



NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK ASSESSMENT AND RATING PROCESS

Key to the National Quality Framework is continuous quality improvement. Authorised officers from each state and territory regulatory authority are responsible for assessing and rating education and care services in their jurisdictions against the new National Quality Standard.

When did rating and assessment commence?

The first assessment visits to services commenced in June 2012.

The National Regulations require approved services to have a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The QIP needs to be available on request by the regulatory authority. The QIP does not need to be submitted until the service is scheduled for an assessment visit.

Is there a Quality Improvement Plan template?

A template, guidance and frequently asked questions on how to prepare a QIP are available on ACECQA's website.

Providers can choose to develop their own plan, including using an existing plan.

The aim of a QIP is for providers to self-assess their performance in delivering quality education and care and to plan future improvements. The plan also helps providers to document the strengths of their services and to recognise areas for improvement.

What are the steps in the process?

The following table outlines the national quality rating and assessment process for evaluation of services against the National Quality Standard and National Regulations. It is designed to be a cooperative process with opportunities for services to discuss how they are meeting the National Quality Standard and enhancing outcomes for children.

Week 1* A: Notice of visit	The approved provider receives a letter from the regulatory authority notifying of the four week period in which the assessment and rating visit will occur. The regulatory authority requests that the approved provider submits a copy of the service Quality Improvement Plan within three weeks. The regulatory authority may also request additional service specific information.
Week 3 B: Quality Improvement Plan	The approved provider submits the Quality Improvement Plan to the regulatory authority.
Weeks 5 - 8 C: Visit occurs	For all service types, the regulatory authority will give the approved provider at least five days' notice of the visit. For family day care services, the regulatory authority will give between 0 and 5 days' notice of the educator sample to be visited. The authorised officer may give some general comments at the time of the visit but will not give an indication of the service rating. Feedback may include the opportunity to make minor adjustments to the service operation within specified areas and timeframes to address concerns identified at the visit. For further information on the minor adjustments policy refer to <i>assessment and rating chapter of the Operational Policy Manual for regulatory authorities</i> .
After the visit	
Approx. 3 - 5 weeks after the visit date D: Draft report	The approved provider is issued the draft report. The approved provider has 10 working days to provide feedback on any factual inaccuracies in the report and provide evidence to support their feedback.
Approx. 5 - 7 weeks after the visit date E: Feedback due	Feedback on the draft report is provided to the regulatory authority. If no feedback is provided, the report is final and the notice of final ratings is issued to the approved provider.
Approx. 8 weeks after the visit date F: Feedback due	If feedback is provided on the draft report, this is considered by the regulatory authority, the report is then finalised and the notice of final ratings is issued to the approved provider.

Once the report is finalised and received by the approved provider, the 14 day period in which a review can be requested commences. If the notice is sent electronically, the 14 days run from the day that it is sent. If posted, the 14 days run from the fourth day after the notice of ratings was posted.

* Note that the timeframes given in the table are guidelines only.

What resources are available?

The ACECQA website has information and resources including:

- the Guide to Assessment and Rating for Services
- the Guide to Assessment and Rating for Regulatory Authorities
- the National Quality Standard Assessment and Rating Instrument
- Information on Assessment and Ratings
- The Assessment and Rating Process
- the National Law and National Regulations
- a Quality Improvement Plan template
- the National Quality Standard, including a guide to help providers to identify which practices they can, or should, improve.

When can I expect to be notified of the commencement of my rating and assessment process?

Assessment and rating visits commenced in June 2012.

Initial priority has been given to education and care services that are currently covered by the former National Childcare Accreditation Council but are not yet accredited or were due for accreditation in 2011–12.

How long will a rating and assessment visit take?

The duration of the rating and assessment visit will depend on a number of priorities, including:

- the approved capacity of the service
- the type of service—family day care or centre-based service
- the number of educators at the service
- the number of different age groups at the service
- whether the service is session based, such as before and after school, or provides whole-day care.

The final timeframe will be a decision for the regulatory authority. All services can expect that the authorised officer undertaking the assessment will have an opening and closing discussion with the person in day-to-day charge of the service, view the entire service, observe each age group catered for (for example, birth to 24 months; 25 to 36

months) or a number of sessions, observe interactions inside and outside, talk to educators and review some documentation.

How many authorised officers will visit?

In determining whether one or more authorised officers will visit, the regulatory authority will consider:

- the size and complexity of the service
- configuration—for example, number of discrete rooms
- the number of educators at the service
- safety issues—for example, when driving long distances, two authorised officers are required to travel together
- whether a more experienced authorised officer needs to attend to train or observe a less experienced authorised officer
- any other relevant factors.

What type of minor adjustments will a provider be able to make to a service?

Services may be given the opportunity to make minor adjustments within specified areas and timeframes to address concerns raised at the assessment visit. More information can be found in the Guide to Assessment and Rating for Services.

Contact your state or territory regulatory authority for further information on rating and assessment. Their contact details are available on the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority's website at <http://acecqa.gov.au/regulatory-authorities1/contact-your-regulatory-authority>.