



THE EXCELLENT RATING

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



The Excellent rating is the highest rating a service can receive under the National Quality Framework. Services must meet eligibility criteria of Exceeding NQS across all seven quality areas to apply. From 1 July 2023, the expiry period for the Excellent rating was extended from three years to five years. Services that apply and are successful in their application after 1 July 2023, will hold the Excellent rating for a five-year period, however the service must maintain the eligibility criteria of the Excellent rating by upholding the Exceeding NQS rating in all seven quality areas during this time.

Please see below some frequently asked questions to help you better understand the Excellent rating.

1) My service has been rated Exceeding NQS across all seven quality areas and we are interested in undertaking the Excellent rating application process. Where do we start?

ACECQA has developed a suite of resources available on the [ACECQA website](#) to help services in the application process. We encourage services to start with engaging in the [Excellent rating eLearning module](#). This will take services through each criterion that must be addressed through the application process and explore how services can use the [Exceptional Practice Framework](#) to develop clear and concise evidence statements. Services can also contact our Excellent rating team at excellent@acecqa.gov.au or on 1300 422 327.

2) How much evidence do I need to submit in my application?

Whilst all applications will look different due to the context, number of applied themes and types of documentation submitted, services can use the [Exceptional Practice Framework](#) to help them unpack what information is relevant to each criterion. The only requirement is that services submit an evidence statement for each criterion. Supportive documentation to compliment your statements may include photographs, children's documentation, videos, websites, etc. Services can upload additional evidence at several points of the application process, if required.

3) My service was awarded the Excellent rating in December 2022. Does that mean we will hold the Excellent rating for 5 years, as our expiry date is after 1 July 2023?

No. Services must have received their decision for being awarded the Excellent rating on or after 1 July 2023. Any service that was rated Excellent prior to this date will remain on the three-year expiry period as per their decision notice. Information about each Excellent rated service is located on the ACECQA website including the date their Excellent rating remains valid to.

4) If my service is rated Excellent from 1 July 2023 for the five-year timeframe, does this mean I am exempt from an Assessment and Rating visit from my regulatory authority during this time?

No. ACECQA is not responsible for assessing and rating services, other than awarding the Excellent rating. Each state and territory's regulatory authority (RA) is responsible to schedule the assessment and rating process with all approved services in line with the legislation and their policies, procedures and processes. If a service is assessed and rated during their awarded period, they must maintain Exceeding NQS rating across all seven quality areas to retain the Excellent rating.

5) What happens if my service is scheduled for an Assessment and Rating visit during the Excellent rating five-year expiry period and the service is rated Exceeding in less than seven quality areas?

Services must maintain Exceeding NQS across all seven quality areas to maintain eligibility criteria for retaining the Excellent rating. If a service is rated anything other than Exceeding NQS across all seven quality areas during their awarded period, ACECQA is required to revoke the rating. ACECQA is responsible to review Excellent rated services and is notified when they are undertaking the Assessment and Rating process.

6) We received our Assessment and Rating final report in October 2018. Is there a time frame for when we are required to apply for the Excellent rating?

No. There are no time frames in place for when a service is required to apply for the Excellent rating. Services can apply for the Excellent rating anytime they hold a rating of Exceeding NQS across all seven quality areas.

7) Our service has prepared an Excellent rating application which we are ready to submit. We have recently been partially reassessed. Our service has maintained the rating of Exceeding NQS across all seven quality areas. Do we still meet the criteria?

Yes. If your service has maintained Exceeding NQS across all seven quality areas, the eligibility criteria for the Excellent rating is met. Please contact your [state or territory's regulatory authority](#) if you have any questions about the criteria and processes for full and partial assessments.

8) Our service is a community preschool and closes for 6 weeks between December and January each year. Is it still possible for our service to submit an Excellent rating application just before our closure?

Yes. However, we require the primary contact to be available throughout the assessment process to provide further information if we have any questions about a service's application. ACECQA recommends services carefully consider whether this timing aligns with the service's operational limitations. Services may opt to apply once staff have returned from leave to ensure optimal engagement during the assessment period.

9) Will our service receive information about the decision made?

Yes. ACECQA will provide a written Decision Notice to the approved provider, your service and your state or territory regulatory authority within 14 days of the decision being made. The Decision Notice details the reasons for the decision, including practice examples being identified as either exceptional practices at the highest level or non-exceptional practices. Additionally, each criterion and theme will have a detailed analysis and considerations for improvement to support the individual service with their commitment to achieving and providing exceptional education and care.

10) Our service's Excellent rating application was not successful. What is the timeframe for when our service can submit another application?

Services may only apply once every three years. ACECQA encourages these services to spend time critically reflecting on the Decision Notice, including each criterion and themes analysis and considerations for continuous improvement.