



DRAFT CRITERIA FOR EXCELLENT RATING

December 2011

Introduction

Under the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*, ACECQA is responsible for assessing applications for the 'Excellent' rating.

The ACECQA Board has decided that the overarching criterion for an Excellent rating assessment is that:

A service demonstrates excellent practice and sector leadership.

The Board established a Working Group to develop what constitutes 'excellent practice and sector leadership' and how that could be assessed. The Board has now agreed a draft position paper on criteria for the excellent rating for the purpose of consultation. Initial consultation has occurred with governments and the Stakeholder Reference Group. It is now being released for broad consultation.

Excellent practice and sector leadership requires evidence of how both the service's process and structural components intersect to produce improved outcomes for children. The service must be able to demonstrate that its procedures and structural components are above and beyond the operation of a service at the Exceeding National Quality Standard level and that they have achieved improved outcomes for participating children.

The Board decided on an assessment framework which comprises an overarching and mandatory criterion and elective criteria for services to meet. This acknowledges the breadth and diversity of services and the unique contextual factors which impact upon how a service may demonstrate excellence. These factors include, but are not limited to, a service's location, local community, workforce composition and profile of children and families using the service.

An application comprises the following two parts.

Part A

Part A includes criteria for the rating. Criterion 1 is the overarching criterion and is mandatory for all applications. Applications must also address three (3) out of the remaining five (5) criteria.

Part B

Part B requires the application to include a three year 'Forward Plan' statement of how the service intends to provide leading edge leadership and mentoring to the sector as a model provider, if rated Excellent. This part of the application seeks to ensure that services continue to demonstrate excellent practice and sector leadership for the three year period of the rating.

Guidelines will be developed to support services at the Exceeding National Quality Standard Rating level to apply for the Excellent rating. It is anticipated that these Guidelines will be available in April 2012 in advance of any rating of services by the regulatory authorities. ACECQA encourages all services at Exceeding National Quality Standard to apply for the Excellent Rating.

PART A

Demonstrated excellent practice and sector leadership

[This is essentially a self-nominated criterion where a service nominates an indicator they believe constitutes excellent practice and sector leadership. Evidence needs to show the outcomes for children are clearly improved by the service's excellent practice and sector leadership.]

DRAFT CRITERION 1 (MANDATORY)

Demonstrated excellent practice and sector leadership that leads to improved outcomes for children.

For example, a service may provide evidence that, in the following areas, it performs at the Excellent rating level and this has achieved improved outcomes for children. Services should **not be limited** by this list:

- learning and teaching practices which are exemplary and innovative
- educators' knowledge of each child's learning with sound, sensitive pedagogic approaches and deep understanding of the curriculum
- richness and appropriateness of educator interactions with each child and their scaffolding strategies, particularly guiding, modelling and questioning
- embedded inclusion measures that ensure each child's needs are intensively supported and the capacity of each child maximised
- innovative leadership and management techniques including strengths based practice, mentoring and coaching, and democratic principles of leadership. The leadership and management practices utilise contemporary professional literature and theory to reflect and extend on current approaches.

A service may also describe how the interrelationship between the following features of its service, rather than any one feature on its own, underpins the provision of quality education and care leading to better outcomes for its children:

- leadership
- philosophy
- vision
- relationships and interactions
- teaching and learning
- assessment and planning
- professional learning
- qualifications and support
- self review
- management.

DRAFT CRITERION 2 (OPTIONAL)

Service is regarded as a lighthouse service through strong and effective relationships and engagement with their community and research participation.

For example, the service:

- performs as a mentor of and provides leadership to other services in the sector
- implements innovative programs with children and families which enhance their community connections
- builds and maintains strong partnerships with local community services which improve the delivery of programs to children and families
- develops relationships with local schools to ensure a smooth transition for children from education and care services to school
- builds community networks and referral mechanisms, including for vulnerable children
- establishes and maintains partnerships with universities and peak bodies
- participates in academic research conducted by universities which have contributed to the broader knowledge base in the field
- engages in action research investigations, involving ongoing testing and monitoring of internal practices, that seek to improve service's practices
- provides pedagogical leadership to other services
- demonstrates knowledge of contemporary professional literature and applies this knowledge in practice
- engages in professional critical reflection in relation to service practice and has fully embedded quality improvement processes as part of service provision
- ensures contemporary professional research is used by educators to rationalise and question educational thinking.

DRAFT CRITERION 3 (OPTIONAL)

Demonstrated commitment to the professional development of educators and other staff and to the development of the broader sector workforce.

For example, the service:

- supports educators undertaking postgraduate study or research and uses this expertise to inform practice in the service
- implements professional development strategies to actively enhance staff expertise and retention
- demonstrates commitment to and leadership in sector workforce development initiatives.

DRAFT CRITERION 4 (OPTIONAL)

Demonstrated engagement of and strong partnerships with parents and families in all elements of service provision

For example, the service:

- engages parents and families in developing and implementing programs
- implements targeted programs to encourage participation and improve outcomes for children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and their families
- provides multiple opportunities for parents and families to participate in the service and contribute to service decisions
- implements programs to support culturally sensitive practices and diversity

DRAFT CRITERION 5 (OPTIONAL)

Demonstrated cultural competence, and learning from Indigenous Australians.

For example, the service:

- demonstrates strong cultural competence, respects multiple cultural ways of knowing, seeing and living, celebrates the benefits of cultural and linguistic diversity and has an ability to understand and honour differences
- uses a range of rich and meaningful cultural structures and resources including extended families, Elders, traditional and current practices or stories drawn from a wide range of community types
- embeds Indigenous language and art in its program, including visual art, music, dance and drama
- effectively and meaningfully involves families, ensuring they feel welcome to attend the service, participate and contribute to daily activities such as singing and contemporary and traditional dancing, storytelling, planting of plants indigenous to the area.

DRAFT CRITERION 6 (OPTIONAL)

Demonstrated positive workplace culture and organisational values leading to continuous improvement.

For example, the service:

- has a well developed capacity to review its own performance and improve its practices
- implements family friendly policies and practices to support staff and reviews these policies and practices over time to improve performance
- implements policies and practices to value staff and their work
- actively engages staff in decision-making and information sharing
- builds a positive organisational culture through professional development and networking.

PART B

How a service intends to operate if rated Excellent

The application must also include a 'Forward Plan' statement of how the service intends to provide leadership and mentoring to the sector as a model provider, if rated Excellent.

The service should describe how it intends to undertake the activities it has described in its claims for the next three years. For example, the application should describe how the service intends to share learning's, further engage with the community and with research, and how these will produce improved outcomes for children.

An application should include a statement of any support the service intends to obtain from another source, or may require from ACECQA, to enable it to undertake its Forward Plan.