



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority

The Australian, state and territory education ministers have agreed to changes to the National Quality Framework (NQF).

This information sheet explains the changes to the National Quality Standard (NQS) and quality ratings.

WHEN DO THE CHANGES START?

The revised NQS and related changes will commence 1 February 2018.

Other changes to the National Law and Regulations will commence 1 October 2017 in all states and territories (except Western Australia which will commence by 1 October 2018).

WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER INFORMATION?

Visit acecqa.gov.au/nqf-changes for the full list of changes.

REVISED NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD AND OTHER CHANGES FROM 1 FEB 2018

REVISED NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

A revised NQS will be introduced to help clarify how quality is rated in education and care services.

- The number of standards of the NQS has been reduced from 18 to 15, and the elements from 58 to 40.
- The language is clearer, and each standard and element now describes a single unique concept.
- New guidance will clarify the difference between the Meeting NQS and Exceeding NQS rating levels for each standard.
- Services will be assessed and rated against the revised NQS from 1 February 2018. If a quality assessment visit starts before 1 February 2018, the service rating will be completed against the current NQS, and any review of this rating will also be against the current NQS.

See the next page for a copy of the revised NQS and a summary of the changes.

OTHER CHANGES TO NOTE

Excellent rating

The application fee for the Excellent rating will be removed. Services must be rated Exceeding in all quality areas to be eligible.

Exceeding NQS

All standards in a Quality Area will need to be rated Exceeding NQS for that Quality Area to be rated Exceeding NQS.

There are no changes to the way in which the overall rating for Exceeding NQS is calculated.

Significant Improvement Required

The definition of the Significant Improvement Required rating will change from 'unacceptable risk' to 'significant risk' to increase clarity for families.

Regulatory authorities will continue to work with these services to improve quality and impose sanctions where needed.

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
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.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO THE NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

Changes to the National Quality Standard (NQS) were agreed to following consultation with the education and care sector.

The changes will streamline the NQS and reduce overlap between elements and standards. As services also comply with the legislation, elements which directly duplicate these requirements, have been removed.

Changes to the NQS are summarised below.

Quality Area 1

The number of standards has increased from two to three to reflect the three primary contributors to quality education: programs, practice, and assessment and planning.

Under the current NQS, concepts relating to assessment and planning are referenced in multiple areas. These are now grouped together under the new standard 1.3.

Quality Area 2

The number of standards and elements has reduced from three standards and ten elements to two standards and six elements.

The new 'Health' standard includes healthy lifestyle, wellbeing and comfort, and health practices and procedures.

The current standard 2.3 has been consolidated into a new 'Safety' standard to ensure each child is protected and adequate supervision is provided to protect children from harm and hazard.

Quality Area 3

The number of standards and elements has reduced from three standards to two and seven elements to five.

The two standards cover the design of the service environment, and the use of the service. There has been a slight shift in the concept of environmental responsibility to focus more on the child's experience.

Quality Area 4

There are no changes to the number of standards and elements in Quality Area 4.

All elements relating to staffing arrangements and staff continuity under Quality Area 7 are grouped together under Quality Area 4 in the revised NQS.

The elements about educator to child ratios and qualification requirements have been removed as they must be maintained at all times under the National Regulations.

Quality Area 5

The number of elements has reduced from six to four as elements that were similar have been combined. For example, responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.

Quality Area 6

The number of standards has reduced from three to two and the elements from nine to six. Elements that were similar have been combined. For example, under the current NQS there are two elements about ensuring current information is available to support families.

Quality Area 7

This quality area was renamed. The standards have been reduced from three to two and thirteen elements to six.

Although this may look like a big change, six of the elements that were removed duplicate minimum legislated requirements. For example, the requirement to maintain and store records.

The revised NQS replaces elements that relate to specific regulations with a broader element about decision-making and systems.