



# MAKING QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND RATING MORE EFFECTIVE

From 2023, there will be some process refinements to how regulatory authorities quality assess and rate services under the National Quality Framework (NQF).

These process changes seek to make quality assessment and rating more effective.

Our shared objective remains continuous quality improvement in children's education and care.



## OPERATIONAL REFINEMENTS TO THE QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND RATING PROCESS

The Education and Care Services National Law (National Law) offers flexibility in some of the requirements for undertaking quality assessment and rating under the NQF.

To support clarity and consistency at the national level, the [Guide to the NQF](#) sets out what approved providers and their services can expect as part of a typical assessment and rating process.

**From 2023, there will be refinements to some quality assessment and rating processes.**

These will include:

- a shift to a shorter notice period of 1-5 days for most assessment and rating visits
- an enhanced focus on the service's self-assessment and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) as part of its continuous quality improvement, rather than as a point in time preparation for assessment and rating
- greater use of partial assessment and ratings as currently allowed under the National Law (only applicable to services rated under the 2018 National Quality Standard (NQS)).

These refinements are consistent and in accordance with existing National Law requirements.

## MAKING QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND RATING MORE EFFECTIVE

These operational process changes are intended to make the system more efficient and effective for providers and services, as well as provide families with up-to-date information on service quality to assist them in their decision making.

The adjusted notice period promotes best practice in education and care service delivery, one that is 'always ready' for quality assessment and rating. This meets the intent of observing and assessing typical practice. Approved providers and their services should not be experiencing unnecessary stress or pressure in anticipation of a quality assessment visit.

The introduction of adjusted notice periods for assessment and rating should enable a more accurate and agile process that is more reflective of typical service practice, through targeted evidence gathering and focused discussions.

The overarching goal remains that the assessment and rating process effectively influences, and positively impacts, developmental and educational outcomes for children.

# The health, safety and wellbeing of children is our shared priority, and the assessment and rating process is driving national continuous quality improvement.

## FURTHER DETAILS ABOUT THE CHANGES

Adjusted notice periods will also apply to any partial assessment processes. A partial assessment and rating is where the regulatory authority reassesses any aspect or element of a service that has already been fully assessed and rated. Where appropriate to do so, a partial reassessment may be undertaken without a visit by the regulatory authority to the service (via a 'desktop' review).

For partial reassessments that do not include a service visit, the regulatory authority may provide 1-5 days' notice that a conversation will occur instead of a visit.

A desktop review may be appropriate where the required evidence includes documentation for sighting or discussions that can be conducted over the phone. A desktop review would not be conducted if the authorised officer needs to observe practice to collect evidence to inform a rating.

Partial assessments, whether in person or via desktop review, provide the opportunity to target quality assessments to specific quality areas with a direct link to improving educational and developmental outcomes for children, without requiring a service to undergo a full assessment. They also require less evidence collection and can offer less disruption to service routines.

## PREPARING FOR CHANGE

Providers and their services can prepare for these changes by maintaining an up-to-date quality improvement plan (QIP) (or Self Assessment Working Document in NSW) informed by a thorough self-assessment. The QIP is designed to be a dynamic, evolving document that enables continuous improvement, self-assessment, and self-reflection.

Approved providers should ensure an up-to-date QIP (or Self Assessment Working Document in NSW) is uploaded to the National Quality Agenda IT System portal or via any other jurisdiction specific submission process. The regulatory authority will use the uploaded QIP for quality assessment and rating purposes.

The sector will be further supported to adapt to this shift through updated content to be published in the Guide to the NQF, including further guidance on best practice self-assessments and maintaining a current QIP.

Some regulatory authorities also have self-assessment resources available and encourage their use.

Putting these adjustments into practice will be a matter for each regulatory authority. Your regulatory authority will be communicating further information in relation to these operational refinements to assessment and rating processes in 2023.

## ASSESSMENT AND RATING OF SERVICES UNDER THE NQF

Since 2012, services have been quality assessed and rated by their state or territory Regulatory Authority against the National Quality Standard (NQS).

Services are assessed and rated against the NQS to:

- promote continuous improvement in the provision of quality education and care; and
- improve knowledge and access to information about the quality of services to help families make informed decisions about their child's education and care.

Most of these quality assessment and ratings have been 'full' assessments. These look at all elements and standards within the seven (7) quality areas.

Regulatory authorities under the National Law (s138) may also conduct partial assessment and ratings of services.

Under the National Law, assessment and rating visits to services can happen at any time.

## RESOURCES

Visit the ACECQA website at [acecqa.gov.au](http://acecqa.gov.au) to download national resources:

[The Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)

[ACECQA Information sheet – Developing and reviewing your quality improvement plan](#)

[ACECQA Information sheet – The assessment and rating report](#)

[The National Quality Standard Assessment and Rating Instrument](#)

[Quality Improvement Plan template](#)

[The ACECQA Self-assessment Tool.](#)

Contact your regulatory authority for information about the assessment and rating process in your state/territory. Contact details are available on the [ACECQA website](#).

ACECQA's family focused [StartingBlocks.gov.au](http://StartingBlocks.gov.au) is the national government one-stop-shop for families to find and shortlist early childhood education and care services, view quality ratings and fees, and estimate out of pocket costs.