



Quality Area

3

Introduction

Quality Area 3 - Physical environment

Take a moment to consider the type of environments you like to live in or be surrounded by. These may look different to different people, however we all would like the environments we engage with to be welcoming, inviting, home-like and safe.

We are often constrained by the physical design of the building or spaces, however it is what we place in these environments and how we use them that influences how we feel.



Now think about the type of environment you would like to work in. Does it look similar to the type of environment you like to live in? It may look different physically, but do you believe it should have the same 'feel'? Is it welcoming, home-like and inviting?

Ask your educators, families and children about the type of environments they feel comfortable in. For FDC educators their home is their workplace, so discover how they ensure their environment provides a diverse range of meaningful learning experiences while maintaining a welcoming homely environment for children (Guide to the NQF, p.190).

QA3 of the National Quality Standard (NQS) invites you and your educators to look at how you can use your service's physical environments, both indoors and outdoors, to create welcoming, inviting, inclusive and safe spaces for children to feel comfortable and competent to explore, learn, create and be.

You are invited to think about how the **design** of your environment is fit for purpose so that it is appropriate, suitable, safe and clean, and how you **use** it to support every child's participation and engagement in quality experiences in both the built and natural environments.

2018 National Quality Standard

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.

What does meeting the NQS look like in QA3?

This Quality Area of the NQS focuses on the physical environment and on ensuring that it is safe and suitable, as well as providing a rich and diverse range of experiences that promote children's learning and development.

What does a quality physical environment look like?

A quality environment may mean different things to all those involved in your service. Consider what might be important to your team when defining what a quality environment might look like.

While their responses may differ, there are some characteristics of the **design and use** of an environment that are important to consider in supporting the participation and learning of all children in your service.

Quality physical environments are 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 (Guide to the NQF, p.176)
- providing children with the opportunity to challenge themselves and to take safe risks.

Here's a snapshot of how service's rating in QA3 compares across Australia:

www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/national-quality-framework-snapshots





Give careful consideration to how your service can create engaging, inviting and welcoming environments that encourage all to participate. (Elements 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1)

Quality indoor and outdoor environments invite all children to participate at a level they are comfortable participating in, whilst also introducing an element of challenge to scaffold their learning and build confidence in their abilities. (Elements 3.2.1, 3.2.2)



Engaging outdoor and indoor environments encourage children of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to be actively involved in making decisions, thinking creatively, displaying a sense of agency and building relationships. (Elements 3.2.1, 3.2.2)



Children learn to become environmentally responsible when they are included in daily sustainable practices, both indoors and outdoors. (Elements 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.3)

Include open-ended resources in your learning environments that can be used in many different ways for different purposes. (Elements 3.2.2, 3.2.3)





Sustainable practices are meaningful when they are consistent, embedded into practice and communicated to families. (Element 3.2.3)

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