



Quality Area

Introduction

7

Quality Area 7 - Governance and Leadership

Before you begin this Quality Area, you might like to make yourself a cup of tea or coffee, find a quiet place, and take a moment to read your service philosophy.

Quality Area 7 emphasises the importance of having a philosophy that guides all aspects of your service's operations. It also explains that your service philosophy is part of an effective governance framework that supports you and your team to operate effectively and ethically.

Your service philosophy is so important, that it's required to be included in your Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). It is a living, evolving document that should underpin all decisions, guide pedagogy, reflect the shared understanding of the role of the service, and be reviewed at least annually. Everyone involved in your service, including the approved provider, nominated supervisor, educational leader, coordinator, educators, should be familiar with it and included in its development and/or review. Remember to also include the voices of your children and families in the review process.

As you read (you might find it helpful to read it out loud, or have someone read it to you), consider if it reflects your service's purpose and guides practices, as well as prioritises values within your service, such as a commitment to continuous improvement.

Think about whether your service's philosophy:

- articulates a clear service vision for children and families
- underpins the decisions, policies and daily practices
- clearly informs educators and families about the 'culture' of the service
- reflects the guiding principles of the NQF
- guides the implementation of your role as the educational/service leader
- reflects a commitment to continuous improvement. (Element 7.1.1)

Also consider whether you or your educators would feel confident in discussing the service philosophy and how it informs decisions. Would you be able to articulate this to an authorised officer, colleague, or family member?

Considering your responses to the above, you may find that it's time to review your philosophy. Perhaps it no longer underpins decisions or guides pedagogy, or no longer reflects the shared understandings of the educators, children and families. It would also be valuable to review your service philosophy if it has been longer than 12 months since the last review, or if there has been a significant change in staffing.



For a resource that can guide you and your team in the review of your philosophy, see the information sheet, 'Reviewing your service philosophy', on the ACECQA website.



So where to go from here? It might be timely to remember the collective goal for children in education and care services and how best to achieve this goal.

The ECA Code of Ethics provides a framework for reflection about the ethical responsibilities of education and care service professionals. It offers an excellent starting point for a service philosophy review.

Since its inception in 2012, the NQF has guided services to raise quality and drive continuous improvement. This objective was created with the aim to promote quality education and care programs and environments leading to positive outcomes for children and families. Striving for best practice underpins the commitment to continuous improvement and is reflected in the guiding principles of the NQF (Guide to the NQF, p.9-11).

As the educational/service leader, you have a perfect opportunity to inspire and motivate your educators to work toward achieving this shared goal. Encourage them to view continuous improvement as a positive tool to assist them to deliver best outcomes for all children.

Quality Area 7 invites you to think about the systems (governance) 'in place to support effective management and operation of the service, consistent with the service's statement of philosophy' (Guide to the NQF, p.278). It also highlights how effective leadership can promote a positive organisational culture with a focus on quality outcomes for children and a commitment to continuous improvement.

National Quality Standard

Concept		Descriptor
QA7		Governance and Leadership
7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service.
7.1.1	Service philosophy and purpose	A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service's operations.
7.1.2	Management systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.
7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision making and operation of the service.
7.2	Leadership	Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.
7.2.1	Continuous improvement	There is an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place.
7.2.2	Educational leadership	The educational leader is supported and leads the development and implementation of the educational program and assessment and planning cycle.
7.2.3	Development of professionals	Educators, co-ordinators and staff members' performance is regularly evaluated and individual plans are in place to support learning and development.

Here's a snapshot of how services' ratings in Quality Area 7 compare across Australia:

www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework/national-quality-framework-snapshots



What does meeting the NQS look like in Quality Area 7?

The NQS sets a benchmark for the quality of education and care in services. When services implement effective and efficient management systems, procedures and processes, educators are supported to reflect on their practices and programs, and focus on delivering quality education and care for children and families.

What does effective governance look like?

Effective governance requires:

- A statement of philosophy that underpins each aspect of the service.
- Adequate management systems to support all who use the service.
- Policies and procedures that provide guidance.
- Clear roles and responsibilities of team members.



Management systems

Strong management and administration systems contribute to the delivery of a quality service for children and families.

Reflect on how your service's management systems enable effective administration.

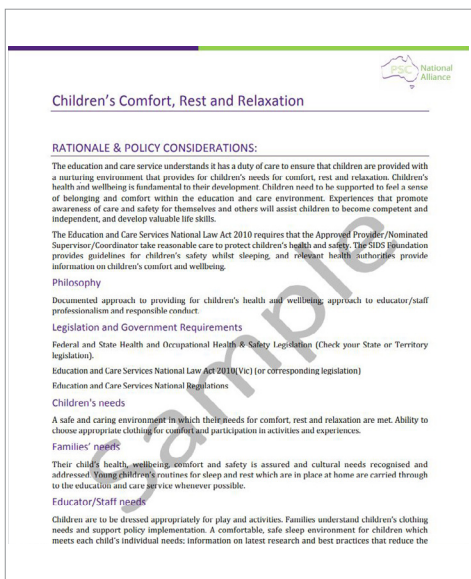
Examples of these could include: an effective sign-in process; easy to complete incident, injury, and illness records; and ways of documenting children's rest, sleep and meals.

In FDC, this could also include the working with children checks for residents aged 18 years and over. (Element 7.1.2)

There are a set of operational requirements that underpin this Quality Area. Under the National Regulations, the approved provider must ensure the service has policies and procedures in place (Reg. 168) and that certain records are kept and managed (Reg. 177).

In an FDC service, the approved provider must ensure that the required additional policies and procedures are also in place (Reg. 169), and the FDC educator is responsible for the management of certain records (Reg. 178).

Consider how your service's governance arrangements ensure compliance with the National Law and Regulations.



Policies and procedures are a legal requirement under the NQF. A list of the required policies and procedures can be found on p.454 of the Guide to the NQF.

Urge your educators to be guided by these documents when making decisions for and about children in order to comply with legislation and meet the requirements of each quality area in the NQS.

Ensure copies of your policies are available to your educators and families at all times. In FDC, this would include having copies available in the educator's home. (Element 7.1.2)

Roles and responsibilities

Clear position descriptions also contribute to the effective governance of a service. When every team member has a clear understanding of their role, responsibilities, and the expectations of their performance, they are supported to make effective decisions. This extends to an understanding of others' roles and responsibilities, including the director, nominated supervisor, educational leader, and the coordinator in FDC. In FDC it also refers to the responsibility of the approved provider to ensure that other adults who live in the FDC residence are fit and proper people to be in the company of children.

Leadership

In addition to effective governance, effective leadership and a commitment to quality improvement are also recognised as having an impact on the delivery of quality education and care services. The Guide to the NQF informs us that, 'Research demonstrates that there is a strong link between leadership and improved outcomes for children' (p.298).

Reflect on what leadership looks like in your service. Your service may have a number of leaders with a common vision but varied roles and responsibilities. Quality Area 7 speaks to each of these leaders. Perhaps you hold a number of leadership roles within your service and your leadership style may differ between these roles. For example, if you are the educational leader, you may also perform the roles of nominated supervisor, the director/coordinator, room/team leader or the approved provider.



Although these leadership roles may differ, the vision is still the same – to achieve the best outcomes for children and families. Think carefully about how best to achieve this.

Effective leadership can contribute to the building of a positive organisational culture and professional learning community that is focussed on quality.

Effective leadership establishes a culture of reflective practice to encourage continuous improvement across all aspects of the service.

Identify ways you contribute to the development of your service's positive organisational culture with a commitment to continuous improvement. (Standard 7.2)

'Effective leaders establish shared values for the service that reflect the service context and professionalism and set clear directions to the service's continuous improvement. Governance refers to the systems in place to support effective management and operation of the service, consistent with the service's statement of philosophy' (Guide to the NQF, p.278).



Learn more about what leadership looks like in education and care services here
<http://thespoke.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/leadership-look-like-early-childhood-settings/>

Continuous improvement

Quality services maintain a culture of ongoing professional reflection and self-assessment, and document continuous improvement in their Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

Your QIP can be presented in a variety of ways.

Remember, your QIP is a dynamic, evolving document that supports you and your educators to progress toward improvement. This is best achieved when it is reviewed regularly and includes the voices of your educators, children and families. (Elements 7.1.2, 7.2.1, 7.2.2)

Have you reviewed your QIP recently to reassess your service and determine where goals have been achieved and where improvements are required?

Undertaking a self-assessment can be an important part of the QIP development and review process. In addition, the reflective questions in the Guide to the NQF are useful discussion prompts for meetings with educators and families. It is important to create a culture where quality practices are identified, as are opportunities for quality improvement.

Consider the ways you can use your QIP to identify the strengths of your service, as well as areas for improvement against the NQS and the Approved Learning Frameworks.

Here's a resource that can guide you and your team in the review of your QIP: <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/media/27556>



Educational leadership

The commitment to quality improvement is everyone's responsibility. Your role as the educational/service leader is to work with others in a leadership position to support the team to reflect on their program and practices as part of your service's continuous improvement.

The role of the educational leader is a legislative requirement and is selected by the approved provider. The suitably qualified and experienced people in this position have the important task to lead the development and implementation of the service's educational program and assessment and the planning cycle (pedagogical leadership).

Perhaps you are the educational leader and, if so, you hold a unique set of professional skills, often differing to the skills of other leadership positions within the service. In the introduction to this Toolkit you were invited to download the educational leader information sheet when learning about QR codes. This is a valuable resource that highlights some of the skills identified as being crucial to the role.

This is a complex role, and it might be that you hold this position along with another leadership position in your service. The role of the educational leader is primarily to:

- collaborate with educators and provide curriculum direction and guidance
- support educators to effectively implement the cycle of planning to enhance programs and practices
- lead the development and implementation of an effective educational program in the service
- ensure that children's learning and development are guided by the learning outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework and/or the Framework for School Age Care (Guide to the NQF, p.303).



Reflect on how you are supported in your role as educational leader. This could be through capacity building, empowerment, and the resourcing of time and/or materials.

Think about your leadership style. Perhaps you adopt a shared or distributed leadership model that encourages collaboration with your team, identifying the skills and strengths they bring to your service.



As with you being supported in your leadership role, perhaps you are also building capacity in and empowering your educators to step in and out of leadership roles as appropriate by mentoring, guiding and supporting. (Elements 7.1.2, 7.1.3, 7.2.2)



Learn more about the role of the educational leader in the Educational Leader Resource here: www.acecqa.gov.au/media/27476

and in the We hear you blog: <https://wehearyou.acecqa.gov.au/2016/10/06/the-role-of-the-educational-leader-part-1/>



Development of professionals

‘To achieve best outcomes for children and families, a service requires a skilled and engaged workforce’ (Guide to the NQF, p.278). A commitment to ‘ongoing learning and reflective practice’ – as suggested in one of the five principles of the Approved Learning Frameworks – ensures educators continually reflect upon their practices, as well as seek ways to build their professional knowledge (a professional learning community) (EYLF, p.13; FSAC, p.11).

Effective leaders create trusting, open and respectful relationships where team members feel safe to collaboratively evaluate their performance and identify areas for professional development.

Reflect on the strategies that are proving successful in building a professional learning community. How do you know they are successful?



Consider how your performance review processes assist your team to identify strengths and areas for development and how they can help set individual performance and learning goals. (Elements 7.1.2, 7.2.1, 7.2.2, 7.2.3)

We wish you and your educators every success in your endeavour to achieve the best outcomes for children and their families. We have every confidence that you will continue to lead, guide, motivate, inspire and work collaboratively with each other to provide a quality educational and care environment.