



Australian Children's  
Education & Care  
Quality Authority

This information sheet explains new guidance on determining the Exceeding National Quality Standard (NQS) rating level for standards. The guidance clarifies the difference between the Meeting NQS and Exceeding NQS rating levels to ensure quality expectations are clear for providers, educators and assessors.

## WHEN DOES THIS CHANGE START?

This change will take effect with the revised NQS from 1 February 2018 in all states and territories.

## WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER INFORMATION?

Visit [acecqa.gov.au/nqf-changes](http://acecqa.gov.au/nqf-changes)

Visit your regulatory authority website [acecqa.gov.au/contact-your-regulatory-authority](http://acecqa.gov.au/contact-your-regulatory-authority)

# NEW GUIDANCE ON DETERMINING EXCEEDING NQS FOR STANDARDS FROM 1 FEB 2018

Governments, ACECQA, and education and care experts have collaborated to develop new guidance that clarifies the difference between the Meeting NQS and Exceeding NQS rating levels for each standard.

There are three Exceeding themes that services will need to demonstrate for a standard to be rated Exceeding NQS.

This new guidance will be published in the new Guide to the NQF and will be used in quality rating assessments from 1 February 2018.

## DETERMINING EXCEEDING NQS FOR STANDARDS

A rating of Exceeding NQS means going **above and beyond** what is expected at the Meeting NQS level for a standard.

Feedback from the sector suggested that more information was needed to clarify what **above and beyond** means and ensure transparent expectations of quality at the Exceeding NQS rating level.

The following three themes must be demonstrated in service practice for a standard to be rated as Exceeding NQS:

**Theme 1:** Practice is embedded in service operations

**Theme 2:** Practice is informed by critical reflection

**Theme 3:** Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

### Other changes to Exceeding calculations

From 1 February 2018, there is a change in the way quality area ratings are assessed.

To be rated Exceeding NQS in a quality area, all standards in that quality area must be rated Exceeding NQS.

There are no changes to the way the overall rating for Exceeding NQS is calculated.

To be rated Exceeding NQS overall, all quality areas must be at least Meeting NQS, and four or more Quality Areas must be Exceeding NQS, with at least two of these being quality areas 1, 5, 6, or 7.

## EXCEEDING NQS THEMES

### Theme 1: Practice is embedded in service operations

This theme means that high quality practice for the standard is demonstrated consistently and frequently across the service. This ensures a sense of continuity and predictability for children.

For example:

- high quality practice is usual practice across the service
- quality practice is consistent across all educators
- each educator’s practice reflects a clear understanding of the requirements of the standard
- practice for the standard reflects the service philosophy and the principles of the approved learning frameworks.

### Theme 2: Practice is informed by critical reflection

When practice is informed by critical reflection, educators consider, question, analyse and re-evaluate planning and decision-making for that standard. This supports a culture of ongoing self-assessment that helps identify continuous improvement and improved outcomes for children, families and educators.

For example:

- reflection on practice is regular and ongoing

- opportunities for improvements are identified and implemented
- educators are aware of the influences on their practice and are committed to ongoing learning
- decision-making processes draw on diverse perspectives.

### Theme 3: Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with families and/or the community

Every education and care service is unique, as are the children, families, and community at the service. This theme recognises that high quality practice is informed by and tailored to the unique strengths and needs of children, families and the community. This theme recognises differences across service types. For example, it is expected that services that educate and care for school-aged children may build strong relationships with the school and broader community and have fewer interactions with families compared to services that educate and care for younger children.

For example:

- practice reflects the voices and strengths of children, families and the community
- practice demonstrates shared decision-making and problem solving with families and/or the community
- practice suits the unique environmental, cultural and community context of the service
- practice fosters a culture of inclusiveness.

## SUMMARY OF APPROACH TO DETERMINING NQS FOR STANDARDS

Assessors are trained to use ‘observe’, ‘discuss’ and ‘sight’ techniques to assess practice.

| Working Towards NQS                                       | Meeting NQS   | Exceeding NQS   |
|---|---|---|
| One or more elements of the standard are <b>not met</b> . | All elements of the standard are <b>met</b> .<br>Service practice <b>does not reflect</b> all three Exceeding themes:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ Practice is <b>embedded</b> in service operations</li> <li>✓ Practice is informed by <b>critical reflection</b></li> <li>✓ Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with <b>families and/or community</b></li> </ul> | All elements of the standard are <b>met</b> .<br>Service practice <b>reflects</b> all three Exceeding themes:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Practice is <b>embedded</b> in service operations</li> <li>✓ Practice is informed by <b>critical reflection</b></li> <li>✓ Practice is shaped by meaningful engagement with <b>families and/or community</b></li> </ul> |