**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

**Implementation of Assessment and Rating (A&R)**

**Refinements in Western Australia**

In November 2022, Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) released an information sheet, [Making quality assessment and rating more effective](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-11/InfoSheet_Making%20quality%20assessment%20and%20rating%20more%20effective%203.pdf) to notify the sector of the process refinements for how regulatory authorities assess and rate services.

Since this time the Education and Care Regulatory Unit (ECRU) has communicated their position to implement these changes from 1 January 2024. This FAQ document provides answers to the common questions being asked about these changes.

**Why are these refinements being introduced?**

These operational process changes are intended to make the system more efficient and effective for providers and services, as well as provide families with up-to-date information on service quality to assist them in their decision making.

It will also provide the regulatory authority (RA) with a more flexible approach to scheduling assessment visits, resulting in the completion of more A&Rs to reduce timeframes between assessment and reassessment.

**Why move to reduced notice periods?**

The adjusted notice period promotes best practice in education and care service delivery, one that is ‘always ready’ for quality assessment and rating. This meets the intent of observing and assessing typical practice. Approved providers and their services should not be experiencing unnecessary stress or pressure in anticipation of a quality assessment visit.

The introduction of adjusted notice periods for assessment and rating should enable a more accurate and agile process that is more reflective of typical service practice, through targeted evidence gathering and focused discussions.

**What is the reduced notice period?**

The reduced notice period is 1-5 days. In most circumstances services will receive 5 days’ notice, however the regulatory authority can provide less than 5 days and will implement this practice as required.

**In what circumstances will less than 5 days’ notice be implemented?**

An assessment or reassessment in response to serious or ongoing non compliance is one circumstance where the regulatory authority may implement a lesser notice period. Other circumstances may include scheduling requirements.

**How will services be notified of their upcoming visit?**

Services will receive a telephone call from an Authorised Officer to advise of the upcoming visit. A confirmation email will be sent to the approved provider and service following the telephone call.

**When will services provide their Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)?**

Services will have 24 hours from the telephone call to provide their QIP. This information will be included in the confirmation email.

**What do these changes mean for the QIP?**

These refinements will see an enhanced focus on the service’s self- assessment and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) as part of its continuous quality improvement, rather than as a point in time preparation for assessment and rating. Providers and their services can prepare for these changes by maintaining an up-to-date QIP informed by a thorough self-assessment.

The QIP is designed to be a dynamic, evolving document that enables continuous improvement, self-assessment, and self-reflection. Approved providers should ensure an up to date QIP is uploaded to the National Quality Agenda IT System portal. The regulatory authority will use the uploaded QIP for quality assessment and rating purposes.

**Can a QIP be submitted via email?**

All QIPs are required to be uploaded to the NQAITS portal, QIPs will not be accepted via email. Please contact the ACECQA Helpdesk if you are experiencing issues with uploading your QIP. Email nqaits@acecqa.gov.au Phone 1300 667 319.

**Who will get a partial reassessment?**

To be eligible for a partial reassessment a service must have been assessed in full under the 2018 National Quality Standard (NQS).

**If I have been rated under the 2018 NQS will I always receive a partial reassessment?**

No, in some cases a full reassessment will be completed.

**How does the RA determine what will be reassessed?**

The regulatory authority will complete a thorough assessment of a service’s compliance, quality and governance history, as well as reviewing the QIP to determine what Quality Areas (or in some cases element/s, standard/s) will be selected for reassessment.

**Can a service select what Quality Areas they want reassessed?**

A service can select one Quality Area they would like reassessed. This must be communicated to the Authorised Officer at the time of the QIP submission.

**What happens if a service wants to have different Quality Areas, or all Quality Areas reassessed?**

Under section 139 of the Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012 an approved provider may apply to the Regulatory Authority for a reassessment and re‑rating of an approved education and care service or any aspect or element of an approved education and care service which is rateable against the National Quality Standard or the national regulations.

An approved provider can apply via the NQA ITS for a reassessment, using application form SA10 ‘Application for re-assessment and re-rating (service rating)’. An application must be in writing, include the prescribed information that is requested by the Regulatory Authority and include payment of the prescribed fee. An application under this section can only be made once in every 2-year period unless the Regulatory Authority agrees otherwise.

**Can the RA reassess single elements?**

Yes, a reassessment can be at an element, standard or quality area level. The reassessment of elements may occur in response to ongoing or serious non compliance which would justify a change of rating. For example, if a service has a pattern of non-compliance for inadequate supervision, the regulatory authority may reassess element 2.2.1.

**What is a desktop assessment and when will this be used?**

A desktop assessment can be used by the regulatory authority to reassess an element, standard or quality area where the observation of practice is not required.

**How long will a visit be?**

The time an authorised officer spends observing practice and engaging in discussions with educators and staff will depend on what is being reassessed. The time allocated to a visit and discussions will be proportionate to a full assessment and will depend on the number of, and which elements, standards or quality areas are being reassessed. The size of a service may also impact this as authorised officers will still observe practice and engage in discussions with educators across the service.

**Will there be day 2 virtual discussions?**

In most circumstances the completion of observations and discussions will occur at the service on day 1 as a second day will not be required for a partial reassessment.

The regulatory authority recognises that this is a significant change of practice and one that may come with some concerns. Services are reminded of the importance of their QIP in highlighting their self-assessment and continuous improvement journey. Wherever possible please highlight tangible examples of practice and operational strengths and/or exceeding themes in your QIP. This will enable authorised officers to plan to observe and discuss these as part of your re/assessment to maximise the time allocated to your visit.