

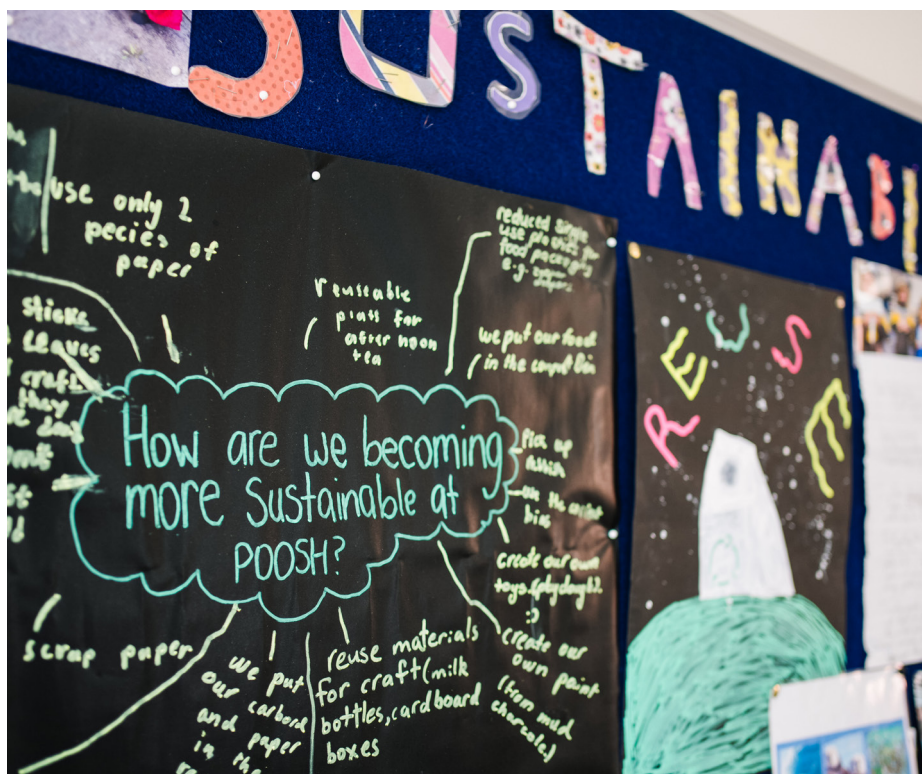


QUALITY AREA 1

## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM DOCUMENTATION FOR APPROVED PROVIDERS

### SCHOOL AGE CARE

This information sheet is designed to give practical guidance for approved providers of services educating and caring for school age children and young people to streamline documentation processes and reduce duplication while ensuring the legislative and quality standards are met.



This information sheet provides guidance for approved providers on the educational program and practice documentation requirements for children and young people attending services educating and caring for school age children approved under the National Quality Framework (NQF).

School age care is not intended to be an extension of the school day, but rather complement the child or young person's learning at home and at school. The focus is on empowering and supporting children and young people's active participation and engagement in play, leisure and recreational opportunities through informing the educational program. Effective documentation in school age care involves recording, demonstrating, assessing, evaluating and making visible children's and young people's wellbeing, learning and development as well as the intentionality of educators' decision making.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

There is no one way to meet documentation requirements under the NQF. Approaches to documentation should focus on children's and young people's wellbeing, learning, and development and authentically reflect the children and young people, families and communities of your service. It can also provide opportunities for educator learning and growth.

Children and young people in outside school hours care are encouraged to be actively involved in the development, format, content and evaluation of documentation relating to the educational program. They may also be engaged in the documentation process, sharing their ideas, interests and learning and may collaborate with educators and service leaders around decisions on the way documentation is developed, used and displayed.

Educators and service leaders use this information and apply their professional judgment to choose methods that best capture the intent and purpose of this documentation.

## COMPLYING WITH THE NATIONAL LAW AND REGULATIONS – WHAT SERVICES MUST DO

The [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#) set out requirements for educational program and practice. Section 168 of the [Education and Care Services National Law](#) outlines what the approved provider and nominated supervisor must do in relation to the program to be delivered to all children and young people being educated and cared for by the service. This includes ensuring that the educational program is:

- based on an approved learning framework [My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia](#) and
- delivered in a manner that accords with the approved learning framework; and
- based on the developmental needs, interests, and experiences of each child; and
- designed to take into account the individual differences of each child.

The National Regulations further define what must be done to comply with the Law, but they do not prescribe how to do it or what educational documentation must look like. In collaboration with service and educational leaders, approved providers make informed decisions on the best approach to documentation to maintain compliance, meet the National Quality Standard (NQS) and support educators to effectively deliver and document programs that enhance outcomes for the children and young people, and their families.

Services must meet the following:

- ✔ **Regulation 73** – Have an educational program that contributes to the five learning outcomes of the approved learning framework ([My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia V2.0](#))

- ✔ **Regulations 325B (SA), 345A (Tas), 359A (Vic), 373A (WA), 289A (NT), 274A (NSW), 298A (Qld)** - These regulations apply in place of regulation 74(1)(b) - Programs for children over preschool age:
  - The approved provider of the education and care service must ensure that, for the purposes of the educational program for a child over preschool age, evidence about the development of the program is documented.
- ✔ **Regulation 74(1)(b) – ACT only – For a child over preschool age** – Document child evaluations including:
  - Evaluations of the child’s wellbeing, development and learning.
- ✔ **Regulation 74(2)** – Prepare documentation that is readily understandable by the educators at the service and the parents of the child. Services must consider:
  - the time children are being educated and cared for
  - how the documentation will be used by the educators.
- ✔ **Regulation 75** – a) Display information about the contents and operation of the educational program in a place that is accessible to parents, and **b)** have a copy of the educational program available for inspection on request.
- ✔ **Regulation 76** – provide parents, on request, with:
  - information about the content and operation of the program in relation to the child
  - information about the child’s participation in the program
  - a copy of the documents kept under regulation 74 in respect of the child.

*The National Law and Regulations do not prescribe how much documentation is required or the method services must use to document.*

## DOCUMENTATION AND THE NQS

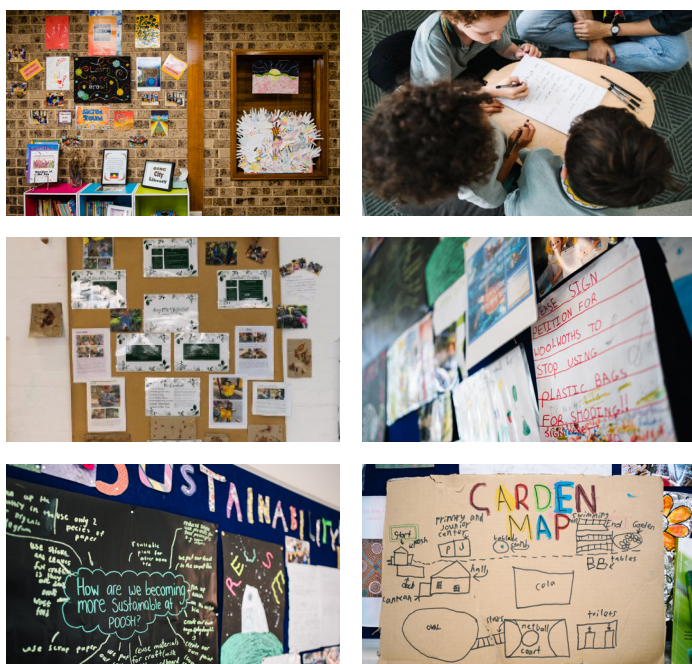
The NQS is a schedule of the National Regulations and documentation expectations are outlined in Quality Area 1 Educational Program and Practice, in particular Standard 1.3 Assessment and Planning:

1.3	Assessment and planning	Educators and coordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child.
1.3.1	Assessment planning cycle	Each child’s learning and development is assessed or evaluated as part of an ongoing cycle of observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection.
1.3.2	Critical reflection	Critical reflection on children’s learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and implementation.
1.3.3	Information for families	Families are informed about the program and their child’s progress.

## WHAT EVIDENCING DOCUMENTATION UNDER THE NQS – WHAT SERVICES MAY DO

Approved providers should provide support to educators and service leaders and collaboratively set expectations to ensure documentation meets legislative requirements as well as to encourage continuous improvement of programs and practice. Approved providers should also empower and encourage educators to explore a range of styles and methods to determine what works best for their unique setting including the children, young people, families, service and community.

Some examples of ways educators document are as follows, but these are examples only and it is important to contextualise and agree on strategies for documentation that meets the standards and your service context.



In setting or collaborating on processes to meet the requirements of the National Law, National Regulations, NQS and align with the approved learning framework it is important to:




- consult with and empower educators and service leaders to build ownership of and commitment to agreed processes and expectations for documentation
- focus on the primary purpose of documentation
- ensure expectations/benchmarks are sustainable, reasonable, and achievable
- eliminate or minimise any duplication
- ensure documentation practices complement (rather than hinder) educators' engagement in valuable play and leisure experiences and interactions with children and young people
- ensure that educators and service leaders have the appropriate resources (including time and professional development) to successfully undertake the documentation
- acknowledge that educators and service leaders will have differing levels of knowledge and skills

- recognise and value the diverse ways to document children's and young people's wellbeing, learning and development and capture each phase of the planning cycle outlined in [My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia](#).

## HOW AUTHORISED OFFICERS GATHER EVIDENCE

Educators and service leaders must demonstrate how they meet the legislative and quality standards but are empowered to do this in a way that is relevant to the individual service, the child or young person, families and community.

In gathering information to make rating and compliance decisions, authorised officers from the regulatory authority collect evidence during the assessment and rating process using the following methods:

-  **Observe:** Authorised officers will observe service practices and interactions.
-  **Discuss:** Authorised officers will discuss why and how particular practices occur at the service.
-  **Sight:** Authorised officers will sight documentation provided as evidence to support particular practices at the service.

The [Guide to the National Quality Framework](#) is a useful tool to consider how authorised officers may observe, discuss, or sight evidence for each element of the NQS. This is not a prescriptive or exhaustive list.

Authorised officers **will**:

- empower educators and service leaders in the process of collecting evidence, so it is important to think about what an authorised officer will see happening during their visit, what you can talk about and what documentation can be made available at assessment and rating.
- use effective and efficient ways to collect evidence to assess against the NQS and underpinning legislative standards through a combination of the observe, discuss and sight methods.
- use the Guide to the NQF and [My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia](#) to determine ratings and compliance.

Authorised officers **will not**:

- expect to see copious amounts of photographs or videos.
- determine the documentation, templates, apps, tools or approaches to be used.

## QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROCESS FOR DOCUMENTATION

To ensure that documentation processes remain fit for purpose, sustainable, contemporary, meaningful and continue to meet the legislative standards, it is worthwhile to implement regular collaborative review practices and provide time for educators to focus on and streamline documentation processes.



Listening to and empowering educators and service leaders is a key component to ensure documentation methods are manageable, implementable and reflect their pedagogical and philosophical approaches.

Careful consideration and reflection on the following approaches may be helpful:

Example misconceptions or ineffective practices in documentation	Effective documentation approaches to explore
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setting an inflexible program template for the service that duplicate information or do not capture key information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouraging educators to use professional judgement to make informed decisions about their environments.</li> <li>Acknowledging that each educator will have different literacy levels and styles, which may impact how they undertake documentation.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only including a weekly educational program format displayed on a wall for families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The educational program can be displayed in an accessible location for families to view and understand. The location, format or schedule is not prescribed under the National Law and can be met in a way that is best suited for families and the service.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setting a quota or benchmark of observations within a set timeframe which reflects a focus on quantity over quality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documenting significant moments as they occur in the program, in a way that will assist the educator in further planning.</li> <li>Documentation which takes into account the period of time a child or young person is being educated and cared for.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only documenting anecdotal observations of prescribed stages of the planning cycle on a specified inflexible template.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choosing from a range of effective documentation methods that reflect the children or young people in your service. This may include embedding the stages of the planning cycle organically in a learning story or narrative.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Always linking <a href="#">My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia</a> outcome ‘numbers’ to observations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considering how a numbered or coded outcome is readily understandable for families or meaningful for children, young people and families.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requiring photographs or videos for every piece of documentation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considering the rights, privacy and engagement of the children and young people in the moment to limit disruptions and respect their rights.</li> <li>Adopting some or all of the National <a href="#">Model Code- taking images in early education and care</a> that is relevant for the service.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using social media or other digital platforms as a means of communicating with families that does not inform the educational program or assessment and planning for children and young people.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with families to set reasonable and manageable expectations about the output, volume and intent of digital platforms and social media (including the use of photographs and videos as a means of communication) and explain potential implications on children’s and young people’s privacy, safety and wellbeing.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If applicable, documenting each child’s and young person’s individual wellbeing, learning and development e.g. via a set number of work samples, observations or developmental checklists.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considering how educators will develop relevant documentation to ensure children’s and young people’s unique knowledge, strengths, culture, abilities and interests are seen within documentation of the program.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documenting and/or reflecting on every planned experience in the program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting educators and service leaders to use their professional judgement to decide which experiences are relevant to document and reflect on, including those that occur spontaneously, and consider the implications on future wellbeing, learning and development within the educational program.</li> </ul>



## SUPPORT FOR EDUCATORS IN DOCUMENTATION

Documentation demonstrates how the educational program is planned, implemented and evaluated to support children's and young people's learning, development and wellbeing, therefore it is important to consider the structure and support required to ensure that this can occur effectively.

In this context, conditions and support relate to how the service environment is organised so educators can be successful in meeting the requirements of the NQS, legislation and expectations the approved provider sets for documentation. Conditions and support can also be associated with how the service meets or exceeds quality areas of the NQS. For example:

### Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements Organisation of educators

- The service's approach to rostering educators to support familiarity and continuity for children, young people and families.
- Other considerations should include the setup of functional workspaces, time for professional conversations, mentoring and reflection, and staff members' access to reliable resources including Information Communication Technology, and texts for guidance and research.

## Educator wellbeing and professional satisfaction

- Excessive and/or duplicative documentation practices may be overwhelming or burdensome and have negative impacts on educator wellbeing. When educators are supported and have autonomy to use their professional judgement in the documentation practices, they show a stronger sense of wellbeing, pride, and satisfaction in the work they do.
- Excessive and/or duplicative documentation also undermines the aims of the NQS by diverting educator energy and time to administrative work, rather than planning rich learning and leisure experiences.

## Professionalism, standards and collaborations

- When educators are provided with tailored professional development to enhance their focused and concise documentation practices, they are better supported to undertake documentation effectively.
- Conditions that should be implemented to support staff include allocated budgets for ongoing professional learning and mentoring, arranging staff so they have opportunities for professional conversations and reflections about documentation during non-contact times.

## Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership Educational Leadership

- It is important to consider how the educational leader role is supported to assist educators in designing and developing effective and manageable documentation that promotes the learning, development and wellbeing of children and young people. If the educational leader has a strong voice in the decision making of the educational program and documentation, they are more likely to be successful in their important role and fulfill their responsibilities under the National Regulations.

