

6.6 National Quality Standards Policy

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Reviewed by: Child Care Team

This policy relates to	
National Quality Standards Early Childhood Education & Care	All National Quality Standards and National Quality Framework.

Purpose

The policy aims to raise quality and drive continuous improvement in education and care services through:

- Commitment to the National Quality Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care and School Age Care;
- A National Quality rating and assessment process;
- Streamlined regulatory arrangements;
- A new national body jointly governed by the Australian Government and state and territory governments- the Australian Children’s Education and care Quality Authority (ACECQA) to oversee the new system.

Background

In December 2009, all Australian government, through the Council of Australian Governments, agreed to a partnership to establish a National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care (National Quality Framework) The new system replaces state and territory licensing and quality assurance processes. The National Quality Framework takes effect on 1st January 2012.

Policy

All educators are required under their contract with Beucare to work with the National Quality Framework for Education and Care and to meet the National Quality Standards.

The National Quality Framework is underpinned by the Educational and Care Services National Law and Education and Care Services National Regulations. Together they set the National Quality Standard and the regulatory framework for most long day care, preschool/kindergarten, family day care and outside school hours care services in all states and territories. The National law provides objectives and guiding principles for the National Quality Framework.

In making decisions about operating education and care services and working to achieve the National Quality Standard to improve quality at service, the guiding principles of the National Quality Framework apply. These principles are:

- The rights and best interests of the child are paramount;
- Children are successful, competent and capable learners;
- Equity, inclusion and diversity underpin the framework;
- Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued;
- The role of parents and families is respected and supported;
- Best practice is expected in the provision of education and care services.

The National Quality Standard

The National Quality Standard sets a national benchmark for the quality of education and care services. It is aimed to provide services and families a better understanding of a quality service. This will enable families to make informed decisions about the services providing education and care to their child.

The Rating System

There are five rating levels within the national quality rating and assessment process:

- Excellent – indicates that a service demonstrates excellence and is recognised as a sector leader;
- Exceeds National Quality Standard – indicates that a service is exceeding the National Quality Standard;
- Meets National Quality Standard – indicates that a service is meeting the National Quality Standard;
- Working towards National Quality Standard – indicates that a service is working towards meeting the National Quality Standard;
- Significant Improvement Required – indicates that a service is not meeting the National Quality Standard and that the regulator is working closely with the service to immediately improve its quality (otherwise the service's approval to operate will be withdrawn).

Quality areas, standards and elements

There are seven quality areas:

- QA1 Educational program and practice

- QA2 Children's health and safety
- QA3 physical environment
- QA4 Staffing arrangements
- QA5 Relationships with children
- QA6 Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
- QA7 Leadership and service management

Meeting the National Quality Standards is the expected standard of all educators. Educators identified not to be working at the level of Meeting the National Quality Standards will be expected to be committed to the process of achieving this rating. This process will include:

- Attending specific, additional training;
- Working collaboratively with coordinators;
- Achieving outcomes to Action Plans;
- Demonstrating ongoing progression and improvement

Where educators are identified as working at the level of Significant Improvement Required and not showing a commitment to the process of improvement, the service may cancel the educator's registration with the service.

Assessing and rating a service

The *National Regulations* set out how services will be assessed. Regulatory Authorities must:

- Review service information (compliance history, rating and assessment history);
- Review a service's current Quality Improvement Plan;
- Visit one or more family day care residences or venues under that service.

The *National Regulations* also provide that the regulatory authority must consider a range of information when determining a rating, including:

- Any relevant information provided by a government department, public or local authority;
- State or territory regulatory authority or a Commonwealth department;
- Information relating to any other quality assurance or registration process under an education law relating to the service.

Services will be assessed by an authorised officer using the *NQS Assessment and Rating Instrument*. After undertaking an assessment, the regulatory authority will notify the approved provider of a rating for each quality area and an overall rating for the service.

Approved Learning Frameworks

Australia has a National Quality Standard linked to national learning frameworks that recognise children learn from birth. These are:

- Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (Early Years Learning Framework);
- My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia These frameworks outline practices to support and promote children's learning.

Early Years Learning Framework

The Early Years Learning Framework guides educators in developing quality programs for children. It describes the early childhood pedagogy (principles and practice) and the outcomes required to support and enhance young children's learning from birth to five years of age, including their transition to school.

Framework for School Age Care

The Framework for School Age Care builds on the Early Years Learning Framework and extends the principles, practice and outcomes to accommodate the contexts and age range of the children and young people who attend school age care settings.

The Framework for School Age Care exists to ensure that children in school age care have opportunities to engage in leisure and play-based experiences that are responsive to the needs, interests and choices of the children attending the service and that contribute to their on-going development. It provides guidance to educator working with school age children in outside school hour's care, long day care and family day care settings.

Relevant Legislation

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

National Quality Standards

National Standards for In-home Care

Key Resources

Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia

My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia

Australian Government Department of Education and Training: *Child Care Service Handbook*

<https://www.education.gov.au/child-care-service-handbook>