



National Quality Framework – the facts

The National Quality Framework commenced on 1 January 2012 with the aim of providing every Australian child with the best start in life through access to high quality early childhood education and care, and school-age care services.

The National Quality Framework (NQF) includes:

- a national legislative framework
- a National Quality Standard
- a national quality assessment and rating process
- a national organisation called the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

Some requirements of the NQF will be phased in between 2012 and 2020 such as requirements pertaining to educator qualifications and educator-to-child ratios.

National legislative framework

The national legislative framework consists of a national law and the national regulations:

- the *Education and Care Services National Law 2010*
- the *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*

The Regulatory Authority in each state and territory is responsible for administering the NQF including approving, monitoring and assessing services. The Regulatory Authority in Victoria is the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD).

The guiding principles of the NQF, which should be applied to daily practice in education and care services to achieve the National Quality Standard, are:

1. The rights and best interests of the child are paramount.
2. Children are successful, competent and capable learners.
3. Equity, inclusion and diversity underpin the framework.
4. Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued.



5. The role of parents and families is respected and supported.
6. Best practice is expected in the provision of education and care services.

National Quality Standard

The National Quality Standard (NQS) is the benchmark for quality of education and care services. The NQS aims to promote:

- the safety, health and well-being of children
- a focus on achieving outcomes for children through high-quality educational programs
- families' understanding of what distinguishes a quality service.

The NQS consists of seven Quality Areas upon which services are assessed and rated:

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. Leadership and service management.

National quality assessment and rating process

The National Quality Framework applies to most kindergartens, long day-care, family day care and outside of school hours care services. All approved services will be assessed and rated against each of the seven Quality Areas and also given an overall rating. All ratings will be published on a National Register and available online.

The five rating levels are:

1. Excellent rating, awarded by ACECQA
2. Exceeding National Quality Standard
3. Meeting National Quality Standard
4. Working Towards National Quality Standard
5. Significant Improvement Required

The assessment and ratings process aims to promote continuous quality improvement at services and provide families with better information when making choices about their children's education and care.

Quality Improvement Plans

The National Regulations require that each approved service has a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The QIP is a working

document which assists service providers to reflect on the provision of education and care and must include:

- a statement about the philosophy of the service
- an assessment of the current practices of the service against the National Regulations and National Quality Standard
- areas the provider considers may require improvement.

The QIP is used by the Regulatory Authority when assessing a service and must be available at the service at all times.

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)

The ACECQA is the national organisation responsible for the oversight of the NQF and ensures consistency in the implementation of the NQS.

The ACECQA website is a great source of information for families, professionals and service providers on all aspects of the NQF, including the rating and assessment process and Quality Improvement Plans.

For more information

www.acecqa.gov.au

www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood

www.deewr.gov.au/early-childhood