

Workloads

Better practice, less duplication



Australian Children's
Education & Care
Quality Authority™

12 July 2024

Brad Hayes
Federal Secretary
Independent Education Union of Australia
PO Box 177
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Dear Mr Hayes,

I would like to acknowledge the contribution and support of the Independent Education Union of Australia (IEU) in the development of ACECQA's 'Educational program documentation information sheets' for teachers, educators and approved providers.

We believe the suite of information sheets will support the early childhood education and care and school age care sector to clearly understand the minimum requirements of educational documentation under the National Quality Framework and support them to make informed decisions about documentation that is relevant to their context. Through the guidance, services are encouraged to avoid duplication and unnecessary documentation and consider ways their approaches can be streamlined, whilst still providing quality outcomes for children, young people and their families.

As of 12 July 2024, we have published the information sheets on our website, as a freely available resource. We encourage IEU to share the information sheets more broadly through your members and communication channels.

Yours sincerely

Gabrielle Sinclair
Chief Executive Officer

Is the amount of documentation you are undertaking causing you stress? Are you writing more and more just in case you don't have enough evidence for assessment and rating?

Are you duplicating information? Is all of your documentation valuable or are you repeating things because you feel obliged to meet some self-imposed or other-imposed quota?

Get the facts from the ACECQA Educational Program Documentation information sheets, which were developed in collaboration with the IEU.

The IEU has worked with ACECQA to clarify what is – and is not – required for compliance with the National Quality Standards and National Law documentation of the educational program.

The National Quality Framework was implemented in 2012, and the quantity and type of documentation demanded of teachers has intensified exponentially over time, increasing teacher/director workloads unnecessarily.

We encourage you to pull out or print these information sheets and use them to review the amount of documentation in your service. Keep a copy handy for your next assessment and rating visit and please let the union know if the authorised officer appears to be familiar with the information sheet.

Are they operating within the advice contained in the information sheet during your visit and do they have adequate training and experience in early childhood pedagogy to recognise how the learning cycle (including critical reflection) is demonstrated through your program/plans without the need for lengthy explanatory texts?

How did we get here?

1. Members identified unsustainable workloads due to duplicative and excessive documentation to justify planned activities and resources through lengthy explanatory documents recording critical reflection, which would be obvious to any trained early childhood teacher.
2. The IEU investigated the origins and authority for requirements related to documentation of the educational program and identified the National Quality Framework overseen by ACECQA.
3. The federal office of the union sought to collaborate with ACECQA to write information sheets to clarify what is and is not required for compliance with the National Quality Framework (NQF).

Educational program documentation for educators and teachers

This information sheet is designed to give practical guidance for educators and teachers in early childhood education and care services to streamline documentation processes and reduce duplication while ensuring the legislative and quality standards are met.

These two pages are extracts from the ACECQA information sheets for teachers and educators, written after consultation with the IEU.

Pull them out and pin them on your noticeboard.

Educators and teachers are encouraged to explore a range of styles and methods to document children's learning. Services can choose what documentation suits the unique context of their service, including the needs of their children, families, educators and teachers.

Did you know?

To ensure documentation is meaningful and authentic for children's learning to be made visible, educators, teachers and service leaders use their professional judgment in selecting methods that best reflect the intent and purpose of the documentation.

Complying with the national law and regulations – what services must do

The regulations define what must be done to comply with Section 168 of the Education and Care Services National Law, but they do not prescribe how to do it or what educational documentation must look like. In collaboration with services and educational leaders, approved providers will make informed decisions on the best approach to maintain documentation compliance.

Services must meet the following:

- Regulation 73
- Regulation 74(2)
- Regulation 75(a)
- Regulation 76.

The National Quality Standards (NQS) is a schedule of the National Regulations and documentation expectations are outlined in Quality Area 1 Educational Program and Practice, in particular Standard 1.3.1 Assessment and Planning:

1.3.1 Assessment planning cycle

1.3.2 Critical reflection

1.3.3 Information for families

Evidencing documentation under the NQS – what services may do

As the NQS is underpinned by the legislation, there will be alignment between practice that is compliant with the law and regulations, and evidence of how they meet the aligning NQS standard/s.

Careful consideration and reflection should inform decisions to promote practices that support quality outcomes for children, families, educators, and teachers and:

- align with the legislative and quality requirements
- reflect contemporary research and knowledge about children's learning and development
- eliminate or minimise duplicative or unnecessarily onerous practices
- empower educators, teachers and service leaders to build ownership of and commitment to agreed processes for documentation
- focus on the primary purpose of documentation; to inform teaching practice and children's progress
- ensure expectations/benchmarks of documentation practices are meaningful, sustainable, reasonable and achievable
- ensure documentation practices complement (rather than hinder) educators' and teachers' engagement in valuable learning experiences and interactions with children
- ensure that educators, teachers and service leaders have the appropriate resources (including time and professional development) to successfully undertake the documentation, and
- recognise and value the diversity of ways to document children's learning and capture each phase of the planning cycle outlined in the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia.



How authorised officers gather evidence

The Guide to the National Quality Framework is a useful tool that explains how authorised officers may observe, discuss or sight evidence.

Observe: service practices and interactions

Discuss: why and how particular practices occur at the service

Sight: documentation provided as evidence to support practices at the service.

Authorised officers will:

- empower service leaders, teachers and educators 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 National Quality Framework and the Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia V2.0, 2022 to determine ratings and compliance.

Authorised officers will not:

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

Articulating evidence about documentation

Educators, teachers and educational leaders are encouraged to consider strategies to support their teams to articulate the thinking and planning that informs documentation. For example, it may be helpful to discuss and share thoughts about:

- theories or philosophical approaches
- how professional judgment is used

- how the documentation process reflects the related requirements of the Law, Regulations and NQS
- how the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) is embedded and information shared about the framework
- how the documentation is used to support each child's meaningful participation, engagement and progress towards the learning outcomes and is informed by each child's knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests, and
- how children and families views and ideas have informed the documentation processes.

Reflecting on documentation and its purpose

The amount of documentation

- is setting a benchmark or quota of observations per child meaningful? Is the focus on quantity rather than quality?
- are documentation processes duplicative in any areas?
- can documentation be reduced without compromising quality?
- is the process for documentation impacting on the quality and time of interactions with children?

The purpose of the documentation

- are there opportunities to streamline or reduce documentation while continuing to meet the requirements of the regulations and the NQS?
- could documentation be more concise or used for a dual purpose?

The rights and privacy of children

- are documentation processes ensuring the most effective use of available time?
- can your processes for documentation be reduced, removed or combined to be more sustainable in the long term?
- are there other strategies that could be explored to build in or use time in the work day to effectively and concisely document, that don't impact on children's learning, supervision or wellbeing?

Educational program documentation for approved providers

The following text contains short extracts from different sections of the information sheets for employers. They may be useful for discussions with employers about documentation and processes at your preschool or centre.

Did you know?

There is no one way to meet documentation requirements under the NQF. Approaches to documentation should reflect the children, families and communities of your service. To ensure documentation is meaningful and authentic for children's learning to be made visible, educators, teachers and service leaders use their professional judgement in selecting methods that best reflect the intent and purpose of the documentation.

Approved providers should provide support to educators, teachers and service leaders and collaboratively set expectations to ensure documentation meets legislative requirements as well as to encourage continuous improvements of programs and practice.

Approved providers should also empower and encourage educators and teachers to explore a range of styles and methods to determine what works best for their unique setting including the children, families, service and community.

In settings 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, teachers 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 duplication
- ensure documentation practices complement (rather than hinder) educators' and teachers' engagement in valuable learning experiences and interactions with children
- ensure that educators, teachers and service leaders have the appropriate resources (including time and professional development) to successfully undertake the documentation.

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

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

To ensure documentation expectations are met, educators and teachers should be provided with adequate non-contact time to effectively document and plan for children's learning.

Approved providers should refer to relevant employment awards for educators and teachers in relation to non-contact allocations for staff members responsible for educational documentation and consider the varied roles and workload of each educator and teacher.

Excessive and/or duplicative documentation practices may be overwhelming or burdensome and have negative impact on educators and teacher wellbeing.

Excessive and/or duplicative documentation also undermines the aims of the NQS by diverting educator and teacher energy and time to administrative work, rather than planning and assessment of rich learning experiences.

Educational leadership

It is important to consider how the role will continuously support educators and teachers and ultimately improve outcomes for children and families.

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 role and fulfill their responsibilities under the National Regulations.

How to avoid duplication

What should you do if you're directed to undertake duplicative or excessive practices related to the NQF Educational Program documentation?

1. Identify any duplicative or unnecessary documentation. You may find the reflective questions from the information sheet helpful.
2. Work out how the process or requirements can be improved (for example using the same document to satisfy several required records).
3. Approach your employer/manager and draw attention to the information sheet. Discuss your suggestions for how documentation can be reduced, removed, combined and/or used for multiple purposes while meeting legislative requirements.

If the issue remains unresolved, encourage all staff at your service to make a written request for a review of practices at your workplace based on the official advice in the information sheet. Contact your union organiser for support with this.

Let's eliminate duplicative and excessive practices together

The information sheets form part of an ongoing process the IEU has undertaken with several government and regulatory authorities, with a view to addressing, at a structural level, processes that lead to excessive teacher workloads.

Access the information sheets here:

- Educational Program Documentation for Educators and Teachers – Early childhood - bit.ly/Educatorteacherfactsheet
- Educational Program Documentation for Educators – School age care - bit.ly/schoolfactsheet
- Educational Program Documentation for Approved Providers – Early Childhood - bit.ly/ECprovidersfactsheet
- Educational Program Documentation for Approved Providers – School Age Care - bit.ly/schoolprovidersfactsheet

The common theme is that a teacher's professional judgement should be paramount in determining what constitutes an appropriate level of documentation for teaching and learning, administrative and data collection processes.

The IEU is constantly working with employers, regulatory authorities and government to achieve positive industrial and professional outcomes for members. Encourage your colleagues to join their union to ensure the voice of the profession is heard at every level and in every forum.

Lisa James

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