

2021 National Quality Framework Approved Learning Frameworks Update

Terms of Reference

Introduction

The 2021 Update of the National Approved Learning Frameworks (ALFs) is commissioned by

Education Council under its functions set out in section 220 of the Education and Care Services National Law Act (National Law).

Under the National Law, providers of children's education and care services must ensure their program is based on an approved learning framework, and addresses the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, while taking into account individual differences.

There are two national ALFs that recognise children learn from birth, and that are linked to the National Quality Standard (NQS):

- Belonging, Being, Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF); and
- My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia (MTOP).

Both ALFs were developed prior to, and formally introduced with, the commencement of the NQF in 2012. They articulate a collection of pedagogical principles, practices and outcomes that guide approved providers and service leaders in designing and implementing programs, through processes of planning, curriculum decision-making and evaluation, in prior to school age and school age education and care settings.

The ALFs have been in use under the NQF for close to a decade, and it is important they remain a contemporary and effective foundation to high quality education and care and relationships across the early childhood development service system. Stakeholders consulted as part of the initial phase of the 2019 NQF Review considered it timely that the ALFs be reviewed and updated.

Objective

The purpose of the update of the ALFs (the 2021 NQF ALFs Update) is to maintain the ongoing currency and relevance of the ALFs, and consider the issues set out in the Scope below.

Principles

The 2021 NQF ALFs Update will be guided by the objectives and guiding principles of the National Law.

Scope

While governments consider both frameworks have been effective, an update of the ALFs will strengthen their contribution to the objectives of the National Law and their value to stakeholders through ensuring the frameworks are in line with the current education and care environment, improving national consistency and, where appropriate, aligning with Australian curriculum requirements.

The 2021 NQF ALFs Update will consider:

- a. any opportunities to strengthen coherent learning pathways, including through the relationship between the two ALFs, between the ALFs and the state-based frameworks¹, and linkages across the ALFs and school curricula;
- b. the importance of measuring success in supporting children's learning and development, including how and the extent to which education and care practitioners are enabled to assess achievement of learning outcomes;
- c. learnings from contemporary research on factors contributing to effective pedagogy in children's education and care, including but not limited to:
 - children's brain development in the context of early learning and foundations of lifelong health;
 - language acquisition;
 - continuity of learning;
 - multidisciplinary relationships/partnerships with professionals;
 - parental partnerships and the home and community learning environment;
- d. human rights perspectives, including reference to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant Conventions as they pertain to inclusive, quality education for all children;
- e. learnings from equivalent learning frameworks in the Australian and international contexts, and any reviews of those frameworks;
- f. cultural competence and the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and ways of knowing and being in the frameworks;
- g. representation of socially and culturally diverse perspectives in the frameworks;
- h. findings and recommendations from relevant Productivity Commission inquiries and Royal Commissions, or other significant government review processes including the national school curriculum review;
- i. reference to the Mparntwe Education Declaration;
- j. governance arrangements for the ongoing promotion, protection, maintenance and support of the ALFs;
- k. any further significant themes or issues which may emerge from research and/or stakeholder engagement as part of the ALFs Update.

Key deliverables

The 2021 NQF ALFs Update will include (at a minimum):

- investigation and reporting on aspects of the ALFs that would benefit from refinement based on analysis of the experience of implementation, international practice, research, and related areas of policy and practice;
- implementation of a stakeholder communication and engagement strategy, including gathering stakeholder feedback on the ALFs and how they could be improved in the initial stage of the project, and through a stakeholder discussion paper;
- development of recommended improvements to both frameworks based on the results of the investigation and the stakeholder engagement;

¹ Currently, the relationship between the national ALFs and any state-based frameworks is characterised by a principle whereby a national ALF may complement, supplement or replace individual state and territory frameworks. The exact relationship is determined by each jurisdiction. It is intended that this principle be maintained through this process.

- development of draft revised ALFs for sector testing and validation;
- development of recommended products and methods to support effective transition to and implementation by education and care providers of the updated ALFs, which will be the work of all governments and ACECQA;
- delivery of final revised ALFs for AESOC and Education Council approval.

The NQS – and other associated regulatory requirements on education and care providers for the ALFs – are not in scope of this project.

Oversight/governance

The 2021 NQF ALFs Update will be progressed by ECPG. ECPG will report to AESOC, and through AESOC to Education Council. The ECPG will establish a time-limited ALFs Steering Committee to oversee the 2021 NQF ALFs Update project.

Milestones

- Late 2020 – Education Council commissions 2021 National Quality Framework Approved Learning Frameworks Update.
- Mid 2021 – Stakeholder feedback and engagement process.
- Late 2021 – Sector piloting / testing of draft updated consultation ALFs
- First half of 2022 – Education Council approves updated ALFs
- Second half of 2022 – sector/ governments / ACECQA prepare for implementation of updated ALFs
- Early 2023 – Updated national ALFs implemented under the NQF.