wellbeing
- how the educational leader promotes a culture of professional enquiry, where practices and outcomes are reviewed and new ideas are generated.

sight ***Assessors may* sight:**

- documentation that shows evidence of critical reflection, such as reflection journals or diaries
- documentation that reflects on all aspects of the program and may include jottings about:
  - the effectiveness of arrivals/departures,
  - interactions, responsiveness and relationships with particular children
  - transitions and routines
  - planned experiences and spontaneous child directed learning
  - incidental and planned group times
  - the environment and experiences provided
  - intentional teaching strategies
  - communication with colleagues and families
  - any other aspects of practice to prompt further thinking and discussion
  - the effectiveness of resources and equipment used
  - experiences and learning outcomes achieved
  - review of curriculum content and pedagogy
- if the service has a Strategic Inclusion Plan, how the service reflects on adaptations made to reduce barriers to participation.

ELEMENT 1.3.3
INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

FAMILIES ARE INFORMED ABOUT THE PROGRAM AND THEIR CHILD'S PROGRESS.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 1.3.3

Regulation 75 Information about the educational program to be kept available

Regulation 76 Information about educational program to be given to parents

Jurisdiction-specific provisions

NSW – Regulation 274A Programs for children over preschool age

NT – Regulation 289A Programs for children over preschool age

Qld – Regulation 298A Programs for children over preschool age

What Element 1.3.3 aims to achieve

Quality education and care services engage with families to provide information about the wellbeing, learning and development of their child. Educational leaders support educators to recognise the benefits of quality education and care to both families and the service and to understand that learning outcomes are best achieved when educators work in partnerships with families. Services develop a communication plan in consultation with families to ensure that information for families is accessible, meaningful and useful.

Educators verbally inform families of their child's participation and progress whenever possible, and share documentation about children's learning and development in ways that are accessible, understandable and meaningful for families. This enables families to understand their child's strengths, abilities and knowledge from the perspective of the service. Educators also share 'point-in-time' summaries about each child's progress towards the learning outcomes and engage families in the assessment process by seeking their input and feedback. Educators encourage families to share in decision-making about their child's further learning, development and wellbeing.

The educational program is displayed in a way that is accessible, understandable and meaningful for families to read so that they can view what has been planned for their child.

Information is also provided that documents children's participation and their progress against the approved framework's learning outcomes, as well as how educators have supported and guided them. Educational leaders support educators to share information sensitively, taking into account the child and family's right to confidentiality.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 1.3.3 (for all services)

Information for families about their child's progress

observe

Assessors may* observe *educators:

- having conversations with families about their child
- verbally sharing positive observations with families about their child
- showing meaningful documentation to families about their child
- exchanging information with families about the educational program.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how educators:
  - » seek input from families about their preferences for the way they receive information about their child's progress
  - » document observations or information of a sensitive nature
  - » support continuity of learning and transitions for each child
- how information is made available and accessible to families, particularly families with diverse needs
- whether educators seek feedback from families about how they access documentation about their child and whether it is useful, understandable and meaningful to them
- educators' understanding of the need to respect children and their families' right to confidentiality
- how arrangements are made to exchange information about the child with families at mutually convenient meeting times
- educators' understanding of the importance of communicating with families about their child's progress

school age children

- how barriers are addressed to involve families in their child's learning
- how the service works with families and the school to support a consistent learning approach for children.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- documentation (such as a communication plan) that demonstrates that families have been consulted about how they would like to receive information about their child's progress
- a range of strategies being implemented to share information with families in meaningful and useful ways
- documented expectations about the ways educators share information with families such as through:

- conversations
- emails
- phone calls
- communication books
- offering meetings at mutually convenient times

- documented expectations about how educators record information from families
- transition statements for children transitioning to school
- the educational program, including planning and reflections for families about the experiences and learning that have occurred
- the educational program displayed in an accessible location for families to view and understand
- documented information about each child's developmental needs, interests, experiences, participation and progress (see **Element 1.3.1**) that is shared with families

school age children

- *if required by the regulatory authority*, documented evaluation of each child's wellbeing, learning and development (see **Element 1.3.1**) that is shared with families.

EXCEEDING GUIDANCE FOR STANDARD 1.3
ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

Overview

The following guidance is provided to assist services and assessors to consider if practice for Standard 1.3 demonstrates the Exceeding themes at the level required for a rating of Exceeding NQS. The indicators provided are not exhaustive, and services may demonstrate Exceeding level practice for Standard 1.3 in a variety of ways that suit their particular operating environment and approach to practice.

Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 1.3 Exceeds the NQS:

- Educators, the educational leader and co-ordinators:
  - » demonstrate a deep understanding of the requirements of the standard, the concepts and the component elements, and a commitment to high quality practice at all times
  - » consistently engage in planned and spontaneous critical reflection on children's learning and development, as individuals and in groups
  - » consistently draw on their insights to make changes to the design and implementation of the program
  - » work collaboratively to assess or evaluate each child's learning and development as part of an ongoing assessment and planning cycle that drives development of an education program that enhances and extends each child's learning and development
  - » are able to explain how their approach to assessment and planning connects to:
    - the approved learning framework/s and enhances and extends each child's learning and development
    - the service philosophy and supports the service's broader vision for quality.
  - » consistently engage meaningfully with children's families to inform them about the educational program and their child's participation, learning and development.
- The observed and discussed approach to assessment and planning:
  - » consistently aligns with the service philosophy
  - » consistently demonstrates a strong commitment to the principles and practices of the approved learning frameworks/s
  - » is consistently reflected in the service's program documentation and required assessment or evaluation documentation
  - » consistently reflects meaningful engagement and communication with families.

Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 1.3 Exceeds the NQS:

- The service's approach to assessment and planning :
  - » reflects robust debate, discussion, and opportunities for input by all educators, and is informed by critical reflection and past incidents
  - » is informed by current recognised guidance.
- Any change to the service's approach to assessment and planning is understood by all and implemented appropriately.
- All educators, the educational leader and co-ordinators regularly reflect, individually and with each other on:
  - » their approach to assessment and planning to consider whether it supports the best outcomes for children and families
  - » engagement with families and whether communication of the education program and children's participation, learning and development is accessible and understandable
  - » alternate assessment and planning processes, and make changes where opportunities for improvement are identified
  - » social justice and equity implications of their assessment and planning to ensure that practice considers the circumstances and rights of every child at the service
  - » theoretical and philosophical influences on their assessment and planning, including the theoretical perspectives identified in the approved learning framework/s
  - » how they draw on theoretical and philosophical influences and how they have influenced practice over time.

Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 1.3 Exceeds the NQS:

- The service's approach to assessment and planning:
  - » reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service
  - » welcomes, respects and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service.
- All educators:
  - » consistently seek out the voices, perspectives, and views of children throughout the day, and draw on this input in ongoing assessment and planning
  - » consistently support children to participate in assessing and planning their own learning and development.

- All educators, the educational leader and co-ordinators:
  - » consistently engage with families and the community to ensure that children's learning and development outside of the service is incorporated into the assessment and planning cycle
  - » consistently engage with families about their child's progress in ways that are tailored to individual families' circumstances and ways of connecting, for example engaging with families using respectful and culturally safe practices.

QUALITY AREA 2
CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

Overview

Quality Area 2 of the National Quality Standard reinforces children's right to experience quality education and care in an environment that provides for their health and safety. Educators support this when they promote each child's wellbeing and healthy lifestyle, and support each child's growing competence, confidence and independence.

Learning about healthy lifestyles, including nutrition, personal hygiene (such as handwashing, dental hygiene and ear care), physical fitness, emotions and social relationships, is integral to children's wellbeing and self-confidence. When children develop resilience, their ability to take increasing responsibility for their self-help and basic health routines promotes a sense of independence and confidence. As children become more independent, they can take greater responsibility for their own health, hygiene and personal care and they become aware of their own and others' safety and wellbeing (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 30; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 29). This is particularly relevant for school age children attending education and care services.

The approved provider, nominated supervisors, co-ordinators and educators have responsibility for supporting the health, protection, safety and wellbeing of all children. In exercising their responsibilities, they must take reasonable care to protect children from foreseeable risk of harm, injury and infection.

Standards, elements and concepts

Quality Area 2 has two standards that focus on children's health and safety. These standards are crucial to delivering quality outcomes for children under the National Quality Framework because:

- children's health, comfort and wellbeing strongly impact on their learning, confidence and self-growth
- all children have a right to safety and protection from harm
- adequate supervision and effective management of incidents and emergencies are paramount at all times to support children's safety and engagement in the educational program.

Standard/ Elements	Concept	Descriptor
QA2		**Children's health and safety**
2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation.
2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.
2.1.3	Healthy lifestyle	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.
2.2.3	Child protection	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.

STANDARD 2.1
HEALTH

EACH CHILD'S HEALTH AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IS SUPPORTED AND PROMOTED.

How Standard 2.1 contributes to quality education and care

Children's health and physical wellbeing contributes to their ability to concentrate, cooperate and learn (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 30; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 29). Being active, healthy, well rested and free of illness assists children to participate happily and successfully in the learning environment. It is also important that children are supported to take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 32; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 31).

Children's health requirements can change over time as they grow and develop. Working together with families and, where relevant, health care professionals, the service should have effective processes to support all aspects of children's health. This can include:

- being aware of and meeting each child's physical health and comfort requirements
- encouraging physical activity
- supporting children's wellbeing by providing opportunities for children's sleep, rest and relaxation
- implementing effective hygiene practices to control the spread of infectious diseases
- managing injuries and illnesses
- meeting children's nutritional needs
- teaching children that healthy lifestyles underpin everyday routines and experiences.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for Standard 2.1 (for all services)

Wellbeing and comfort

- How do we find out about individual children's routines, and ensure that all relevant staff members are informed about these?

birth to three

- How do we seek information from families about their children's routine experiences, such as sleeping and toileting patterns, and support the same approaches within the service?
- How do we encourage and support mothers who wish to breastfeed in the service?
- How do we arrange routine times to ensure that children are able to follow their individual needs or preferences, including arrangements for children who do not need or wish to sleep or rest when other children do?

school age children

- How do we seek information from children and families about children's wellbeing, physical comfort or personal needs, and support children sensitively within the service?

Health practices and procedures

- How do we keep informed of, and implement, current practices and guidelines from recognised authorities in relation to:
  - child and adult immunisation
  - allergies and anaphylaxis
  - food safety and hygiene practices
  - administration of medication
  - rest and safe sleep requirements
  - sun safe practices
- How do we find out about individual children's health requirements, and ensure that all relevant staff members are informed about these?
- How do we maintain acceptable levels of hygiene while minimising the use of toxic products?
- How do we ensure that families are informed about and follow the service's policy and guidelines for the exclusion of ill children?
- What arrangements do we have in place to regularly review and update our child health related policies and procedures?
- How do we communicate with families if there is an outbreak of an infectious disease?

family day care

- How do family day care educators and co-ordinators discuss and manage risks associated with working in isolation, when managing children's illnesses and injuries?

school age children

- What arrangements do we need to make for older children to independently administer their own medication?

Healthy lifestyle

- How do we ensure that all educators are familiar with current guidelines about healthy eating, physical activity, rest and safe sleeping?
- How do we ensure that all educators understand and implement correct procedures relating to food handling, transportation and storage?
- How do we plan food and beverages to meet the preferences of each child as well as their dietary and nutrition requirements, including during excursions or other special activities?
- How do we incorporate discussions and activities about healthy eating, physical activity and allergies into children's everyday experiences so that each child is encouraged to make healthy food and beverage choices?
- How do we plan the program to ensure that there is a balance between planned and spontaneous active play as well as a balance between passive and active experiences?
- How do we set up the environment and resources to encourage and support children to engage in movement and physical play?
- How do we plan the program to include opportunities for active play during periods of inclement weather?
- How do we encourage children to solve problems in relation to physical challenges in the environment?

school age children

- How do we encourage play and recreational experiences that are child-initiated, child-directed, and appropriate for the age and capabilities of school-aged children?

ELEMENT 2.1.1
WELLBEING AND COMFORT

EACH CHILD'S WELLBEING AND COMFORT IS PROVIDED FOR, INCLUDING APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITIES TO MEET EACH CHILD'S NEED FOR SLEEP, REST AND RELAXATION.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 2.1.1

Section 51(1)(a) Conditions on service approval (safety, health and wellbeing of children)

Section 166 Offence to use inappropriate discipline

Regulation 81 Sleep and rest

What Element 2.1.1 aims to achieve

Wellbeing and comfort incorporate both physical and psychological aspects and are central to children's learning and development. Without a strong sense of wellbeing it is difficult for children to develop a sense of belonging, to trust others and feel confident in being themselves and to participate in experiences that support their personal growth (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 30; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 29).

Holistic approaches recognise the importance of physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. Educators who provide a range of active and restful experiences throughout the day support children's individual requirements for health, nutrition, sleep, rest and relaxation.

Children's individual comfort and wellbeing requirements may vary for daily routines, such as rest, sleep, dressing, and toileting or nappy changing. Educators should recognise and incorporate into their practice:

- the sociocultural background of the child and the family
- the child's personal preferences
- the routines and activities that are in place at the child's home.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 2.1.1 (for all services)

Ensuring children's wellbeing and comfort

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- children:
  - » demonstrating a sense of belonging and comfort in their environment by recognising and communicating their bodily needs and seeking comfort and assistance from educators when required (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 32)

- being supplied with clean, appropriate spare clothes when they need them and knowing where they can access them independently
- who do not require sleep or rest being given choice and opportunities to engage in quiet play experiences

birth to three

- being supported sensitively and positively when they are learning to use the toilet

school age children

- being provided with and accessing comfortable spaces away from the main activity areas for relaxation and quiet activity

- children's needs for privacy during toileting and/or dressing and undressing times being respected and facilitated
- children's and families' individual clothing needs and preferences being met to promote children's comfort, safety and protection within the scope of the service's requirements for children's health and safety
- sleep and rest practices that are consistent with current views about children's health, safety and welfare and that meet children's individual needs
- physical spaces being made available for children to engage in rest and quiet experiences
- educators:
  - showing awareness of children's comfort and avoiding overcrowding when children are grouped for rest and sleep
  - providing a range of active and restful experiences throughout the program and supporting children's preferences for participation

birth to three

- relaxed, positive nappy-changing and toileting routines that are adapted to meet the individual child's routines

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- the service's sleep and rest policies, procedures and practices
- how the service:
  - addresses each child's clothing needs and preferences
  - provides opportunities for families to communicate changes in children's routines to educators

- how educators:
  - » work with families to support children's toileting routines
  - » find out about children's and families' individual clothing needs and preferences and how they reach agreement with families, considering the scope of the service's requirements for children's health and safety
  - » negotiate sleep and rest routines and practices with families for each child at the service

birth to three

school age children

- » negotiate arrangements for relaxation and 'downtime' with children
- privacy arrangements for children's toileting and personal hygiene requirements.

sight ***Assessors may* sight:**

- evidence demonstrating that the service's approach to addressing individual clothing needs and preferences is shared with families
- evidence demonstrating that the service's approach to sleep and rest is shared with families

birth to three

- evidence that babies who are asleep are checked at regular intervals
- evidence that families are provided with daily information about their child's nappy change/toileting patterns

school age children

- planning that reflects the input of children into rules and routines of the service that relate to the comfort of individuals and the group.

ELEMENT 2.1.2
HEALTH PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

EFFECTIVE ILLNESS AND INJURY MANAGEMENT AND HYGIENE PRACTICES ARE PROMOTED AND IMPLEMENTED.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 2.1.2

Section 51(1)(a) Conditions on service approval (safety, health and wellbeing of children)

Regulation 77 Health, hygiene and safe food practices

Regulation 85 Incident, injury, trauma and illness policies and procedures

Regulation 86 Notification to parents of incident, injury, trauma and illness

Regulation 87 Incident, injury, trauma and illness record

Regulation 88 Infectious diseases

Regulation 89 First aid kits

Regulation 90 Medical conditions policy

Regulation 91 Medical conditions policy to be provided to parents

Regulation 92 Medication record

Regulation 93 Administration of medication

Regulation 94 Exception to authorisation requirement – anaphylaxis or asthma emergency

Regulation 95 Procedure for administration of medication

Regulation 96 Self-administration of medication

Additional state/territory and local government requirements

In addition to complying with the National Quality Framework, services must also comply with other relevant national, state/territory and local government requirements. For example, immunisation requirements that prevent enrolment of a child unless approved documentation is provided to indicate the child is fully immunised for their age, or has received an approved exemption from immunisation. For more information, contact your regulatory authority. Some services may require an Immunisation History Statement, which can be obtained from the **Australian Immunisation Register**.

What Element 2.1.2 aims to achieve

Illness management and hygiene practices

While it is not possible to prevent the spread of all infections and illnesses, effective illness management practices and maintaining high standards of hygiene significantly reduce the likelihood of children becoming ill. This involves reducing children's exposure to materials, surfaces and body fluids that may cause infection or illness.

For more information, see the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) publication **Staying Healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services**, 2013.

In helping children to take growing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing, educators model and reinforce health and personal hygiene practices with children. Educators also promote continuity of children's personal health and hygiene by sharing ownership of routines and schedules with children, families and the community.

Injury management

Services need to consider the effectiveness of injury management processes, including risk identification and conducting risk benefit analysis and risk assessments to minimise risk. This involves considering the way educators:

- support children in risky play
- are organised to ensure effective supervision
- are proactive, responsive and flexible in using professional judgments to prevent injury from occurring.

When developing effective injury management procedures, services also need to consider a range of contingencies if an injury occurs. These include:

- administration of first aid
- contacting emergency services or medical professionals
- contact and communication with families including injury notification forms
- maintaining adequate supervision
- managing the emotional wellbeing of all children and educators
- serious incident and any other notification requirements
- reviewing and evaluating procedures after an incident as part of the quality improvement process.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 2.1.2 (for all services)

Hygiene practices

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- hygiene practices that reflect current research and advice from recognised health authorities
- safe and hygienic storage, handling, preparation and serving of all food and drinks consumed by children, including food brought from home
- nominated supervisors, educators, co-ordinators and family day care assistants:
  - » implementing the service's health and hygiene policy and procedures
  - » actively supporting children to learn hygiene practices (including hand washing, coughing, dental hygiene and ear care)
  - » maintaining a hygienic environment for children
- children consuming food and drinks in a hygienic manner

birth to three

- educators implementing appropriate hygiene practices in relation to hand washing, toileting, nappy changing and cleaning of equipment
- clean toileting and nappy-changing facilities
- fresh linen and other bedding being used for each child using a cot or a mattress
- bedding being stored hygienically (for example, in named cloth bags and not touching other children's bedding).

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how the service accesses information from recognised authorities about current health, hygiene and safety guidelines and how this information is used to inform policies, procedures and practices
- how often children's bedding, dress-up clothes, cushion-covers and other washable materials are laundered
- how cleanliness of the service is consistently maintained

birth to three

- how a regular regime of washing children's toys and equipment is maintained.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- policies and procedures relating to health and hygiene
- written procedures and schedules for maintaining a regular regime of washing children's toys and equipment
- evidence that families are provided with information and support that helps them to follow the service's hygiene procedures

- current nappy-changing and toileting procedures displayed in toilet and nappy-changing areas
- information about correct hand-washing procedures displayed in relevant areas of the service, such as bathrooms, nappy change areas and food preparation areas
- visual aids and hand-washing signs displayed where children wash their hands.

Illness and injury management

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- groupings of children arranged to minimise the risk of illness and injuries
- educators:
  - » observing and promptly responding to signs of illness and injury in children
  - » observing the symptoms of children's illnesses and injuries and systematically recording and sharing this information with families (and medical professionals where required)
  - » discussing health and safety issues with children
  - » involving children in developing guidelines to keep the service environment healthy and safe for all
  - » communicating with families about children's health requirements in culturally sensitive ways
  - » implementing appropriate practices when administering medication, including:
    - checking the written authorisation from the parent or guardian
    - checking that the medication does not exceed its use-by date and is supplied in its original packaging
    - checking that prescribed medication displays the child's name
    - storing medication appropriately
    - completing records to indicate when medication is administered

centre-based services

- having another person check the dosage and witness the administration of medication.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how the service's policies on dealing with infectious disease address child and staff immunisation, including exclusion periods
- how the service's guidelines for the exclusion of ill children and educators are implemented

- how families are advised of cases of infectious illnesses in the service, including information about the nature of the illness, incubation and infectious periods and the service's exclusion requirements for the illness
- how the service implements its procedure for notifying families of injuries that affect children while in education and care
- how the service responds to a serious accident or health-related emergency involving a child
- how the service communicates information about a child's individual health requirements to staff members
- how the service conveys concerns or questions about a child's health needs to their family
- how information about a child's individual health is kept confidential

school age children

- arrangements for negotiating individual procedures for the administration of medication with families and children
- how/if information about the child's individual health requirements is communicated with the school.

sight ***Assessors may* sight:**

- policies and procedures relating to incident, injury, trauma, illness and medical conditions
- the service's policy and procedures on dealing with infectious disease, including notifying families of cases of infectious illnesses in the service and exclusion of ill children, that is consistent with current information from a relevant recognised authority
- an up-to-date first aid kit or kits readily available wherever children are (including in the service and on excursions)
- current records of the status of children's immunisations, including a written process for obtaining information from families about their children's current immunisation status
- a written process for observing, responding to and recording signs of illness and injury in children and notifying families of illness or injuries that affect children while at the service
- information that has been provided to educators and families about child and adult immunisation recommendations
- enrolment records containing health information and authorisations for each child enrolled at the service
- individual medical management plans provided by the parents of children with a specific health care need, allergy or a diagnosed relevant medical condition, including but not limited to asthma, diabetes or risk of anaphylaxis

- a written process for and records of the administration of medication for children that includes:
  - authorisation from a parent or guardian to administer the medication
  - the name of the medication being administered
  - details of the time and dosage of the medication administered
  - the signature of the person who administered the medication

centre-based service

  - the signature of the person who witnessed the administration of medication

- records of:
  - staff members' first aid qualifications
  - staff rosters that demonstrate a first-aid-qualified staff member is on duty at all times (see ***Children's Health and Safety – medical conditions policy and managing medical conditions of enrolled children*** for more information).

ELEMENT 2.1.3
HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ARE PROMOTED AND APPROPRIATE FOR EACH CHILD.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 2.1.3

Section 51(1)(a) Conditions on service approval (safety, health and wellbeing of children)

Regulation 78 Food and beverages

Regulation 79 Service providing food and beverages

Regulation 80 Weekly menu

What Element 2.1.3 aims to achieve

Healthy eating and physical activity contribute to children's ability to socialise, concentrate, cooperate and learn. Learning about healthy lifestyles, including nutrition and physical fitness, is integral to wellbeing and self-confidence (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 30; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 29).

Good nutrition is essential to healthy living and enables children to be active participants in play and leisure (*Framework for School Age Care*, p. 29). Education and care settings provide many opportunities for children to experience a range of nutritious food and to learn about healthy food choices from educators and other children.

Physical activity enhances brain development, coordination and social and motor skills and helps children to build confidence in their own abilities, develop their independence, and enjoy being active. The educational leader and educators foster physical and psychological development in children by encouraging physical activity that is challenging, extends thinking and offers opportunities to take manageable risks. Instead of trying to eliminate all risk from children's play, it is important to understand that risky play can be acceptable where the benefit to children's learning outweighs the risks. Risks can be managed through conducting risk assessments, and weighing the obligation to protect children from foreseeable risk of harm against the benefit of providing children with a stimulating play environment.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 2.1.3 (for all services)

Healthy eating

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- educators:
  - » engaging children in experiences, conversations and routines that promote relaxed and enjoyable mealtimes and promote healthy, balanced lifestyles (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 32; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 31)
  - » using cooking experiences to further children's understandings of healthy food and nutrition
  - » following the service's procedures for the safe storage and heating of food and drink
  - » never using food to reward or punish children
  - » encouraging children to eat healthy food without requiring them to eat food they don't like or to eat more than they need, including supporting children to recognise when they are hungry or 'full'
  - » sitting with children and modelling, implementing and reinforcing healthy eating and nutrition practices with children during mealtimes
  - » consulting children about their routines and meal times

birth to three

- » responding to babies' verbal and non-verbal cues about their preferred food preferences and meal times

- children:
  - » showing an awareness of healthy lifestyles and good nutrition
  - » being provided with food that is consistent with the:
    - Australian Government guidelines **Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood,** and/or
    - **Australian Dietary Guidelines**
  - » eating food that is consistent with advice provided by families about their child's dietary requirements, likes, dislikes, and any other requirements families have regarding their child's nutrition
  - » who have not eaten at the routine time or who are hungry being provided with food outside of routine meal and snack times
  - » being provided with food and drinks consistent with the menu
  - » having ready access to water and being regularly offered water throughout the day

school age children

- » being involved in choosing and preparing healthy meals

- adequate quantities of food available for children that are consistent with the **Australian Dietary Guidelines**, as well as sufficient food for children who may request more

birth to three

- babies being fed individually by educators according to each child's routine
- educators following the service's procedures for the safe storage and heating of food and drink, including breast milk
- a supportive environment for mothers to breastfeed
- children being supported by educators to feed themselves.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how the service:
  - » meets the needs of children with special dietary requirements
  - » consults with families and children to learn about children's individual requirements for food, their likes and dislikes in relation to food and any culturally appropriate food requirements

birth to three

- » supports families' choices regarding infant feeding, including breastfeeding and bottle feeding
- » supports families who choose to breastfeed their child while they are at the service

- where food is brought from home, how the service encourages families to provide food that is consistent with the Australian Government guidelines (**Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood**, and/or **Australian Dietary Guidelines**), and is focused on developing respectful relationships and supporting families in their parenting role.

sight

Assessors may sight:

- the service's health and safety policy, including nutrition, food, drink and dietary requirements
- program planning including cooking experiences that promote healthy eating and knowledge of nutrition
- the service's policy on dealing with medical conditions such as anaphylaxis and allergies
- written procedures for the safe storage and heating of food and drink
- resources for families and children on healthy eating and referrals to further information
- written menus (where the service is responsible for providing food) on display, detailing the food provided for children that are consistent with the:
  - » Australian Government guidelines **Get Up & Grow: Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Early Childhood,** and/or
- **Australian Dietary Guidelines**

- if the menu is changed, notification is displayed for families so that they are informed of their children's meals that day
- furniture and utensils that are age appropriate and encourage children to be positively involved in and enjoy mealtimes

birth to three

- evidence that families are provided with daily information about their child's intake and experiences with food and drink
- written procedures for the safe storage and heating of babies' bottles and breast milk.

Physical activity

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- educators:
  - » implementing physical games and activities as part of the program and encouraging each child's participation
  - » encouraging and supporting children to participate in new or unfamiliar physical activities according to each child's abilities and their level of comfort
  - » becoming involved and demonstrating enjoyment in children's physical activity
  - » encouraging children to identify and manage risks in their play, including providing opportunities for children to problem-solve
- children:
  - » being encouraged and supported to use increasingly complex sensory motor skills and movement patterns that:
    - combine gross and fine motor movement and balance
    - increase their spatial awareness
    - use their problem-solving skills (adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 32)
  - » having frequent opportunities to engage in active play
  - » showing enthusiasm for participating in physical play and negotiating play spaces to ensure the safety and wellbeing of themselves and others
  - » helping to plan and set up physical play activities and equipment
  - » initiating and leading physical play activities with peers
- children and educators talking about how their bodies work and the importance of physical activity to people's health and wellbeing
- educators planning and implementing opportunities for children to engage in dance, creative movement and drama and to respond to traditional and contemporary music and storytelling
- indoor and outdoor areas that are organised in ways to promote safe physical play and activity for children of different age groups and capabilities

birth to three

- provision of safe areas and encouragement for babies to practise rolling over, sitting, crawling, standing, walking and climbing
- support for children to develop co-ordinated movement through planned experiences, such as action songs, dancing and throwing and kicking balls.

discuss ***Assessors may* discuss *how the service:***

- maintains a balance between spontaneous and planned physical activity, and passive and active experiences, for all children
- manages risk while providing a stimulating learning and play environment for children
- considers children's voices in planning physical activities, including opportunities for physical play that support the abilities, diversity and backgrounds of each child attending the service
- provides appropriate resources to support children's interest and participation in physical activity.

sight ***Assessors may* sight:**

- how the planned program incorporates physical activity that meets each child's capabilities and extends their development, including how it balances quiet/passive play times with more energetic outdoor play
- evidence that information about the importance of physical activity to children's health and development is communicated to families.

EXCEEDING GUIDANCE FOR STANDARD 2.1
HEALTH

Overview

The following guidance is provided to assist services and assessors to consider if practice for Standard 2.1 demonstrates the Exceeding themes at the level required for a rating of Exceeding NQS. The indicators provided are not exhaustive, and services may demonstrate Exceeding level practice for Standard 2.1 in a variety of ways that suit their particular operating environment and approach to practice.

Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 2.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- Educators, the educational leader, and co-ordinators demonstrate a deep understanding of the requirements of the standard and its component elements, and a commitment to high quality practice at all times
- All educators:
  - » are consistently attuned to and respond to children's changing health and physical activity requirements throughout the day
  - » provide a range of opportunities to effectively address and respond to children's needs for sleep, rest and relaxation throughout the day, individually and in groups
  - » manage and support children's health and medical needs in line with established best practice at all times
  - » actively promote healthy eating, physical activity, and effective hygiene practices in the delivery of the daily program
  - » provide regular opportunities for explicit learning about health and wellbeing
  - » respond confidently to the daily events that impact on children's health and activity needs
- The observed and discussed approach to supporting and promoting children's health and physical activity consistently aligns with the design and delivery of the educational program and service philosophy and demonstrates a strong commitment to the priorities, principles and practices of the approved learning framework
- The service's approach to supporting and promoting children's health and physical activity reflects a commitment to the prevention of illness and injuries and this is evident in the service's approach to reporting and responding to health and illness-related incidents.

Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 2.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- Educators, the educational leader and co-ordinators:
  - » systematically and regularly reflect on opportunities to enhance each child's health outcomes and promote physical activity with children and families
  - » seek out and consider alternate ways of supporting each child's health and activity needs, and make changes where opportunities to further enhance children's outcomes are identified
  - » are able to explain how reflection on children's changing health and activity needs influences the design and delivery of the educational program
  - » reflect together on health and illness-related incidents, and support the service to make changes to practices, policies and procedures where opportunities are identified to strengthen the approach
  - » are aware of and able to discuss the influences on their approach to supporting and promoting children's health and activity requirements and outcomes, the recognised guidelines that underpin their practice approach, and how these build on the approved learning framework/s and the service's health policies and procedures
  - » consider and discuss social justice and equity implications of their practice decisions to ensure that practice takes into account the needs and rights of every child at the service
- The service's approach to supporting and promoting children's health and activity needs and outcomes reflects robust debate, discussion, and opportunities for input by all educators, and is informed by critical reflection on past incidents
- The service's approach to supporting and promoting children's health and physical activity, including safe sleep and nutrition, is informed by current recognised guidelines and up-to-date information
- Any change to the service's approach to supporting and promoting children's health and activity needs are understood by all and implemented appropriately.

Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 2.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- Educators, the educational leader and co-ordinators:
  - » engage meaningfully and regularly with families to discuss children's changing health and physical activity requirements , including their interests, preferences and strengths, and incorporate these into the program
  - » work directly with children, families, and professionals as appropriate to develop targeted practices that are responsive to children's evolving health and activities needs
  - » incorporate children's changing health and activity needs, interests, preferences and strengths into the design and delivery of the educational program, including information gathered from families and the community and directly from children
  - » proactively promote children's health and physical activity with families and the community
  - » build partnerships with families and the broader community to further enhance children's health and activity outcomes, for example through collaborative initiatives with health professionals and other support services
- The service's approach to supporting and promoting children's health and physical activity suits and draws inspiration from the unique environmental, cultural and community context of the service.

STANDARD 2.2
SAFETY

EACH CHILD IS PROTECTED.

How Standard 2.2 contributes to quality education and care

Children have a fundamental right to be protected and kept safe when they attend an education and care service. Unsafe settings and situations can negatively impact on children's physical health and wellbeing, which in turn can negatively affect their experiences, learning and wellbeing in the present and throughout their lives.

Through a widening network of secure relationships, children develop confidence and feel respected and valued. A strong sense of wellbeing promotes children's confidence and optimism, which maximises their learning and development (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 30; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 29).

Questions to guide reflection on practice for Standard 2.2 (for all services)

Protecting each child

- How do we identify potential supervision risks in the service?
- How do we plan to ensure that all areas used by children are effectively supervised, including when children are participating in high-risk activities or varying their activities?
- How do we plan to manage supervision of small groups of children who may need to be in a different space from the main group, such as children who sleep for longer periods than others ir at different times, children who take longer to finish mealtimes or children who want to engage in quiet, solo activities away from other groups of children?
- How do we identify, assess, manage and record hazards and potential risks for children, such as potentially dangerous products, plants, objects and animals at the service, and how often do we do this?
- How do we ensure children are alerted to safety issues and encouraged to develop the skills to assess and manage risks to their own safety?
- How do we ensure that all equipment and materials used in the service meet relevant safety standards, including bedding and sun protection resources and equipment?
- How do we conduct risk assessments for potential excursions and plan for children's safety during excursions?
- How do we identify which emergency procedures and specific action plans are required for our service and how often do we practise these? What recognised authorities are consulted in the development of these plans?

- How do we maintain an awareness of the people who have contact with children at the service and/or who collect children from the service?
- How do we keep up to date with current legislation in our state or territory in relation to child protection, and ensure that all staff understand how to report their concerns about child protection issues?

family day care

- How do we discuss and manage supervision risks associated with working in isolation?
- How do we discuss and manage transport arrangements, including supervision and safety considerations (for example, child safety in educators' vehicles and safe fitting of car seats)?

school age children

- How do we keep up to date with current information on travelling safely, such as bus travel and bike safety?

ELEMENT 2.2.1
SUPERVISION

AT ALL TIMES, REASONABLE PRECAUTIONS AND ADEQUATE SUPERVISION ENSURE CHILDREN ARE PROTECTED FROM HARM AND HAZARD.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 2.2.1

Section 51(1)(a) Conditions on service approval (safety, health and wellbeing of children)

Section 165 Offence to inadequately supervise children

Section 166 Offence to use inappropriate discipline

Section 167 Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards

Section 170 Offence relating to unauthorised persons on education and care service premises

Section 171 Offence relating to direction to exclude inappropriate persons from education and care premises

Regulation 82 Tobacco, drug and alcohol free environment

Regulation 83 Staff members and family day care educators not to be affected by alcohol or drugs

Regulation 99 Children leaving the education and care service premises

Regulation 100 Risk assessment must be conducted before excursion

Regulation 101 Conduct of risk assessment for excursion

Regulation 102 Authorisation for excursions

What Element 2.2.1 aims to achieve

Supervision is a key aspect of ensuring that children's safety is protected at all times in the service environment and while on excursion.

The educational leader and educators promote children's learning and development by creating safe physical and social environments that have a positive impact. Children have a right to be protected from potential hazards and dangers posed by products, plants, objects, animals and people in the immediate and wider environment. Educators need to be alert to and aware of the potential for accidents and injury throughout the service, not just within their immediate area.

By fostering children's capacity to understand and respect the social and natural environment, educators create learning environments that encourage children to explore, problem solve and create and construct in challenging and safe ways.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 2.2.1 (for all services)

Adequate supervision

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- children:
  - » being supervised in all areas of the service, by being in sight and/or hearing of an educator at all times, including during toileting, sleep, rest and transition routines
  - » being unable to access unsupervised or unsafe areas in the service
  - » only being taken outside the service premises by an educator, co-ordinator, nominated supervisor, parent or authorised nominee
- educators:
  - » supervising children closely when they are in a situation that presents a higher risk of injury—for example, during water play or woodwork experiences or on an excursion
  - » adjusting their levels of supervision depending on the area of the service and the skills, age mix, dynamics and size of the group of children they are supervising
  - » talking with children about safety issues and correct use of equipment and the environment and, where appropriate, involving children in setting safety rules
  - » discussing sun safety with children and implementing appropriate measures to protect children from overexposure to ultraviolet radiation such as sunburn

birth to three

- » closely monitoring and regularly observing sleeping children, and that all sleeping children are within hearing range

centre-based service

- » exchanging information about supervision with colleagues to ensure that there are no areas being accessed by children without supervision, while recognising children's need for privacy

- nominated supervisors, co-ordinators, educators and family day care educator assistants:
  - » supervising every person who enters and leaves the service premises in areas where children are present
  - » following the service's procedures for releasing children and ensuring they are released only to parents or authorised nominees
- safe sleep practices (according to SIDS recommendations) being implemented
- equipment, furniture and activities arranged to ensure effective supervision while also allowing children to access private and quiet spaces.

discuss — ***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how nominated supervisors, co-ordinators and educators:
  - » inform new and/or relief educators of the service's supervision arrangements and what they are required to do in relation to supervising children
  - » promote engagement in children's play and experiences whilst maintaining supervision requirements
  - » ensure that supervision arrangements are flexible to allow supervision of individuals or small groups of children, such as when children are sleeping or indoor and outdoor experiences are concurrently offered to children
  - » balance supervision requirements with children's needs for privacy and independence
- if children are taken on excursions, how the service plans for and undertakes excursions

family day care

- how the service ensures that children are not left alone with visitors to the family day care residence or venue.

sight — ***Assessors may* sight:**

- evidence of planning for the supervision of children in outdoor and indoor areas, including supervision of nappy changing/toileting, and meal and sleep routines
- the service's policy and procedures on delivery and collection of children that ensures that children are released only to authorised nominees
- records of children's attendance, including arrivals and departures, with the signature of the person responsible for verifying the accuracy of the record and the identity of the person collecting the child
- a written process for monitoring who enters and leaves the service premises at all times
- evidence of detailed information provided to families regarding excursions, including the destination, mode of transport, educator-to-child ratios and the number of adults in attendance, and written authorisation for children to be taken outside the service premises, including for excursions or routine outings (except during emergency situations)

family day care

- evidence that a record is kept of all visitors to a family day care residence or venue that includes the signature of the visitor and the time of the visitor's arrival and departure.

Reasonable precautions

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- nominated supervisors, educators, co-ordinators and family day care educator assistants:
  - » implementing daily safety checks and monitoring the maintenance of buildings, equipment and the general environment
  - » implementing the service's policy and procedures regarding the use and storage of dangerous products
  - » removing identified hazards immediately or securing the area to prevent children from accessing the hazard
  - » implementing risk minimisation plans for children enrolled at the service who have a specific health care need, allergy or relevant medical condition

birth to three

- educators attending to children:
  - » at all times when they are eating or drinking
  - » closely when they are in situations that present a higher risk of injury—for example, on a nappy change table or in a high chair
- children:
  - » being unable to access potentially hazardous items, such as medications, detergents, cleaning products and garden chemicals, and that such items are clearly labelled at all times
  - » being unable to access power points, double adaptors and power boards and that other electrical equipment and electrical cords are secured
- adequate supervision of children consuming hot food and drink
- toys and equipment made available to children only in areas where they may be used safely
- a tobacco, drug and alcohol free environment
- simple warning signs where potentially dangerous products are stored
- poisonous or hazardous plants identified, explained to children and in some instances removed or not made accessible to children, or children are adequately supervised
- that, where drinks, food and cooking utensils/appliances are used as part of the program, they do not present an unacceptable risk to children
- secure, protective caps placed in all unused power points that are accessible to children
- climbing equipment, swings and large pieces of furniture having stable bases and/or are securely anchored
- climbing equipment, swings and other large pieces of equipment located over areas with soft fall surfaces that meet the requirements under the **Australian Standards for Playgrounds**

- animals that may pose a risk to children kept separate and apart from areas used by children, unless involved in a specific activity that is directly supervised by educators

birth to three

- safe sleep practices being implemented and the service using cots, other bedding equipment and accessories that meet Australian Standards
- hot drinks and hot food being made and consumed away from areas that are accessible to children.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how daily safety checks of buildings, equipment and the general environment are conducted and what action is taken as a result of the checks
- the service's approach to sun protection
- how safety is maintained when children are involved in food preparation/cooking activities
- how safety and hygiene are maintained when animals are part of the service
- where the service transports children:
  - » how the service maintains up to date with current information and laws on child restraints in vehicles
  - » that the vehicle is suitable and safe for all children
  - » how the service ensures car seats, restraints and booster seats are approved and fitted in accordance with Australian Standards and are in good working order

family day care

- if there is a firearm on the premises:
  - » occasions on which the firearm may be used
  - » where the firearm and ammunition are stored
  - » that the firearm is not in the presence of children at any time.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- written procedures for conducting daily safety checks and identifying and undertaking the maintenance of buildings and equipment
- completed daily safety checks of buildings, equipment and the general environment
- records of pest/vermin inspections and/or eradications
- in relation to excursions:
  - » the service's policy and procedures on excursions
  - » evidence of planning for excursions that includes a written risk assessment undertaken prior to conducting an excursion and provided to families prior to conducting excursions, and that supervision implications were considered

- documented evidence of detailed information provided to families regarding excursions, including the destination, mode of transport, educator-to-child ratio and number of adults in attendance
- documented authorisation for children to be taken outside the service's premises or to alternative areas within the premises (for example an area of the building or school premises that is not approved space or that cannot be used during normal operating hours)

- the service's medical conditions policy
- the service's policy on dealing with water safety, including safety during water-based activities
- enrolment records that include authorisations and health information
- the service's policy and procedures on sun protection and evidence that information about the service's approach to sun protection is shared with families
- evidence that information about the service's approach to safe sleep is documented and shared with families

family day care

- if there is a firearm on the premises:
  - the firearms licence
  - the ammunition is stored in a locked container separate to the container that holds the firearm
  - the firearm is not accessible to children and located in a locked storage container as required by state and territory legislation.

ELEMENT 2.2.2
INCIDENT AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

PLANS TO EFFECTIVELY MANAGE INCIDENTS AND EMERGENCIES ARE DEVELOPED IN CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT AUTHORITIES, PRACTISED AND IMPLEMENTED.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 2.2.2

Section 51(1)(a) Conditions on service approval (safety, health and wellbeing of children)

Regulation 97 Emergency and evacuation procedures

Regulation 98 Telephone or other communication equipment

What Element 2.2.2 aims to achieve

Planning to manage incidents and emergencies assists services to:

- protect children, adults and staff
- maintain children's wellbeing and a safe environment
- meet the requirements of relevant workplace health and safety legislation.

Having a clear plan for the management and communication of incidents and emergencies assists educators to handle these calmly and effectively, reducing the risk of further harm or damage.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 2.2.2 (for all services)

Incident and emergency management

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- emergency procedures displayed prominently throughout the premises
- nominated supervisors, co-ordinators and educators having ready access to an operating telephone or other similar means of communication
- emergency telephone numbers displayed near telephones
- service staff having ready access to emergency equipment, such as fire extinguishers and fire blankets.

discuss ***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how the service communicates information to families about the service's emergency procedures and plans to manage incidents
- how the service ensures that service staff are informed about and understand the service's emergency procedures and plans
- procedures for managing incidents and emergencies in single-staff services
- how the service discusses and practises emergency drills with children
- the provision of training for nominated supervisors, educators, co-ordinators and family day care educator assistants in the use of emergency equipment.

sight ***Assessors may* sight:**

- procedures for managing incidents and emergencies and providing a child-safe environment
- records of emergency drills, and evaluations of these
- a current, portable record of children's emergency contacts that can be carried by educators in case of emergencies and/or evacuations
- written emergency and evacuation procedures that include instructions for what must be done in the event of an emergency and an emergency evacuation floor plan (for example, a plan for a bushfire in a bushfire-prone area)
- written plans to manage an emergency that may be likely to affect individuals at the service (for example, the management of an asthma attack, anaphylactic reaction or epileptic fit)
- written communication with families about the service's emergency procedures and plans to manage incidents
- evidence that emergency equipment is tested as recommended by recognised authorities.

ELEMENT 2.2.3
CHILD PROTECTION

MANAGEMENT, EDUCATORS AND STAFF ARE AWARE OF THEIR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES TO IDENTIFY AND RESPOND TO EVERY CHILD AT RISK OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 2.2.3

Section 51(1)(a) Conditions on service approval (safety, health and wellbeing of children)

Section 162A Persons in day-to-day charge and nominated supervisors to have child protection training

Regulation 84 Awareness of child protection law

Additional state/territory requirements

In addition to complying with the National Quality Framework, approved providers, educators and other staff may be required to report on incidents or suspected incidents involving children under other state and territory laws including **child protection legislation**.

For more information please see **Notifications in the Guide to the NQF**.

What Element 2.2.3 aims to achieve

Management, educators, family day care educator assistants and other staff members must be aware of current child protection policy and procedures, including their legal responsibilities, and be able to act when required to protect any child who is at risk of abuse or neglect.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 2.2.3 (for all services)

Awareness of role and responsibility to protect children

observe

Assessors may* observe *educators:

- listening and responding to families' comments about their day-to-day observations of their child and the events occurring in their lives
- remaining vigilant about observing and responding to signs or indicators of child abuse and/ or neglect.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how nominated supervisors, educators, co-ordinators family day care educator assistants and staff members develop their awareness of any obligation under child protection law
- how new or relieving educators, family day care educator assistants and other staff members are made aware of their responsibilities in relation to child protection and the particular protection needs of individual children in the service
- any support mechanisms in place for educators and other staff members who identify children at risk.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- evidence:
  - » that current information about child protection procedures and expectations is provided to service staff
  - » that nominated supervisors, educators, co-ordinators and family day care educator assistants have attended training or professional development on child protection
  - » that information is provided to families about the service's practices in relation to child protection
  - » that nominated supervisors, educators and co-ordinators work collaboratively with other authorities and/or professionals to support children who have specific protection needs

family day care

- » that educators' families have been provided with information and/or training to support their understanding and response to suspected child protection issues

- a current list of local community resources that can provide information and support for children, families and service staff in relation to children at risk of abuse and/or neglect.

EXCEEDING GUIDANCE FOR STANDARD 2.2
SAFETY

Overview

The following guidance is provided to assist services and assessors to consider if practice for Standard 2.2 demonstrates the Exceeding themes at the level required for a rating of Exceeding NQS. The indicators provided are not exhaustive, and services may demonstrate Exceeding level practice for Standard 2.2 in a variety of ways that suit their particular operating environment and approach to practice.

Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 2.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- Educators, the educational leader, and co-ordinators demonstrate a deep understanding of the requirements of the standard, concepts and the component elements, and a commitment to high quality practice at all times
- All educators:
  - » ensure that children are supervised effectively at all times;
  - » are consistently attuned to the needs of all children to ensure each child's safety at all times
  - » are aware of and act on their responsibilities for ensuring children's safety at all times, including in relation to child protection, and are able to articulate these responsibilities
  - » proactively identify and manage risks and take precautions to protect children from harm and hazard
  - » identify and respond confidently to changes in the service environment throughout the day, adjusting practice where necessary to ensure that children are safe and effectively supervised at all times
- Ongoing risk assessment and management is built into day-to-day operations across the service to ensure a consistently safe environment
- Effective plans to manage incidents and emergencies are developed and reviewed in consultation with relevant authorities and practised regularly
- The observed and discussed approach to supporting and promoting children's safety consistently aligns with the design and delivery of the educational program and service philosophy and demonstrates a strong commitment to the priorities, principles and practices of the approved learning framework.

Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 2.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- Educators, the educational leader and co-ordinators:
  - » systematically and regularly reflect, individually and as a team, on practices to support child safety, including risk assessment and emergency management procedures and practices, and make changes when opportunities to further enhance children's outcomes are identified
  - » are responsive and adjust supervision strategies as required
  - » are able to explain how an ongoing commitment to children's safety influences the design and delivery of the educational program
  - » reflect together on safety-related incidents, and support the service to make changes to practices, policies and procedures where opportunities are identified to strengthen the approach
  - » are aware of and able to discuss the influences on their practice to support and promote children's safety, including recognised guidelines, information sources, and other legislation that underpin their practice approach, and how these align with the approved learning framework/s and the service's policies and procedures
  - » consider and discuss social justice and equity implications of their practice decisions to support and promote each child's safety to ensure that practice takes into account the needs and rights of every child at the service
- The service's approach to risk assessment, emergency management and child protection reflects current recognised guidelines and up-to-date information from trusted sources
- The service's approach to supporting and promoting children's safety reflects robust debate, discussion, and genuine opportunities for input by all educators and is informed by critical reflection on past incidents
- Any change to the service's approach to supporting and promoting children's safety are understood by all.

Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 2.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- Educators:
  - » actively engage with families about their concerns and priorities for their children's safety
  - » actively raise awareness of issues impacting on child safety with families and the community, including in the context of child protection
  - » are familiar with and respond respectfully to the differing cultural contexts of families and the community that impact on perspectives about child safety and protection, while ensuring that practice decisions always reflect a best practice approach
- The service's approach to managing risks and supporting child safety:
  - » reflects the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service
  - » is informed by meaningful and ongoing partnerships with the broader community, for example local community and emergency services
  - » considers the geographical context of the service and is responsive to changes in the environment throughout the year.

QUALITY AREA 3
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Overview

Quality Area 3 of the National Quality Standard focuses on the physical environment. The physical environment is critical to:

- contributing to children's wellbeing, creativity and developing independence
- providing a diverse range of experiences that promote children's learning and development
- keeping children safe
- creating/organising spaces to reduce the risk of injury.

National Law & Regulations

Related National Law and National Regulations

The National Law and National Regulation provisions that are directly relevant to Quality Area 3 are listed under the corresponding element.

Other requirements in the National Law and National Regulations that are relevant to Quality Area 3 are:

- Part 3 of the National Law: Service approval
- Regulation 25 Additional information about proposed education and care service premises
- Regulations 41–45 Service waiver and temporary waiver.

Additional state/territory and local government requirements

In addition to complying with the National Quality Framework, services must also comply with other relevant national, state/territory and local government requirements. These include:

- the Building Code of Australia
- food safety standards (for kitchens and food preparation areas)
- relevant Australian Standards (for example, pool safety, playground equipment and soft fall).

Standards, elements and concepts

Quality Area 3 has two standards that focus on the design of service facilities and the use of the service's physical environment to support children's experiences. These standards are crucial to delivering quality learning outcomes for children under the National Quality Framework because:

- inclusive built and natural environments in indoor and outdoor spaces, when appropriately resourced, promote play-based learning
- well maintained, fit-for-purpose facilities keep children safe and support each child's access to facilities and participation in activities/experiences

- the physical environment significantly impacts on the quality of children's experiences and encourages children to become environmentally responsible.

Standard/ Elements	Concept	Descriptor
QA3		**Physical environment**
3.1	Design	The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service.
3.1.1	Fit for purpose	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child.
3.1.2	Upkeep	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.
3.2	Use	The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.
3.2.1	Inclusive environment	Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.
3.2.2	Resources support play-based learning	Resources, materials and equipment allow for multiple uses, are sufficient in number, and enable every child to engage in play-based learning.
3.2.3	Environmentally responsible	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.

STANDARD 3.1
DESIGN

THE DESIGN OF THE FACILITIES IS APPROPRIATE FOR THE OPERATION OF A SERVICE.

How Standard 3.1 contributes to quality education and care

The way in which the service environment is designed, equipped and arranged determines how children use space and resources. The environment also impacts on the behaviours and interactions of children and adults.

Indoor environments are characterised by open spaces that provide children with opportunities to be involved in self-chosen and negotiated experiences that can be quiet or active learning situations, solitary play experiences, or routines with small and large groups.

Quality indoor spaces:

- support the emerging interests of every child and enable them to demonstrate their innate creativity and curiosity
- reflect the cultures, interests, abilities and learning styles of every child
- recognise children as active learners and competent decision makers.

Outdoor environments are characterised by both active and quiet zones that comprise a balance of fixed and moveable equipment, open space to engage in physical activities, and spaces that promote investigation and respect for the natural environment.

Outdoor spaces that are dynamic and flexible:

- provide opportunities for unique play and learning
- complement and extend the indoor learning experiences
- offer children opportunities to be active, make mess and noise, and be wholly engaged in play.

To maximise children's engagement in positive experiences and support the access of every child, services should consider:

- the location of the service
- the amount of space and how it is arranged and used for different groups and ages of children
- access between indoor and outdoor environments
- the availability of furniture, equipment and resources, and arrangement of rooms
- how the placement of buildings, fixtures and fittings supports the access of all children and families
- internal and external noise levels
- visibility and design that supports effective supervision

- the air quality
- ventilation and access to natural light.

Well-designed facilities support children to access different areas, move between indoor and outdoor spaces, explore, experiment, create and express themselves, while allowing others in the space to do the same. When educators, with support from the educational leader, create physical and social learning environments that have a positive impact on children's learning, they are able to spend valuable time interacting with children. This enriches the lives and identities of children and families.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for Standard 3.1 (for all services)

Appropriate design and upkeep

- How does the environment support children's learning? What barriers do we need to overcome?
- What processes are in place to monitor the cleanliness and safety of the premises, furniture and equipment?
- How does the design of the environment promote and foster children's learning, development and wellbeing?
- How do we ensure that children are safe entering and leaving the service?
- How does the environment support the access of all children and families enrolled at the service and children who may enrol in the future?

school age children

- How do we ensure the environment is organised to meet supervision requirements, and also provide appropriate spaces and activities for children's need for privacy and autonomy?

family day care

- How are FDC educators supported and encouraged to maintain the upkeep of their residence's environment to ensure children's safety and wellbeing?

ELEMENT 3.1.1
FIT FOR PURPOSE

OUTDOOR AND INDOOR SPACES, BUILDINGS, FIXTURES AND FITTINGS ARE SUITABLE FOR THEIR PURPOSE, INCLUDING SUPPORTING THE ACCESS OF EVERY CHILD.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 3.1.1

Regulation 104 Fencing and security

Regulation 106 Laundry and hygiene facilities

Regulation 107 Space requirements—indoor space

Regulation 108 Space requirements—outdoor space

Regulation 109 Toilet and hygiene facilities

Regulation 110 Ventilation and natural light

Regulation 111 Administrative space

Regulation 112 Nappy change facilities

Regulation 114 Outdoor space—shade

Regulation 115 Premises designed to facilitate supervision

Regulation 116 Assessments of family day care residences and approved family day care venues

Regulation 117 Glass (additional requirement for family day care)

Jurisdiction specific provisions

NSW – Regulation 274 Swimming pools

Tasmania – Regulation 345 Swimming pool prohibition

What Element 3.1.1 aims to achieve

To support each child's access to indoor and outdoor environments, services (including family day care residences and venues) should have sufficient space, equipment and facilities that are fit for purpose and promote children's learning and development. Well-designed indoor and outdoor spaces:

- are flexible
- are welcoming and accessible
- reflect the diversity within the local and broader communities
- support the health and safety of children, service staff and families
- facilitate convenient and integrated access between indoor and outdoor areas, as well as convenient access to toilet (including nappy-changing, if applicable) and hand-washing facilities

- are environmentally sustainable
- promote an understanding of and respect for the natural environment
- supports the grouping of children in ways that:
  - minimise the risk of injury
  - minimise conflict between children
  - reduce prolonged exposure to excess internal and external noise
  - promote children's learning and development.

Age-appropriate furniture and equipment helps to minimise accidents and support children's learning, growing independence, confidence and self-esteem.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 3.1.1 (for all services)

A fit for purpose service environment

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- appropriately sized and equipped indoor and outdoor spaces
- a physical environment that is safe and includes adequate space for solitary play, and for children to work, play and talk together in small and large groups
- outdoor spaces with shaded areas that meet the recommendations of relevant recognised authorities for protection from the sun
- environments designed to support each child's access and assist educators to:
  - adequately supervise children
  - group children in ways that minimise the risk of injury and conflict, reduce prolonged exposure to excess noise, and promote children's learning and development
- fencing that provides safety
- facilities that enable interaction and convenient access between indoor and outdoor spaces, including toilet (and nappy-changing, if applicable) and hand-washing facilities
- a balance of natural and artificial lighting, adequate ventilation and fresh air
- appropriate areas for food preparation and storage
- quiet, comfortable and well-ventilated areas for sleeping and resting
- space available for administrative functions, private conversations and consultation with families and for educator and staff breaks
- facilities designed or adapted to support access by every child, family, educator and staff member, including adaptive equipment to support the inclusion of all children

birth to three

- nappy-changing and related facilities for services with children under three years of age
- care is taken to meet the needs of non-mobile babies, including providing adequate indoor space

school age children

- appropriate areas and resources for children to rest and relax.

discuss ***Assessors may* discuss:**

- the administration spaces used to consult and discuss confidential matters with families

centre-based service

- where relevant, how the service has considered the impact of any building modifications and/or the installation of new furniture, storage areas and fixed equipment on the unencumbered space available

family day care

- how educators balance their family members' need for privacy with providing sufficient space for the children being educated and cared for.

sight	***Assessors may* sight:**
	• the service's approach to grouping children
centre-based service	• plans of indoor and outdoor areas, including information about soft fall • plans that show evaluation of and changes to the placement of furniture and equipment, if available
school age children	• where the service shares multi-purpose areas with a school, documented risk assessment of the physical environment in relation to: » access to, and use of, multi-purpose areas » the impact of multi-purpose areas on service delivery » the service's approach to sharing the multi-purpose areas with the school
family day care	• the service's registration documentation and assessments of educators' approved premises.

ELEMENT 3.1.2
UPKEEP

PREMISES, FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT ARE SAFE, CLEAN AND WELL MAINTAINED.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 3.1.2

Regulation 103 Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair

What Element 3.1.2 aims to achieve

In education and care services, the upkeep of buildings, furniture and equipment impact directly on the safety of children and service staff. Every child has the right to be safe.

Upkeep refers to the responsibility of services to implement effective maintenance, cleaning and appropriate safety precautions, which also helps prevent injuries and the spread of infectious diseases.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 3.1.2 (for all services)

Effective upkeep

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- premises, furniture and equipment that are safe, clean and well maintained
- educators regularly conducting safety checks and monitoring the maintenance of buildings and equipment
- educators following safety advice from recognised authorities and manufacturers when arranging equipment, furniture and experiences
- areas used by children that are regularly cleaned.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- schedules for cleaning all toys and equipment used by children
- procedures for undertaking building and equipment maintenance at the service
- the arrangements the service has for appropriate laundering of soiled items.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- documented procedures, correspondence and schedules relating to:
  - » maintenance and safety checks
  - » the cleaning of buildings, premises, furniture and equipment
  - » adhering to manufacturers' advice when using and cleaning furniture and equipment
- documents that confirm equipment meets Australian Standards, for example for cots, other bedding equipment and accessories
- risk assessments of the physical environment

centre-based service

- where relevant, a management plan that is in place to protect the safety of children, families and service staff while major work is occurring at the service.

EXCEEDING GUIDANCE FOR STANDARD 3.1
DESIGN

Overview

The following guidance is provided to assist services and assessors to consider if practice for Standard 3.1 demonstrates the Exceeding themes at the level required for a rating of Exceeding NQS. The indicators provided are not exhaustive, and services may demonstrate Exceeding level practice for Standard 3.1 in a variety of ways that suit their particular operating environment and approach to practice.

Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 3.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- Educators, the educational leader, and co-ordinators demonstrate a deep understanding of the requirements of the standard, concepts and the component elements, and a commitment to high quality practice at all times
- All outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings:
  - » support the access and full participation of every child
  - » promote and positively support children's interaction with space, materials and each other
  - » contribute to a flexible and stimulating environment that enhances each child's development and learning
  - » are safe, clean and well-maintained at all times.
- All educators:
  - » are able to explain how the design of the physical environment, including selection of furniture, equipment and resources, supports safe and inclusive access by all children and promotes each child's full engagement with the program.
- The observed and discussed approach to the design and maintenance of the physical environment:
  - » consistently aligns with the design and delivery of the educational program and service philosophy
  - » demonstrates a strong commitment to the principles and practices of the approved learning framework/s
  - » consistently aligns with safety, cleanliness and maintenance advice from recognised authorities and reflects the service's policies, procedures and record keeping systems.

Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 3.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- The service's approach to design and maintenance of the physical environment:
  - » reflects robust debate, discussion, and opportunities for input by all educators, and is informed by critical reflection and past incidents
  - » is informed by current recognised guidance on creating an inclusive, safe physical environment that strengthens children's learning and development outcomes and enhances participation in the program.
- Any change to the service's approach to design and maintenance of the physical environment is understood by all and implemented appropriately.
- Educators, the educational leader and co-ordinators:
  - » are attuned to changes to the physical environment throughout the day and confidently adjust practice and the environment as needed to ensure the continued safety, participation and inclusion of all children
  - » reflect, individually and together, on the design of the physical environment, and consider opportunities to make changes to strengthen inclusion and participation, and to enhance children's safety, learning and development outcomes
  - » are aware of and able to discuss the theoretical influences on the service's design choices and how these align with the approved learning framework/s and the service's philosophy, policies and procedures
  - » consider and discuss social justice and equity implications of design choices to ensure that the physical environment supports the needs and rights of every child at the service.

Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 3.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- The design of the physical environment:
  - » reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service
  - » welcomes, reflects and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service
  - » shows that the service works creatively within the limitations of the physical setting
- Opportunities for collaboration with family and community partners are built into the service's approach to designing and making changes to the physical environment

STANDARD 3.2
USE

THE SERVICE ENVIRONMENT IS INCLUSIVE, PROMOTES COMPETENCE AND SUPPORTS EXPLORATION AND PLAY-BASED LEARNING.

How Standard 3.2 contributes to quality education and care

A service environment that is inclusive, promotes competence in children and supports exploration and play-based learning creates the context for children to learn and build relationships with others. Welcoming, home-like, inclusive, vibrant and flexible environments support children's exploration, creativity and learning, and are responsive to the individual requirements of each child. A quality physical environment caters for different learning capacities and learning styles, and encourages children and families to contribute ideas, interests and questions (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 15; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 15). It also supports the holistic way that children learn.

Exploration of the natural environment helps to build children's competence and play-based learning. It also encourages children to develop an appreciation of the natural world, an awareness of the impact of human activity on the environment, and ways in which they can contribute to a sustainable future.

Resources should reflect the breadth of age groups and interests and capabilities of children that are sharing the environment. Resources need to be accessible to children so they can choose and be responsible for their actions (*Framework for School Age Care*, p. 15).

Questions to guide reflection on practice for Standard 3.2 (for all services)

Inclusive environment

- Is the environment welcoming, home-like and inviting for children and families (within the constraints of our setting)?
- What opportunities do we provide for children to be involved in planning, setting up and modifying the environment?
- How is the environment equipped and organised to cater for all ages and levels of capabilities?
- How are the backgrounds and cultures of families and the broader community reflected in the environment?
- How can the physical environment be adapted to include all children and provide for their needs and interests?
- How can we create a physical environment that welcomes and respects all children and families, and encourages their participation in learning experiences?

Promoting competence, supporting exploration and play-based learning

- How can we organise environments and spaces to provide children with opportunities to:
  - » play independently as well as promote small and large group interactions?
  - » engage in unstructured play?
- How do we plan to use the physical space to support children in building relationships?
- How do we support children's interaction between the indoor and outdoor environments?
- How does the organisation of the indoor and outdoor environment allow for a variety of uses by children and educators?
- How do we arrange indoor and outdoor spaces that support children's access to materials and equipment?
- What adaptions can be made to the environment or additional resources introduced to provoke interest, creativity, sustained shared thinking and collaborative learning?
- How do we provide spaces that promote safe exploration, learning through play and interaction with the environment for children of all ages?
- What equipment do we provide that allows for multiple uses?
- How does the physical environment contribute positively to children's developing autonomy and independence?
- What features in the physical environment encourage open-ended interactions, spontaneity, risk taking, exploration, discovery and connection with nature?
- How do we regularly evaluate the effectiveness of learning environments and draw links to the intended learning outcomes?
- What messages are given to children about how the service cares for the environment?
- What strategies can we implement to support educators to model environmentally responsible practices, and foster children's capacity to value and respect the broader environment?
- How can we access additional information, ideas and strategies to support children to take an active role in caring for the environment and contribute to a sustainable future?
- How do we foster children's capacity to understand, care for and respect the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land? (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 14; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 13)

school age children

- What strategies are in place to provide appropriate levels of challenge to children while ensuring that younger children are safe?

family day care

- How do we ensure the environment provides a diverse range of meaningful learning experiences while maintaining a warm, homely environment for children?

ELEMENT 3.2.1
INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

OUTDOOR AND INDOOR SPACES ARE ORGANISED AND ADAPTED TO SUPPORT EVERY CHILD'S PARTICIPATION AND TO ENGAGE EVERY CHILD IN QUALITY EXPERIENCES IN BOTH BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 3.2.1

Regulation 113 Outdoor space—natural environment

What Element 3.2.1 aims to achieve

Services provide an inclusive environment when indoor and outdoor spaces are designed to support the diverse interests, preferences and learning styles of all children in the service. Educators can also enhance inclusion by identifying aspects of the environment that can be adapted to support each child's participation. Indoor and outdoor environments offer significantly different yet complementary experiences and should be given equal focus and attention.

Flexible arrangements of furniture and equipment, together with materials that allow for multiple uses, encourage children to become flexible thinkers and investigators as they engage in play-based learning. A secure and predictable environment with adequate space and appropriate facilities and resources enables children to participate in experiences/activities of their choice, and take increasing responsibility for their own health, hygiene and personal care. This supports children to increase their self-confidence and competence, and provide them with a strong sense of self identify. Environments also support positive relationships when space is arranged for small groups of children to play and talk without undue distraction from children engaged in other activities.

School age care is characterised by opportunities to develop relationships. Some children develop social skills through quiet play, such as talking to friends. Other children socialise through physical play, requiring open spaces to develop physical and social skills, such as team building and leadership. Services should make space available for small and large groups to gather. Indoor and outdoor environments should be organised and adapted to support all aspects of children's learning and invite conversations between children, educators, families and the broader community. Flexible environments allow for the range of activities that support the learning and development of school age children (*Framework for School Age Care*, p. 15).

Assessment guide for meeting Element 3.2.1 (for all services)

Environments that support participation and quality experiences

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- clear pathways that direct children and adults around rather than through areas being used by others
- spaces organised to ensure that routine activities (such as toileting, nappy changing, eating and sleeping) promote positive interactions and opportunities for learning
- safe shelving and storage areas from which children can access equipment and resources that are age and capability appropriate
- challenging elements of outdoor and indoor environments that allow for experiences that scaffold children's learning and development and offer opportunities for appropriate risk taking and risky play
- children:
  - » actively engaged in a variety of rich, meaningful, enquiry-based experiences in both indoor and outdoor environments, with appropriate levels of challenge to support exploration and experimentation
  - » initiating their own experiences using equipment and resources that they can access independently
  - » exploring relationships with living things and observing, noticing and responding to change
  - » being encouraged to use their senses to explore natural and built environments
  - » accessing areas with natural features such as plants, trees, edible gardens, sand, rocks, mud and water
- educators:
  - » setting up and adapting the indoor and outdoor environments to:
    - offer both built and natural features and structures
    - meet the range of ages, interests and abilities of all children
    - facilitate the inclusion of every child and support every child to be able to participate in all daily experiences
    - promote small and large group interactions and meaningful play and leisure
    - stimulate and reflect children's interests
    - assist children to function autonomously in distinct learning or interest areas
    - encourage a free flow of activity throughout the day
    - facilitate positive interactions between children, educators and families
    - enable small groups of children to work together on their own projects

- support children to create their own games and experiences
  - » planning, implementing, modifying or changing play materials to encourage each child's participation and to allow them to experience success
  - » planning learning environments that include a range of materials and equipment with appropriate levels of challenge where children are encouraged to explore, experiment and take appropriate risks in their learning according to their current capacities, strengths and interests
  - » engaging with children in constructing and adapting their own play settings/environments
  - » supporting children to move between environments
  - » encouraging the use of natural materials in all learning environments
  - » involving children in the arrangement of spaces to increase aesthetic appeal
  - » re-organising and re-setting the environment with assistance from children to provide order and predictability for children, attract their interest to the area and stimulate learning
- a relaxed atmosphere maintained by using positive and effective strategies to modify inappropriate noise levels in the environment

birth to three

- comfortable and protected areas both indoors and outdoors where children can:
  - » rest, roll, sit, crawl and stand, alone or with others
  - » experience sensory activities
  - » safely explore their environment with their mouths, hands and bodies, and minimise time spent in high chairs, cots, playpens and strollers
  - » be cuddled or held by an adult

school age children

- built and natural environments that provide access to opportunities for play and leisure activities in which the children experience fun, enjoyment, challenge and success.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how educators:
  - » involve children in discussions about the use of space and resources
  - » set up the environments to manage the balance of active and quieter spaces for play, and responds to the individual requirements of all children throughout the day
  - » adjust the environment to support each child's participation and provide for their learning and development
- how resources, materials and equipment are chosen to enhance children's learning

- strategies the service has for working collaboratively with family members, specialists and/or resource agencies to support the inclusion of individual children
- how the indoor and outdoor spaces have been designed to invite open-ended interactions, spontaneity, risk-taking, exploration, discovery and connection to nature
- how the service implements strategies to support the development of children's creativity, engagement and understanding of indoor and outdoor environments.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- documented learning programs that:
  - » pay equal attention to planning outdoor and indoor environments to support children's learning outcomes and extend on child-led learning
  - » outline opportunities for children to engage in outdoor and indoor experiences, such as dramatic play, construction, music and exploration
  - » incorporate opportunities for children to:
    - be active and wholly engaged for long periods of uninterrupted play
    - spend time in a quiet area away from other children if they wish
    - choose whether they wish to participate in large and small group activities
  - » indicate that the outdoor and indoor spaces are re-organised to continuously engage children
- the statement of philosophy that describes the service's approach to inclusion
- documented evidence that indicates the educational leader, nominated supervisors, educators and co-ordinators work collaboratively with family members, specialists and/or resource agencies to:
  - » plan for the inclusion of children with additional needs
  - » access adaptive equipment to support children's requirements
  - » facilitate access to support services required while the child is at the service

family day care

- evidence that strategies are in place to ensure that children in residences without direct access to outdoor environments—for example, high-rise units—have opportunities to access outdoor environments.

ELEMENT 3.2.2
RESOURCES SUPPORT PLAY-BASED LEARNING

RESOURCES, MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT ALLOW FOR MULTIPLE USES, ARE SUFFICIENT IN NUMBER, AND ENABLE EVERY CHILD TO ENGAGE IN PLAY-BASED LEARNING.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 3.2.2

Regulation 105 Furniture, materials and equipment

What Element 3.2.2 aims to achieve

Services should design learning environments with resources that support play-based learning and encourage children to explore, solve problems, create and construct (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 15; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 14). Educators can provide additional interest, variety and challenge for children by choosing equipment and materials that can be used in multiple ways, and allowing the environment to be regularly and readily rearranged or adjusted. When children are challenged in play and leisure, they explore new possibilities and develop the confidence to take responsibility for their own learning.

Services should provide sufficient resources, materials and equipment for children to engage with and use for play. Resources and materials need to be accessible to children, and reflect the breadth of ages, interests and capabilities of children who are sharing the environment (*Framework for School Age Care*, p. 15). These resources encourage children's knowledge of, and connections with, the built and natural environments.

School age care settings provide children with play and leisure activities in which they experience fun, enjoyment, mastery and success (*Framework for School Age Care*, p. 32). Services should consider how they offer appropriate levels of challenge to encourage school age children to explore, experiment and take appropriate risks (*Framework for School Age Care*, p. 34), as they learn to regulate themselves and contribute to the social environment (*Framework for School Age Care*, p. 32).

Assessment guide for meeting Element 3.2.2 (for all services)

Sufficient resources to support play-based learning

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- resources, materials and equipment in the indoor and outdoor environment that children can explore and use freely in their play, which:
  - » are sufficient in variety and number to:
    - meet the range of interests, ages and abilities of children

- avoid overcrowding and ensure that children do not have to wait for long periods to participate or access resources or facilities
- minimise disputes over their use
- use in a range of different ways
- support the participation of all children

» are organised in ways that ensure appropriate and effective implementation of the program

» offer a range of challenges and experiences that reflect the breadth of ages, interests and capabilities of children who are sharing the environment

» are flexible and can be rearranged or adjusted to provide additional interest, variety and challenge

» are suitable for promoting play and leisure-based learning

» stimulate children's curiosity

» provide many sensory experiences

» encourage children to explore, discover and experiment

» are challenging and encourage children to take appropriate risks

- children:

» being supported to take on challenges and try new activities/ experiences

» using a range of equipment and resources to engage in physical experiences that assist them to develop movement, coordination, balance, flexibility and strength

» using a range of commercial, natural, recycled and homemade materials to support their learning in a range of ways—for example, to:

- express meaning using visual arts, dance, drama and music
- explore literacy in a range of ways
- explore numeracy concepts such as sorting, categorising, ordering and comparing collections of materials
- represent their thinking
- experiment with different technologies
- use their imagination and make up their own games
- be involved in completing day-to-day tasks, such as preparing and cooking food, caring for living things and being involved in the care of the environment

» exploring, solving problems, creating, constructing and engaging in critical thinking in the learning environment

» being supported to handle equipment and manage tools with increasing competence and skill

- educators:

» enhancing child-initiated experiences by providing additional resources and, where appropriate, participating in and extending children's play

- choosing resources, materials and equipment with children and using them in a way that supports children's sense of belonging, relationships, creativity and learning
- providing sufficient time and resources for children to initiate and become actively involved in experiences
- introducing appropriate tools, technologies and media to enhance children's learning
- demonstrating the potential of resources to children and suggesting new and different ways to use them
- being creative in their use of equipment and materials to stimulate children's interest and curiosity
- providing resources to support active learning and open-ended imaginative play
- structuring the environment so that it is flexible to allow children to move resources and equipment to extend learning opportunities
- using outdoor environments not only as places for children to release energy and engage in physical activity but also for exploration, problem solving and creative expression.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- the strategies used to engage with families and children to ensure their views are considered and incorporated in the selection and organisation of materials, equipment and resources at the service
- how resources and materials in the educational program reflect children and adults with a range of abilities as active participants in the community
- strategies used by educators to accommodate children's changing interests, capabilities and skill levels
- how children are given opportunities to be involved in purchasing resources, including choice and use, so that their preferences support group and individual play-based learning.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- documentation and learning programs that demonstrate links between the arrangement and choice of resources, materials and equipment and learning outcomes for children
- plans for the arrangement of indoor and outdoor spaces to create inviting learning environments and documentation of how children's ideas have influenced these plans
- photographs of children using materials and equipment in a variety of ways.

ELEMENT 3.2.3
ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE

THE SERVICE CARES FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUPPORTS CHILDREN TO BECOME ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE.

What Element 3.2.3 aims to achieve

Education and care settings are places where children learn about self, others and the world, including environmental responsibility. Services play a role in helping children develop an understanding and respect for the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 13; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 15). Children develop positive attitudes and values by engaging in sustainable practices, watching adults around them model sustainable practices, and working together with educators to show care and appreciation for the natural environment (*Hughes*, 2007).

This element aligns sustainable operations within the service and children's learning about environmental responsibility. Environments and resources can emphasise accountability and advocacy for a sustainable future and promote children's understanding about their responsibility to care for the environment on a day to day and long-term basis (*Framework for School Age Care*, p. 15). This is particularly relevant for school age care environments as children's depth of understanding of these concepts develops.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 3.2.3 (for all services)

Supporting environmental responsibility

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- children:
  - » being supported to appreciate and care for natural and constructed environments
  - » interacting with vegetation and natural materials in the environment
  - » exploring insects and animals in their habitats to develop their understanding of biodiversity
  - » participating in environmentally sustainable practices that:
    - support their engagement with and respect for the natural environment
    - increase their awareness of the impact of human activity
    - build a sense of responsibility for caring for the environment
    - are meaningful, relevant to the service context and community, and connect service operations with the educational program and practice

- being given opportunities to increase their:
  - knowledge of and respect for natural and constructed environments
  - awareness of the interdependence of living things
- educators:
  - developing environmental awareness and programs as a platform for ongoing environmental education
  - using different ways to incorporate animals and plants into the program to support children's understanding of ecology and the environment
  - fostering children's capacity to understand and respect the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals and the land
  - sharing information and supporting children to access resources about the environment and the impact of human activities on environments
- spaces that promote the development of life skills, such as growing and preparing food, waste reduction and recycling, and children being actively engaged in these experiences
- the service's environmental strategy being implemented.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- the development and implementation of strategies to support children to be environmentally responsible and to show respect for the environment
- how the educational program fosters wonder and knowledge about the natural world
- strategies used to support every child to engage in quality experiences in the natural environment.
- environments.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- documentation of children's learning about environmental and sustainability issues
- policies that promote children's understanding about their responsibility to care for the environment and the development of life skills (such as growing and preparing food, waste reduction and recycling)
- planning documents that support children's learning through investigation and exploration of the natural environment
- photographs and displays highlighting children's understanding and learning of the natural environment, including their contributions.

EXCEEDING GUIDANCE FOR STANDARD 3.2
USE

Overview

The following guidance is provided to assist services and assessors to consider if practice for Standard 3.2 demonstrates the Exceeding themes at the level required for a rating of Exceeding NQS. The indicators provided are not exhaustive, and services may demonstrate Exceeding level practice for Standard 3.2 in a variety of ways that suit their particular operating environment and approach to practice.

Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 3.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- Educators, the educational leader, and the co-ordinator demonstrate a deep understanding of the requirements of the standard, concept and the component elements, and a commitment to high quality practice at all times
- Children actively engaged in child-directed learning experiences that demonstrate environmental awareness and/or responsibility
- Observed practice and discussions demonstrate a whole-of-service approach to the use of space and resources that is inclusive, purposeful, creative, and flexible, and enhances learning and development outcomes for all children
- All educators:
  - » are able to explain how the use of the physical environment is organised to be flexible, support safe and inclusive access by all children and promote each child's engagement in play-based learning
  - » confidently organise and adapt spaces and resources as needed throughout the day, week, and month to ensure a consistently inclusive and flexible play-based learning environment for all children
  - » demonstrate an ongoing commitment to caring for the natural environment and fostering environmental awareness and responsibility in children, and are aware of how their practice aligns with practice across the service
- The service's approach to creating inclusive learning environments, engaging in sustainable practice and supporting environmental responsibility reflects the service's philosophy.

Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 3.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- The service's approach to organising inclusive, play-based learning environments and to supporting environmental responsibility:
  - » reflects robust debate, discussion, and opportunities for input by all educators, and is informed by critical reflection

- » is informed by current recognised guidance.
- Any change to the service's approach to organising inclusive, play-based learning environments and to supporting environmental responsibility is understood by all and implemented appropriately.
- All educators regularly reflect on opportunities to:
  - » support every child's participation and to further enhance children's learning and development through the creative and flexible use of space, equipment and resources
  - » support children's environmental awareness and responsibility.
- The service team reflect together on opportunities to:
  - » further enhance children's learning and development through the creative and flexible use of space, equipment and resources
  - » strengthen the service's engagement in environmental sustainability, and work together to implement agreed changes across the service.

Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 3.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- The service's use and organisation of space and resources:
  - » reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service welcomes, respects and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service.
- The service's approach to environmentally sustainable practice and support of environmental responsibility:
  - » reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service
  - » welcomes, respects and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service
- The service collaborates with family and/or community partners to:
  - » foster an inclusive, welcoming and flexible play-based learning environment
  - » design indoor and outdoor spaces that draw on and reflect the diverse cultures of the broader community, for example engaging with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to design an environment that reflects their culture
  - » engage in sustainable practices within the service and support environmental awareness and responsibility across the service community
- Children engaged in excursions that utilise community environments and support child-directed exploration and discovery
- Educators supporting families to develop understanding and engage in environmentally responsible and sustainable practices.

QUALITY AREA 4
STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

Overview

Quality Area 4 of the National Quality Standard focuses on the provision of qualified and experienced educators who develop warm, respectful relationships with children, create predictable environments and encourage children's active engagement in the learning program. A collaborative and ethical culture where professional standards guide all aspects of practice is critical to a quality service.

The approved provider, educational leader, nominated supervisor, co-ordinators and educators all play a vital role in establishing effective and ethical practices in the service. A sound philosophy guides decision-making, including decisions about the appropriate arrangement of suitably qualified educators and staff members at the service. This helps to promote continuity of staff, which contributes to children's learning and development.

Standards, elements and concepts

Quality Area 4 has two standards that focus on the organisation and professionalism of educators, staff and management. These standards are crucial to delivering quality outcomes for children under the National Quality Framework because:

- professional and collaborative relationships between management, educators and staff support continuous improvement, leading to improved learning experiences and outcomes for children
- careful organisation of staff contributes to the continuous support of each child's learning and development in an effectively supervised environment
- professional standards set quality benchmarks for educators' practice and relationships.

Standard/ Elements	Concept	Descriptor
QA4		**Staffing arrangements**
4.1	Staffing arrangements	Staffing arrangements enhance children's learning and development.
4.1.1	Organisation of educators	The organisation of educators across the service supports children's learning and development.
4.1.2	Continuity of staff	Every effort is made for children to experience continuity of educators at the service.
4.2	Professionalism	Management, educators and staff are collaborative, respectful and ethical.
4.2.1	Professional collaboration	Management, educators and staff work with mutual respect and collaboratively, and challenge and learn from each other, recognising each other's strengths and skills.
4.2.2	Professional standards	Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.

STANDARD 4.1
STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS ENHANCE CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT.

How Standard 4.1 contributes to quality education and care

Having sufficient educators and staff members available at all times when children are present enables the service to deliver quality education and care programs that respond to and promote children's learning and development.

Educators are likely to be responsive, purposeful and reflective when staffing arrangements at the service enable them to direct their full attention to their work with children, and when they do not have to attend simultaneously to other tasks. Responsive learning relationships are strengthened as educators and children engage and learn together (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 15; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 15). The service is encouraged to arrange staff in ways that support positive experiences for all children at the service at all times.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for Standard 4.1 (for all services)

Staffing arrangements

- How do our staffing arrangements support each child's learning and development?
- How do our staffing arrangements support educators to direct their full attention to their work with children, including getting to know each child?
- How do our staffing arrangements support consistent practice, including staff members' and children's transitions?
- How does our staffing roster support continuity of care and positive experiences for children on a day-to-day basis?
- How do we inform children and families when an educator is on leave and who will be working with them instead?
- How do we facilitate children's and families' familiarity with relief staff?
- How do we support relief staff to learn about and understand the service's policies, processes?
- How do our staffing arrangements support educators to develop positive and respectful relationships with families?
- How do we provide feedback and support to educators so that they continue to learn and feel fulfilled, resulting in continuity of educators over time?

- How do we engage in reflective practice to support and encourage each other, support ongoing learning and focus on quality improvement?

family day care

- Do our service's procedures support families to access alternative care when their usual educator is unavailable at short notice?
- What arrangements are in place to ensure that our principal office can support educators and families when children are in care overnight and at weekends?
- How do we communicate with educators and with families when there is a change of co-ordinator(s) at the service?

ELEMENT 4.1.1
ORGANISATION OF EDUCATORS

THE ORGANISATION OF EDUCATORS ACROSS THE SERVICE SUPPORTS CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 4.1.1

Section 51(2) Conditions on service approval (FDC Co-ordinators)

Section 161 Offence to operate education and care service without nominated supervisor

Section 161A Offence for nominated supervisor not to meet prescribed minimum requirements

Section 162 Offence to operate education and care service unless responsible person is present

Section 163 Offence relating to appointment or engagement of family day care co-ordinators

Section 164 Offence relating to assistance to family day care

Section 164A Offence relating to the education and care of children by family day care service

Section 169 Offence relating to staffing arrangements

Section 269 Register of family day care educators, co-ordinators and assistants

Regulation 117A Placing a person in day-to-day charge

Regulation 117B Minimum requirement for a person in day-to-day charge

Regulation 117C Minimum requirement for a nominated supervisor

Regulation 118 Educational leader

Regulation 119 Family day care educator and family day care educator assistant to be at least 18 years old

Regulation 120 Educators who are under 18 to be supervised

Regulation 123 Educators to child ratios – centre-based services

Regulation 123A Family day care co-ordinator to educator ratios—family day care service

Regulation 124 Number of children who can be educated and cared for—family day care educator

Regulation 126 Centre-based services—general educator qualifications

Regulation 127 Family day care educator qualifications

Regulation 128 Family day care co-ordinator qualifications

Regulation 130 Requirement for early childhood teacher—centre-based services—fewer than 25 approved places

Regulation 131 Requirement for early childhood teacher—centre-based services—25 or more approved places but fewer than 25 children

Regulation 132 Requirement for early childhood teacher—centre-based services—25 to 59 children

Regulation 133 Requirement for early childhood teacher—centre-based services—60 to 80 children

Regulation 134 Requirement for early childhood teacher—centre-based services—more than 80 children

Regulation 135 Early childhood teacher illness or absence

Regulation 136 First aid qualifications

Regulation 143A Minimum requirements for a family day care educator

Regulation 143B Ongoing management of family day care educators

Regulation 144 Family day care educator assistant

Regulation 145 Staff record

Regulation 146 Nominated supervisor

Regulation 147 Staff members

Regulation 148 Educational leader

Regulation 149 Volunteers and students

Regulation 150 Responsible person

Regulation 151 Record of educators working directly with children

Regulation 152 Record of access to early childhood teachers

Regulation 153 Register of family day care educators, co-ordinators and assistants

Regulation 154 Record of staff other than family day care educators, family day care co-ordinators and family day care educator assistants

General transitional and saving provisions

Regulation 239 Centre-based service offering a preschool program in a composite class in a school

Regulation 239A Centre-based services in remote and very remote areas—attendance of early childhood teachers

Regulation 240 Qualifications for educators (centre-based service)

Regulation 241 Persons taken to hold an approved early childhood teaching qualification

Regulation 242 Persons taken to be early childhood teachers

Regulation 243 Persons taken to hold an approved diploma level education and care qualification

Regulation 243A Persons taken to hold an approved diploma level education and care qualification for regulation 128 in Queensland

Regulation 244 Persons taken to hold an approved certificate III level education and care qualification

Jurisdiction specific provisions

ACT

Regulation 260 Children over preschool age – minimum number of educators and qualifications required

Regulation 261 General qualifications for educators—children over preschool age—centre-based services

Regulation 262 Required qualifications to be a qualified educator for children over preschool age

Regulation 264 General qualification for educators – Centre-based services

Regulation 265 Required qualifications to be a qualified educator—unexpected absence of qualified educator

Regulation 267 Early childhood teacher—60 or more children

Regulation 386 Resignation of early childhood teacher

NSW

Regulations 271 Educator to child ratios—children aged 36 months or more but less than 6 years

Regulation 272 Early childhood teachers—children preschool age or under

Regulation 278 Qualifications for primary contact staff members-saving

Regulation 388 Educator to child ratios (centre-based services)

NT

Regulation 290 General qualification requirements for educators—children over preschool age

Regulation 294 Early childhood teacher – 60 or more children

Qld

Regulation 299 General qualification requirements for educators – children over preschool age

Regulations 299C Educator to child ratios during rest period

Regulations 299D Additional staff members of volunteers

Regulations 299E Qualifications for educators

Regulations 299F Educator to child ratios when educator or early childhood teacher on rest pause

Regulations 299G Access to or attendance of early childhood teacher on rest pause

Regulations 299H Educator to child ratios when educator or early childhood teacher absent for 5 minutes or less

Regulations 299I Access to or attendance of early childhood teacher absent for 5 minutes or less

Regulation 300 Educator to child ratios—children aged 15 months to 24 months

Regulation 301 Educator to child ratios – children aged over 24 months to 13 years

Regulation 304 Early childhood teacher – 60 or more children

Regulation 390 Resignation of early childhood teacher SA

Regulation 321 General requirements for educators – children over preschool age

Regulation 322 Educator to child ratios—disadvantaged preschools

Regulation 323 Educator to child ratios—preschool children at an education and care service

Regulation 324 Early childhood teachers—preschools

Regulation 325 Qualifications for family day care educators Regulation325A Educator to child ratios during short absence of educators

Regulation 332 Early childhood teacher – 60 or more but fewer than 81 children
Regulation 333 Early childhood teacher – more than 80 children

Regulation 334 Early childhood teachers-Preschools

Regulation 335 Qualifications for family day care educators

Tas

Regulation 342 Educator to child ratio – children preschool age and under who are 36 months of age or over

Regulation 342A Educator to child ratios during short absence of educators
Regulation 343 Qualifications for educators – preschools

Regulation 349 Early childhood teacher in attendance – 60 or more children
Regulation 392 Resignation of early childhood teacher

Vic

Regulation 356 Qualifications of educators – children over preschool age

Regulation 357 Educator to child ratio – children aged over 24 months but less than 36 months

Regulation 363 Early childhood teacher in attendance – 60 or more children

Regulation 364 Educational qualifications – centre-based services- saving of existing experience and qualification

Regulation 366 Qualifications for family day care educators – saving of existing experience and qualifications

WA

Regulation 369 Educator to child ratio – children over preschool age

Regulation 370 General qualification requirements for educators – children over preschool age

Regulation 372 Educator to child ratio – pre-kindergarten programme or kindergarten programme by a school

Regulation 373 Early childhood teachers—pre-kindergarten programme or kindergarten programme provided by a school

Regulation 379 Educators required to be early childhood teachers

Regulation 394 Resignation of early childhood teacher

What Element 4.1.1 aims to achieve

The organisation of educators across a service is a key factor in supporting all children to have opportunities to engage in meaningful learning and interactions with educators with whom they are familiar and comfortable. Carefully planned rosters support educators to be available and responsive to children, and support quality experiences and adequate supervision at all times when children are attending the service.

The National Regulations set educator-to-child ratios to ensure the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children while attending the service, including during excursions and incursions. The presence of adequate numbers of qualified and experienced educators has been consistently linked with quality interactions and positive learning experiences for children.

The National Regulations also set qualification requirements for co-ordinators in family day care services. Qualified and experienced co-ordinators train, support and monitor educators in their education and care role with children.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 4.1.1 (for all services)

Organisation of educators

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- how the organisation of educators throughout the day supports children's learning and development and ensures that educator-to-child ratios are maintained, including during administration and/or programming time

centre-based service

- that the numbers and ratio of educators rostered at the beginning and end of the day are:
  - » facilitating effective communication with families at drop off and pick up times
  - » supporting adequate supervision of children
  - » offering children meaningful opportunities to engage with educators while rooms are set up or packed away.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how staffing arrangements are managed to promote the participation of all children
- how the service communicates who is working each day to families and children

- how the service decides if it needs extra staff to support a child with additional requirements and how extra staff are orientated into the team to enable all educators to work together and build their skills and knowledge of inclusive practice to support all children
- how the service provides non-contact time to enable educators to undertake tasks such as:

centre-based service

  - » programming
  - » meeting with families
  - » meeting with inclusion support professionals
  - » networking with relevant organisations, such as other education and care services and local schools
- the service's approach to rostering educators across the day and week and what is considered when this is arranged

school age children

- the service's approach to rostering educators to support familiarity and continuity for children and families

family day care

- the service's approach to placing children with individual educators and what is considered during this process
- how the allocation of co-ordinators to individual educators supports children's learning and wellbeing
- the processes in place to assist families to access alternative care when their usual educator is unavailable.

sight ***Assessors may* sight:**

- rosters for nominated supervisors, co-ordinators, educators and other staff

school age children

- procedures and supporting documentation to assist relief educators to learn about the service's processes, routines, families and children

centre-based service

- staff rosters that demonstrate the service is meeting staffing requirements including that a first-aid-qualified staff member is on duty at all times

family day care

- staff records that demonstrate educators, co-ordinators and family day care educator assistants hold first aid qualifications
- records of co-ordinator qualifications.

ELEMENT 4.1.2
CONTINUITY OF STAFF

EVERY EFFORT IS MADE FOR CHILDREN TO EXPERIENCE CONTINUITY OF EDUCATORS AT THE SERVICE.

What Element 4.1.2 aims to achieve

Continuity of staff on a day-to-day basis and over time assists educators to build secure relationships with children and plays a significant role in promoting their learning and development. Educators who work closely with children each time they attend the service, understand each child's interests, strengths and areas where support may be needed. They are able to provide continuity of experiences to extend children's learning.

A service that values and proactively supports continuity of staff is better placed to attract and retain educators, which in turn benefits children and families. Consistent and committed educators support quality standards and continuity of care for children. It is important for the service to attract suitably qualified and experienced staff, and retain staff members who can best meet the needs of children and their families.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 4.1.2 (for all services)

Continuity of educators

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- children demonstrating their trust and comfort with educators by happily responding to them, having conversations and initiating interactions with them, and seeking their company
- educators, including relief educators, addressing children and families by name and demonstrating in these interactions that they are familiar with how the service operates.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- the processes the service has in place to recruit and retain staff
- how the service helps to build staff cohesion and pride in the service
- how the service celebrates educators' commitment to the service over time
- the educational leader's, educators' and co-ordinators' understanding of the importance of educator continuity for children's learning and wellbeing
- how the service uses exit data to contribute to the service's continuous improvement

- how the nominated supervisor and co-ordinators set individual performance and learning goals for educators and other staff
- how performance development processes provide educators with targeted feedback that supports continuity
- any incentives to enhance the retention/continuity of educators

centre-based service

- when choice is an option during recruitment, how the service determines the best fit with the existing team when appointing new staff
- what strategies the service uses to ensure a regular pool of relief educators is available to provide continuity for children
- how the service considers educators' experience, qualifications and how long they have been at the service when placing educators in particular rooms and age groups.

sight ***Assessors may* sight:**

- rosters and staffing arrangements that reflect the importance of educator continuity on a day-to-day basis
- exit data and documentation that provides information about the reasons for educators leaving the service.

EXCEEDING GUIDANCE FOR STANDARD 4.1
STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

Overview

The following guidance is provided to assist services and assessors to consider if practice for Standard 4.1 demonstrates the Exceeding themes at the level required for a rating of Exceeding NQS. The indicators provided are not exhaustive, and services may demonstrate Exceeding level practice for Standard 4.1 in a variety of ways that suit their particular operating environment and approach to practice.

Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 4.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- Educators, the educational leader, and co-ordinators demonstrate a deep understanding of the requirements of the standard, concepts and the component elements, and a commitment to high quality practice at all times.
- At all times, purposeful consideration is given to organisation of educators to ensure familiarity and continuity for children and a high quality learning and care environment.
- All educators and co-ordinators:
  - » are able to explain how the organisation and continuity of educators enhances children's wellbeing, learning and development; demonstrate awareness of how decisions are made about the organisation of educators across the service
  - » understand and implement effective processes to support organisation and continuity of educators to enable the establishment and maintenance of secure relationships with children.
- The observed and discussed approach to organisation and continuity of educators, including relief educators, consistently aligns with the service's philosophy, policies and procedures.

Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 4.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- The service's approach to organisation and continuity of educators:
  - » reflects robust debate, discussion, and opportunities for input by all educators, and is informed by critical reflection and past incidents
  - » is informed by the qualifications, strengths, priorities and professional development goals of educators
  - » is informed by current recognised guidance.

- Any change to the service's approach to organisation and continuity of educators is understood by all and implemented appropriately.
- The service team:
  - » reflects together on opportunities to further enhance children's wellbeing, learning and development through possible changes to the organisation of educators or improvement in staff continuity
  - » works together to implement agreed changes across the service where necessary.

Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 4.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- The organisation and continuity of educators:
  - » reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service
  - » welcomes, reflects and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service and, in particular, family input on ways to support familiarity and continuity of their child's learning and development at the service
- Opportunities for collaboration with family and community partners are built into the service's approach to organisation and continuity of educators.
- The service's approach to organisation and continuity of educators supports all children to participate fully in the service program at all times.

STANDARD 4.2
PROFESSIONALISM

MANAGEMENT, EDUCATORS AND STAFF ARE COLLABORATIVE, RESPECTFUL AND ETHICAL.

How Standard 4.2 contributes to quality education and care

Professionalism is demonstrated when management, educators and other staff develop and maintain relationships with each other that are based on the principles of mutual respect, equity and fairness. Team collaboration that is based on understanding the expectations and attitudes of team members, and build on the strength of each other's knowledge, help nurture constructive professional relationships. These relationships reduce the likelihood of misunderstanding and conflict. For more information see Early Childhood Australia's **Code of Ethics** (2016), a resource that guides the behavior of early childhood professionals.

When adults communicate effectively and respectfully with each other they promote a positive and calm atmosphere at the service, supporting children to feel safe and secure and contributing to the development of positive relationships between children and educators. Unresolved and poorly managed conflict between adults in the service affects morale and impacts on the provision of quality education and care to children.

Services support staff to act cohesively and ethically as a team and provide an environment that is conducive to children's learning and development. This may be reflected in the service's statement of philosophy (see **Element 7.1.1**).

Questions to guide reflection on practice for Standard 4.2 (for all services)

- How do we ensure that the service's statement of philosophy reflects the different views, beliefs and values of the team?
- How do we acknowledge the personal strengths, professional experiences and diversity that our colleagues bring to our work?
- What beliefs about relationships between management, educators, co-ordinators and other staff are reflected in our statement of philosophy?
- How do we promote professionalism, confidentiality and ethical conduct?
- What strategies have we developed to ensure information is appropriately shared between management and service staff?
- How do we use critical reflection to challenge our beliefs?
- How do we promote the personal and collective strengths of our team?
- How do we share the successes of our team with families?
- What opportunities do we provide for educators, co-ordinators and other staff to have conversations and discussions to further develop their skills, or to improve practice and relationships? How do we ensure that everyone's voice is heard and considered?

- What makes our service a positive place to work?
- What strategies do we use to find out how staff members feel about/within our team?
- How effective are the processes we have implemented to resolve any ethical issues that may arise?
- How regularly do we review Early Childhood Australia's **Code of Ethics** (2016) and our own service's code of conduct and service philosophy to ensure that our practices and policies align with current recognised approaches?

ELEMENT 4.2.1
PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION

MANAGEMENT, EDUCATORS AND STAFF WORK WITH MUTUAL RESPECT AND COLLABORATIVELY, AND CHALLENGE AND LEARN FROM EACH OTHER, RECOGNISING EACH OTHER'S STRENGTHS AND SKILLS.

What Element 4.2.1 aims to achieve

Professional collaboration involves working together cooperatively towards common goals. Collaboration is achieved through open communication, information sharing, joint planning and the development of common understandings and objectives (*Framework for School Age Care*, p.12).

In a collaborative environment, all staff are encouraged to respect and value the diverse contributions and viewpoints of their colleagues. Staff also share resources, provide constructive feedback, and work together respectfully and professionally to solve problems. Interactions between management, educators and staff are guided by Early Childhood Australia's **Code of Ethics** (2016), the service's code of conduct and the service philosophy. By collaborating effectively, service staff model successful working relationships for children.

A lively culture of professional inquiry is established when the educational leader, nominated supervisor, co-ordinators and educators are all contributing to continuous improvement at the service. In this setting, staff members can raise and debate issues including program quality, environment design, inclusion and equity, children's wellbeing and working with families (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 13; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 12). By drawing on each person's diverse perspectives, skills, experiences and background, these discussions enhance the team and provide opportunities for educators to revise their practice and implement strategies for improvement. These discussions also provide educators with an opportunity to develop a shared understanding of how children learn and their role in supporting this, contributing to more effective and responsive programs for children.

Updating and maintaining educators' knowledge is a joint responsibility of management and educators. This can be achieved through providing a range of professional development strategies that challenge and extend current thinking.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 4.2.1 (for all services)

Developing a culture of professional collaboration, recognition and continuous improvement

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- positive working relationships within the service and an atmosphere of openness

- new educators, co-ordinators and staff members being supported by other team members
- educators, co-ordinators and staff members using strategies that assist casual and relief educators to feel a sense of belonging to the team and service
- information about current recognised approaches and research on education and care is shared among management, educators and staff members
- educators sharing their knowledge and discussing and reflecting on the needs of particular children and families
- educators, co-ordinators and staff members:
  - » sharing tasks and responsibilities
  - » offering assistance to each other
  - » responding promptly to support other team members in difficult situations
- the educational leader, nominated supervisor, co-ordinators and educators:
  - » working collaboratively to affirm and challenge their practice through supportive relationships with their colleagues
  - » discussing and adopting inclusive practices and strategies that best support each child
  - » demonstrating a commitment to learn more, regardless of their experience and current knowledge and skills.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- the service's approach to using particular strengths, talents and interests of individual educators
- how educators acknowledge each other's strengths and diverse knowledge and skills
- how the educational leader, nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators openly reflect on all aspects of the service as a team
- whether the service has regular team meetings, or similar opportunities, that include a cycle of inquiry that collaboratively affirms, challenges, supports and provides opportunities for educators and staff members to learn from each other, share new information and further develop the team's skills
- how educators and staff members are encouraged to support and mentor each other
- how the approved provider, educational leader, nominated supervisor, co-ordinators and educators demonstrate that they are open to change and new possibilities

- how the service ensures that all interactions, including grievance procedures, convey mutual respect, equity and recognition of each other's strengths and skills

centre-based care

- the strategies the service has in place to facilitate communication and reflection between educators.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- evidence recorded in staff meeting minutes or reflective journals that demonstrates that the educational leader, nominated supervisor, co-ordinators and educators are engaging with their colleagues to reflect on practice, explore new possibilities and record outcomes that have resulted in improved practice so that children and families benefit
- documented examples of projects or teamwork that recognises and builds on the diverse skills, knowledge and strengths of the team.

ELEMENT 4.2.2
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS GUIDE PRACTICE, INTERACTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS.

What Element 4.2.2 aims to achieve

The approved provider and service staff should use professional standards and ethical principles to guide professional conduct in decision-making and practice. The approved provider must provide clear guidance to all staff about their responsibilities in relation to one another and to the families and children using the service.

The approved provider should also ensure that all staff know and understand the requirements of the National Quality Framework including the National Law, National Regulations, the National Quality Standard, the approved learning frameworks, Early Childhood Australia's **Code of Ethics** (2016), as well as the services' philosophy, policies and procedures.

It is important that educators and service staff are aware that their attitudes, values and beliefs impact their work. Educators can benefit from working with each other, the educational leader and their supervisor or co-ordinator to identify where biases may have informed their values, and minimise the impact of bias in their practice and relationships with children, families, colleagues and the local community.

When all educators understand what is guiding their practice and why, educators can make improvements to their practice and enhance outcomes for children.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 4.2.2 (for all services)

Professional conduct

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- service staff demonstrating:
  - » care, empathy and respect for children, colleagues and families in their everyday practice
  - » professional conduct in interactions and relationships with children, colleagues, families and members of the community
- the educational leader, nominated supervisor, co-ordinators and educators taking responsibility for:
  - » working in ways that meet the requirements of the National Quality Framework
  - » implementing the approved learning frameworks.

discuss ***Assessors may* discuss:**

- the ways in which service staff access copies of:
  - » the **National Quality Standard**, **National Regulations** and **Guide to the National Quality Framework**
  - » the approved learning frameworks and associated guides to the frameworks
  - » Early Childhood Australia's **Code of Ethics** (2016)
  - » the service's statement of philosophy
  - » the service's policies and procedures
  - » the service's staff handbook and code of conduct
  - » other relevant professional publications
- how the service uses these documents to maintain quality standards and professional conduct
- how up-to-date information is communicated to educators (for example, service/employer information and changes or updates that impact on practice and regulatory compliance)
- strategies used to bring Early Childhood Australia's **Code of Ethics** (2016) to the attention of all staff and how is it used to guide professional conversations about day-to-day practice at the service
- how the educational leader, nominated supervisor, co-ordinators and educators use professional standards and knowledge of current recognised approaches to guide their everyday work and to meet the requirements of the National Quality Framework
- how educators recognise and minimise the impact of personal biases on their practice and relationships with children, families, colleagues and the local community
- inclusion and what it means to educators, children and families
- where information can be found to assist staff to resolve differences.

sight ***Assessors may* sight:**

- the service's code of conduct and Early Childhood Australia's **Code of Ethics** (2016) are accessible to educators and staff members, and are displayed and made available to families
- a handbook or resources for new and existing service staff that includes:
  - » the statement of philosophy
  - » position descriptions
  - » professional standards and/or code of conduct.

EXCEEDING GUIDANCE FOR STANDARD 4.2
PROFESSIONALISM

Overview

The following guidance is provided to assist services and assessors to consider if practice for Standard 4.2 demonstrates the Exceeding themes at the level required for a rating of Exceeding NQS. The indicators provided are not exhaustive, and services may demonstrate Exceeding level practice for Standard 4.2 in a variety of ways that suit their particular operating environment and approach to practice.

Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 4.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- Educators, the educational leader, and the co-ordinator demonstrate a deep understanding of the requirements of the standard, concept and the component elements, and a commitment to high quality practice at all times.
- All interactions between educators and others in the service community are respectful and promote a positive atmosphere within the service.
- All educators show a willingness to share information or ask for assistance from others and acknowledge the strengths and skills of others.
- All members of the service team consistently demonstrate a high level of collaboration, affirming, challenging, supporting and learning from each other.
- The observed and discussed approach to professional collaboration and standards:
  - » consistently aligns with the approach described in the service's chosen code of conduct and code of ethics
  - » consistently aligns with the service's philosophy, policies and procedures.

Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 4.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- The service's approach to professional collaboration and standards:
  - » reflects robust debate, discussion, and opportunities for input by all educators, and is informed by critical reflection and past incidents
  - » enables and promotes regular opportunities for all members of the service team, with special consideration to support newly inducted educators, to work collaboratively and to share and learn from each other's existing and developing strengths and skills
  - » is informed by current recognised guidance and the service's chosen code of conduct and code of ethics

- The service team reflects together:
  - on the role and application of professional ethics and standards across the service
  - on ethical issues that arise in the service
  - to consistently identify and implement opportunities to strengthen ethical practice.
- Educators reflect collaboratively on pedagogical knowledge and curriculum delivery.
- Educator's discussions and notes demonstrate:
  - self-awareness of the ethical and professional standards underpinning their own practice
  - ongoing reflection on opportunities for improvement.
- Decision-making processes are informed by professional standards, including the service's chosen code of conduct and code of ethics.
- Changes to the application of professional standards within the service, including the chosen code of conduct and code of ethics, are clearly understood by all.

Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 4.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- The approach to professional collaboration and standards:
  - reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service;
  - welcomes, reflects and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service.
- All members of the service team recognise diversity as a strength and work together to promote a culture of inclusiveness and sense of belonging for all children, families and the community, including cultivating a deep respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.
- All members of the service team consistently identify and implement culturally sensitive ways to communicate, support and engage with families.
- Decision-making and problem-solving in regard to ethical issues that emerge within the service environment are informed by the voices of families and the community.
- Educators build relationships with families and members of the community that include the exchange of ideas and best practice.

QUALITY AREA 5
RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN

Overview

Quality Area 5 of the National Quality Standard focuses on educators developing responsive, warm, trusting and respectful relationships with children that promote their wellbeing, self-esteem, sense of security and belonging. Relationships of this kind encourage children to explore the environment and engage in play and learning.

All children need a sense of connection with others to support the development of their identity and social and emotional competence. From birth, children begin to explore how the social world works. Exploring and learning to socialise appropriately with others, and to manage feelings, behaviours and responsibilities is a complex process. When educational leaders, co-ordinators and educators take a positive, strengths-based approach to guiding children's behaviour, they ultimately empower children to regulate their own behaviour and develop the skills needed to interact and negotiate effectively with others.

Relationships with peers take on increasing importance for older children. Supportive relationships with educators enables older children to develop confidence in their ability to express themselves, work through differences, engage in new experiences and take calculated risks.

Standards, elements and concepts

Quality Area 5 has two standards that focus on relationships between educators and children, and between children and their peers. These standards are crucial to delivering quality outcomes for children under the National Quality Framework because supportive and respectful relationships enable children to:

- develop their confidence and a strong sense of identity
- develop effective communication skills and the ability to express themselves effectively
- participate in collaborative learning and build meaningful relationships with others
- regulate their own behaviour and learn to negotiate complex social situations and relationships.

Standard/ Elements	Concept	Descriptor
QA5		**Relationships with children**
5.1	Relationships between educators and children	Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.
5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
5.1.2	Dignity and rights of the child	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.
5.2	Relationships between children	Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.
5.2.1	Collaborative learning	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other.
5.2.2	Self-regulation	Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.

STANDARD 5.1
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EDUCATORS AND CHILDREN

RESPECTFUL AND EQUITABLE RELATIONSHIPS ARE MAINTAINED WITH EACH CHILD.

How Standard 5.1 contributes to quality education and care

When children experience nurturing and respectful reciprocal relationships with educators, they develop an understanding of themselves as competent, capable and respected. Consistent emotional support contributes to children developing a strong sense of wellbeing and belonging. Relationships are the foundation for the construction of identity, and help shape children's thinking about who they are, how they belong and what influences them (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 20; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 19).

Constructive everyday interactions and shared learning opportunities form the basis of equitable, respectful and reciprocal relationships between educators and children. Educators who are actively engaged in children's learning and share decision-making with them, use their everyday interactions during play, routines and ongoing projects to stimulate children's thinking and to enrich their learning.

These relationships provide a solid foundation from which to guide and support children as they develop the self-confidence and skills to manage their own behaviour, make decisions and relate positively and effectively to others.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for Standard 5.1 (for all services)

Positive relationships

- How do we build close, secure relationships with children of all ages, abilities, genders and backgrounds?
- How do we ensure children feel that they belong and are included in the service, can participate in all learning experiences, and that their contributions are appreciated and recognised?
- How do we learn about individual children's non-verbal cues and communication strategies, and the specific communication requirements of each child? How do we cater for and help each child to reach their potential?
- How do we promote children's social and emotional competence?
- How do we identify and overcome potential barriers to inclusion at the service so that each child's participation is supported?
- How do we respectfully engage in children's play? What roles do we play?
- How do we deliberately, purposefully and thoughtfully interact with children to support their learning?

- What strategies and techniques do we use to extend and build on children's comments and conversations?
- How do we respond to the distress some children experience when they have to adapt to unfamiliar routines, new people and new places?
- How do we respond sensitively and appropriately to all children's efforts to communicate?

family day care

- How do we respond in a fair and consistent way to our own children and to the children who attend the service?

Dignity and rights of every child

- How do we consider the rights of every child when planning and implementing the program?
- How do we encourage all children to understand their rights and the rights of others?
- How do our service's policies and procedures support each child's dignity and rights?
- How do we identify and minimise the impact of our own biases on our practices and relationships with children and families? How are children's rights considered in these reflections?

ELEMENT 5.1.1
POSITIVE EDUCATOR TO CHILD INTERACTIONS

RESPONSIVE AND MEANINGFUL INTERACTIONS BUILD TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS WHICH ENGAGE AND SUPPORT EACH CHILD TO FEEL SECURE, CONFIDENT AND INCLUDED.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 5.1.1

Section 166 Offence to use inappropriate discipline

Regulation 155 Interactions with children

What Element 5.1.1 aims to achieve

Positive interactions between educators and children involve educators viewing each child as capable and competent, with a right to a voice and able to contribute to decisions that affect them. This enables educators to focus their education and care practices on children's strengths and inclusion in the group environment.

Educators who are responsive to children's thoughts and feelings are supporting them to develop a strong sense of wellbeing. By interacting positively and meaningfully with children, educators help children to feel accepted and to develop a sense of attachment and trust. Children who are supported to understand themselves experience a sense of belonging that fosters self-esteem. Self-esteem contributes to the development of identity and is critical to children's capacity to understand their own strengths, abilities and interests. When children feel safe, secure and supported, they develop confidence to explore and learn (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 20; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 19).

Positive and responsive one-on-one interactions, especially with children under three years old, are important to children's wellbeing and their future development. Secure relationships with educators encourage children under three years to thrive, and provides them with a secure base for exploration and learning. As children grow and develop they continue to rely on secure, trusting and respectful relationships with the adults in their lives.

Mutually supportive relationships are important for school age children. Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships are key to establishing a positive and trusting community in school age care settings, and enable children to develop their independence, leadership and social skills, and a strong sense of identity (*Framework for School Age Care*, p. 10).

Assessment guide for meeting Element 5.1.1 (for all services)

Building trusting relationships

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- educators:
  - » sitting and engaging in relaxed and unhurried two way conversations with children, particularly at mealtimes
  - » assisting new children to settle into the program by talking with them or their families about their interests
  - » responding openly, positively and respectfully to children's comments, questions and requests for assistance
  - » engaging with children in conversations throughout the day or session, talking about what is happening around them and what they are learning
  - » engaging in sustained conversations with each child about their individual interests
  - » showing enthusiasm and respect when interacting with all children and their families
  - » comforting children who cry or show other signs of distress
  - » responding positively to the varying abilities, individual strengths and confidence of all children, and facilitating their involvement in the service
  - » acknowledging children's efforts and achievements and supporting children to experience success
  - » adjusting and tailoring their interactions to best support the differing ages and capabilities of children attending the service
  - » demonstrating that they know each child well and have developed a unique, reciprocal relationship with each child
  - » actively supporting the maintenance of each child's home language where interactions with the family supports this approach
  - » respectfully participating in children's play and using children's cues to guide their level and type of involvement
  - » modelling reasoning, predicting, reflective processes and appropriate language
  - » collaborating with children about routines and experiences and providing opportunities for them to make decisions and choices
- using appropriate techniques, such as sign language and other resources and tools, to support communication with all children

birth to three

- talking with children about what is about to happen during routines and transitions
- encouraging 'turn taking' communication by responding and adding to interactions initiated by children
- responding to children when they practice and play with language, by repeating the words, sounds and gestures that children use
- describing objects and events as the children participate in play

school age children

- respectfully stepping into and out of children's play, to support children's decision-making
- setting up learning environments which support children to learn independently
- providing opportunities for children to develop relationships by teaching others

family day care

- co-ordinators:
  - » supporting educators' relationships with children during home visits and playgroups by sharing their expertise and professional experience
  - » developing respectful relationships with children
- children:
  - » demonstrating a sense of belonging, security and comfort in the environment
  - » communicating their need for comfort and assistance
  - » initiating conversations with educators about their experiences inside and outside the service
  - » confidently expressing ideas and feelings and sharing humour with educators
  - » asking educators for assistance when they engage in new experiences, take on new challenges and try to complete tasks independently

birth to three

- » being supported to build secure attachments with one educator initially and then other educators in the environment
- » using a favourite toy, photograph or comfort item brought from home to help them settle and feel secure in the service (adapted from the *Early Years Learning Framework*, pp. 21, 26; and the *Framework for School Age Care*, pp. 20, 22).
- an atmosphere that is relaxed and positive where children are engaged in experiences that interest them
- an environment that reflects the lives of the children, their families and the local community
- practices and routines that observe children and their family and community contexts
- group sizes and staffing practices that:
  - » support the establishment of secure relationships between educators and children
  - » support children settling into the service each day
  - » meet each child's requirements throughout the day
  - » facilitate effective daily communication with families

birth to three

- predictable and respectful personal-care routines that are enjoyable experiences for children and that enrich their learning
- many opportunities for children to experience relaxed physical contact and one-to-one interactions with familiar educators.

discuss ***Assessors may* discuss:**

- ways in which nominated supervisors, co-ordinators and educators learn more about the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child-rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families using the service
- strategies used to respond to each child's preferences and assist all children to develop a sense of security, belonging and confidence in the service
- how plans for the inclusion of children with additional needs are shared and communicated with educators and staff members
- the ways in which children's cues are used to guide the level and type of adult involvement in children's play
- how children are encouraged to share their stories and ideas
- how routines and everyday experiences are guided by children and used to support their learning, based on children's preferences and the dynamics of the day
- the ways in which educators use information gained from their observations and interactions with children to extend children's thinking and learning
- how educators use their interactions with children to support the maintenance of home languages and learning English as an additional language, following communication with families

birth to three

- how staffing, group arrangements and the environment support children to feel secure and relaxed at the service

centre-based service

- how rosters are planned to promote continuity of, and enhance, relationships with children and families.

sight ***Assessors may* sight:**

- examples of information gathered from:
  - families to support their child during the settling-in process
  - other professionals or support agencies that work with children, including children who require additional support and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- the service's approach to equity and inclusion, documented in the statement of philosophy
- plans for the inclusion of children who require additional support
- evidence that educators and co-ordinators draw on the diverse knowledge, experiences and views of their colleagues when reviewing their teaching strategies and experiences planned for children, to ensure that all children have opportunities to achieve learning outcomes

- evidence of planned and spontaneous experiences and routines where educators support the engagement of individual children and groups of children in experiences of their own choosing
- documentation of children's learning that shows evidence that educators' interactions with children are used to support children's developing ideas, skills and relationships.

ELEMENT 5.1.2
DIGNITY AND RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

THE DIGNITY AND RIGHTS OF EVERY CHILD ARE MAINTAINED.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 5.1.2

Section 166 Offence to use inappropriate discipline

Regulation 155 Interactions with children

What Element 5.1.2 aims to achieve

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations founded on respect for the dignity and worth of each child, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, origins, wealth, birth status or ability.

By agreeing to undertake the obligations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Australia has committed to protecting and ensuring children's rights. This includes Article 19 of the convention, which states that children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 5.1.2 (for all services)

Dignity and rights of children

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- spaces, resources and routines arranged to minimise times when children are likely to experience stress or frustration or made to wait unnecessarily
- children:
  - » supported to make choices and to experience the consequences of these where there is no risk of harm to themselves or another person
  - » being acknowledged when they make positive choices in managing their own behavior

school age children

  - » having independence and increased autonomy in recognition of their growing maturity and ability to take responsibility for their own behavior
- educators:
  - » pre-empting potential conflicts or challenging behaviours by monitoring children's play and supporting interactions

- using positive language, gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice when redirecting or discussing children's behaviour with them
- responding promptly to children's disruptive behaviour by acknowledging their feelings, spending time with them and suggesting alternative ways of responding
- being patient, gentle, calm and reassuring even when children strongly express distress, frustration or anger
- talking to children about the importance of empathy, treating others equally and celebrating differences
- encouraging each child's sense of identity
- supporting children to treat each other with dignity and respect in their interactions
- using diverse resources to celebrate different cultures and backgrounds
- modelling and encouraging children to identify and challenge discrimination when they observe inappropriate behavior, or hear inappropriate comments
- respectfully considering information received from families, other professionals and resource agencies and responding appropriately to support the rights of children
- encouraging children to reflect on and consider the impact of their behaviour
- guiding all children's behaviour in ways that:
  - are focused on supporting children to develop skills to self-regulate
  - preserve and promote children's self-esteem and confidence

birth to three

- speaking in comforting tones and holding babies to soothe them when they are crying
- using distraction and redirection techniques when children want the same toy or are distressed
- responding positively to children's exploratory behavior

school age children

- taking action if bullying occurs, according to the service's policies and procedures such as anti-bullying, interactions with children or behaviour guidance policies

family day care

- responding to their own children's behaviour and the behaviour of children using the service in a fair and consistent way.

discuss ***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how the service celebrates diversity, including:

- supporting each child's sense of identity
- guiding children's understanding of cultural diversity
- how the service communicates its culturally diverse practices with families

- how the service maintains an environment of cultural inclusion and supports educators' cultural competence
- how educators reflect on the equity and rights of each child, in particular how their own practice and behavior may affect individual children
- how educators reflect on, identify and minimise the impact of their own biases on their practices and relationships with children and families

birth to three

- how the service manages situations such as when children bite, including communication with families

school age children

- whether services located in schools have regard to the school's approach to guiding behaviour, and how the service and the school cooperate to maintain the rights of children in a recreation and leisure program.

sight ***Assessors may* sight:**

- documentation that shows that diverse views, including family backgrounds and values, are considered in planning and programming for each child
- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child displayed
- documented reflections on children's experiences at the service including whether all children's rights are being upheld.

EXCEEDING GUIDANCE FOR STANDARD 5.1
RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN

Overview

The following guidance is provided to assist services and assessors to consider if practice for Standard 5.1 demonstrates the Exceeding themes at the level required for a rating of Exceeding NQS. The indicators provided are not exhaustive, and services may demonstrate Exceeding level practice for Standard 5.1 in a variety of ways that suit their particular operating environment and approach to practice.

Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 5.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- Educators, the educational leader, and the co-ordinator demonstrate a deep understanding of the requirements of the standard, concepts and the component elements, and a commitment to high quality practice at all times.
- Each educator's practice reflects a deep commitment to building and maintaining respectful and equitable relationships with each child.
- At all times, interactions between educators and children across the service:
  - » support each child to feel secure, confident, and included
  - » maintain each child's dignity and rights.
- All educators are able to explain how their relationships with children are guided by an understanding of and commitment to:
  - » building trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included
  - » respecting the dignity and worth of each child
  - » protecting and ensuring children's rights.
- The observed and discussed approach to relationships between educators and children:
  - » consistently aligns with the principles and practices of the approved learning framework/s
  - » consistently aligns with the service's philosophy, policies and procedures.

Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 5.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- The service's approach to relationships between educators and children:
  - » reflects robust debate, discussion, and opportunities for input by all educators, and is informed by critical reflection and past incidents
  - » is informed by current recognised guidance.

- Any change to the service's approach to relationships between educators and children is understood by all and implemented appropriately.
- All educators:
  - systematically reflect on their interactions with children across the service and on opportunities to further enhance children's lifelong learning and sense of belonging within the service and the child's world
  - demonstrate self-awareness and are purposeful in the consideration of the theoretical perspectives that influence their pedagogy and the practice across the service.
- The service team reflect together to:
  - consider the social justice and equity implications of educators' approaches to relationships with children to ensure interactions support the dignity, rights, cultures and best interests of all children, including children who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
  - challenge stereotypes and biases in promoting and maintaining a culture of inclusiveness
  - engage in robust debate and discussion in which personal, professional and organisational values that influence relationships between educators and children are identified and discussed.

Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 5.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- The service's approach to building and maintaining respectful and equitable relationships with each child:
  - reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service
  - welcomes, reflects and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service
  - contributes to a culture of inclusiveness and sense of belonging for children and families at the service
  - is strengthened by meaningful relationships with families and the community
  - seeks, values and considers family input to inform 'Interactions with Children' policy and practice.

STANDARD 5.2
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHILDREN

EACH CHILD IS SUPPORTED TO BUILD AND MAINTAIN SENSITIVE AND RESPONSIVE RELATIONSHIPS.

How Standard 5.2 contributes to quality education and care

When educators create supportive environments in which children experience mutually enjoyable, caring and respectful relationships, children respond accordingly (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 25; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 24). Positive relationships provide children with the confidence and agency to explore and learn about their world. As their relationships become more complex and far-reaching over time, children's interactions with others also help them to extend their knowledge, thinking and ability to apply what they already know in new and unfamiliar contexts. Developing effective relationships with others is a key part of children's social development and these relationships also provide a base for children's learning.

An important aspect of children's 'belonging, being and becoming' involves them learning how their behaviours and actions affect themselves and others. By learning how to make sensible choices about their behaviour, children develop the skills to regulate their actions independently and understand the benefits of positive behaviour. When children have opportunities to contribute to decisions and participate collaboratively with others in everyday settings, they learn to live interdependently and make informed choices (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 25; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 24). The service should ensure that all children are supported to develop the skills, dispositions and understandings they need to interact sensitively and empathetically with others.

Educators and co-ordinators can assist by developing:

- positive and respectful strategies for guiding children's behavior, and helping children to negotiate their requests with others
- strategies that demonstrate respect and understanding of individual children when they strive to recognise and understand why each child may behave in a certain way, or why behavior may occur in particular circumstances or at specific times of the day.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for Standard 5.2 (for all services)

Supporting sensitive and responsive relationships

- How do we support children to form and maintain positive relationships with others?
- How is a culture of respect, equity and fairness encouraged in the service? How is this communicated to educators, children and families?
- How do we model positive and respectful relationships for children?
- How do we support children's development and understanding of respectful relationships?

- How do we ensure that the physical environment, program and routines are conducive to the development and maintenance of children's interpersonal relationships?
- How do we promote a sense of community within the service?

family day care

- How do we foster positive relationships between members of the educator's family and the children being educated and cared for?

Collaborative learning

- How do we plan the program and routines to ensure adequate time for children to engage in uninterrupted play experiences and projects of their own choosing, with a variety of peers and adults?
- How do educators plan and create opportunities for children to collaborate with others to progress their learning?

Guiding children's behaviour

- How do we support individual children to engage with others in ways that are appropriate for each child's development?
- How do we ensure that our policies regarding interactions with children and behaviour guidance reflect current information about child development and current recognised approaches in guiding young children's behaviour?
- How do we reflect on our own experiences, beliefs and attitudes that may influence the way in which we guide children's behaviour?
- How do we support children to recognise their own emotions and those of others?
- What opportunities do children have to make decisions about rules, expectations and consequences in relation to their own and others' behaviour?
- How do we manage situations where we experience challenges in guiding the behaviour of a child or a group of children?
- How do we work with families, other professionals and support agencies to ensure that behaviour guidance strategies maintain the rights of each child to be included in the environment and program at all times? How are different expectations managed?

school age children

- How do we meet older children's needs for independence and greater freedom?
- How do we ensure a consistent approach to guiding children's behaviour between schools and the service as well as meeting the rights of children in a recreation and leisure program?

family day care

- How do we support educators when they are feeling stressed by, or are having difficulty coping with, a child's behaviour?

ELEMENT 5.2.1
COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

CHILDREN ARE SUPPORTED TO COLLABORATE, LEARN FROM AND HELP EACH OTHER.

What Element 5.2.1 aims to achieve

Services provide a range of opportunities for children to learn how to work with others collaboratively and effectively, including through play experiences. Educators can support children to learn about and experience cooperation by modelling cooperative behaviour themselves and acknowledging cooperation when it occurs. As children develop their social skills, educators provide time and space for children to engage in collaborative experiences. These enjoyable experiences help children to learn about their responsibilities to others and to appreciate their connectedness and interdependence as learners. They learn to balance their own needs and wants with those of other children. By nurturing respectful and reciprocal relationships among children, educators support children to value collaboration and teamwork.

School age care settings are places for children to learn more about themselves, others and the world as they increasingly cooperate and work collaboratively with others. By encouraging children's active involvement in learning experiences, children learn to explore and solve problems and develop greater capacity for independence and collaboration. Older children can challenge and extend their own thinking, and that of others, and create new knowledge in collaborative interactions and negotiations with peers. By exchanging ideas and collaborating with others, older children can also learn life and social skills, such as conflict resolution and negotiation skills.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 5.2.1 (for all services)

Supporting cooperation and collaboration

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- children:
  - » participating in play and showing awareness and interest in others
  - » developing friendships as part of a small group
  - » engaging in enjoyable interactions with their peers, contributing to shared play experiences, and responding positively to ideas and suggestions from others
  - » engaged in experiences that support them in establishing and maintaining relationships with children of various ages, genders, cultures and capabilities
  - » engaged in ongoing collaborative projects they have initiated that involve research, planning, problem-solving and shared decision-making

- engaged in activities that may benefit others (such as helping re-set experiences or setting the table for a meal)
- showing kindness and compassion towards their peers
- negotiating roles and relationships in play and leisure experiences
- spending time with their peers

family day care

- experiencing friendly and genuine interactions with members of the educator's family (*Early Years Learning Framework*, pp. 21–26; *Framework for School Age Care*, pp. 20–24).

- educators:
  - supporting children's progress through different stages of play, to help them gain confidence in interacting with their peers
  - modelling collaborative behaviour through their interactions with children and colleagues, to help children to initiate interactions and join in play and social experiences with their peers
  - respectfully and thoughtfully engaging in children's group play and projects
  - supporting children to understand or communicate with each other
  - planning experiences that encourage children to work together to achieve success
  - allocating time for relaxed, unhurried experiences that enable children to collaborate and direct their own learning together
  - creating opportunities for peer scaffolding in small and large group play
  - asking follow-up questions to extend children's learning in group situations
  - promoting a sense of community in the service
  - providing opportunities and resources for children to assume leadership roles and direct play experiences with their peers
  - acknowledging older children's complex relationships and sensitively intervening in ways that promote social inclusion

school age children

- implementing mentoring programs within the service to connect older children with younger children
- providing grouping opportunities related to children's interests

family day care

- supporting, in a fair and consistent way, collaboration and teamwork between the children at the service and their own children.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how staffing and grouping arrangements support positive relationships between children
- how educators support and promote children's interpersonal relationships
- how educators support inclusion of children from diverse backgrounds and capabilities in collaborative play, projects and experiences with others

- how educators learn about children's shared interests and how they use this information to plan further learning opportunities

school age children

- opportunities provided for children to take on leadership roles within the service
- how educators broaden children's perspectives and encourage an appreciation of diverse views and ideas within the group
- how educators differentiate the curriculum to engage children in collaborative learning experiences when they differ in knowledge and skills

family day care

- how educators provide opportunities for children to experience a variety of group settings
- how the service addresses and communicates the role that educators' family members may play in the service.

sight ***Assessors may* sight:**

- the service's policy on interactions with children and behaviour guidance
- evidence that:
  - » the program and routines include regular opportunities for children to engage in social play and collaborative experiences
  - » educators identify children's shared interests and use this information to plan further collaborative learning opportunities

school age children

- » the program includes collaborative and challenging learning experiences that are responsive to children's interests

family day care

- guidelines about the role of educators' families in the provision of family day care
- documented plans for children to spend time in group experiences with children of similar ages and other educators.

ELEMENT 5.2.2
SELF-REGULATION

EACH CHILD IS SUPPORTED TO REGULATE THEIR OWN BEHAVIOUR, RESPOND APPROPRIATELY TO THE BEHAVIOUR OF OTHERS AND COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 5.2.2

Section 166 Offence to use inappropriate discipline

Regulation 155 Interactions with children

Regulation 156 Relationships in groups

What Element 5.2.2 aims to achieve

Self-regulation becomes increasingly important as children move through childhood. They become more mindful of the way others interact with them, and at the same time develop understandings of how their actions affect the way others feel and behave. Educators work with young children to promote and model positive ways to relate to others. This includes role modelling and supporting children to convey and construct messages with purpose and confidence, for example when expressing needs, resolving conflict or responding to the behavior of others.

School age care educators actively support the inclusion of all children in play, help children to recognise when play is unfair, and offer constructive ways to build a caring, fair and inclusive learning community.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 5.2.2 (for all services)

Relating positively with others

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- children:
  - » engaging in cooperative, helping behaviour
  - » exploring different identities and points of view in dramatic play
  - » challenging other children's behaviour when it is disrespectful or unfair
  - » expressing their feelings and responses to others' behaviours confidently and constructively
  - » being supported to communicate effectively to resolve disagreements with others
- educators and co-ordinators:
  - » implementing planned and spontaneous discussions about emotions, feelings and issues of inclusion and exclusion, fair and unfair behaviour, bias and prejudice

- » modelling respectful behaviour and providing supportive language to enable children to vocalise their concerns
- » encouraging children to listen to other children's ideas, consider alternative behaviours and solve problems together
- » talking with children about the outcomes of their actions, and the rules and reasons for these
- » planning and implementing strategies to support individual children's behaviour
- » discussing with and supporting children to identify their feelings, and providing a safe place for them to explore calming strategies
- » listening empathetically to children when they express their emotions, acknowledging their feelings and reassuring children that it is normal to experience positive and negative emotions at times
- » supporting children to negotiate their rights in relation to the rights of others and intervening sensitively when children experience difficulty in resolving a disagreement

family day care

- educators and members of their family modelling positive, socially acceptable behaviour and language.

discuss

Assessors may* discuss *how:

- educators:
  - » learn about and support individual children's relationships with other children
  - » help children to understand that others may not always wish to play with them
  - » use their knowledge of individual children's personalities and friendship preferences to support children to manage their own behaviour and develop an understanding of the feelings of others
  - » encourage positive behaviour in children, and support them to understand the expectations for their behaviour and the consequences of inappropriate behaviours
  - » support children when they are trying to negotiate and resolve conflicts with others
  - » support children to negotiate and share ownership of acceptable behaviours as a group
  - » work with families and other professionals to appropriately support each child's emotional and social learning
- service staff work with each child's family and, where applicable, their school, to ensure an inclusive and consistent approach is used to support all children to regulate their behavior and communicate effectively

- the nominated supervisors, co-ordinators and educators manage situations in which:
  - » families have different views and expectations compared to those of the service about guiding children's behaviour
  - » a child may benefit from more support in managing their behaviour
- the educational leader supports educators to enhance their skills and knowledge to positively guide children's behaviour
- the service positively influences educators' views and beliefs around children's behaviour, with a focus on all children being supported when they are distressed

school age children

- the nominated supervisors, co-ordinators and educators guide children's behaviour in ways that have regard to those followed in the school/s children attend, while maintaining the rights of children in a recreation and leisure program
- children are supported to develop skills to identify and report inappropriate behaviours such as bullying (including cyber bullying) and social exclusion.

sight ***Assessors may* sight:**

- the service's policies and procedures on interactions with children and behaviour guidance
- evidence of:
  - » planned and spontaneous experiences that support children to develop and practise the skills required to participate in group discussions and negotiate shared decision-making with their peers
  - » collaboration with schools, other professionals or support agencies that work with children who have diagnosed behavioural or social difficulties
- examples of information gathered from families about their children's social skills and relationship preferences
- documented communication with families that shows their views, ideas and preferences have been considered when planning appropriate strategies to support their child's positive inclusion in the program
- the service's policy on interactions with children that outlines a clear process for guiding children's behaviour, based on current recognised approaches and with a focus on children's rights
- individual behaviour guidance plans for children, including evidence of consultation with their families and if appropriate, input and suggestions from other professionals and support agencies.

EXCEEDING GUIDANCE FOR STANDARD 5.2 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHILDREN

Overview

The following guidance is provided to assist services and assessors to consider if practice for Standard 5.2 demonstrates the Exceeding themes at the level required for a rating of Exceeding NQS. The indicators provided are not exhaustive, and services may demonstrate Exceeding level practice for Standard 5.2 in a variety of ways that suit their particular operating environment and approach to practice.

Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 5.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- Educators, the educational leader, and the co-ordinator demonstrate a deep understanding of the requirements of the standard, concepts and the component elements, and a commitment to high quality practice at all times
- All educators:
  - » confidently and effectively facilitate cooperative and collaborative learning opportunities, in appropriate group sizes, to ensure that every child is consistently supported to collaborate, learn from and help others;
  - » demonstrate a consistent approach to behaviour guidance to ensure that each child is supported at all times to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others, and communicate effectively to resolve conflict.
- All educators are able to explain how their support of children to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships is guided by an understanding of and commitment to:
  - » creating supportive environments that enable children to collaborate, learn from and help each other;
  - » supporting each child to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.
- The observed and discussed approach to supporting children to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships:
  - » consistently aligns with the principles and practices of the approved learning framework/s;
  - » consistently aligns with the service's philosophy, policies, and procedures, including the behaviour management/guidance strategy.

Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 5.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- The service's approach to supporting children to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships:
  - » reflects robust debate, discussion, and opportunities for input by all educators, and is informed by critical reflection and past incidents;
  - » enables the identification and implementation of opportunities to strengthen practice;
  - » is informed by current recognised guidance.
- Any change to the service's approach to supporting children to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships is understood by all and implemented appropriately.
- Educators demonstrate self-awareness of the theoretical perspectives that influence their pedagogy, and the practice across the service, and show that they are committed to continuous improvement
- The service team reflect together to:
  - » consider the social justice and equity implications of educators' approaches to facilitating ative and collaborative learning opportunities and behaviour guidance;
  - » engage in robust debate and discussion in which personal, professional and organisational values that support children to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships are identified and discussed.

Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 5.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- The service's approach to supporting children to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships:
  - » reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service;
  - » welcomes, reflects and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service;
  - » contributes to a culture of inclusiveness and sense of belonging at the service;
  - » encourages all children to challenge stereotypes and biases, and develop a deep understanding and appreciation of the cultural diversity of the service and the broader community, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.
- All educators:
  - » draw on their knowledge of each family's strengths and priorities, including behaviour guidance approaches in the home environment, to support children to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships;
  - » tailor their approaches to supporting children to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships in response to input from families and the community.

QUALITY AREA 6
COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Overview

Quality Area 6 focuses on supportive, respectful relationships with families which are fundamental to achieving quality outcomes for children. Community partnerships that are based on active communication, consultation and collaboration also contribute to children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing.

Families are the primary influence in their children's lives; they often have strong beliefs and values regarding the education and care of their children. When families and services collaborate and build respectful relationships, children have the opportunity to develop a positive sense of self and experience respectful relationships. As well, the child, the family and the service do not exist in isolation; they are part of a much wider community. Children benefit from services engaging with local communities because these partnerships strengthen children's interest and skills in being active contributors to their community. Collaborative partnerships are achieved when the service's philosophy has a strong commitment to valuing diversity, inclusive practice and connecting to the community. To help services be prepared to engage all children in the educational program, services may also develop specific plans (for example a **Strategic Inclusion Plan**) to ensure the service is 'inclusion ready'.

Related National Law

A number of the guiding principles that underpin the National Law support services' engagement with Quality Area 6. These principles are:

- that the principles of equity, inclusion and diversity underlie the National Law
- that Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued
- that the role of parents and families is respected and supported (see **section 3(3)** of the National Law).

Standards, elements and concepts

Quality Area 6 has two standards that support building collaborative partnerships with families and communities to enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing as they transition through the early years into school and/or attend outside school hours care services. These standards are crucial to delivering quality outcomes for children under the National Quality Framework because:

- authentic family engagement encourages the active participation of each child and their family in service decisions and the educational program
- reflecting on inclusive practice helps the service to identify and remove potential barriers to an inclusive environment and support the wellbeing of all children and families

- community engagement helps the service to build relationships between each child, the families of the service and the community they reside in, and encourages each child to develop their identity within the context of their local community
- as well as enriching programs, practices and policies, it provides an opportunity to support children to respect and value diversity.

Standard/ Elements	Concept	Descriptor
QA6		**Collaborative partnerships with families and communities**
6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained and families are supported in their parenting role.
6.1.1	Engagement with the service	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.
6.1.2	Parent views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
6.1.3	Families are supported	Current information is available to families about the service and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.
6.2	Collaborative partnerships	Collaborative partnerships enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing.
6.2.1	Transitions	Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing information and clarifying responsibilities.
6.2.2	Access and participation	Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program.
6.2.3	Community engagement	The service builds relationships and engages with its community.

STANDARD 6.1
SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES

RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES ARE DEVELOPED AND MAINTAINED AND FAMILIES ARE SUPPORTED IN THEIR PARENTING ROLE.

How Standard 6.1 contributes to quality education and care

Standard 6.1 acknowledges that the family is the most powerful influence on each child's life and that learning outcomes are most likely to be achieved when educators work in partnership with families to ensure the experiences planned for children are meaningful (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 12; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 10). This standard also recognises that each family's wellbeing and capacity to nurture and support their children, is influenced by the community in which they live and the material resources and social supports available to them.

In Australia there is a diversity of family types (including, for example blended and extended families, LGBTI parents) and all families are different. Children have diverse understandings of 'family' and unique relationships with those who feature prominently in their lives. Services that reflect on what the concept of family means to each child can nurture the important relationships that exist between children and their families. For example, services need to recognise the importance of extended families, kinship ties, carers and guardians in children's lives.

Effective, respectful communication between educators and families builds shared understanding of each other's expectations and attitudes, and builds on the strength of each other's knowledge. Educators create a welcoming environment when the diversity of families, and the families' practices and aspirations they hold for their children, are respected (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 13; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 11). Sometimes family aspirations and expectations can be in conflict with service philosophy and practice. Open, respectful and non-judgmental communication between educators and families builds a shared understanding of children's learning and participation.

Collaborative partnerships with families contribute to building a strong, inclusive community within the service. Respectful, honest and open two-way communication with educators assists families to feel connected with their children's experience in education and care and helps them develop trust and confidence in the service. The service also supports families in their parenting role by becoming a reliable source of practical information about resources and services within the local community and by helping families to understand what constitutes quality practice.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for Standard 6.1 (for all services)

Respectful and inclusive relationships with families

- How do we help all families to feel comfortable, welcome and valued at the service?
- Does our concept of family reflect the diversity of family structures in the service and the wider community?
- How could we improve our approach to support relationships with all families?
- How do we promote a common understanding of inclusion?
- How do we promote the benefits and value of inclusion for all children and families?
- How can we engage in genuine partnership with families to challenge and address stereotypical or biased views of family compositions?
- How do we listen to families and include their perspectives in the educational program?
- What role do families play in the service? How can we recognise their contributions?
- How do we share decision-making with families? What decisions can we make together with families?
- How does the information that families provide to the service contribute to operational decision-making?
- How does the service establish and maintain meaningful partnerships with all families?
- How can the service be more accessible to families?
- How do we communicate our philosophy and educational choices with families?
- What strategies are in place for information sharing between families and the service during orientation, settling in and onwards?
- What techniques or strategies do we use to communicate with families who have specific or diverse communication preferences?
- How can we find out if our communication strategies are reaching all families and if they would prefer other methods?

Supporting families in their parenting role

- How do we encourage families to contribute to their child's experiences in ways that are meaningful for them?
- How do we learn about children's families and others who are important in their lives?
- How do we respond when families make requests or express concerns?

- How do we find out and share information about the community resources that are relevant to our service and to the children in the service and their families?
- How do we support families to access community services and resources? How do we find out what kinds of support would be beneficial to families?
- How do we support and reassure families whose children are using an education and care service for the first time?
- How do we seek information that will assist children to manage separation from their primary caregiver without anxiety?

ELEMENT 6.1.1
ENGAGEMENT WITH THE SERVICE

FAMILIES ARE SUPPORTED FROM ENROLMENT TO BE INVOLVED IN THE SERVICE AND CONTRIBUTE TO SERVICE DECISIONS.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 6.1.1

Regulation 157 Access for parents

What Element 6.1.1 aims to achieve

Families' first major engagement with the service occurs during the enrolment process. The enrolment process presents an opportunity for services to share information about its operations, philosophy and governance with families. Services can also encourage families to express their preferences about how the orientation of their child into the service will occur. This helps families to feel supported from the beginning and to understand that the service values their input about what is best for their child.

When families are given the opportunity to provide information about their children that will assist educators to get to know them and help them settle into the program, families feel that their suggestions are clearly valued and that they are regarded as partners in their child's experience at the service. This partnership between the service and the family strengthens when educators seek further information from families while assessing children's progress and planning their individual goals.

Services encourage families to become involved in ways that suit their current commitments, availability and skills. For example families can contribute to service processes, such as reviewing the service philosophy and self-assessments, revising policies and procedures, and identifying goals for the Quality Improvement Plan.

When services seek and encourage families' meaningful involvement in the service, families are included as co-contributors to decisions and are able to influence service programs, policies and planning processes. Services may use a range of strategies to cater to the diversity of family preferences on information sharing and engagement.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 6.1.1 (for all services)

Enrolment and settling-in process

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- prospective families being:
  - » invited and encouraged to visit and become familiar with the service before their child starts
  - » encouraged to talk with service staff about the values and expectations they hold in relation to their child's time at the service before, during and after the enrolment process
  - » encouraged to share information about other child-related services accessed by the family
- families being encouraged to:
  - » stay with their child for as long as they choose during the settling-in period and on an ongoing basis
  - » contact the service, and in particular their child's educator/s during the day if they wish
- educators assisting families to develop and maintain a routine for saying goodbye to their child
- each child being offered comfort and reassurance in a way that is suited to the child during separation from their family
- educators sharing honest information with families about how their child is settling into the service

family day care

- a principal office that is well signposted, and accessible and welcoming to families and children

school age children

- services acknowledging and respecting children's prior learning from school.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how the service identifies the individual education and care requirements of each child and their family
- the provisions made to support families during the enrolment and orientation process
- how the settling-in process is tailored to meet the needs of individual children and families
- how information is gathered from families to support continuity of care between home and the service

school age children

- how currently enrolled children are involved in the orientation of new children and their families
- how links and communication with schools can be established and maintained

family day care

- how co-ordinators:
  - » determine the best placement for a new child and how families are involved in the selection of an educator best able to support the child's wellbeing, learning and development
  - » collaborate with educators and families to settle new children into the service
  - » work with educators to make decisions about the placements of children from diverse cultural backgrounds and/or children requiring additional support
- the educator's approach to interviewing prospective families and settling their children into the service.

sight ***Assessors may* sight:**

- the service's enrolment and orientation procedures and documentation
- evidence that families seeking a place at the service are provided with easy-to-read information about how the service operates and what it can provide (including information about inclusion and learning)

family day care

- documented information provided:
  - » to new families about the role of the principal office, including how co-ordinators:
    - monitor each child's placement
    - provide ongoing support for educators, families and children
    - assist families in finding an alternative placement when the child's educator is unavailable
    - assist families to access service policies and procedures
  - » by the educator to new families about themselves and their family, and their philosophy, expectations, routines and experiences offered to children.

Family involvement and contribution to service decisions

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- a culture of open, respectful communication, characterised by friendly conversations between families, their child's educator and other members of the service
- educators and families sharing information about children's progress, relationships, interests, strengths and experiences while participating in the service and within their family
- the service:
  - » creating a welcoming environment for all families
  - » communicating respectfully and sensitively with all families
  - » recognising and valuing diversity when engaging with families
  - » responding to families' questions, concerns and requests in a prompt and courteous way
  - » implementing a range of strategies to share information and engage families in decision-making processes.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- processes in place to communicate with families in ways that are convenient for them
- opportunities provided for families to:
  - » talk with the approved provider, educational leader, nominated supervisor, co-ordinators and educators about their participation in the service and any issues or concerns
  - » provide regular feedback and input about all aspects of the service
- how families, including extended family members, are able to contribute to the operation of the service and be involved in an advisory, consultative or decision-making role
- how families are encouraged to contribute to the development and review of the service's programs, philosophy, policies and procedures
- how the service involves families and uses their suggestions during self-assessment, planning for quality improvement and development of the Quality Improvement Plan (see **Element 7.1.2**)

family day care

- how the principal office collaborates with and seeks contributions from families about service decisions
- how educators and co-ordinators maintain two-way communication with families about children's placements and their progress
- how co-ordinators:

- » work with educators to facilitate family involvement
- » support the involvement of families in the service
- » support and involve families who have difficulty accessing the principal office due to their geographical location and/or lack of transport.

sight — ***Assessors may* sight:**

- evidence that:
  - » the service has strategies in place to communicate with families with varying literacy skills, or where English is not a first language
  - » the service provides resources that are available to families in a range of languages
  - » families are able to share their understanding of their child's strengths, interests, abilities and needs
  - » families have easy access to the service's policies and procedures
  - » families, including extended family members, are invited and supported to participate in the program and events at the service
  - » families are invited to participate and become actively involved in decision-making at the service, and are asked for feedback on service decisions
  - » families have opportunities to contribute to the development and review of the service's programs, statement of philosophy, policies and Quality Improvement Plan
- information available to families about the range of opportunities they have to participate in the service

family day care

- evidence of regular communication between co-ordinators and families.

ELEMENT 6.1.2
PARENT VIEWS ARE RESPECTED

THE EXPERTISE, CULTURE, VALUES AND BELIEFS OF FAMILIES ARE RESPECTED AND FAMILIES SHARE IN DECISION-MAKING ABOUT THEIR CHILD'S LEARNING AND WELLBEING.

What Element 6.1.2 aims to achieve

Educators recognise that families are children's first and most influential teachers, and that the views of parents should be respected (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 12; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 10). Children are born belonging to a culture, which is not only influenced by traditional practices, heritage and ancestral knowledge, but also by the composition, experiences, values and beliefs of individual families and communities (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 13; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 12).

When educators communicate with families to find out about their child's evolving preferences, experiences and routines, and respect the expertise, cultures, languages, values, beliefs and child-rearing practices of families, they are able to:

- better support each child's learning and wellbeing
- develop a tailored educational program that builds on each child's background, strengths and promotes their development
- support families in their parenting role (*Early Years Learning Framework*, pp. 12–13; *Framework for School Age Care*, pp. 10–11).

In a service environment where families are respected and share in decision-making, families and educators are supported to value each other's knowledge and roles, and communicate freely and respectfully. Genuine partnership relationships which include shared decision-making with families support consistency between children's experiences at home and at the service, which positively enhances children's learning, wellbeing and inclusion (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 12; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 10).

Assessment guide for meeting Element 6.1.2 (for all services)

Respecting families and sharing decision-making

***Assessors may* observe:**

- information being exchanged between families and educators at arrival and departure times
- educators and families discussing children's individual requirements and play preferences sensitively, respectfully and confidentially

- educators demonstrating a non-judgmental understanding of each child, and each child's family and community context
- educators sharing with families:
  - » some of the interactions they have had with children
  - » children's successes and achievements

observe

- families:
  - » being informed promptly and sensitively of any incidents affecting their child
  - » talking about the values and expectations they hold in relation to their child's wellbeing and learning
  - » sharing their knowledge, skills and expertise as well as aspects of their family life and culture
  - » contributing to the documentation of their child's learning and goal-setting.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- the strategies used by the service to facilitate shared decision-making with families and to respect families' requests
- how the service supports consistency between each child's home and the service but still ensures best practice and upholds the rights of each child
- opportunities provided for families to:
  - » contribute to curriculum decision-making
  - » provide feedback about the experiences planned for their child
  - » have private discussions with the educational leader, nominated supervisor, co-ordinators and educators.

sight

Assessors may* sight *evidence that:

- information from the family about each child's background, experiences, preferences and home routines is updated, recorded in the child's documentation and used to support curriculum decision-making
- families are given opportunities to:
  - » provide feedback about their child's experiences
  - » make suggestions about service routines, transitions and activities
  - » contribute to curriculum decision-making and the documentation of children's learning
- families' knowledge of their children is incorporated into plans for children's experiences and learning.

ELEMENT 6.1.3
FAMILIES ARE SUPPORTED

CURRENT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE TO FAMILIES ABOUT THE SERVICE AND RELEVANT COMMUNITY SERVICES AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT PARENTING AND FAMILY WELLBEING.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 6.1.3

Section 175 Offence relating to requirement to keep enrolment and other documents

What Element 6.1.3 aims to achieve

Services use a variety of methods to support families and keep them informed of the details about their child's learning, development and wellbeing, as well as the operational aspects of the service. This includes informing families about the service's ongoing self-assessment in relation to the National Quality Standard, quality improvements being achieved, as well as their participation in, and outcome of, the assessment and rating process.

Educators and co-ordinators are able to support families in their parenting role by being readily available for informal discussions with them at mutually convenient times. Further support is offered by referring families to current information on parenting and family issues displayed in the service, as well as referring them to recognised parenting and child development websites.

Providing easily accessible and reliable information about support networks and local community services helps families to make connections and use resources that support parenting. Improving the wellbeing of families is an important contributing factor in improving children's overall wellbeing. School age care educators facilitate communication between families and the schools their children attend.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 6.1.3 (for all services)

Providing information about the service and other community services

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- educators and families sharing information about:
  - » the service's operations
  - » parenting roles and relevant support services and resources
  - » community services
- educators assisting families to identify, locate, contact and/or access local community services.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how information is available to families about the service's operations
- how families are kept informed about the service's quality improvement against the National Quality Standard
- the processes used by the service to maintain current contact details for local support services
- how families are sensitively supported and encouraged to access local community services and resources that may be relevant to them

family day care

- how co-ordinators:
  - » keep families informed about the operation of the family day care service
  - » advise families about proposed policy changes, encourage input and inform them of any changes
  - » support educators' knowledge of community resources and services that families could be referred to
  - » provide guidance and support to educators in discussing sensitive issues with families.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- newsletters, communication books or other methods of communication with families
- information about the service's philosophy, operation, policies and procedures being available:
  - » in areas of the service regularly accessed by families
  - » in service documentation provided to them
  - » on noticeboards, charts or posters in areas regularly used by families and/or through appropriate media
- information about community services and resources available in:
  - » areas of the service regularly used by families but where they can be accessed privately
  - » service documentation such as the family handbook
- easy-to-read information about the service in the languages used at the service and in the local community
- evidence that policy changes are explained in detail and communicated to families prior to implementation.

EXCEEDING GUIDANCE FOR STANDARD 6.1
SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILIES

Overview

The following guidance is provided to assist services and assessors to consider if practice for Standard 6.1 demonstrates the Exceeding themes at the level required for a rating of Exceeding NQS. The indicators provided are not exhaustive, and services may demonstrate Exceeding level practice for Standard 6.1 in a variety of ways that suit their particular operating environment and approach to practice.

Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 6.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- Educators, the educational leader, and the co-ordinator demonstrate a deep understanding of the requirements of the standard, concepts and the component elements, and a commitment to high quality practice at all times
- Educators, co-ordinators and the educational leader:
  - » engage collaboratively and respectfully with families from enrolment and orientation to learn about their expertise, culture, values and beliefs and priorities for their child's learning and wellbeing
  - » consistently support families to participate in the service, make meaningful contributions to service decisions, and share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing
  - » regularly provide families with comprehensive, current and accessible information about the service, relevant community services, and resourcing to support parenting and family wellbeing
  - » recognise the leading role of families in their children's wellbeing and development
- Across the service, the observed and discussed approach to building respectful and supportive relationships with families demonstrates a strong commitment to the principles and practices of the approved learning framework/s, and aligns with the educational program, the service's statement of philosophy, and the enrolment and orientation process.

Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 6.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- The service's approach to supporting relationships with families:
  - » reflects robust debate, discussion, and opportunities for input by all educators, and is informed by critical reflection and past incidents

- » is informed by current recognised guidance on supporting relationships with families
- Any change to the service's approach to supportive relationships with families is understood by all and implemented appropriately
- Educators, co-ordinators and the educational leader:
  - » Intentionally consider alternate ways of engaging with families and supporting their participation at the service, and make changes where opportunities to further enhance children's and families' outcomes are identified
  - » are able to explain how ongoing engagement with families influences the design and delivery of the educational program
  - » are aware of and able to discuss how the approach to engaging with families and supporting their participation at the service aligns with practice theory, the approved learning framework/s and the service's philosophy, policies and procedures
  - » are aware of how families' perceptions of their role influences how they participate in the service
  - » consider and discuss social justice and equity implications of their approach to engaging with and supporting each family's participation in the service, including self awareness of their own biases and how these may impact on building respectful relationships with families
- As a team, educators, co-ordinators and the educational leader engage in robust debate and discussion about the service's approach to engaging with families and supporting their participation at the service. As part of this debate and discussion, personal, professional and organisational values that influence practice are identified, discussed and challenged.

Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 6.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- Relationships with families:
  - » reflect the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service
  - » welcome, reflect and draw on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service
- Educators, co-ordinators and the educational leader:
  - » actively support families to build relationships with other families and with relevant community services to strengthen child, parenting and family outcomes
  - » consistently tailor their approaches to communicating with and engaging with each family in recognition of individual families' circumstances and ways of connection, and seek out families' views on their preferred means of communication and participation from enrolment

- draw on their knowledge of each family to provide thoughtful and tailored opportunities for each family to participate in the service , for example building a sense of belonging for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families
- explore opportunities to build trust and support families to contribute to the educational program in ways that celebrate and share their strengths, beliefs and culture with children, families and the service team
- build and maintain community partnerships that support and promote parenting and family wellbeing and proactively and respectfully engage with families to support their parenting and family wellbeing circumstances and priorities.

STANDARD 6.2
COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS ENHANCE CHILDREN'S INCLUSION, LEARNING AND WELLBEING.

How Standard 6.2 contributes to quality education and care

Standard 6.2 recognises the connections between children, families, the service and communities and the importance of collaborative relationships and partnerships in enhancing all children's inclusion, learning, development and wellbeing (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 14; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 13).

When working with families, the service understands the importance of seeing families in the context of their participation in the local community and wider society. Services can also establish and maintain an active presence in the local community, seek to strengthen community links and use community resources to support families. This supports the inclusion of children in their community and broadens children's understanding of the world in which they live.

Open communication and collaboration between the service, families and other professionals within the community can be mutually beneficial. These partnerships:

- build the relationships between each child, their families and the service so that each child's capacity to fully participate in the program is supported
- assist children to become aware of the similarities, differences and connections between people within the community
- can provide everyone with a holistic understanding of each child, which contributes positively to every child's inclusion, wellbeing and learning
- create opportunities to develop a shared understanding about inclusion
- give families an opportunity to provide information about their child's interests, strengths and abilities, as well as provide feedback that assists educators to develop programs that are focused on supporting the learning and development of every child
- build the capacity of organisations involved in supporting children and families in the local community
- are more likely to result in information sharing and collaborative problem-solving
- assist in building an environment that supports inclusion and celebrates diversity
- are built on understanding children's and families' right to privacy and confidentiality (see **Element 7.1.2**).

Questions to guide reflection on practice for Standard 6.2 (for all services)

Building collaborative partnerships

- How do we share information to support children's learning and development with other services with which the child and family are connected?
- How do we share our knowledge and expertise about children's learning and inclusion with other professionals who are working with children and families enrolled in the service?
- How do we support each child's transition from and to other education and care environments?
- How do we support each child's successful transition to formal schooling?
- In what ways do we work with schools and other community organisations to support children and families? How effective are these strategies and how can we improve them?
- How do we access support for children's specific individual requirements and rights?
- What local resources and networks exist that might connect children and families with the local community?
- How is information and data (for example the Australian Early Development Census) used to build an understanding of the local community?
- What inclusion support services are available to provide tailored advice for our service?
- What is happening in our local community that is relevant to our work with children and families? How can we best be involved?
- How are we assisting children and their families to develop a sense of belonging to their local community?
- How are we supporting children to see themselves as active contributors to their community?

ELEMENT 6.2.1
TRANSITIONS

CONTINUITY OF LEARNING AND TRANSITIONS FOR EACH CHILD ARE SUPPORTED BY SHARING INFORMATION AND CLARIFYING RESPONSIBILITIES.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 6.2.1

Section 175 Offence relating to requirement to keep enrolment and other documents

What Element 6.2.1 aims to achieve

Transitions in early childhood education settings occur:

- from home to the education and care setting
- between rooms and groups in a setting
- between settings
- from education and care settings to school
- between routines and experiences.

Transitions offer opportunities and challenges for children as different spaces and settings have different purposes, expectations and practices. Working collaboratively with families, other educators, and other professional services, educators support children to actively prepare for transitions between settings and experiences by:

- helping children to understand the expectations, routines and practices of different settings, and building resilience to feel comfortable with the process of change
- sharing information about each child's learning, strengths and interests to support educators in a new setting or group to build on these foundations
- building on children's prior and current experiences to help them to feel secure, confident and connected in their new setting or group (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 16; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 16).

Assessment guide for meeting Element 6.2.1 (for all services)

Supporting smooth transitions

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- children:
  - » experiencing positive transitions within the service, between services and between the service, home, preschool/kindergarten and/or school

school age children

- » being supported and appropriately supervised when being transported to or from the service by car, bus, train, tram or on foot

centre-based service

- educators on different shifts in centre-based services communicating with each other about:
  - » children's experiences earlier in the day
  - » information shared by families about their child.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- the strategies in place to ensure:
  - » children are supported when:
    - moving from one group to another
    - moving between settings
    - returning to the service after an absence
    - transitioning between routines and experiences

school age children

- they arrive at the service at short notice or unexpectedly

  - » excursions are positive and safe learning experiences for children
- the strategies and processes used to support:
  - » children's positive transition to formal schooling
  - » children requiring additional support in their transition to school and to specialist services
- how road safety education and any active transport initiatives are incorporated into the program
- how families are involved in decision-making regarding transitions within the service (for example children moving to a different educator, room or group)

school age children

- how:
  - » information from families about their child's attendance/non-attendance at the service is communicated to educators responsible for transitioning children between school and the service
  - » information is shared between educators working in the before-school and after-school components of the service
  - » the service works with families to support and manage children's attendance at extracurricular and sporting activities

family day care

- processes in place to ensure families are able to access alternative education and care if their usual educator is unavailable.

sight ***Assessors may* sight:**

- examples of summaries of the child's progress towards the learning outcomes when transitioning between different age settings
- examples of plans and statements to assist children in making positive transitions from the service to formal schooling
- written procedures for releasing children from the service and ensuring that they are released only to authorised nominees
- records of children's arrivals and departures, with the signature of the person responsible for verifying the accuracy of the record and the identity of the person collecting the child

birth to three

- evidence that in centre-based services, shifts are planned to maximise continuity of education and care for children

school age children

- documented procedures for transitioning children between school and the service, including a procedure that addresses enrolled children who have not arrived at the service.

ELEMENT 6.2.2
ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS SUPPORT CHILDREN'S ACCESS, INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM.

What Element 6.2.2 aims to achieve

The inclusive practices of educators, and the partnerships they form with each child and their families, have a significant effect on each child's access, participation and success in learning. Educators' attitudes, beliefs and values about inclusion are key factors for successful inclusion. Children thrive when families, educators, local schools and the wider community work together in partnership to support their access, inclusion and participation.

Services can support each child's access, inclusion and participation in the program by learning about their individual context (family circumstances, geographic location, cultural and linguistic experiences) as well as their interests, learning styles, strengths and abilities. The educational leader and educators use this knowledge when making decisions about the physical environment, the curriculum and the day to day routines and transitions. They ensure that there are no barriers to children's participation in any aspect of the program (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 13; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 11).

By developing their professional knowledge and skills, and working in collaborative partnership with children, families and other services within the community, educators find effective ways to ensure that all children have opportunities to experience quality learning. This gives children a sense of personal worth and enhances each child's access and participation in everyday events, routines and play experiences (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 12–13; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 11). Planning and reflecting on practices, programs and policies assists educators to ensure that potential barriers to participation are addressed, each child is participating in the educational program, and services are 'inclusion-ready' and welcoming.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 6.2.2 (for all services)

Supporting children's access, inclusion and participation

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- all children:
  - » demonstrating a sense of belonging and comfort in the service environment
  - » demonstrating trust and confidence in educators and staff members
  - » participating and engaging in play experiences (adapted from *Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 21; *Framework for School Age Care*, p. 20).

centre based service

- that educators have adapted aspects of the environment, routines, transitions and staffing arrangements to facilitate the inclusion of all children.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how the service:
  - » demonstrates its commitment to the participation of all children
  - » ensures that the educational leader, co-ordinators and educators access support and/or participate in professional development to build the skills and expertise necessary to support the inclusion of children with specific health, cultural or developmental requirements
  - » collaborates with families, other professionals, therapists or specialists from inclusion/support agencies to support all children and encourage their participation
- how other professionals/therapists are involved in devising programs for individual children, and how shared goals for learning are identified and implemented
- how plans are developed to support the inclusion of children who require specific health, cultural or developmental support
- the processes involved in making or taking a referral to or from other services/agencies
- how the service implements strategies to ensure environments are welcoming to children and families in the community, and enrolment information and procedures are accessible and clear
- how educators identify potential barriers to inclusion and ensure the environment and routines are adapted appropriately to facilitate the participation of all children

school age children

- how the service collaborates with their local school to devise complementary support plans for individual children.

sight ***Assessors may* sight:**

- evidence:
  - » that the service seeks to build their capacity to respond to each child's specific requirements
  - » of professional development that supports responsiveness to each child's specific requirements and inclusive practices
  - » that the service's philosophy, policies and procedures demonstrate a commitment to access, inclusion and participation for every child and their family in the service
  - » of meetings and/or communication between the service, families, and other agencies or specialists working with individual children
  - » that where required, families are referred and supported to make contact with appropriate support services/agencies
  - » that with the family's consent and when required, information about the child's experiences and achievements in the service is appropriately shared with other support services/agencies
- examples of individual support plans for children that are implemented within the daily program and/or Strategic Inclusion Plans that promote inclusive programs and practices
- procedures for families or educators to request referrals for children
- processes for making and accepting referrals from other services/agencies in the local community such as:
  - » child protection agencies
  - » early childhood intervention services
  - » cultural support agencies
  - » family support agencies
  - » health professionals
- images, books and resources that reflect children and adults, from a range of backgrounds, cultures and abilities, as active contributors to and participants in the community.

ELEMENT 6.2.3
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

THE SERVICE BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS AND ENGAGES WITH ITS COMMUNITY.

What Element 6.2.3 aims to achieve

Services can further support children's sense of belonging by helping them to experience connections and be engaged with their local community. When services develop respectful and responsive connections with their immediate or wider community, they are likely to further enrich the educational program for children. Inviting members of diverse groups within the community to share their interests and expertise helps to extend children's knowledge, and assists the service to reflect on the inclusiveness of its practices. This broadens children's understanding of the world in which they live and contribute.

Building connections and relationships with people in the community helps children to learn more about various cultures that exist within Australia, including knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' perspectives, identity, histories, cultures and places of significance in their local community.

Having opportunities to visit places in the community helps children to form relationships with a broad range of people from the community, and to build respect and trust in adults outside their immediate family and service.

Children in school age settings have opportunities to be involved in a wide range of community activities. This allows older children to develop their capacity for independence and self-direction within the context of their local community (*Framework for School Age Care*, p. 24).

Assessment guide for meeting Element 6.2.3

Community engagement

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- an environment that reflects the lives of the children and families using the service and the cultural diversity of the broader community, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- images, books and resources that provide a balanced view of contemporary Australians
- all service staff responding positively to the differences in families' home lives and lifestyle choices
- the educational leader and educators planning and implementing experiences in the program to support children's understanding of the community within which they live.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how the service:
  - » builds connections between the service and the local community
  - » reflects and incorporates the diversity of the local community across its operations
  - » strengthens children's connection with and understanding of their community
  - » uses community resources to improve the educational program and provide quality learning experiences for each child
  - » demonstrates a commitment to developing their own cultural competence in a two-way process with families and communities
  - » shares information about community events relevant for children and families
- examples of community members coming into the service and examples of the service's participation in the local community
- how the educational leader, nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators raise awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and/or other local communities
- how children are supported to develop an understanding of their social and cultural heritage

school age children

- how educators incorporate educational excursions or incursions to develop children's understanding of their local community.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- evidence that:
  - » the service liaises with other children's services, local businesses, schools, health and family support services and other organisations working with families and children in the local area
  - » members of the local community are invited into the service to contribute to the program
  - » children have opportunities to learn about and contribute to the community in which the service is located
- planned experiences that involve incursions and/or children visiting parts of their community to extend on knowledge gained.

EXCEEDING GUIDANCE FOR STANDARD 6.2 COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Overview

The following guidance is provided to assist services and assessors to consider if practice for Standard 6.2 demonstrates the Exceeding themes at the level required for a rating of Exceeding NQS. The indicators provided are not exhaustive, and services may demonstrate Exceeding level practice for Standard 6.2 in a variety of ways that suit their particular operating environment and approach to practice.

Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 6.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- Educators, the educational leader, and the co-ordinator demonstrate a deep understanding of the requirements of the standard, concepts and the component elements, and a commitment to high quality practice at all times
- Educators, co-ordinators and the educational leader:
  - » establish and maintain ongoing collaborative partnerships with the community and link with community and support agencies to enhance children's learning, wellbeing and participation
  - » consistently facilitate inclusion and support assistance to ensure that the educational program enables each child to fully participate
  - » systematically promote continuity of learning and transitions for each child by sharing relevant information, clarifying responsibilities, and building collaborative strategies with relevant stakeholders
- Across the service, the observed and discussed approach to building collaborative partnerships with the community displays a strong commitment to the principles and practices of the approved learning framework/s, and aligns with the educational program and with resources that support community engagement and inclusion.

Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 6.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- The service's approach to collaborative partnerships:
  - » reflects robust debate, discussion, and opportunities for input by all educators, and is informed by critical reflection and past incidents
  - » is informed by current recognised guidance on collaborative partnerships.

- Any change to the service's approach to collaborative partnerships is understood by all and implemented appropriately
- Educators, co-ordinators and the educational leader:
  - purposefully consider and create opportunities to strengthen the service's approach to enhancing children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing, and seek out new links and partnerships where opportunities to further enhance children's and families' outcomes are identified
  - are able to explain how ongoing community engagement influences the design and delivery of the educational program and supports children's learning, wellbeing and enables full participation in the program for every child
  - are aware of and able to discuss how the service's approach to inclusion support and supporting transitions between learning environments aligns with practice theory, the approved learning framework/s and the service's policies and procedures
  - consider and discuss social justice and equity implications of their approach to inclusion support and supporting transitions for all children, including self awareness of their own biases and how these may impact on child and family outcomes
  - challenging stereotypes, raising awareness of, and cultivating deep respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures
- As a team, educators, co-ordinators and the educational leader engage in robust debate and discussion about the service's approach to building community partnerships and supporting inclusion and transitions. As part of this debate and discussion, personal, professional and organisational values that influence practice are identified, discussed and challenged.

Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 6.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- The service's collaborative partnerships:
  - reflect the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service
  - welcome, reflect and draw on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service
- Educators, co-ordinators and the educational leader:
  - support families to build relationships with relevant community services and agencies that enhance children's wellbeing, learning and participation in the educational program
  - seek out and build new community partnerships in response to the perspectives, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service, including the changing support and transition needs of children and including at the direct request of families if appropriate

- Community partnerships contribute to a culture of inclusiveness and sense of belonging at the service
- The service demonstrates a commitment to building and sustaining reciprocal relationships with community groups, including mutually beneficial partnerships that make connections with local Elders and give back to the community.

QUALITY AREA 7
GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Overview

Quality Area 7 focuses on effective leadership and governance of the service to establish and maintain quality environments for children's learning and development. Effective leaders establish shared values for the service that reflect the service context and professionalism and set clear direction for the service's continuous improvement. Governance refers to the systems in place to support effective management and operation of the service, consistent with the service's statement of philosophy.

To achieve the best outcomes for children and families, a service requires a skilled and engaged workforce, sound administrative and risk management systems, well-documented policies and procedures, and a safe and healthy learning environment for children.

Effective evaluation and self-review enables a service to continuously improve their practice, policies and procedures. An ongoing cycle of self-assessment, planning and review, together with engagement with all stakeholders including families, creates a culture of continuous improvement at the service.

Educational leaders support educators to develop the curriculum and reflect on their practice to identify opportunities for improvement. The educational leader also assists educators to identify areas for ongoing learning and professional development to enhance their practice.

Standards, elements and concepts

Quality Area 7 has two standards that focus on governance and leadership at the service. These standards are crucial to delivering quality outcomes for children under the National Quality Framework because:

- effective governance requires a statement of philosophy, adequate management systems and clearly delineated roles and responsibilities to support the effective operation of a quality service
- effective leadership establishes a culture of reflective practice to encourage continuous improvement across all aspects of the service, resulting in a higher quality service for children and their families.

Standard/ Element	Concept	Descriptor
QA7		**Governance and Leadership**
7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service.
7.1.1	Service philosophy and purpose	A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service's operations.
7.1.2	Management systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.
7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service.
7.2	Leadership	Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.
7.2.1	Continuous improvement	There is an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place.
7.2.2	Educational leadership	The educational leader is supported and leads the development and implementation of the educational program and assessment and planning cycle.
7.2.3	Development of professionals	Educators, co-ordinators and staff members' performance is regularly evaluated and individual plans are in place to support learning and development.

STANDARD 7.1
GOVERNANCE

GOVERNANCE SUPPORTS THE OPERATION OF A QUALITY SERVICE.

How Standard 7.1 contributes to quality education and care

Governance provides leadership and direction to the service. The approved provider must ensure that there are effective systems, procedures and processes in place to support the service to operate effectively and ethically. This promotes the confidence of families and local community in the service.

An effective governance framework includes:

- a statement of philosophy based on the service's beliefs, values and aims for the educational program that the framework provides
- an effective and efficient management system to:
  - » enable the operation of a quality service
  - » ensure that all aspects of its operations, including policies and procedures, are consistent with the principles underlying the National Law, National Regulations and any other legislation that applies to the service
  - » manage foreseeable and long-term risks to the service's operations and to children while they attend the service
- ethical codes and practices that guide decision-making
- clearly defined roles and responsibilities that support effective decision-making and operation of the service
- an effective complaints management process
- a continuous improvement approach to all aspects of the service and its educational program.

By establishing effective administrative and records management systems and implementing documented policies and procedures, the service can focus on delivering quality education and care for children and families.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for Standard 7.1 (for all services)

- What are the strengths of our management and administration systems that contribute to delivering a quality service for children and their families?
- How does our service's governance contribute to the development of a service vision and purpose?
- How do we determine the appropriate management and governance structure at our service?
- How do we support the development of effective leaders at the service?

- What is the process for making decisions within the service and is this process fair and equitable?
- How can we improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our systems and processes?
- Does our management of confidential information meet requirements?
- To what extent does our statement of philosophy reflect our purpose, guide our practice and show a commitment to continuous improvement?
- How and when is our statement of philosophy reviewed?
- How do we address complaints? How is the complaints management process used to identify strategies for quality improvement?
- Is our complaints management system/process effective in supporting quality improvement and empowering families to express their concerns and suggestions?
- How can we ensure that families are able to contact the appropriate person when making a complaint?
- What systems are in place to ensure the service's compliance with the National Law and Regulations?
- What systems are in place to regularly check the currency and validity of working with children checks, teaching registrations, first aid qualifications, and anaphylaxis and asthma management training?
- How and when are our policies and procedures reviewed?
- What systems are in place to ensure policies and procedures are being used to inform practice and is this information being communicated to families in respectful ways?
- How does the service involve stakeholders in consultation, evaluation and advisory processes?
- What information is provided to families about our governance structures?

ELEMENT 7.1.1
SERVICE PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSE

A STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY GUIDES ALL ASPECTS OF THE SERVICE'S OPERATIONS.

What Element 7.1.1 aims to achieve

A written statement of philosophy outlines the purpose and principles under which the service operates. It also reflects the guiding principles of the National Quality Framework (see **section 3(3)** of the National Law), and the approved learning frameworks (see **Element 1.1.1**).

A statement of philosophy serves three purposes. It:

- underpins the decisions, policies and daily practices of the service
- reflects a shared understanding of the role of the service among staff, children, families and the community
- guides educators' pedagogy, planning and practice when delivering the educational program.

When the educational leader, nominated supervisors, co-ordinators and educators contribute to the review of a philosophy statement, it is more likely to be owned by all members of the team. It encourages commitment and willingness to put it into practice.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 7.1.1 (for all services)

Service philosophy

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- the practices of the educational leader, nominated supervisor, educators and co-ordinators are in line with the service's statement of philosophy
- the values stated in the service philosophy being reflected in the service's environment, policies and procedures.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how a shared understanding of the service's statement of philosophy underpins practice and decision-making for both individual educators and the service, including the planning cycle and approaches to equity and inclusion
- how educators and families are encouraged to be meaningfully involved in reviews of the service's statement of philosophy

- examples of how the statement of philosophy is used to set directions, build commitment and align actions with the service's goals and desired outcomes
- the service's approach to reviewing their philosophy statement to ensure it fits with changes to management and staffing, and new knowledge about practice that educational leaders and educators may have gained.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- the service's statement of philosophy
- documentation relating to the service's review of its statement of philosophy (such as staff meeting minutes)
- evidence that the service's statement of philosophy is included in the induction process for all staff members and in the enrolment and orientation process for families.

ELEMENT 7.1.2
MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

SYSTEMS ARE IN PLACE TO MANAGE RISK AND ENABLE THE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF A QUALITY SERVICE.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 7.1.2

Section 21 Reassessment of fitness and propriety

Section 51(2) Conditions on service approval (FDC co-ordinators)

Section 56 Notice of addition of nominated supervisor

Section 56A Notice of change of a nominated supervisor's name or contact details

Section 161 Offence to operate education and care service without nominated supervisor

Section 161A Offence for nominated supervisor not to meet prescribed minimum requirements

Section 162 Offence to operate education and care service unless responsible person is present

Section 162A Persons in day-to-day charge and nominated supervisors to have child protection training

Section 163 Offence relating to appointment or engagement of family day care co-ordinators

Section 164 Offence relating to assistance to family day care educators

Section 164A Offence relating to the education and care of children by family day care service

Section 165 Offence to inadequately supervise children

Section 166 Offence to use inappropriate discipline

Section 167 Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards

Section 168 Offence relating to required programs

Section 169 Offence relating to staffing arrangements

Section 170 Offence relating to unauthorised persons on education and care service premises

Section 171 Offence relating to direction to exclude inappropriate persons from education and care service premises

Section 172 Offence to fail to display prescribed information

Section 173 Offence to fail to notify certain circumstances to Regulatory Authority

Section 174 Offence to fail to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority

Section 174A Family day care educator to notify certain information to approved provider

Section 175 Offence relating to requirement to keep enrolment and other documents

Section 188 Offence to engage person to whom prohibition notice applies

Section 269 Register of family day care educators, co-ordinators and assistants

Regulation 158 Children's attendance record to be kept by approved provider

Regulation 159 Children's attendance record to be kept by family day care educator

Regulation 160 Child enrolment records to be kept by approved provider and family day care educator

Regulation 161 Authorisations to be kept in enrolment record

Regulation 162 Health information to be kept in enrolment record

Regulation 163 Residents at family day care residence and family day care educator assistants to be fit and proper persons

Regulation 164 Requirement for notice of new persons at residence

Regulation 165 Record of visitors

Regulation 166 Children not to be alone with visitors

Regulation 167 Record of service's compliance

Regulation 168 Education and care service must have policies and procedures

Regulation 169 Additional policies and procedures

Regulation 170 Policies and procedures to be followed

Regulation 171 Policies and procedures to be kept available

Regulation 172 Notification of change to policies and procedures

Regulation 173 Prescribed information to be displayed

Regulation 174 Time to notify certain circumstances to Regulatory Authority

Regulation 174A Prescribed information to accompany notice

Regulation 175 Prescribed information to be notified to Regulatory Authority

Regulation 176 Time to notify certain information to Regulatory Authority

Regulation 176A Prescribed information to be notified to approved provider by family day care educator

Regulation 177 Prescribed enrolment and other documents to be kept by approved provider

Regulation 178 Prescribed enrolment and other documents to be kept by family day care educator

Regulation 179 Family day car educator to provide documents on leaving service

Regulation 180 Evidence of prescribed insurance

Regulation 181 Confidentiality of records kept by approved provider

Regulation 182 Confidentiality of records kept by family day care educator

Regulation 183 Storage of records and other documents

Regulation 184 Storage of records after service approval transferred

Regulation 185 Law and regulations to be available

Jurisdiction specific provisions

Tasmania – Regulation 344 Working with vulnerable people registration—staff members

Victoria – Regulation 358 Working with children check to be read

Victoria – Regulation 359 Criminal history record check to be read and considered

What Element 7.1.2 aims to achieve

Efficient and effective systems

Efficient and effective management systems allow the service to identify and manage organisational risks in a timely manner, and carry out risks assessments as required to manage foreseeable risks to children's safety and wellbeing (see **Element 2.2.1**). Effective management systems support the educational leader, nominated supervisor and educators in their planning, delivery and reflection on the educational program, and the development of strategies to continuously improve. When educators have adequate time and administrative support to perform their roles, they can focus on delivering a quality service to children and their families.

Confidentiality and records management systems

Services are required to safely store and maintain the confidentiality and currency of information provided by families, service staff and other stakeholders. This builds families' confidence in the service's records management practices, and is an indicator of the level of professionalism at the service.

Administrative systems

The approved provider is required to:

- ensure that the service operates in compliance with the National Law, the National Regulations and the National Quality Standard
- liaise with the regulatory authority when required.

The approved provider must ensure that there are adequate systems in place to maintain the effective, compliant operation of the service.

Complaints management system

An effective complaints and grievance management system confirms to staff, families and the community that complaints and grievances are taken seriously and investigated promptly, fairly and thoroughly. Effective management of complaints may inform quality improvement processes and is an efficient way of considering and acting on feedback from families.

Notifying the regulatory authority of operational changes, incidents and complaints

The approved provider must notify the regulatory authority of certain circumstances and information, including any:

- significant changes to the operation of the service

- complaints that may impact on the regulatory authority's consideration of provider or service approvals
- change relevant to the fitness and propriety of the approved provider
- complaints alleging that a serious incident has occurred or is occurring while a child was or is being educated and cared for by the service*, or the National Law has been contravened

  WA

  * In WA the approved provider must notify of complaints alleging that the safety, health or wellbeing of a child (or children) has been compromised, or the National Law has been contravened
- serious incidents that occur at the service
- any incident where the approved provider reasonably believes that physical or sexual abuse of a child or children has occurred or is occurring while the child is being educated and cared for by the service.

Documented policies and procedures

The service should ensure that policies and procedures are well-documented, maintained and easily accessible to staff members and families. This supports the service to implement practices that are based on the service's policies and procedures.

Regularly reviewing policies and procedures in collaboration with families supports a shared understanding of the service's practices.

Risk management and employing fit and proper staff

Fitness and propriety describes a person's suitability to be involved in the operation of an education and care service. Prior to granting provider approval or service approval, regulatory authorities assess whether the applicant applying for provider approval is fit and proper to provide an education and care service. The approved provider is responsible for assessing a person's suitability for the roles of nominated supervisor and responsible person at the service.

The approved provider, nominated supervisor and responsible person must remain fit and proper for the service to operate under their management.

When a family day care service is provided in an educator's home, adults who reside on the premises must be assessed as, and remain, fit and proper for the service to operate.

Checking and maintaining accurate records that relate to the fitness and propriety of all staff assists in safeguarding children against risks to their safety and wellbeing.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 7.1.2 (for all services)

Records management

observe

***Assessors may* observe:**

- the facilities for storage of confidential records that are at the service or are immediately accessible by the service
- program information being shared in a way that respects the rights of children and families to privacy and confidentiality.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- the processes in place at the service for reviewing and updating records and information on a regular basis
- the service's practice in relation to the retention and disposal of records.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- the following records available and kept for the required length of time:
  - » evidence of current public liability insurance (this does not apply if the insurance is provided by a state or territory government)
  - » a Quality Improvement Plan
  - » child assessments
  - » an incident, injury, trauma and illness record
  - » a medication record
  - » the child attendance record
  - » the child enrolment record
  - » the record of the death of a child while being educated and cared for by the service
  - » a record of the service's compliance history
  - » a record of the responsible person in day-to-day charge
  - » the name of the person designated as the educational leader
  - » the nominated supervisor's written consent to the nomination
  - » the record of volunteers and students

centre-based service

- » staff records, including:
  - the names of responsible persons for each time that children are being educated and cared for by the service
  - the record of educators working directly with children

family day care

- » records of:
  - family day care staff
  - visitors to family day care residences or approved family day care venues
  - working with children checks for residents aged 18 years and over (or other checks as required, depending on the service's jurisdiction: see **Regulation 163**)
  - assessments of family day care residences and approved family day care venues

- evidence that the educator is adequately monitored and supported by a family day care co-ordinator, including records of visits by the co-ordinator to the family day care residence or family day care venue, and any correspondence provided by the co-ordinator for the purpose of monitoring or support to the educator
- evidence that records are stored appropriately to protect confidentiality
- that the following prescribed information is displayed:
  - » provider approval, including:

- the approved provider name
- the provider's approval number
- any conditions relating to the provider approval

» service approval, including:
- the name of the approved service
- the service approval number
- any conditions or waivers relating to the service approval

» service or temporary waivers, including:
- the elements of the National Quality Standard and/or National Regulations that have been waived
- the duration of the waiver
- whether the waiver is a service or a temporary waiver

» nominated supervisor, including:
- the name of the nominated supervisor

» service rating, including the:
- current ratings for each quality area under the National Quality Framework
- overall rating of the service

» service operation, including the:
- opening days and hours
- name and phone number of the responsible person in charge at any given time
- name and phone number of the person who can be contacted for a complaint
- name of the educational leader
- contact details of the Regulatory Authority

» health and safety, including a notice:
- stating that a child at risk of anaphylaxis is enrolled at the service, if applicable
- of an occurrence of an infectious disease at the service, if applicable.

Administrative systems

Assessors may* observe *the availability of information technology for administration, planning, evaluation and communication purposes, including for communication with families.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- the role of the nominated supervisor in the service
- procedures that apply to educators when requesting specific resources to support program delivery

- human resource management procedures including recruitment and selection, leave, rosters and access to training and development
- opportunities for all staff members to comment on and improve the effectiveness of systems within the service.

Assessors may* sight *examples of internal communications, such as meeting minutes, distribution of notices and staff bulletins.

Notifications to the regulatory authority

Assessors are unlikely to **observe** practice in relation to this element.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- the process the service has in place for informing the regulatory authority about relevant changes
- the service's processes for notifying the regulatory authority of required matters
- with the nominated supervisor, examples of the types of incidents they consider to be serious, which would require notification to the regulatory authority.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- information displayed in staff areas about the required notifications
- records of notifications to the Regulatory Authority
- records held by the regulatory authority in relation to complaints against the service that allege a breach of legislation or a serious incident.

Complaints management

Assessors are unlikely to* observe *practice in relation to this element.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- the management of any complaints or grievances lodged with the service
- how educational leaders, educators, nominated supervisors, co-ordinators and staff members listen to, document and follow up issues raised by children, families and other stakeholders.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- a documented grievance and complaints management procedure
- evidence that grievances and complaints are investigated and documented in a timely manner
- evidence that complaints lead to amendments to policies and procedures as required

- information for families on how complaints and grievances are made and how they are managed by the service.

Documented policies and procedures

Assessors may* observe *that the service's practices are consistent with documented policies and procedures.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- the provision of information about the service's policies and practices to parents/families prior to the child's attendance at the service
- the ways in which families are encouraged to contribute to the development and review of policies
- how families are explicitly informed of policy changes.

sight

Assessors may* sight *the following required policies and procedures available at the service, which are also available to families:

- health and safety policies and procedures, including:
  - » delivery and collection of children
  - » excursions
  - » refusal of authorisation for a child to leave the service
  - » dealing with infectious disease
  - » dealing with medical conditions
  - » emergency and evacuation
  - » health and safety, which covers:
    - nutrition, food and beverages, dietary requirements
    - sun protection
    - sleep and rest for infants and children
    - water safety
    - the administration of first aid
  - » incident, injury, trauma and illness
  - » a child-safe environment
- staffing policies and procedures, including:
  - » a code of conduct
  - » determining the responsible person present
  - » the participation of volunteers and students
- relationships with children policies and procedures, including interactions with children
- service management policies and procedures, including:
  - » governance and management of the service, and confidentiality of records

- » enrolment and orientation
- » payment of fees
- » dealing with complaints

family day care

- the assessment, approval and reassessment of approved family day care residences and family day care venues
- the engagement or registration of family day care educators
- keeping a register of family day care educators
- monitoring, support and supervision of family day care educators
- fit and proper assessment of family day care educators and assistants and adults residing at family day care residences
- visitors to family day care residences and venues
- provision of information, assistance and training to family day care educators
- engagement and registration of family day care educator assistants.

Fit and proper staff

Assessors are unlikely to **observe** practice in relation to this element during a site visit.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- with service staff their understanding of their responsibilities under the relevant child protection legislation
- with the approved provider the fitness and propriety of nominated supervisors

family day care

- the service's approach to ensuring the fitness and propriety of adults who reside in educators' homes when the education and care service is provided to children.

sight

Assessors may* sight *evidence:

- in the staff record of sighting, and recording the identifying number and expiry date of, working with children checks (or equivalent as required in Part 4.4 Divisions **9** and **10** of the National Regulations)
- of required safety screening clearance for:
  - » educators, co-ordinators, family day care educator assistants and staff members prior to engagement at the service

family day care

- » residents aged 18 years and over.

ELEMENT 7.1.3
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES ARE CLEARLY DEFINED, AND UNDERSTOOD, AND SUPPORT EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING AND OPERATION OF THE SERVICE.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 7.1.3

Section 51(2) Conditions on service approval (FDC co-ordinators)

Section 163 Offence relating to appointment or engagement of family day care co-ordinators

Section 164A Offence relating to the education and care of children by family day care service

Section 174A Family day care educator to notify certain information to approved provider

What Element 7.1.3 aims to achieve

Each individual who begins work at the service should have a clear understanding of their role, responsibilities and the expectations for their performance. They should be encouraged to engage with the philosophy and context that underpin the operation of the service as early as possible. A comprehensive induction process plays a critical role in creating and maintaining a positive and professional culture.

Services should foster a clear and open understanding of the staffing structure and responsibilities of all staff. This supports effective decision-making and efficient service operation.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 7.1.3 (for all services)

Roles and responsibilities

Assessors are unlikely to **observe** practice in relation to this element during a site visit.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how responsibilities and expectations are communicated to all staff members
- educators' understanding of:
  - the National Law and National Regulations
  - the National Quality Standard
  - the **Early Years Learning Framework** and/or the **Framework for School Age Care** or any other approved learning framework implemented at the service
  - the service's statement of philosophy

- the service's particular code of conduct and any code of ethics used to inform and evaluate practice (for example Early Childhood Australia's **Code of Ethics**)
- with any new staff members, their level of understanding of the philosophy of the service and the context in which it operates
- with staff members their experience of, and satisfaction with, the service's induction process
- induction processes for all educators and staff, including relief educators

family day care

- the service's approach to inducting new educators and developing their understanding of their roles and responsibilities as a family day care educator.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- the service's documented induction procedure
- information provided to all staff members about the service and their role, such as position descriptions.

EXCEEDING GUIDANCE FOR STANDARD 7.1
GOVERNANCE

Overview

The following guidance is provided to assist services and assessors to consider if practice for Standard 7.1 demonstrates the Exceeding themes at the level required for a rating of Exceeding NQS. The indicators provided are not exhaustive, and services may demonstrate Exceeding level practice for Standard 7.1 in a variety of ways that suit their particular operating environment and approach to practice.

Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 7.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- Educators, the educational leader, and co-ordinators demonstrate a deep understanding of the requirements of the standard, concepts and the component elements, and a commitment to high quality practice at all times
- Well established governance arrangements and administrative systems consistently support the operation of a high quality service and drive continuous quality improvement
- Educators, co-ordinators and those with management responsibilities are able to discuss and demonstrate how the service's management systems support proactive risk management and drive continuous improvement, for example in relation to:
  - Recruitment and staff selection
  - Responding to and learning from incidents, complaints and feedback from families
  - Maintaining up-to-date records that support effective service provision
- Educators, co-ordinators and those with management responsibilities are able to discuss and demonstrate how their daily practice is underpinned by the service's statement of philosophy and how they are involved in reviewing the statement regularly
- Persons with management responsibilities are able to discuss and demonstrate how the statement of philosophy underpins service operations, and explain how it was developed and how and when it is reviewed
- The guiding principles of the National Law (see **section 3** of the Law) are reflected in and consistently enacted through the service's statement of philosophy
- The service's policies and practices on recruitment and retention of staff reflect the diversity of the local community

- All members of the service team, including relief staff, understand and are able to articulate their roles and responsibilities, including in relation to each other, children, and families, and the service's decision-making processes
- Across the service, observed and discussed governance and administrative arrangements align with systems, documented policies, procedures and records.

Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 7.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- Any change to the service's approach to governance is understood by all and implemented appropriately
- Educators, co-ordinators and those with management responsibilities:
  - » critically reflect on the statement of philosophy, individually and together, to ensure it aligns with the service's current purpose, priorities, and approach to practice, and make changes where required to strengthen alignment and drive continuous improvement
  - » engage in regular reviews of systems, policies and procedures to ensure they are effective, align with quality practice, are responsive to feedback identified through the service's risk management and quality improvement systems, and support consistent, high quality practice across the service
  - » are aware of and able to discuss the service's governance and decision-making processes and how these align with professional standards and contribute to continuous quality improvement
- The service supports and enables all members of the service team to provide feedback on opportunities to strengthen governance and administrative systems, including decision-making processes, and this feedback is respectfully considered
- Change processes are managed sensibly and collaboratively with key stakeholders and the rationale for change is clearly communicated

Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 7.1 Exceeds the NQS:

- Governance of the service:
  - » reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service
  - » welcomes, reflects and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service

- Educators, co-ordinators and those with management responsibilities:
  - » actively support families and the community to meaningfully engage with the service philosophy, policies and procedures, and to provide feedback and contribute to regular reviews
  - » actively support families and the community to understand the roles and responsibilities of members of the service team and how to engage with the service's feedback processes
- The service supports and enables families and the community to provide feedback on governance arrangements and administrative systems, including decision-making and feedback processes
- Governance and administrative arrangements contribute to a culture of inclusiveness and a sense of belonging at the service and suit the unique context of the service

STANDARD 7.2
LEADERSHIP

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP BUILDS AND PROMOTES A POSITIVE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY.

How Standard 7.2 contributes to quality education and care

Effective leadership builds and maintains a professional workplace in which all staff members can communicate and raise issues openly, participate in respectful debate and contribute to each other's ongoing professional learning.

A positive work culture that is focused on quality encourages management and staff to continuously improve the service for the benefit of children and their families. Building a positive culture and professional learning community involves:

- reflecting on and continuously questioning how to improve teaching methods, educators' practices, curriculum quality, equity, and the wellbeing and inclusion of each child
- building staff members' professional knowledge
- strengthening relationships with children and families
- establishing expectations for:
  - » the quality of education and care provided by nominated supervisors, educational leaders, educators and co-ordinators
  - » programs and practices that promote children's wellbeing, learning and development.

To lead effectively, leaders need current, in-depth content knowledge as well as a deep understanding and appreciation of children's learning and development. Research demonstrates that there is a strong link between leadership and improved outcomes for children. Effective leaders are clear about the purpose of education and care services and have the skills to effectively communicate shared goals and expectations.

To develop and maintain an organisational culture that is inclusive, leaders need to demonstrate ongoing commitment to inclusion and a respect for diversity in all aspects of the service.

Questions to guide reflection on practice for Standard 7.2 (for all services)

- How is the leadership in our service contributing to the development of a positive organisational culture?
- How can we develop the skills and capacity of team members in a way that leads to improved shared leadership?
- How are we creating opportunities for professional conversations?
- How do our performance management processes support continuous improvement?

- How can we share the collective knowledge of the team?
- What do we know about the rate of, and reasons for, turnover of educators, co-ordinators and staff members at this service?
- How can we structure our staffing arrangements to improve continuity of care for children?
- How does the evidence/data we collect inform our self-assessment and quality improvement processes? Do we need to collect additional or different data?
- How are children, families and communities included in evaluating the quality of our service?
- In what ways does our service analyse feedback, complaints, serious incidents, injuries and illness to drive continuous improvement?
- How are resources allocated and targeted to support our quality improvement plan?
- How do we raise awareness of inclusion amongst service staff, and support educators to promote and reduce the barriers to inclusion for all children and families?
- What strategies are proving successful in building a professional learning community? How do we know they are successful?
- How can we use the Assessment and Rating Instrument in our self-assessment process?
- How can the **guiding principles** of the National Law be considered in our self-assessment process?

ELEMENT 7.2.1
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

THERE IS AN EFFECTIVE SELF-ASSESSMENT AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROCESS IN PLACE.

National Law & Regulations

National Law and National Regulations underpinning Element 7.2.1

Regulation 31 Condition on service approval-quality improvement plan

Regulation 55 Quality improvement plans

Regulation 56 Review and revision of quality improvement plans

What Element 7.2.1 aims to achieve

Quality services regularly monitor and review their performance to guide planning and improve service quality. This creates a shared understanding of the principles that guide the service, and encourages continuous improvement in practice, policies and procedures.

Quality services regularly update and maintain their Quality Improvement Plan as a dynamic document to guide progress towards improvement. Quality services use the Quality Improvement Plan for continuous assessment against the National Quality Standard and the approved learning frameworks, to identify new goals for the service as part of an effective cycle of improvement. Incorporating regular self-assessment and quality improvement discussions in staff meetings encourages educators to participate in reflection on key practices, such as pedagogy and inclusion, and enables all staff members to provide input into planning for continuous quality improvement.

Establishing and maintaining a culture of ongoing reflection and self-review offers challenge, inspires motivation, and supports positive levels of staff satisfaction. This provides opportunities for all staff to improve their practice and programming, which contributes directly to improved learning outcomes for children.

An effective cycle of continuous improvement includes reviewing:

- the extent to which the service meets or exceeds the National Quality Standard
- the performance of all staff members
- how the service and its practices are delivered in accordance with the Early Years Learning Framework and/or the Framework for School Age Care (or other approved learning frameworks)
- the outcomes for children at the service against the learning outcomes in these frameworks
- feedback and complaints from children and families.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 7.2.1 (for all services)

Regular self-assessment

Assessors may* observe *service practices and program delivery that match the service's self- assessment, which is reflected in its Quality Improvement Plan.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how the service:
  - » aligns program delivery with quality improvement planning
  - » collects and uses information from a range of sources as part of the process of self-assessment and planning for quality improvements
  - » uses reflections on children's learning and development to plan, implement and evaluate programs and to support children in achieving outcomes (see **Elements 1.3.1 and 1.3.2**)
  - » engages in reflective practice on inclusion in the service's Quality Improvement Plan
- how the educational leader supports educators to engage in reflective practice to refine strategies and to create and sustain improvements
- processes for regularly updating the Quality Improvement Plan and identifying new goals and strategies for quality improvement
- how the views and suggestions of educators, children and families are considered and used to inform the development and review of the service philosophy, quality improvement planning processes, including self-assessments.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- the service's Quality Improvement Plan displayed so that families and staff can view the current goals and strategies for quality improvement
- the documented process for ongoing self-assessment, planning and review against the National Quality Standard
- systems for collecting information from families, children and staff members about their perceptions of the service.

ELEMENT 7.2.2
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

THE EDUCATIONAL LEADER IS SUPPORTED AND LEADS THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING CYCLE.

What Element 7.2.2 aims to achieve

Educational leadership

The role of the educational leader is primarily to:

- collaborate with educators and provide curriculum direction and guidance
- support educators to effectively implement the cycle of planning to enhance programs and practices
- lead the development and implementation of an effective educational program in the service
- ensure that children's learning and development are guided by the learning outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework and/or the Framework for School Age Care or other approved learning frameworks.

The educational leader of a service plays a significant role in guiding and developing educators' and families' understandings about play and leisure-based learning, and the significance of the early years in the education continuum for children. Their approach to leadership for learning has the potential to build the knowledge, skills and professionalism of educators, and to help communicate these important messages to families, schools and the broader community.

'A lively culture of professional enquiry is established when educators, co-ordinators and staff members are encouraged to build their professional knowledge, reflect on their practice and generate new ideas. In a culture that values professional learning, issues relating to curriculum quality, equity and children's wellbeing can be raised, debated and used to enhance programs, practices and policies' (*Early Years Learning Framework*, p. 13: *Framework for School Age Care*, p.12).

Selecting and supporting the educational leader

Leadership in education and care is complex, multi-faceted and diverse. Emerging research on the role of educational leader in the Australian context demonstrates that this type of pedagogical leadership may present a range of challenges and require a different set of skills than other types of leaders within the service. It also recognised that for the educational leader to be successful in generating quality outcomes, they need to be supported in their role. An approved provider/ nominated supervisor might consider the following skills, knowledge and attributes in nominating and developing the educational leader:

- communication and interpersonal skills

- comprehensive knowledge of theory that relates to early childhood education and care (for example, child development, attachment, learning), professional standards and approved learning frameworks, and contemporary understanding of evidence-based best practice approaches to teaching and learning
- knowledge of leadership theory and the use of a range of leadership styles
- thinking skills, including the ability to critically analyse and challenge conventional practice and ideas
- a sense of purpose and direction, and the ability to influence
- a willingness to mentor and support educators from diverse backgrounds and with varying levels of knowledge and experience
- commitment to learning and participating in professional learning opportunities.

Approved providers and nominated supervisors might also consider how they provide support for the educational leader and what the outcomes for the role might look like in terms of improved quality programs and practice. Some key features include enabling capacity building opportunities, empowering leaders and ensuring the role is well-resourced. Resources may include time, professional learning materials and opportunities, clearly defined role description, expectations, networking and collegial support opportunities.

Leading, developing and implementing the program

The educational leader provides guidance on educators' pedagogy and professional practice, by supporting educators to build and nurture secure respectful relationships with children and families, and assisting educators to articulate how and why they make decisions about the curriculum/program.

An effective educational program includes realistic goals which have a clear purpose in line with the service's philosophy (see **Element 7.1.1**). The educational program and practice reflect the principles, practice and outcomes of an approved learning framework (see **Element 1.1.1**).

Other key aspects of the educational leader's role in leading, developing and implementing the program include:

- mentoring and supporting educators' understanding of educational program and practice, such as:
  - how theory supports best practice in all parts of the program
  - building relationships and interactions with children to assist their learning through play and leisure-based programs
  - intentional teaching strategies and thoughtful, deliberate educator practices that support children's wellbeing, learning and development
  - routines and transitions
  - providing for continuity of learning when children transition to, from or within the service
  - developing documentation that is meaningful, relevant and promotes reflection on educators' pedagogy and practice

- drawing on a range of understandings about learning theories and styles, as well as educators' strengths, to develop educators' professional skills and confidence
- encouraging and empowering educators to draw on their creativity, intuition, knowledge of child development, as well as children's knowledge, identity and culture in their teaching and planning for learning
- liaising with other early childhood education and care professionals (such as therapists, maternal and child health nurses, and early childhood intervention specialists)
- assisting educators to make connections in the community, including with diverse cultures and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Elders or their representatives.

Assessment and planning cycle

An ongoing cycle of assessment and planning is critical to the delivery of a quality educational program. The educational leader plays a pivotal role in this process, including:

- leading educators to use current approaches to documentation and planning
- mentoring and supporting educators in how they assess learning
- ensuring that the assessment and planning cycle is applied to each child and the program as a whole (see **Element 1.3.1**); note **some jurisdictions have different requirements** or the program in school age services)
- assisting educators to understand and implement reflective practice (see **Element 1.3.2**)
- leading critical reflection discussions to examine program and practice, investigate alternative approaches and ways of thinking, identify quality improvements required and plan for improvements
- leading further discussions after educators have implemented a change to program or practice, and identifying if other improvements are needed
- communicating in sensitive and meaningful ways with families when they need more information about the educational program and/or their child's learning.

For more information about the assessment and planning cycle, see **Standard 1.3 and Element 1.3.1**.

Assessment guide for meeting Element 7.2.2 (for all services)

Educational leadership

Assessors may* observe *the educational leader working with educators to build capacity and understanding about their pedagogy and practice, including ways they assess, reflect on and plan for children's learning.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- how the service supports the educational leader to have opportunities for discussions with educators, provide mentoring, lead reflective practice, and realise the intent of their role
- how the educational leader assists educators to promote children's learning and development and, when necessary, facilitate discussions with families
- what strategies and processes the educational leader uses to lead the development of effective programs within the service and to ensure that the planning cycle is implemented effectively
- how the educational leader supports and builds educators' understandings of how to assess, plan for and evaluate children's learning, including supporting the development of documentation that is meaningful and relevant
- the ways that leadership is tailored and targeted to reflect individuals' strengths and areas for growth
- how educators are mentored and supported through learning communities, positive organisational culture and professional conversations
- how the educational leader works with the service's leadership and management structure to support educators through periods of change.

sight

Assessors may* sight *evidence of:

- designation of the educational leader in the staff record
- documentation of the educational leader providing feedback and guidance to educators about the assessment and planning cycle
- reflective practice discussions that critically examine current practice and that lead to quality improvement.

ELEMENT 7.2.3
DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONALS

EDUCATORS, CO-ORDINATORS AND STAFF MEMBERS' PERFORMANCE IS REGULARLY EVALUATED AND INDIVIDUAL PLANS ARE IN PLACE TO SUPPORT LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT.

What Element 7.2.3 aims to achieve

A system of regular performance review alongside individual learning and development plans is essential to the development of skills and professional knowledge of educators. Performance planning and review ensures that the knowledge, skills and practices of educators and other staff members are current, and that areas requiring further development are addressed.

An effective performance review provides opportunities for educators to assess their own work performance against their job description, relevant code of ethics (for example Early Childhood Australia's **Code of Ethics**) and the service's code of conduct. The process recognises the specific strengths and contributions of each educator, which has the potential to encourage continuous quality practice and motivate them to continue to learn and develop professionally. Services can address areas that require improvement using a supportive and professional approach, to assist in accessing opportunities to engage in ongoing learning.

Educators who are committed to ongoing learning and performance improvement lift the quality of the service, potentially benefitting staff members, children, families and communities.

Learning and development can be enhanced when educational and/or service leaders (see **Element 7.2.2**) take on an active mentoring role, in collaboration with educators, to develop individual professional development plans that:

- develop educators' professional knowledge, skills and practices
- support creativity, imagination, innovation and continuous quality improvement
- build an understanding of the influence of theories and beliefs
- support educators to stay abreast of current policies, practice and thinking (for example inclusive policies and practice).

For example, educational leaders can mentor new educators to develop their capacity for inclusion and ensure that an inclusive philosophy underpins their pedagogy, program planning and interactions with each child and their families.

There is no one size fits all approach to the performance review, planning and improvement process. The main focus should be on developing an effective and efficient process for quality improvement. The outcome of the process is to:

- build and strengthen educators' understanding of the National Quality Framework
- support the development of strategies, practices and processes to meet the standards
- further educators' knowledge of quality early childhood education practices and programs.

Effective performance reviews include the following components:

Review

- expectations of the position description
- links to service vision and philosophy
- review of previous plan
- acknowledging achievements and contributions

Planning

- identify opportunities for capacity building and leadership
- build on strengths and capabilities
- links to other plans
- set timelines for goals and reviews

Improvement

- set clear goals and expectations with measurable indicators
- plan for professional learning
- identify strategies and approaches for support and mentoring
- tailor to suit individual needs
- collaborate with the educational leader

Assessment guide for meeting Element 7.2.3 (for all services)

Supporting staff learning and development

Assessors may* observe *the performance of each educator, co-ordinator and staff member supported by the educational leader and/or nominated supervisor.

discuss

***Assessors may* discuss:**

- processes to ensure each educational leader, co-ordinator, educator and staff member receives ongoing feedback about their performance and support to improve practice
- how the educational leader, co-ordinators, educators and staff members self-assess their performance and set individual performance and learning goals
- how performance processes identify strengths and areas for development, and how these areas for development are addressed
- how the service's performance review process contributes to planning for educators' learning and further development, and how the service supports this process
- how the effort, contribution and achievement of educators, educational leaders, co-ordinators and staff members is acknowledged and celebrated

family day care

- opportunities for educators to provide feedback about the effectiveness of the support provided by the coordination unit.

sight

***Assessors may* sight:**

- individual performance plans for educators, co-ordinators and staff members
- documented position descriptions for educators, educational leaders, co-ordinators and staff members that:
  - » clearly outline the responsibilities of the position
  - » clearly explain the approved provider's expectations
  - » are used as the basis for monitoring and reviewing the performance of educators, educational leaders, co-ordinators and staff members
- evidence of participation by educators, educational leaders, co-ordinators and staff members in professional development activities to update their knowledge and skills
- evidence that performance reviews for all educators, educational leaders, co-ordinators and staff members are conducted regularly and include a process for reviewing and updating professional development plans based on an evaluation of their professional strengths, interests and goals

family day care

- home visit/support contact records
- policies and procedures about conducting visits to educators' homes.

EXCEEDING GUIDANCE FOR STANDARD 7.2
LEADERSHIP

Overview

The following guidance is provided to assist services and assessors to consider if practice for Standard 7.2 demonstrates the Exceeding themes at the level required for a rating of Exceeding NQS. The indicators provided are not exhaustive, and services may demonstrate Exceeding level practice for Standard 7.2 in a variety of ways that suit their particular operating environment and approach to practice.

Exceeding theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 7.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- Educators, the educational leader, and co-ordinators demonstrate a deep understanding of the requirements of the standard, concepts and the component elements, and a commitment to high quality practice at all times
- Effective leadership:
  - builds and consistently promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community that supports all members of the service team to develop as professionals and contribute meaningfully to quality improvement processes
  - builds educator capacity by supporting educators through ongoing professional development opportunities, for example mentoring
- All members of the service team:
  - are able to explain how the service's performance evaluation process consistently supports their learning and development goals and growth as professionals, including how a tailored professional development plan provides a focus for continuous performance improvement;
  - are able to discuss and demonstrate how they actively participate in the service's ongoing self-assessment and quality improvement process, and how this process drives continuous improvement in service quality and enhances outcomes for children and families
- The educational leader is able to discuss and demonstrate how they are supported by the service's leadership team and work collaboratively with educators to effectively lead the development of the curriculum and set high expectations for teaching and learning
- Educators are able to discuss and demonstrate how they are supported by the educational leader to learn and grow in their professional practice, and how they work with the educational leader to consistently deliver an educational program that sets high expectations for each child's learning

- Across the service, observed and discussed quality improvement processes align with the service's Quality Improvement Plan and with other supporting documentation, including individual professional development plans for staff members

Exceeding theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 7.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- The service's approach to leadership:
  - » reflects robust debate, discussion, and opportunities for input by all educators, and is informed by critical reflection and past incidents;
  - » is informed by current recognised guidance on leadership that supports the operation of a quality service.
- Any changes to the service's approach to leadership is understood by all and implemented appropriately
- The leadership team regularly reflects on the service's quality improvement processes and makes changes where opportunities are identified to enhance outcomes for the service team, children and families

All members of the service team:

  - » regularly reflect on their own learning and professional development goals and opportunities to strengthen their performance and practice, and share their insights through informal and formal performance discussions to support alignment of expectations and goals;
  - » systematically reflect, individually and as a team, on service performance in relation to the National Quality Standard, focus areas identified in the Quality Improvement Plan, and goals for teaching and learning to ensure the service is meeting its own and the regulatory system's expectations for high quality and continuous improvement
- The service supports and enables all members of the service team to provide feedback on quality improvement processes and this feedback is respectfully considered
- Change processes are managed sensitively and collaboratively with key stakeholders and the rationale for change is clearly communicated

Exceeding theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Assessors may consider the following indicators when assessing whether service quality for Standard 7.2 Exceeds the NQS:

- Leadership at the service:
  - » reflects the unique geographical, cultural and community context of the service;
  - » welcomes, reflects and draws on the voices, priorities and strengths of the children and families at the service

- Educators, co-ordinators and those with management responsibilities:
  - » support families and the community to participate meaningfully in the service's quality improvement processes, including the development and review of the Quality Improvement Plan;
  - » support families and the community to understand the role of the educational leader in relation to their own child's participation in the service, and regularly invite them to discuss their own goals and expectations for their child's learning to inform the educational program
- The service supports and enables families and the community to provide feedback on quality improvement processes, and this feedback is actively considered as part of the regular cycle of self-assessment that supports continuous quality improvement
- The service builds and maintains community partnerships that strengthen the professional learning community and support continuous quality improvement, enhancing outcomes for children, families, and the service team
- Quality improvement processes contribute to a culture of inclusiveness and a sense of belonging at the service, and suit the unique context of the service.

ASSESSMENT AND RATING PROCESS

This chapter explains the assessment and rating process of education and care services and provides guidance on the self-assessment and quality improvement planning process. It also provides detail about how ratings are calculated and reviewed against the National Quality Standard.

1. INTRODUCTION

National Law & Regulations

Sections 3(2)(c), 3(2)(e)
Regulation 133

Services are assessed and rated against the National Quality Standard (NQS) to:

- promote continuous improvement in the provision of quality education and care
- improve knowledge and access to information about the quality of services to help families make informed decisions about their child's education and care.

Services are assessed and rated against the NQS by the state or territory regulatory authority.

The National Regulations outline the assessment and rating process for education and care services including the rating levels.

See the *Guide to the National Quality Standard* chapter for more information on the NQS.

Summary of the assessment and rating process

Self-assessment and quality improvement

Approved provider conducts a self-assessment to determine the quality of current practices against the NQS and linked regulatory requirements.

Approved provider identifies strengths and where improvements can be made which is documented in a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

Notice of visit

Regulatory authority provides written notice to approved provider that the assessment and rating process has commenced. The QIP is submitted to the regulatory authority prior to the visit, along with any additional information requested by the regulatory authority.

Assessment and rating visit takes place at the service.

Draft report

Regulatory authority provides the approved provider with a draft assessment and rating report.

Feedback on draft report

Provider can give feedback on any factual inaccuracies in the report and evidence to support feedback.

Final report and notice of final ratings is issued to the provider

Feedback considered before final report is finalised and issued.

Final report

Approved provider may choose to apply for a review of final ratings within the set review period.

Ratings published on national registers

Once the review period has ended, the final ratings are published on the national registers on the ACECQA website.

2. SELF-ASSESSMENT AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

National Law

Regulation 55

Ongoing self-assessment against the National Quality Standard (NQS) drives continuous improvement and is essential to providing quality outcomes for children.

Under the National Regulations, the approved provider must ensure a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is in place for each service.

The purpose of the QIP is to help providers self-assess their performance in delivering quality education and care, and to plan future improvements. The QIP also helps regulatory authorities with the assessment of the service. The QIP does not have to be provided in any specific format, but must include the three required components outlined below.

A QIP must:

- include an assessment by the approved provider of the quality of the practices of the service against the NQS and the National Law and Regulations
- identify areas that the approved provider considers may require improvement
- include a statement of philosophy for the service.

The following section explains the three components of the QIP.

Self-assessment

The first step in the quality improvement planning process is to conduct a self-assessment.

Self-assessment involves critically reflecting on current practice at the service, deciding what is being done well and identifying opportunities for improvement.

The approved provider, educators and management should be familiar with the NQS and related regulatory requirements and reflect on practice, policies and procedures against the seven (7) quality areas of the NQS and related regulatory requirements. This will provide an informed picture of:

- current practice
- the quality of education and care experienced by children and families.

This picture of current practice highlights and confirms the service's strengths and is the starting point for planning to improve quality.

The *Guide to the National Quality Standard* includes a set of reflective questions that serve as prompts to explore current practice at the service. This can assist the provider to think about how and why things are done in a particular way while reflecting on specific practices to determine the:

- effectiveness of practice for all children and families
- relevance of the practice to the service and its stakeholders
- equity and fairness of the practice for all children, families and educators.

Areas for improvement

Reflection determines quality improvements

Following the reflection and self-assessment of current practice in the service, the next step is to identify the opportunities where quality improvements can be made and to plan effectively to implement them.

It is important to be open, honest and critically reflective when undertaking the self-assessment and quality improvement planning processes.

Turning reflection into quality improvement strategies

The QIP must include strategies to address the areas for further improvement identified during the self-assessment process.

A service rated Meeting or Exceeding NQS in all quality areas should be able to demonstrate its ongoing commitment to continuous improvement by documenting how the service will continue to explore opportunities to improve quality.

Statement of philosophy

The statement of philosophy describes the service's values, beliefs and understandings about children, families, the role of educators and the ways children learn. To meet the NQS, the statement of philosophy should be used to guide all aspects of the service's operations.

It is recommended educators, families and children be involved in the development and review of the service's philosophy statement. Regular review of the philosophy in light of new research, the approved learning frameworks, and families' views and expectations will support the service's goals for quality education and care, and continuous improvement.

A statement of philosophy:

Quality Improvement Plan: the main points

National Law

Regulations 55–56

Submit the plan: timeline for new services

The approved provider must ensure that a QIP is prepared for a new service within three months of the service approval being granted, and must provide the QIP to the regulatory authority on request.

Update the plan: timeline for existing services

The QIP is designed to be a dynamic, evolving document. At the commencement of the assessment and rating process, the regulatory authority will request that the service QIP is provided within a specified timeframe. Providers can make any necessary revisions to their existing plan before submitting.

National Law

Regulation 56

Review the plan annually

The approved provider must review and revise the QIP at least annually, having regard to the NQS, and at any time when directed by the regulatory authority. The provider must submit the most current copy of the QIP to the regulatory authority on request.

Developing the QIP

Visit the ACECQA website (acecqa.gov.au) to download an optional QIP template. Approved providers can use an alternate format however information required under regulation 55 must be included.

When writing the QIP, providers should reflect on the outcomes of the self-assessment process. Services may prioritise areas for improvement against the seven (7) quality areas of the NQS and the related regulatory requirements. There is no requirement that all 15 standards and 40 elements are addressed in the QIP. The QIP should include the key areas for improvement.

Services may have a range of documents that assist and record the planning process. The QIP is a summary of the key areas prioritised for improvement.

Collaborate when developing the plan

Developing the service's plan can be a collaborative process which involves children, families, educators, staff members, management and other interested parties, such as representatives of the community or agencies that work with the service to support the inclusion of children.

Update the plan after assessment and rating

It is recommended the QIP is updated after the assessment and rating process is completed to reflect the outcomes of the assessment and rating process.

National Law

Regulation 31

Keep a current QIP at the service and make it available to families and regulators

A service approval is granted subject to the condition that the approved provider ensure a current QIP is kept on the premises of the service at all times or, in the case of a family day care service, at the principal office of the family day care service.

The QIP must also be available on request for inspection by the regulatory authority and to parents of a child who is enrolled or who is seeking to enrol at the service.

3. THE RATING SYSTEM

National Law & Regulations

Regulations 57–62, 172(d)
Section 153

The rating levels under the National Law and Regulations are:

- Excellent rating (the criteria for this rating level is determined by ACECQA)
- Exceeding National Quality Standard
- Meeting National Quality Standard
- Working Towards National Quality Standard
- Significant Improvement Required.

Services that have not been assessed and rated hold the provisional rating of 'Provisional – Not Yet Assessed'.

The rating certificate must be displayed at the service at all times.

What do the ratings mean

1. Educational program and practice
2. Children's health and safety
3. Physical environment
4. Staffing arrangements
5. Relationships with children
6. Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
7. Governance and leadership

Significant Improvement Required

Service does not meet one of the seven quality areas or a section of the legislation and there is a significant risk to the safety, health and wellbeing of children.

The regulatory authority will take immediate action.

Working Towards National Quality Standard

Service provides a safe education and care program, but there are one or more areas identified for improvement.

Meeting National Quality Standard

Service meets the National Quality Standard.

Service provides quality education and care in all seven quality areas.

Exceeding National Quality Standard

Service goes beyond the requirements of the National Quality Standard in at least four of the seven quality areas.

Excellent

Service promotes exceptional education and care, demonstrates sector leadership, and is committed to continually improving.

This rating can only be awarded by ACECQA.

Services rated Exceeding National Quality Standard in all seven quality areas may choose to apply for this rating.

Assessment process

National Law

Regulation 63

Under the National Regulations, an authorised officer of the regulatory authority conducts an assessment and rating visit:

- of the service premises at a centre-based service
- of one or more approved family day care venues or residences for a family day care service.

As part of the assessment and rating process, the regulatory authority must consider:

- the current QIP for the service
- any rating assessment history of the service, including any records of previous rating assessments made under the National Law
- the service's history of compliance.

National Regulations

Regulation 62(2)

The regulatory authority may also consider a range of information when determining a rating, including:

- information disclosed by a government department, public or local authority, state or territory regulatory authority or the relevant Commonwealth department
- steps taken by the service to address matters identified during the rating assessment
- other quality assurance or registration process under an education law applicable to the service
- in the case of a service that provides education and care to children in their year before school, whether the service facilitates access to a preschool program.

Steps in the assessment and rating process

The following table outlines the steps and timelines in the assessment and rating process. These timeframes are guidelines only.

Timeline	Step	Process
Week 1	A. Notice of start of process	Approved provider is notified the assessment and rating process has commenced and the four (4) week period in which the assessment and rating visit will occur. The notification may also include: • the purpose of the assessment and rating process • a request to submit the service QIP and a date for when it should be submitted, typically within three to four weeks • that the authorised officer will advise of the actual assessment and rating visit date at least five working days in advance • guidance on how to source information on the assessment and rating process and developing/updating the QIP • a request for the approved provider or their key contact person (usually a nominated supervisor) to be available at specific times during the visit, for example at the beginning and the end. At the same time, the authorised officer starts an analysis of the available information about the service, including reviewing the compliance and rating history.
Weeks 3–4	B. Quality Improvement Plan	The approved provider submits the QIP to the regulatory authority. The regulatory authority notifies the approved provider that the QIP was received. The notification may also include: • a reminder that the approved provider or their key contact person (usually a nominated supervisor) is to be available at specific times during the visit. • details of the visit, including the approximate time and minimum length for the visit. For centre-based services the letter may advise that the assessment covers each room and all common areas (including outdoors). For family day care services the letter may advise that there will be an initial visit to the service's principal office, a request for the service's family day care register, an assessment of a sample of educators and a final visit to the service's principal office. The authorised officer reviews the service's QIP and prepares for the assessment and rating visit.
Weeks 5–8	C. Notice of visit	For all service types, the authorised officer will confirm the date of the visit and approximate time of arrival at least five working days before the assessment and rating visit. For family day care services, the authorised officer will give notice of the educator sample to be visited either on the day of the visit or up to five days before the visit occurs.

Timeline	Step	Process
	D. Visit occurs	The authorised officer conducts the assessment visit and records observations and evidence. The authorised officer: • focuses on observations of practice • visits a sample of family day care educators' residences or venues, for family day care services • engages in discussion with the approved provider or their key contact person, educators and staff members, and co-ordinators for family day care services • sights and considers documentation. The authorised officer may give some general feedback at the time of the visit but will not give an indication of the service rating. The authorised officer also gives the approved provider, at the time of assessment or as soon as practicable afterwards, an indication of any minor adjustments that may be made at the service before the draft assessment and rating report is issued to the approved provider. Any minor adjustments made by the service are included on the authorised officer's notes and in the assessment and rating report.
	E. After the visit	The authorised officer analyses the information gathered through the assessment and rating process, including whether there was any evidence of inconsistent practice at the service. The authorised officer prepares the draft report with the proposed ratings. The authorised officer also: • addresses any issues that need to be attended to immediately as a result of a risk to the safety, health or wellbeing of a child or children • clarifies any identified non-compliance • informs the service that a draft report with ratings for all quality areas and an overall rating will be provided approximately three to five weeks after the visit, and that the provider will have 10 working days to provide feedback.
Approx. 3–5 weeks after the visit date	F. Draft report	The approved provider is issued the draft report and covering letter. The covering letter includes the contact details of the regulatory authority for providing feedback on any factual inaccuracies in the report and providing evidence to support their feedback. It also states that the draft report will become the final report if no feedback is received within ten (10) working days.
	G. Consider feedback	The regulatory authority considers feedback received from the approved provider.
Approx. 8 weeks after the visit date	H. Final report	The report is finalised, the final ratings are determined and the notice of final ratings is issued to the approved provider. The regulatory authority informs the approved provider and provides information about the review process, including: • requests for a review must be lodged within 14 days of the approved provider's receipt of the report • details of the person to whom a review application is made (name and address) • what can/cannot be reviewed • the review timeline. The approved provider has 14 days to apply for a first tier review. The 14 day period commences: • from the day the rating notice is sent if provided electronically • from the fourth day after the rating notice was posted.

Before the assessment and rating visit

Before the visit, the approved provider determines who should be the key contact person. For example, this may be the approved provider themselves, a person in a management or control or a nominated supervisor.

Authorised officers will gain an understanding of the service before the visit by conducting a desktop review. This review must include the service's QIP, assessment history and compliance history. The desktop review contributes to the plan authorised officers develop for the visit.

National Regulations

Regulation 63

Assessment and rating visit length

As a guide, it is expected that assessment and rating visits for centre-based services will be for at least six (6) hours. There may be circumstances where this is not adhered to due to the size and configuration of the centre-based service.

For services providing multiple types of outside school hours care (e.g. before/after and vacation), it is likely that not all types of care will be visited in the assessment and rating process.

For family day care services, assessment and rating visits generally involve visits to:

- the service (scheme/coordination unit) at the beginning and or end of the assessment and rating visit
- a sample of one or more approved family day care venues or family day care residences. The regulatory authority will determine the sample from the register of family day care educators.

Frequency of the assessment and rating cycle

When regulatory authorities schedule quality rating assessments, the goal is to assess and rate the quality of services, drive continuous improvement and keep information for families and communities accurate and up to date.

To focus resources on services most in need of service improvement, the actions of regulatory authorities are responsive and risk-based. Services with a lower quality rating will be re-rated more frequently. Services with higher quality ratings will generally have a longer period of time between assessment and rating visits in recognition of their ability to operate above the NQS.

Regulatory authorities consider the following factors when managing assessment and rating schedules:

- The quality rating of a service when previously assessed, including results against the quality area, standard and element level – for example, services with three to five quality areas rated at Working Towards NQS may be reassessed more frequently than services with one or two quality areas rated at Working Towards NQS. Similarly, services rated Working Towards NQS in certain Standards, or for a higher number of Standards may also be reassessed more frequently.

- A change in service attributes that could be reasonably considered to affect the service's quality – for example, changes in provider or service management.
- Events that occur at the service – for example, serious incidents, complaints or non-compliance with the National Law can indicate a change in quality and a higher scheduling priority.
- The length of time since the last assessment – for example, over time a quality rating can lose its currency and value for families.

Each regulatory authority manages its assessment schedule in a responsive manner, making adjustments to the schedule as new information emerges and making best use of available resources.

4. HOW IS AN ASSESSMENT AND RATING VISIT CONDUCTED?

Evidence collection

Authorised officers are trained to use 'observe', 'discuss' and 'sight' techniques to gather information and evidence that supports assessment of the service against the NQS, and the National Law and National Regulations.

Observe. The authorised officer may observe children, families, educators, directors, co-ordinators and staff members as part of the service's practices.

Discuss. The authorised officer may discuss the service's practices with the key contact person, educators, directors, co-ordinators, family day care educator assistants or staff members.

Sight. The authorised officer may sight documentation required by the National Law and Regulations, and other documentation as evidence of the service's practices.

For more guidance on how the elements of the NQS may be assessed, see the *Guide to the National Quality Standard.*

Communication during the visit

When visiting a service, the authorised officer(s) introduces themselves to the key contact person and explains what to expect in an assessment and rating visit, including how they will gather evidence (by observing, discussing and sighting evidence). Typically, the authorised officer will ask for a brief tour of the service and to be introduced to educators and staff.

During the visit, authorised officers will try to minimise disruption to practice, unless there is a significant risk to children.

Authorised officers may:

- inform the key contact person when taking breaks
- provide the key contact person with broad verbal feedback, but they cannot give an indication of the rating at this time
- advise of any matters where they can offer the Minor Adjustment Policy, and the timeframe to fix the issue/s.

The assessment and rating process is an important opportunity for providers to demonstrate how the service is delivering quality outcomes against the NQS for children in the context of the service, families and community.

The authorised officer should inform the service that a draft report with ratings for all quality areas and an overall rating will be provided approximately three to five weeks after the visit, and that the approved provider will have 10 working days to provide feedback on any inaccuracies in the report.

National Law & Regulations

Section 152
Regulations 57–62

How are ratings determined?

After an assessment and rating visit occurs, the regulatory authority will:

- consider evidence provided by the approved provider where there have been minor adjustments
- determine the ratings, including assessing inconsistent practice where applicable.

The regulatory authority determines ratings by assessing each element of the NQS. Each standard and quality area is then rated. The overall rating is calculated based on these results.

Services must be rated Exceeding in all quality areas of the NQS to be eligible to apply to ACECQA for the Excellent rating.

Assessing elements

The authorised officer will assess each element as met or not met.

Assessing standards

The authorised officer will assess the evidence against each standard.

- If any element under a standard is not met, the rating for that standard will be Working Towards NQS.
- If all elements are met, the authorised officer will determine whether service practice for each standard represents what is expected at the Meeting level (Meeting NQS) or represents a level of quality above what is required at the Meeting level (Exceeding NQS).
- Each standard will be rated at either Meeting NQS or Exceeding NQS.

The following three themes must be demonstrated in service practice for a standard to be rated as Exceeding NQS:

Theme 1. Practice is embedded in service operations

Theme 2. Practice is informed by critical reflection

Theme 3. Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community.

See ***Exceeding theme guidance*** for more information.

Determining quality area ratings

After the authorised officer has assessed each standard, the quality area ratings are calculated.

- If any standard within a quality area has been rated as Working Towards NQS, the rating for the quality area will be Working Towards NQS.
- If all standards within a quality area are rated at least Meeting NQS, the rating for that quality area will be at least Meeting NQS.
- If all standards within a quality area are rated Exceeding NQS, the rating for the quality area will be Exceeding NQS.
- If all standards within a quality area are rated at least Meeting NQS, but not all standards are rated Exceeding NQS, the rating for the quality area will be Meeting NQS.

Determining overall service ratings

- If any quality area has been rated as Working Towards NQS, the overall service rating cannot be higher than Working Towards NQS.
- If all quality areas are at least Meeting NQS and four or more quality areas are rated as Exceeding NQS, with at least two of these being quality areas 1, 5, 6, or 7, the overall rating will be Exceeding NQS.
- Services rated Exceeding NQS in all seven quality areas are eligible to apply to ACECQA for the Excellent rating.

The Significant Improvement Required rating

A rating of Significant Improvement Required can be applied at the standard and quality area level. If a rating of Significant Improvement Required is given for any standard or quality area, the overall service rating is Significant Improvement Required.

How quality rating levels are determined

The following table demonstrates how the authorised officer determines ratings by assessing each element against the NQS to determine if it is met or not met. This information is then used to rate each standard and quality area to determine the overall rating.

Task	Rating Levels			
	Significant Improvement Required	Working Towards National Quality Standard	Meeting National Quality Standard	Exceeding National Quality Standard
1. Assess each element as 'met' or 'not met'	Assess each element as 'met' or 'not met' and determine compliance with the relevant regulations.			
2. Rate each standard	A Significant Improvement Required rating may be given for a standard and/or quality area. See below.	Service does not meet one or more elements or relevant regulations for the standard. The service does not meet the standard.	All elements and relevant regulations for the standard are 'met'. The service does not demonstrate the three Exceeding themes for the standard. The standard is rated Meeting NQS	All elements and relevant regulations for the standard are 'met'. The service demonstrates the three Exceeding themes for the standard: 1. Practice is embedded in service operations 2. Practice is informed by critical reflection 3. Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community The standard is rated Exceeding NQS. See ***Exceeding theme guidance*** for more information.

Task	Rating Levels			
3. Rate each quality area	Service does not meet that quality area or a relevant regulation for that quality area and the regulatory authority is satisfied there is a significant risk to the safety, health or wellbeing of any child or children being educated and cared for by the service.	Service does not meet a standard in that quality area or a relevant regulation for that quality area but is not rated as Significant Improvement Required (regulation 60(1)).	Service meets the standards and relevant regulations for that quality area (regulation 61(1)). Some standards may be rated Exceeding in the quality area.	Service exceeds the standards for that quality area and complies with the relevant regulations for that quality area (regulation 62(1)), subject to the following criteria: **Criteria 1** If a service provides education and care for children who are in the year that is 2 years before grade 1 of school, the service can only be rated Exceeding NQS in Quality Area 1 if the service either: • provides a preschool program, or • has a documented arrangement with an approved provider of another education and care service to provide a preschool program and informs parents of this arrangement (regulation 62(2)). **Criteria 2** To be rated Exceeding NQS in a quality area: • All standards in the quality area must be rated Exceeding NQS
4.Determine overall rating	Overall rating is Significant Improvement Required if the service is rated Significant Improvement Required for any quality area (regulation 59(2)).	Overall rating is Working Towards NQS if any quality areas are rated Working Towards NQS but the service does not have a Significant Improvement Required rating for any quality area (regulation 60(2)).	Overall rating is Meeting NQS if all quality areas are rated Meeting NQS and/or Exceeding NQS but the service does not satisfy the requirements of regulation 62 for an overall Exceeding NQS rating (regulation 61(2)).	Overall rating is Exceeding NQS if all quality areas are rated at least Meeting NQS, and four or more quality areas are Exceeding NQS, with at least two of these being quality areas 1, 5, 6 or 7.

5. EXCEEDING NQS THEME GUIDANCE

To achieve a rating of Exceeding NQS for any standard, the Exceeding themes need to be demonstrated in service practice for that standard:

- 1. Practice is embedded in service operations
- 2. Practice is informed by critical reflection
- 3. Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

This section provides more information about each of the three Exceeding themes. It also includes a list of indicators designed to assist services and assessors to consider if practice is embedded in service operations, as expected at the Exceeding NQS level. See the ***Guide to the National Quality Standard*** for more information on what is expected for each standard.

Exceeding Theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

Overview

At the Exceeding level for any standard, high quality practice is demonstrated consistently and frequently across the service. It is interwoven through all aspects of the program and is visible, directly or indirectly, in many forms.

At the Exceeding level, educators' embedded practice is consistent with what is considered high quality practice in relation to the standard. When practice is 'embedded' this means it is usual practice for the standard. Members of the service team know and understand what is expected in regard to high quality practice for the standard and consistently work at this level as appropriate for their role and responsibilities within the service.

When high quality practice is embedded, it is reflected across the service's operations and systems. Observed and discussed practices align with the service's philosophy, the principles and practices of the approved learning framework/s, and policies and procedures that relate to the standard.

At the Exceeding level, educators demonstrate a deep understanding of pedagogy. This leads to exemplary practice such as embedding high quality practice throughout service provisions, underpinning all practice with critical reflection and creating contextually appropriate practice for the service community. When educators demonstrate this they are able to link their practice with the National Quality Standards and the reasons behind this approach, in particular how it connects to the service philosophy and broader vision for quality.

Fundamentally, educators understand the themes of exceeding for high quality practice and for the purpose of improving learning and development outcomes for children.

What we aim to achieve with Exceeding Theme 1

When the service team approaches practice with a shared sense of understanding, purpose and agency, this creates a stable, high quality education and care environment that benefits children, families, and the broader service community.

The underlying consistency in intent and approach to practice across the service helps to create a sense of continuity, predictability, and security for each child. A consistent approach to practice does not mean that practice is rigid, unchanging, unreflective, or habit-based. Rather, practice is of high quality, thoughtful and intentional, but is also responsive to the everyday flow of events.

Understanding what is expected and why provides a basis for ongoing discussions about practice, and for ensuring systems are in place to re-think and refine practice, contributing to continuous quality improvement over time.

Assessment indicators for Exceeding Theme 1

Services may demonstrate Exceeding level practice for standards in a variety of ways that suit their particular operating environment and approach to practice. The following list of indicators is designed to assist services and assessors to consider if practice is demonstrated at the Exceeding NQS level.

- Quality practice is demonstrated consistently and frequently across the service at all times
- Members of the service team, as appropriate to their role and responsibilities within the service:
  - » understand what is expected in regard to quality practice for the standard and work consistently at this level
  - » are able to explain how their practice in relation to the standard connects to the service's philosophy and supports the service's broader vision for quality
  - » are thoughtful and intentional in their practice for the standard and respond confidently to the daily flow of events
- Observed and discussed practice aligns with the service's philosophy, the principles and practices of the approved learning framework/s and programs in place, and any policies and procedures that underpin practice for the standard

A tailored list of indicators of what can be considered Exceeding practice for each standard is included in the *Guide to the National Quality Standard*.

Exceeding Theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

Overview

Critical reflection means continually thinking about, questioning, analysing and re-evaluating practice to identify where further improvements could be made for educators, children and families.

At the Exceeding level for any standard, members of the service team engage in ongoing critical reflection on their practice, as appropriate for their role and responsibilities within the service. Individually and as a team they:

- ask ***why*** and ***how*** questions of themselves and each other, such as:
  - Why do we do that?
  - Why do we do it in ***this*** way?
  - How does this practice contribute to improved outcomes for all children and families?
  - Does this practice advantage some children and families and disadvantage others?
  - Does this practice include any stereotyping, bias or inequity?
  - Does this practice need to change?
  - How can we improve this practice?
- consider the theoretical perspectives underpinning their actions and decision-making
- seek different views and opinions and are open to exploring possibilities that they may not have previously considered
- draw on various sources of knowledge and research evidence, and evaluate these sources for their credibility and relevance as well as their 'fit' to the context of the service
- consider the rationale behind new ideas and practices to assess if they align with the approved learning framework and the philosophy of the service

Respect, trust and collegiality are valued so that all members of the service team are able to raise concerns, ask difficult questions, challenge the way things are currently done, and create change in the approach to practice across the service.

The service is responsive to issues, incidents, complaints or feedback. All members of the service team are willing to reconsider their views and re-evaluate their practice, and are mindful of their responsibility to make ethical and well-informed decisions.

What we aim to achieve with Exceeding Theme 2

Engaging in critical reflection supports the service team to make well-informed decisions and plans, to implement and evaluate carefully considered changes to their practice, and to respond with integrity to complex situations and challenges. It also assists them to articulate the reasons for their decisions and practices and to be accountable to children, families, colleagues and communities for their choice of approaches.

Continuously reflecting on practice assists educators to become increasingly thoughtful about their work and motivated to explore new ideas and approaches. Reflective practice supports educators to continue their ongoing professional learning by further developing their knowledge, skills and practices. It also encourages them to stay focussed on continuous quality improvement to improve outcomes for children.

Assessment indicators for Exceeding Theme 2

Services may demonstrate Exceeding level practice for standards in a variety of ways that suit their particular operating environment and approach to practice. The following list of indicators is designed to assist services and assessors to consider if practice reflects critical reflection as expected at the Exceeding NQS level.

- Practice is systematically and regularly reflected on and implications for further improvements are purposefully identified and implemented
- Ongoing learning and quality improvements occur through a systematic cycle of inquiry
- All members of the service team, as appropriate to their role and responsibilities:
  - are aware of the influences on their practice including the key theoretical perspectives identified in the approved learning framework/s and are able to describe how they draw on these in their work
  - can identify personal, professional and organisational values in relation to practice
  - are comfortable raising concerns and challenging the way things are done, with the expectation that their views will be valued and considered
  - are mindful of their responsibility to make ethical and informed decisions
  - consider the social justice and equity implications of their practice
- Decision-making processes draw on diverse perspectives, which are considered in relation to how they align with the service philosophy and the approved learning framework/s used at the service
- Reasons for decisions that result in changes to practice are clearly understood by all
- The service is responsive to issues, incidents, complaints or feedback, and these inform ongoing quality improvement

A tailored list of indicators of what can be considered Exceeding practice for each standard is included in the *Guide to the National Quality Standard*.

Exceeding Theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Overview

At the Exceeding level for any standard, practice is informed by meaningful engagement with children, families and the community and is suited to the unique context of the service.

Educators learn from, and build on the strengths of children, families, colleagues and the community. They view responsive, reciprocal and ongoing relationships as crucial to gaining a greater understanding of the priorities and aspirations of children, families and the community. Educators recognise, respect and build on the primary role of families in their own child's learning and development.

Educators seek deeper insights into the wealth of knowledge, capacities, expertise and resources within families, the community and colleagues, including professionals from local support agencies. Educators look for opportunities to build purposeful collaborations and partnerships that utilise and extend these strengths in ways that contribute to achieving the aspirations and priorities of children, families and the service.

Respect for different perspectives is central to the culture of the service. This respect is evident in the way educators seek input, guidance and feedback from all involved in the service, including children. Educators are committed to listening to children's voices and to trying to understand their perspectives so that they can honour children's rights to have input into matters that affect them.

Each service has a unique context that is shaped by its families, community and location. Diversity in factors such as language, cultural identity, child rearing practices, values and beliefs contributes to the unique depth and complexity of each service. At the Exceeding level for any standard, practice is suited to and draws inspiration from this unique context. The service team is inclusive, modelling and actively promoting respect and valuing of diversity with children, families, colleagues and the community. Educators take every opportunity to extend children's understanding of their local context and of their wider world.

What we aim to achieve with Exceeding Theme 3

Services that demonstrate that they are Exceeding the NQS do so in ways that are unique to the children, families and context of their service. Educators consider the children and families who are using the service as well as the particular characteristics, priorities and strengths of the local community when planning, delivering and reflecting on everyday practice. This results in practice that is tailored and responsive to the needs of the children, families and community.

Children learn and develop in the different contexts in which they live. They are more likely to be confident and involved learners when they see connections and experience continuity of learning between their different contexts. Drawing on the strengths of the service context fosters a culture of inclusiveness that enhances families' sense of belonging, making it more likely that they will sustain their engagement with the service. It also provides opportunities for children to develop a sense of identity and to see themselves as agents of change in a tolerant and diverse world.

Assessment indicators for Exceeding Theme 3

Services may demonstrate Exceeding level practice for standards in a variety of ways that suit their particular operating environment and approach to practice. The following list of indicators is designed to assist services and assessors to consider if practice reflects meaningful engagement with families and/or the community and suits the unique context of the service as expected at the Exceeding NQS level.

- Practice reflects, utilises and builds on the unique strengths and priorities of children and families at the service
- The service actively builds and maintains relationships with families and/or community partners, drawing on a range of communication strategies to support meaningful participation by all
- Opportunities are regularly provided for family and/or community partners to meaningfully participate in service decisions and solve problems
- Practice suits the unique environmental context and/or location of the service
- Practice reflects the cultural and community context of the service
- The voices of children are valued and taken into account
- Practice fosters a sense of inclusiveness and belonging for children, families, the service team, and the broader community

A tailored list of indicators of what can be considered Exceeding practice for each standard is included in the *Guide to the National Quality Standard*.

6. MAKING MINOR ADJUSTMENTS

National Regulations

Regulation 63(2)(b)

The regulatory authority may consider any information available to them about any steps taken by the education and care service to rectify any matters identified during the rating assessment.

A service rating should accurately reflect service quality. Minor matters that do not seriously impact on a service's quality may not affect the rating if they are able to be rectified quickly and easily. There may be some circumstances in which the regulatory authority gives an approved provider the opportunity to make minor adjustments prior to finalising a service's assessment report and overall rating. If a minor adjustment could result in an individual element being assessed as 'met' instead of 'not met', the regulatory authority should consider offering a minor adjustment, even if other elements in the standard are 'not met'.

The regulatory authority may give an approved provider a short time to make these minor adjustments in the following circumstances.

Circumstances in which minor adjustments may be offered
There is no unacceptable risk to the safety, health or wellbeing of children
The quality of service provided is minimally impacted
Rectification can take place quickly and easily
The matters to be adjusted are minor
Elements that have been assessed as not met are elements where a minor adjustment could result in the element being met. The service may receive a higher rating against a standard if the issue is rectified
The changes required involve simple, concrete solutions that can be implemented within the specified timeframe (e.g. within days of the assessment and rating visit, preferably immediately, unless otherwise specified by the regulatory authority)

At the time of the assessment or soon after, the regulatory authority will inform the approved provider of the opportunity to make minor adjustments and provide evidence of those adjustments before the draft assessment and rating report is provided. The regulatory authority assesses whether the evidence provided demonstrates that an element assessed as 'not met' during the assessment and rating visit is now considered to be 'met'.

The approved provider's evidence must satisfy the regulatory authority that appropriate corrective action has been taken without the need to make a subsequent assessment and rating visit to the service. Examples of evidence could include:

- photographs (e.g. to demonstrate that a physical hazard has been removed or fixed, or to demonstrate that an item of documentation is now being displayed at the service)
- copies of revised written policies or procedures
- a record indicating that information has been provided to families attending the service (such as an email).

The evidence must satisfy the regulatory authority that the issue has been fully rectified. Evidence provided after the regulatory authority has issued the draft report to the approved provider for feedback will generally not be considered.

An approved provider may choose not to make minor adjustments, or not to provide evidence of minor adjustments, in which case the regulatory authority will draft the service's assessment report and rating based on the circumstances of the service at the time of the assessment and rating visit.

Providing evidence to demonstrate that an issue has been rectified does not guarantee that the service will be assessed as having met the relevant element or standard.

The right to review

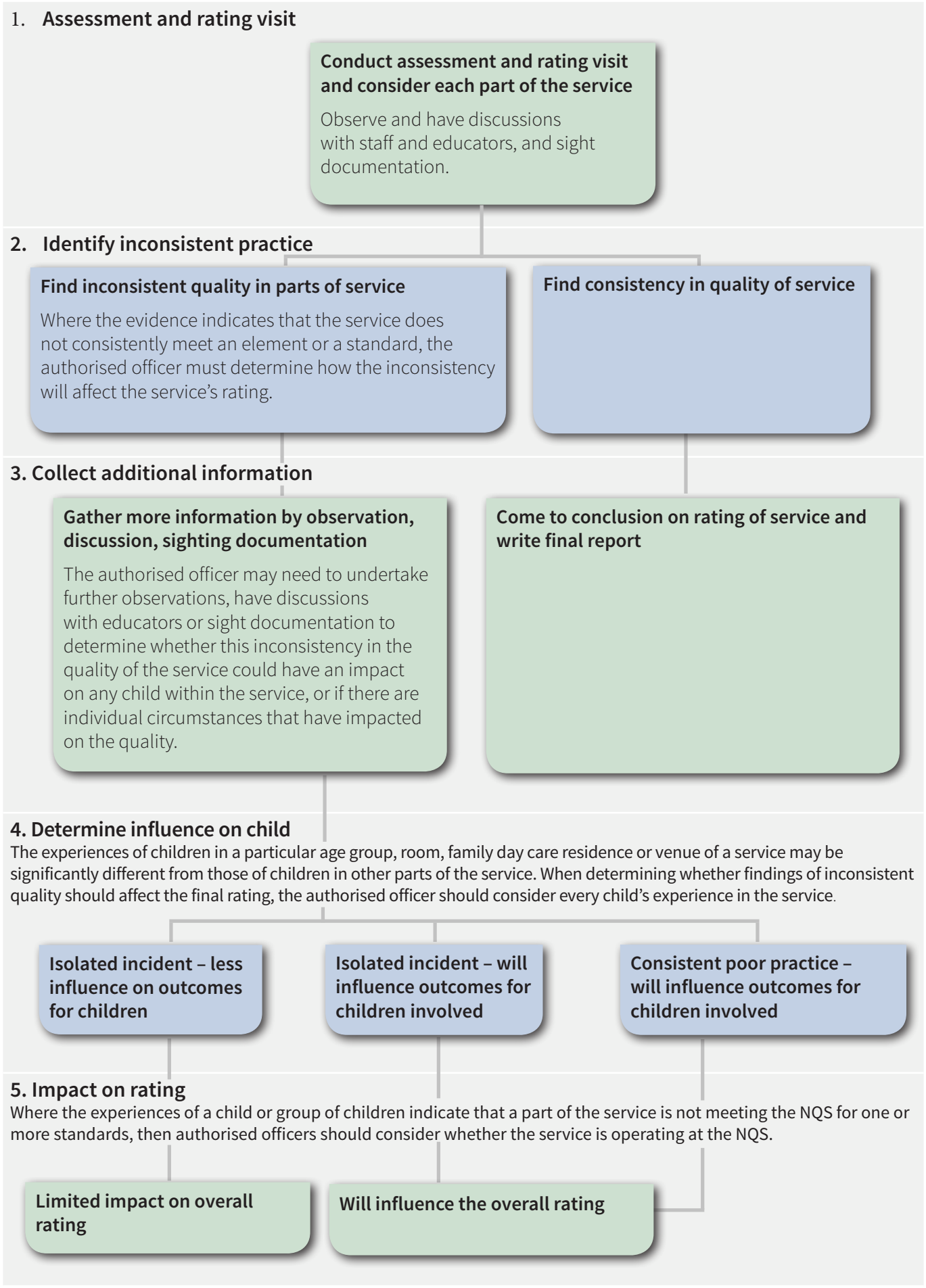
An approved provider cannot request a review of a decision made by the regulatory authority to apply the minor adjustments policy.

Assessing inconsistent quality

The term 'inconsistent quality' refers to situations where different levels of service quality are identified at an assessment and rating visit, including in different rooms, sessions, residences or venues or between different educators in the one room. The experiences of children within particular age groups or specific rooms within a service may be significantly different from what has been identified across the service. For example, experiences of some children in the service may be consistently below the NQS.

The final rating should take into consideration the impact this inconsistent quality has on the experiences of each child in the service.

The flow chart below provides guidance to authorised officers about assessing inconsistent quality.


1. Assessment and rating visit
Conduct assessment and rating visit and consider each part of the service
Observe and have discussions with staff and educators, and sight documentation.
2. Identify inconsistent practice
Find inconsistent quality in parts of service
Where the evidence indicates that the service does not consistently meet an element or a standard, the authorised officer must determine how the inconsistency will affect the service's rating.
Find consistency in quality of service
3. Collect additional information
Gather more information by observation, discussion, sighting documentation
The authorised officer may need to undertake further observations, have discussions with educators or sight documentation to determine whether this inconsistency in the quality of the service could have an impact on any child within the service, or if there are individual circumstances that have impacted on the quality.
Come to conclusion on rating of service and write final report
4. Determine influence on child
The experiences of children in a particular age group, room, family day care residence or venue of a service may be significantly different from those of children in other parts of the service. When determining whether findings of inconsistent quality should affect the final rating, the authorised officer should consider every child's experience in the service.
Isolated incident – less influence on outcomes for children
Isolated incident – will influence outcomes for children involved
Consistent poor practice – will influence outcomes for children involved
5. Impact on rating
Where the experiences of a child or group of children indicate that a part of the service is not meeting the NQS for one or more standards, then authorised officers should consider whether the service is operating at the NQS.
Limited impact on overall rating
Will influence the overall rating

7. WAIVERS

The impact of waivers on the assessment and rating process

A service granted a waiver can still achieve ratings of Meeting National Quality Standard and Exceeding National Quality Standard. For the purposes of an assessment, the service is either taken to comply or not required to comply with the requirements of the National Regulations and elements of the NQS that are covered by the waiver
(see *Applications and Approvals*).

8. EVIDENCE OF NON-COMPLIANCE

Compliance issues identified through the assessment and rating process

In some cases where an element is not met, this may relate to non-compliance with the National Law and Regulations. The identified compliance issues may be reflected in the assessment and rating report and compliance action may be taken in parallel to the assessment and rating process (see *Regulatory Authority Powers*).

9. SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT REQUIRED

National Regulations

Regulation 59

A rating of Significant Improvement Required can be applied at standard and quality area level. If a rating of Significant Improvement Required is given for any standard or quality area, the overall service rating is Significant Improvement Required.

Using the Significant Improvement Required rating

The Significant Improvement Required rating may be given when an authorised officer (in consultation with their manager) is satisfied that the service does not meet a standard, quality area, or relevant regulation for that quality area in a way that poses: 'a significant risk to the safety, health or wellbeing of any child or children being educated and cared for by the service' (regulation 59).

A significant risk is more likely to arise when there is non-compliance with the physical environment, children's health and safety, or staffing requirements, but it could arise in other parts of the NQS. For example, poor educational programming requirements could pose a significant risk to the wellbeing of a child or children given the implications for children's learning and development.

Determining 'significant risk' to a child or children

Authorised officers must always make a case-by-case assessment (in consultation with their manager) of whether there is a 'significant risk to a child or children. Authorised officers may draw on a risk matrix to assist in determining the level of risk present and the appropriate course of action to address the risk. Further guidance on assessing risk is available in *Good Regulatory Practice*.

Risk Matrix

Consequences \ Likelihood	Rare	Unlikely	Possible	Likely	Almost Certain
Major	Moderate	High	High	Critical	Critical
Significant	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Critical
Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	High
Minor	Very low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Insignificant	Very low	Very low	Low	Moderate	Moderate

If the authorised officer determines that a 'high' or 'critical' level of risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of children is present as a result of service practice in a particular standard, quality area, or relevant regulation for that quality area, it is likely that further action would be taken.

Where an authorised officer identifies an issue that constitutes a significant risk, the authorised officer (in consultation with their manager) will need to decide whether it is appropriate to continue the visit. In the case that the assessment and rating visit is stopped, the authorised officer should ensure the decision to stop the visit is documented. If the risk can be satisfactorily addressed at the time of the visit, the assessment and rating visit may continue. The regulatory authority may choose to give the Significant Improvement Required rating for the standard or quality area where the risk was identified.

In general, authorised officers should seek to complete assessment and rating visits to ensure that sufficient evidence is gathered to allow the service to be rated against every standard. This also ensures that all major compliance issues at the service are identified. Regulatory authorities are required to give a rating for every quality area, even if one quality area is rated as Significant Improvement Required.

The assessment and rating process may only be suspended if the regulatory authority decides to take one of the actions outlined under section 137 of the National Law.

Suspending a rating assessment

National Law

Section 137

The assessment and rating process can only be suspended if the regulatory authority decides to take one of the following actions:

- suspend or cancel the service approval or provider approval
- issue a compliance notice to the approved provider in respect of the service
- issue an emergency action notice to the approved provider in respect of the service
- remove or cause the removal of a child or children from the service (emergency removal).

National Law

Sections 136, 137

Unless one of the actions listed in section 137 is taken, the rating must be determined within 60 days of the completion of the assessment and rating visit to the education and care service premises.

If one of the actions is taken, the regulatory authority must give the approved provider a written notice which states that the provider will be given the outcome of the rating assessment within 60 days after the end of the final period of review for the compliance action, or if a review is sought, the determination of the review. Emergency action notices and emergency removal of children are actions listed under section 137 which are not reviewable decisions and therefore do not have a period of review available. In these cases, the provider will be given the outcome of the rating assessment within 60 days of the emergency action notice being given or the emergency removal of children being undertaken.

If the service or provider approval is cancelled, the regulatory authority cannot give a rating for the service. If the service or provider approval is suspended, the rating assessment recommences once the suspension expires.

Other compliance actions

While there are other compliance actions which regulatory authorities might take in response to identifying an issue during an assessment and rating visit, only the actions listed under section 137 have the effect of suspending the assessment and rating timeframe. In all other cases, the regulatory authority must still determine the rating within 60 days of the assessment and rating visit.

When a rating of Significant Improvement Required is given

Regulatory authorities should reassess services which have been rated as Significant Improvement Required as soon as practicable. The reassessment is an opportunity to check the service is meeting minimum requirements to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of children in attendance.

Actions that can cause the suspension of the assessment and rating process
The provider approval or the service approval for the service is suspended or cancelled
A compliance notice has been given to the approved provider in respect of the service
A notice has been given under section 179 in respect of the service (emergency action notices)
An action has been taken under section 189 in respect of a child or children being educated and cared for by the service (emergency removal of children).

If the rating is suspended, the regulatory authority must give written notice to the approved provider. The notice must state that the service rating will be given under section 136 within 60 days after:

- the end of the final period for review of the decision or action that has resulted in the suspension of the rating assessment, or
- if a review has been sought, the determination of the review of the decision or action that has resulted in the suspension of the rating assessment.

Additional guidance

If a compliance notice is issued, the approved provider has 14 days to request a review of the notice. If the approved provider does not request a review, the 60 days to issue a service rating begins at the end of the 14 day period. If the approved provider does request a review of the notice, the 60 day period does not begin until the date of the review decision.

For example, the rating visit is day one. A compliance notice is issued on the sixth day. The provider has 14 days to request a review of the notice. If the provider does not request a review, the regulatory authority has 60 days from the end of the 14 days to issue the rating. The total time taken is 80 days.

If the compliance notice is issued on day six and the provider requests a review of the notice on day 15, and the regulatory authority makes a decision on review request on day 28, the regulatory authority has 60 days from the date of review decision to issue the rating. The total time is 88 days.

The regulatory authority may need to determine the rating for the service before the period for complying with the compliance notice has expired, for example if the regulatory authority gives the provider 90 days to comply with the compliance notice.

10. REASSESSMENT AND RE-RATING AT REQUEST OF THE APPROVED PROVIDER

National Law

Sections 138–139

An approved provider may apply to the regulatory authority to have a service (including any aspect or element of the service) reassessed and re-rated against the NQS.

While a provider indicates the element(s), standard(s) and quality area(s) they are requesting reassessment on, the regulatory authority may extend the scope of the reassessment beyond those requested by the provider. For example, regulatory authorities may reassess and re-rate the entire quality area when a provider requests a reassessment of part of that quality area.

Application for reassessment and re-rating

An application for reassessment and re-rating can only be made once every two (2) years unless the regulatory authority agrees otherwise.

An application for reassessment and re-rating must be in writing, include the prescribed information and include payment of the prescribed fee.

A regulatory authority may reassess a service or any aspect or element of a service at any time.

National Regulations

Regulation 66

Information that must be included in an application for reassessment and re-rating
The name of the education and care service
The service approval number
The name and contact details of the contact person for the purposes of the application
The nature of the reassessment sought including: application for reassessment of the service, or application for reassessment of one or more aspects or elements of the service
If the application is for reassessment of an aspect or element of the service, the particular aspects or elements and quality areas in the NQS for which reassessment is sought
A statement setting out the reasons why reassessment is sought.

Timeframe for conducting the reassessment and re-rating

There is no specific timeframe in which the regulatory authority must reassess and re-rate a service.

Given the reassessment is at the request of the approved provider, the standard timeline for assessment and rating may not need to be applied e.g. the regulatory authority may not need to give the provider as much notice of the assessment visit. However, the provider should be notified as soon as possible. The service may be reassessed sooner if circumstances permit, for example, if the application for reassessment is for one quality area.

Similarly, the regulatory authority may not need to give the provider the standard three weeks to submit the QIP as it is likely the plan will have been updated.

Identifying issues during reassessment

During the visit, the authorised officer may note an issue which was not the subject of the reassessment request. This will require case-by-case consideration, but may require the authorised officer to apply the principles of risk assessment to determine the appropriate course of action.

Where an issue is minor and unlikely to change the service's current rating for that quality area, the regulatory authority may decide not to reassess the area but take some low-level compliance action to address the issue.

Where an issue is more significant and more likely to affect the quality of the service, the regulatory authority may reassess other quality areas or all rooms within the service. As this will be a significant change to the scope of the reassessment, the authorised officer may advise the approved provider of this change.

Regulatory authorities need to decide how they will report on the reassessment. For example, the initial report may be amended with respect to the new ratings, or a new report may be issued with only the reassessed elements of the NQS and ratings.

Factors that influence reassessment and re-rating

In most cases, as part of the continuous quality improvement process that is integral to the NQF, the quality of services would be expected to improve. However, the regulatory authority may decide to reassess a service if it is concerned the quality of a service may have declined over time, or if other risk factors are present. Changes at the service, for example, may result in the decline of a service's quality. In this case, the regulatory authority may want to reassess and re-rate the service to ensure the rating level of the service accurately reflects the service quality. A regulatory authority may also decide to reassess and re-rate a service if an investigation or other compliance action has taken place.

To amend a rating level, the regulatory authority must undertake an assessment and rating of the service.

11. FIRST TIER REVIEW

National Law

Sections 141–143, 190–191

Under the National Law and Regulations an approved provider can request a review of the service's rating if the provider disagrees with the rating given.

This review of ratings by the regulatory authority is referred to as a first tier review.

How to apply

An approved provider can apply to the regulatory authority for a first tier review of the service's quality ratings. The application must:

- be submitted within 14 calendar days of receiving the final assessment and rating report
- be in writing to the regulatory authority which gave the rating
- identify on what grounds the review is being sought and include information set out in the National Regulations (see table)
- be submitted through the National Quality Agenda IT System.

National Regulations

Regulation 68

Information that must be included in an application for first tier review
The name of the education and care service
The service approval number
The name and contact details of the contact person for the purposes of the request
The quality areas to which the grounds for review relate.

The National Law and Regulations do not specify particular grounds for first tier review. Possible grounds might include situations where a provider:

- disagrees with a rating based on the evidence described in the final report
- has additional contextual information about the evidence described in the final report
- believes the authorised officer(s) did not take into account all of the relevant evidence available at the time
- believes the service was not given adequate opportunity to demonstrate how it meets an element or standard.

Matters that do not materially affect the service's rating are less appropriate grounds for first tier review. This means that the matter must be significant enough to warrant a reconsideration of the service's rating.

Sometimes approved providers will have concerns that are better handled through, for example, the regulatory authority's complaints process, or through seeking a reassessment of a service's ratings.

Timeframe for conducting first tier review

National Regulations

Sections 142(4)(a), (b), (c)

The regulatory authority must conduct a first tier review within 30 calendar days of receiving the request. The timeframe may be extended by up to 30 calendar days by agreement between the approved provider and the regulatory authority, or if the regulatory authority requests further information.

The regulatory authority may decide to extend the timeframe by up to 60 calendar days where it considers there are special circumstances.

'Special circumstances' is not defined in the National Law. Relevant case law indicates that 'what is special is that which is not general in character'.[1] The phrase is deliberately flexible and designed to cover circumstances that might not be easily anticipated. Special circumstances may be circumstances that are unusual, uncommon or exceptional. This will depend on the context in which they occur. For example, flooding or natural disasters may be unusual in one location and common or seasonal in another.

Special circumstances can vary on a case by case basis. Without being prescriptive, possible examples where the regulatory authority may decide to extend the timeframe by up to 60 calendar days might include:

- an unexpected event that prevents the reviewer from reaching a decision within the legislated timeframe, for example an illness
- an unexpected event affecting the gathering of or availability of information required for the first tier review, for example a natural disaster or unavailability of key personnel due to illness
- an issue arising during the first tier review that requires investigation.

Conducting the first tier review

Information considered at the first tier review

- A first tier review is a review of the initial 'point-in-time' assessment of the service against the NQS; it is not a reassessment of the service. The regulatory authority can take into account new information during a first tier review, but that information must relate to the facts at the point in time when the assessment was conducted. Any changes made at the service since the ratings assessment, which may have improved the service's quality, cannot be taken into account at first tier review.
- If changes have been made at the service since the ratings assessment that might improve the service's quality and therefore rating levels, the provider should not apply for a first tier review. Instead, the provider should consider whether to apply for a reassessment and re-rating under section 139 of the National Law. During a reassessment and re-rating, the regulatory authority can take into account changes made after the initial ratings assessment. These changes cannot be taken into account during a first tier review.

1. *Mann v Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria* [2002] VSC 256

How a review is conducted

The National Law does not prescribe how the first tier review must be conducted. The regulatory authority can decide how the first tier review is conducted, for example:

- an individual officer or a panel may conduct the review and make the decision
- an individual officer or a panel may conduct the review and make the recommendation to a delegated officer to make the final decision.

If a person was involved in the assessment and rating under review, for example, they conducted the original assessment or were the delegate who determined or approved the final rating, they cannot be involved in the first tier review.

Key requirements and skills for person(s) determining first tier review applications:

Person(s) determining first tier reviews
Should have access to all of the relevant information (including information submitted by the approved provider in its request for a first tier review, and all information used by the regulatory authority to determine the original rating)
Should have relevant knowledge of the NQF, NQS and assessment and rating process, including administrative processes and requirements
Should have knowledge of the relevant legislation
Should have effective communication and conflict resolution skills.

Process which regulatory authorities may follow when conducting a first tier review.

First tier review process
Receive request for review.
Register request for review on National Quality Agenda Information Technology System (NQA IT System).
Acknowledge receipt of application
Identify person(s) within the regulatory authority involved in the original assessment and/or rating under review to ensure they are not involved in the first tier review.
Assign request for review to an individual officer or a panel
Validate and review application: this process involves ensuring that the application form is complete and all supporting documentation referenced in the application has been included.
Seek further information if required, for example: • information from the approved provider to support grounds for requesting review, excluding information that was not available to the original decision maker at the time of the ratings assessment • notes, evidence or any other information (e.g. assessment and rating instrument) considered in original determination of rating • comment from those involved in the assessment and rating of the service on the grounds of the request for review of rating • any other relevant information from individual persons • a visit to the service to collect or assess relevant information.
Assess application and determine what the correct rating levels should be based on the evidence provided. The regulatory authority may seek legal advice about a first tier review if required.
Individual officer or panel recommends the rating levels and/or the overall rating is confirmed or amended.
Individual officer or panel prepares a statement of reason(s). This statement will include the recommendation for each relevant element, standard or quality area, including the information taken into account when making the recommendation.
Regulatory authority staff member delegated first tier review decision-making powers confirms or amends the rating levels for the service.
Notify relevant regulatory authority staff, including original decision maker, of the grounds for review and outcome of the review.
Notify approved provider of the outcome of the review for each rating level, including reasons for the decision. The decision notification should also include information about further review rights. Update the NQA IT System with the outcome of the first tier review application.
Identify any opportunities for the regulatory authority to improve the assessment and rating process.

Determining a first tier review

The regulatory authority may confirm or amend the rating levels under review and must give the approved provider notice in writing of the outcome of the review (including any revised rating levels) and the reasons for the decision made, within 30 days.

A first tier review decision notice should contain a sufficient level of detail for the approved provider to understand the regulatory authority's reason(s) to amend or confirm the relevant element(s), standard(s) or quality area(s). This includes specifying the evidence the regulatory authority considered in relation to the relevant element, standard or quality area, its analysis of this evidence and its conclusion based on this analysis.

The regulatory authority must advise the approved provider of the outcome of the review in writing. This decision notice must:

- set out the rating levels for the service
- explain the reasons the decision was made

Ensuring the decision notice provides sufficient detail supports procedural fairness. It also reduces the likelihood of a second tier review application.

Appeals

A decision to confirm or amend the rating levels of a service may be reviewed by a ratings review panel in a second tier review.

After the first tier review has been determined

ACECQA will publish the rating levels determined by the regulatory authority at first tier review 14 days after the decision, unless an application for second tier review is made. If an application for second tier review is made, ACECQA will publish the rating levels determined by the ratings review panel after the second tier review.

12. SECOND TIER REVIEW

National Law

Sections 144–151, Regulation 69

Under the National Law and Regulations an approved provider can request a review of the service's rating if the provider disagrees with the rating given. This review of ratings by the regulatory authority is referred to as a first tier review. If the approved provider is still not satisfied after the first tier review, they may apply to ACECQA for a further review (a 'second tier review') by a ratings review panel.

National Regulations

Regulation 68

Who can apply?

An approved provider can only apply to ACECQA for a second tier review if the regulatory authority has conducted a first tier review. The application must:

- be submitted to ACECQA within 14 calendar days of receiving the notice of the outcome of the first tier review
- identify on what grounds the review is being sought and include information set out in the National Regulations (see table)
- be made using the application form on the ACECQA website which sets out the information applications must provide.

An approved provider can only apply for a second tier review on the grounds that the regulatory authority:

- failed to take into account or give sufficient weight to special circumstances existing or facts existing at the time of the rating assessment, or
- did not appropriately apply the prescribed processes for determining a rating level.

Information that must be included in an application for second first tier review
The name of the education and care service
The service approval number
The name and contact details of the contact person for the purposes of the application
A statement setting out the grounds on which the provider seeks review of the decision of the regulatory authority and the quality areas to which the grounds for review relate.

National Law

Sections 139, 145

An application must not include information or evidence that was not given to the regulatory authority as part of an initial assessment and rating, reassessment and re-rating, or first tier review.

If a service has made changes since its ratings assessment that it believes will improve the service's ratings levels, it should not apply for a review of ratings. Instead, it should consider whether to apply for a reassessment and re-rating. Changes to a service cannot be taken into account during first and second tier reviews.

Timeframe for conducting a second tier review

ACECQA must give written notice to the regulatory authority that a second tier review application has been received within seven days of receipt. The second tier review panel must make a decision to confirm or amend the rating levels within 60 calendar days of the application for review being made (section 151(2)).

ACECQA must give the approved provider and the regulatory authority written notice of the decision on the review and the reason for the decision within 14 calendar days of the decision being made (section 151(5)).

The chairperson of the panel may extend the period for decision-making if the chairperson considers there are special circumstances that warrant that extension, or by agreement between the chairperson and the approved provider.

National Law

Section 151

Conducting the second tier review

ACECQA must invite the regulatory authority to make submissions to the review.

ACECQA must establish a ratings review panel to conduct the review.

Ratings review panels are responsible for confirming or amending the rating levels given to education and care services by regulatory authorities. ACECQA will establish a ratings review panel for each review. Members for the ratings review panel are drawn from the ratings review panel pool.

National Law & Regulations

Sections 146–151
Regulation 70

Persons approved as members of the panel must have expertise or expert knowledge in:

- early learning and development research or practice
- law
- a prescribed area, such as the assessment of quality in education and care services or other relevant services
- best practice regulation.

The National Law sets out what the ratings review panel may consider when conducting the review.

National Law

Sections 150

What a ratings review panel may consider when conducting a second tier review
Documents, information, plans, photographs, video or other evidence available to the regulatory authority in carrying out the rating assessment
The approved provider's and service's history of compliance with the National Law
Any submissions made by the approved provider as part of the first tier review
The outcome of the first tier review
Any submissions made by the approved provider as part of the second tier review
Any submissions made by the regulatory authority as part of the second tier review.

The ratings review panel is not required to hold an oral hearing for a review. The ratings review panel may request written information from the regulatory authority or approved provider.

If the regulatory authority provides any documents, information or evidence to the ratings review panel, ACECQA will provide the approved provider with a copy and give the provider an opportunity to respond in writing, as required under the National Law.

Determining the second tier review

In most cases, ratings review panels will conduct reviews via teleconference or other electronic means.

Panel members must act in all proceedings with fairness, equity and impartiality. They are required to adhere to the National Law and processes determined by ACECQA. Panels will be supported by a secretariat provided by ACECQA.

The ratings review panel will review all available evidence before confirming or amending the service's ratings levels. Minutes of the deliberations of the review will be kept and the panel will set out its decisions on the review.

The ratings review panel must make a decision within 60 days after the application for review was made. This period may be extended if the chairperson of the panel considers special circumstances warrant the extension or if the approved provider agrees.

Appeals

National Law
Section 151

Rating levels determined by a ratings review panel will be the rating levels for the service. The National Law does not provide a right of appeal against a decision of a panel. If an approved provider is dissatisfied with the rating levels determined by a panel, it may seek legal advice.

If an approved provider believes they have been unfairly treated by ACECQA, they may complain to the Education and Care Services Ombudsman.

After the second tier review has been determined

The ratings review panel may confirm the rating levels determined by the regulatory authority at first tier review, or amend the rating levels.

The rating level confirmed or amended by the panel will be the rating level for the service.

The panel must provide written notice of its decision, setting out the panel's findings on each review ground. ACECQA will send the decision notice to the approved provider and regulatory authority, on behalf of the panel, within 14 calendar days of the decision being made.

ACECQA will publish the rating levels determined by a ratings review panel. ACECQA also publishes de-identified summaries of second tier review decisions on its website.