QRIS Questions and Answers

General and Criteria Questions

➢ How do I learn about the QRIS?
  o Take the online course through Wheelock College on the QRIS. It’s free, available in multiple languages and educators can take at their own convenience. This course will walk educators through the QRIS and its requirements. Educators receive 2 EEC hours for each module completed. Simply take the quiz at the end of each module and print the results as proof of completion. Educators should also enter each module on their PQ Registry. The course can be found at http://wheelock.educommons.net/courses.

➢ For 5A.2.4: "Staff are paid for planning time", does this have to be planning time away from the care of the children? Some staff has paid planning time in the classroom during nap time.
  o Yes, this time needs to be away from the care of children.

➢ How can educators find out more about the Environment Rating Scales?
  o The Environment Rating Scales Institute, the organization of authors of the scales, has updated their website with information that is useful to all programs using the tools, including updated notes and support. The website can be found at http://www.ersi.info/index.html.
  o The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) awarded a $800,000 grant to the Aspire Institute at Wheelock College to develop a resource center on assessment, screening, and measurement that supports quality improvement in early education and care and out of school time programs across Massachusetts. For information on trainings, please visit http://www.wheelock.edu/academics/centers-and-institutes/aspire-institute/center-for-assessment-and-screening-excellence

➢ Some programs have a different number of students on each day of the week. Since not all of the students attend each day, they staff the program according to each day's enrollment. Therefore, do programs record the TOTAL number of school aged students who are enrolled in the program, the AVERAGE number of students over the five days, or the number of students that come on the HIGHEST DAY?
  o The total enrollment.

Qualifications Questions

➢ What does EEC require for qualifications for Center-Based staff?
The following are from the Center Based/School Based QRIS Standards: Note: Please remember that programs must meet all criteria at a level to move to that level.

- **Level 1** is Licensing
- **Level 2**
  - 3B.2.1 All staff working in program have a high school diploma or GED.
  - 3B.2.2 50 percent of classrooms have Educator(s) with a Bachelor’s degree or higher who work for the full program day.
  - 3B.2.3 All Educators (Lead teachers, teachers, teaching aides, etc.) have a minimum of 3 college credits in early childhood education, or related field.
  - 3B.2.4 All Educators have an IPDP that is developed in conjunction with the Supervisor that addresses the identified professional development needs of that Educator and the development of their competency along the initial level of the continuum of the core competencies. The IPDP must also address the actions and timelines that need to be met in order to move to the next level of the QRIS.
- **Level 3**
  - 3B.3.1 75 percent of classrooms have Educator(s) with a Bachelor’s degree or higher who work for the full program day.
  - 3B.3.2 IPDP ensures that each Educator receives professional development in the components of the assessment process including screening, observation, use of assessment tools and processes for accessing additional services to meet children’s need
- **Level 4**
  - 3B.4.1 All (100 percent) of the classrooms have Educator(s) with a Bachelor’s degree or higher who work for the full program day.
  - 3B.4.2 Educators have a minimum of 30 college credits in early childhood education/child development/special education
  - 3B.4.3 IPDP reflects identified opportunities for mentoring/coaching/supervision available to Educators, etc.

- Please refer to the documents in EEC’s resources section and become familiar with the QRIS standards and criteria contained in those standards. The CB/CS Standards document is here at https://www.eec.state.ma.us/QrisStatewide/docs/CB_SelfAssessment_Ref.pdf

In order for a FCC Educator to be approved at a level 2, do they need to be able to document in the PQR that they have completed trainings in MA guidelines, diversity, oral language development, children’s literacy, strengthening families, etc... at the time of submission or does their IPDP just have to document their plans/timelines for completing these trainings? It appears that the documentation needed for this standard is “Record of IPDP” rather than “training as indicated by PQ Registry”.

- The educator needs to have those trainings articulated in their IPDP as planned professional development. EEC expects that type of training (to fulfill criterion 3A.2.4) in the IPDP to be completed within 12 months of the development of the IPDP. FCC educators must ensure they have a timeline for completing those types of trainings in their IPDP that ensures they will be completed within 12 months.
There is some confusion over Center Based Standards Criteria 3A 2.1 and 3A 2.2; 2.1 asks for the administrator have a CDA or Higher or enrolled in the AA or BA and criteria 2.2 asks for Administrator with responsibility for supervision has a BA -- what is the difference?

- This is a site specific type of question. For a program that has only one administrator, this is more direct. In that case, the administrator needs to meet both criteria. However, some programs have multiple administrators (Assistant director and director, or site director and director of multiple sites). In that case, one may meet one criteria and another may meet the second criteria. If they have multiple administrators within the program, in order to ensure that they meet these criteria, please make sure they indicate which administrator meets which criteria. They should also have on file an org chart or job description for each administrator that allows EEC to confirm which one is responsible for the supervision of educators (and therefore must meet criteria 3A.2.2).

Some QRIS criteria require formal training. What is formal training (what will EEC accept)?

- QRIS criteria which require formal training: Training must meet the guidelines for Continuing Education Units (CEUs), Competency Education Credits (CECs) or college coursework as stated within EEC Professional Development Policy P-EEC-13 for regulations.
- EEC accepts CEUs awarded by:
  - Accredited colleges or universities (See http://www.ope.ed.gov/accreditation/);
  - Training organizations with the International Association for Continued Education and Training (IACET) accreditation (See http://www.iacet.org/);
  - Massachusetts Association for the Education of Young Children (MAEYC) (See http://www.massaeyc.com);
  - National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (See http://www.naeyc.org/);
  - The National Coalition for Education and Cultural Programs (NCECP) (See http://www.ncecp.org/);
- EEC accepts CECs issued by Early Intervention at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health
- EEC accepts college courses offered by an institution that has been accredited by an accrediting agency or state approval agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education. (To access the database of accredited post-secondary institutions and programs, go to http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/GetDownloadFile.aspx)

Do substitute teachers need to be entered into the PQR?

- Yes, all educators that work with children are required to be entered into the PQR as per licensing requirements. However, they are entered in as substitutes (substitute educator). These substitutes would not need to be included in the list of educators that need to fulfill training and other criteria in the QRIS.
Will the QRIS online course meet the core competency requirement?

- No. This is a course designed to familiarize users with the QRIS, not the MA Core Competencies for Early Childhood Educators. That course is free and online and can be accessed at [http://ocw.umb.edu/](http://ocw.umb.edu/)

What is considered a related field?

- According to our regulations (page 45): Related Field of Study. A program at an accredited institution of higher learning which includes the study of caregiving, development, education, health care, or psychology of children, birth to eight years of age, or provision of direct services to children and their families.

Application Questions

If a program is working on level 2 but only meets the requirements for level 1, do they submit for level 1 to be considered on the QPM?

- Yes, unless a program meets all the criteria at level 2, the program would submit their QRIS Program Manager application to final for a level 1 rating.

When can programs start a new draft application after submitting for a rating from EEC?

- If a program has created an application in the QRIS Program Manager, a new draft application should not be created unless this is a brand new program or application type. The exiting application will be copied after a rating has been granted by EEC.
- If programs have created new applications without utilizing the “copy” function, the best way to proceed is to delete the incorrect draft and copy the verified information from the last application (which was granted the rating by EEC) into a new draft application. Otherwise, programs end up with multiple “streams” of applications in the system, which will cause problems down the road. Its fine to leave the draft application in the QPM until a program has gotten all the information into the new draft before deleting. Programs can also print that draft for your records.

How do I start a new draft application after being granted a rating?

- As soon as programs are granted a rating, they can copy all of their EEC verified information into a new draft document to begin working on their next steps in their program improvement.
- The instructions are in the QRIS Program Manager (QPM) in the help section. After you sign into the QPM, you can click on the help button on the top right hand corner and it will open all types of help instructions. The one you are looking for is in the link below. [https://www.eec.state.ma.us/QrisStatewide/docs/QRISCopyInstructions.pdf](https://www.eec.state.ma.us/QrisStatewide/docs/QRISCopyInstructions.pdf)
 Our agency is trying to update our Self Assessment for the FY12 QRIS; however, when we go in to the Self-Assessment we are instructed to click on the “update” link next to the area that we need to update. However, this link is nowhere to be found. Is the site experiencing technical difficulties, or do we need to start over from scratch with the self assessment.
  o Programs cannot update information in a final submitted application to EEC. They can only view that application. As soon as programs are granted a rating, they can copy all of their EEC verified information into a new draft document to begin working on their next steps in their program improvement.

 Who will pay for reliable ERS raters? How can programs apply for a level 3 or 4 rating without a reliable rater?
  o At level 2, these and other measurement tools are used by the program as a self-assessment. Levels 3 and 4 require a reliable rater in the ERS tools as part of the rating validation process. If a program meets all the required elements of level 3 or 4 in their self-assessment and has an appropriate score in the measurement tools, including the ERS, they will submit a QRIS application through EEC’s on-line QPM. After verification of back-up documentation, EEC will schedule a reliable rater to visit the program. If funding is available, EEC will assume the cost and responsibility of the reliable rater for level 3 or 4 QRIS program applications.

 How do I get a reliable rater for the BAS/PAS?
  o These tools do not require a reliable rater in the MA QRIS.

 FCC Programs within a system are all sub-contracted providers within our system, so can FCC programs use the business plan for the system as a whole?
  o Family Child Care providers are independent businesses that have a contractual relationship with FCC Systems—they are not contractors. They each need their own business plans. However, a system may consider giving them a template that they use and individualize. Please ensure that this is not something programs copy and use for their own but that it is truly just a template that is individualizes for a program’s specific needs.

Timeline Questions

 How long after submitting for level 1 does it take for a program to be accepted as level 1?
  o Many EEC licensed programs will receive their level 1 rating within a few weeks of submitting their application. If a program has attached additional documentation for verification or is a license-exempt program, the expected timeline is 6-9 months.
How long after submitting for a rating does it take to be able to get back into the system and make updates?

- As soon as programs are granted a rating, they can copy all of their EEC verified information into a new draft document to begin working on their next steps in their program improvement.
- However, programs should not submit an application any sooner than 6 months from receiving their verification.

Once a program submits a QRIS application online through the QPM, what is the deadline to mail the supporting documentation?

- EEC expects to receive back-up documentation within 30 days of a program submitting their final QRIS application in the QPM.

As a result of the opportunity of the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge, the report of programs participating in the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), the recent round of QRIS funding, and general feedback from the field on the QRIS, EEC is further defining the timeline and supports for the QRIS. This will include targeted supports which for starters address alignment with early learning standards, the new orientation course for providers, support for business planning for family child care, and the role of health consultants. As we further study the requested use of QRIS program support funds, EEC may develop other focused supports. EEC also intends to target financial resources towards durable goods. Please see http://www.mass.gov/edu/birth-grade-12/early-education-and-care/qris/qris-resources-for-programs.html

Documentation Questions

- If a program has NAFCC/NAEYC/HS/ Accreditation does this help on the QRIS or the levels to improve the rating?
- If you are using NAEYC Accreditation or Head Start Program as documentation, do you need to send the items listed for that particular standard as documentation?
  - EEC has cross-walked the Head Start, NAEYC and the NAFCC standards to the MA QRIS Standards and criteria. Therefore, in the QRIS Program Manager (QPM), there are a number of places where a certification document will suffice as the backup documentation.
  - Head Start, NAEYC and the NAFCC Program documentation fulfills the back-up documentation for some of the QRIS criteria. For others, additional documentation will be needed. Note: All measurement tools must be conducted and programs must score high enough to apply for level 2, 3 or 4 regardless of NAEYC or Head Start status.
Please refer to the following resource documents for information on which criteria require additional backup documentation and which do not require additional documentation other than certification document.

For those that require additional documentation (boxes marked in grey and state “For reference Only”), EEC has labeled which standard in the HS/NAEYC/NAFCC/COA is matched so that a program can use the same documentation (which will often require the program to do nothing more than copy the same documentation utilized for their certification/accreditation).

- NAFCC (FCC): https://www.eec.state.ma.us/QrisStatewide/docs/FCC_SelfAssessment_Ref.pdf
- NAEYC (CBSB): https://www.eec.state.ma.us/QrisStatewide/docs/CB_SelfAssessment_Ref.pdf
- HS: https://www.eec.state.ma.us/QrisStatewide/docs/CB_SelfAssessment_Ref.pdf
- COA (ASOST): https://www.eec.state.ma.us/QrisStatewide/docs/OST_SelfAssessment_Ref.pdf

If you are using NAEYC Accreditation or Head Start Program as documentation, do you need to send the items listed for that particular standard as documentation?

- For guidance on which criteria NAEYC and Head Start programs need additional criteria, refer to the QRIS Program Manager (QPM) User Guides and Instructions in EEC’s QRIS Resources at http://www.mass.gov/edu/birth-grade-12/early-education-and-care/qris/qris-resources-for-programs.html for the specific program type. These documents crosswalk the NAEYC and Head Start criteria with the MA QRIS criteria. For those items that appear in the grey box (reference only), additional documentation will be needed as proof of meeting those criteria. The reference (grey) section guides programs to the documentation used to meet those criteria for NAEYC or Head Start as programs can often use that same documentation as proof of meeting those criteria.

For documentation, do providers need to submit the BAS, PAS or ERS (FCCERS, ITERS, ECERS, SACCERS) measurement tools with the application or are they just tools to use to assess a program, but need not be submitted?

- Providers need to enter their scores for the ERS and BAS/PAS measurement tools directly into the QRIS Program Manager (QPM). This way, the scores are submitted electronically.

How does a program enter APT-O and APT-Q results? When the pop-up box appears to enter results, there doesn’t appear to be any way to enter the APT-Q results, only APT-O.

- Programs enter the APT-O into the QRIS Program Manager as a document under the measurement tools section. The APT-Q is a questionnaire that is given to staff and is more of a process tool than a rating tool and therefore scores are not entered.
  - The Assessing After-School Program Practices Tool (APT) is a new instrument that has been recently developed for use by Massachusetts 21st Century
Community Learning Center grantees to compliment the Survey of After-School Youth Outcomes (SAYO) tool. The goal of the APT is to assess the extent to which after-school programs are implementing practices congruent with their desired SAYO outcomes. The APT includes an observation tool, the APT-O Self Assessment Observation Tool and a program questionnaire, the APT Program Questionnaire (APT-Q).

- **APT Program Questionnaire (APT-Q)** is the companion tool to the APT Observation tool. This questionnaire is designed to help programs reflect on those aspects of programming which research suggests may be related to SAYO youth outcomes, but which are not easily observable.

- For training certificates, should programs send in a copy of the staff development log or does EEC need copies of each individual's training certificates?
- Does EEC need a transcript for each staff member or is documentation that programs have it on file enough?
  - Please do not send in copies of the certificates or transcripts. Educators need to have entered the trainings and coursework/education into their PQR and check the box in the QPM that shows “evidenced in the PQR”. Please keep these copies in a file for future verification.

- Where do programs enter the ARNETT tool?
  - The Arnett is a required document for programs to enter. Programs will submit the document in the back-up documentation with the following:
    - List of names of educators observed using Arnett, PQR Number and the description of how the program uses the Arnett to support educators.

- How can I request an Exemption?
- How many exemptions can a program request?
- What type of information should be included in an exemption request?

  o All programs may apply for up to 4 exemptions, per QRIS program type, on their QRIS self-assessment application to self assess at one particular QRIS level.
    ▪ Three (3) of these exemptions may be applied to standards criteria that programs should have resolved within 12 months of their QRIS application submission date
    ▪ One (1) of these exemptions may be applied towards one standard criterion that may require a significant length of time to achieve, for example obtainment of a BA.
  o Instructions for Requesting a QRIS Exemption are available on EEC website under QRIS Resources for Programs.
  o Each exemption request should provide clear information about the following:
    ▪ Reason program does not meet this one standard (e.g. awaiting a site visit, new staff member, completing the work necessary to implement standard, timing in the program year, lack of availability of specific type of consultant etc.)
    ▪ Program’s implementation plan and timeline for meeting this one standard criterion that clearly states the timeline for all components of the implementation plan and includes the anticipated completion date of the implementation plan.
  o If the standard will require more than 12 months to complete, include the reason in your response.

Please see the following documents that will assist with this:
  o Instructions for Requesting a QRIS Exemption
    http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs1/qris/20110330_qris_exemption_qpm.pdf
  o The Quick Guide outlines the QRIS application and documentation & submission process
    http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs1/qris/20110525_qris_assessment_guide.pdf