

Registration Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Services (0-3 Years)



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GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
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List of Abbreviations

- CPD** _____ Civil Protection Department
CRPD _____ Commission for the Rights of Persons with a Disability
DQSE _____ Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education
ECEC _____ Early Childhood Education and Care
EO _____ Education Officer
EU _____ European Union
LRP _____ Legally Responsible Person
OHSA _____ Occupational Health and Safety Authority
PA _____ Planning Authority



Introduction

This document consists of regulations and criteria that the Legally Responsible Person (LRP) must comply with, prior to opening an Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) centre (0-3 years) and maintain during operation. These established criteria specifically relate to the design and layout of the premises, as well as the facilities and the documentation required to operate. In order to gain the required status for operation, ECEC service providers should follow the set criteria in this document, in conjunction with the *National Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care Services (0-3 years) (2021)*.

The centres' premises, facilities, policies, and practices, as well as the learning and care programmes that are designed and implemented by the ECEC service providers should promote an inclusive, child-centred environment which respects diversity in all its forms, and which enhances all children's learning and development. These need to be consistent with the principles outlined in the *National Curriculum Framework (2012)*.

The criteria in this document are intended to apply equally to all Centre-Based and Work-Based ECEC centres (0-3 years) operating in both the public and private sectors. Unless otherwise specified, the criteria in this document also apply for those centres offering night ECEC service provision.

The document sets out two main areas for quality. The first section sets out the criteria required for the physical environment while the second section sets out the criteria for the planning of the learning and care process. Both aspects are to be planned concurrently to maximise the use of the learning environment, hence facilitating the delivery of the learning and care provision to achieve quality of outcomes for the benefit all children.

The regulations and criteria in this document may be cited as the Registration Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services 2021.

Contributors

This document has been collaboratively developed within the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education. Dr Jacqueline Vanhear (Director, Quality Assurance Department) and Prof Carmen Dalli (External Expert) guided the project.

List of Terms

The list of terms in this document are to be interpreted as follows¹:

centres means those premises used regularly for the education and care of children aged 0-3 years. These centres provide Centre-Based and Work-Based Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services. In the local context, centres are also referred to as ECEC centres (0-3 years), childcare centres, child day care centres and nurseries.

childcare educator refers to an adult who has a designated role of providing education and care to children attending ECEC centres (0-3 years).

facilities means the necessary indoor and outdoor provision, that includes space for food preparation, eating, sleeping, storage, toileting, bathing, and sufficient and suitable heating, lighting, noise control and equipment to support appropriate learning programme offered by the service provider following relevant health and safety regulation.

Legally Responsible Person (LRP) refers to the person who is legally responsible for the operation of the centre.

night ECEC service provision means the service which operates overnight between the hours of 10pm and 5am.

premises mean the land and buildings (or parts of the building) intended for the exclusive use as an officially regulated centre offering ECEC services (0-3 years) during hours of operation.

registration criteria mean the requirements to be met prior to submitting a written request to obtain the required status of provision for ECEC (0-3 years) centres to operate.

service means the provision offered through the operation of an ECEC centre for 0 to 3-year-olds.

¹ Adapted from Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Services 2008 and Early Childhood Education Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, New Zealand Government, 2008), (pp. 5-7).

Types of Service

ECEC provision may take one of two possible forms:

1. **Centre-Based** services are presently the most common type of ECEC service provision. Their premises are solely equipped and used for ECEC provision. In those cases where a centre is adjacent to the service provider's home, the centre needs to have a separate entrance. The same applies when the centre forms part of, or is adjacent to, a school.
2. **Work-Based** services are provided within the building/premises occupied by an employer/group of employers, where employees actually work and where the building is exclusively used as a work hub. These centres are appropriately equipped, and only used for the provision of ECEC services to children of workers employed/engaged by that same employer/group of employers. Work-Based centres need not have a separate main entrance but must be situated within the building/premises where employees actually work.

The nature of the work operation/s and/or other factors in the vicinity must not present any hazards to children using this service or in some way limit the provision of the service. Such centres must meet all the criteria applicable for Centre-Based services, with the exception that they need not have a separate entrance.

As from the date of the publication of these Registration Criteria new registrations for Home-Based centres will no longer be accepted. Those Home-Based services currently registered with the DQSE will be permitted to operate as long as they adhere to current standards.

Procedure for opening a new Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) centre (0-3 years)

The procedure for opening a new ECEC centre (0-3 years) involves two separate processes. The first process consists of an application with the Planning Authority (PA) while the second process consists of the Registration Process with the DQSE.

During the application process, the PA consults with the DQSE among other entities. Applicants may consult with the DQSE prior to submitting plans to the PA to ensure that the proposed plans are acceptable according to the National Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care Services (0-3years) (2021) and the *Registration Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Services (0-3 years)* (2021). Once the PA permit is issued the centre is to complete all the works according to the permit. The PA permit on its own does not grant permission to operate as an ECEC service provider. This would be a first requirement and separate process from the registration process.

When all works are completed, the LRP may proceed to the registration process. The application for *Registration of a New Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) centre (0-3 years)* can be filled in online and submitted together with the required supporting documentation. Once all documents are evaluated by the DQSE and are found to be according to requirements, a site visit is conducted. The aim of the pre-registration visit is to ensure that the premises of the centre adhere to all the requirements as set out in the PA permit, the National Standards and the reports submitted with the application form. On completion of the visit, officers inform the LRP whether all conditions have been satisfactorily addressed or whether any further action is required. If all conditions have been addressed satisfactorily, a recommendation is made to issue the registration certificate which is then sent to the LRP within one week from the date of visit or from when proof that all conditions have been addressed satisfactorily is received.

A review visit is held before the expiry of the temporary registration during which officers conduct a full assessment of the centre leading to confirmation or non-confirmation of provisional registration.

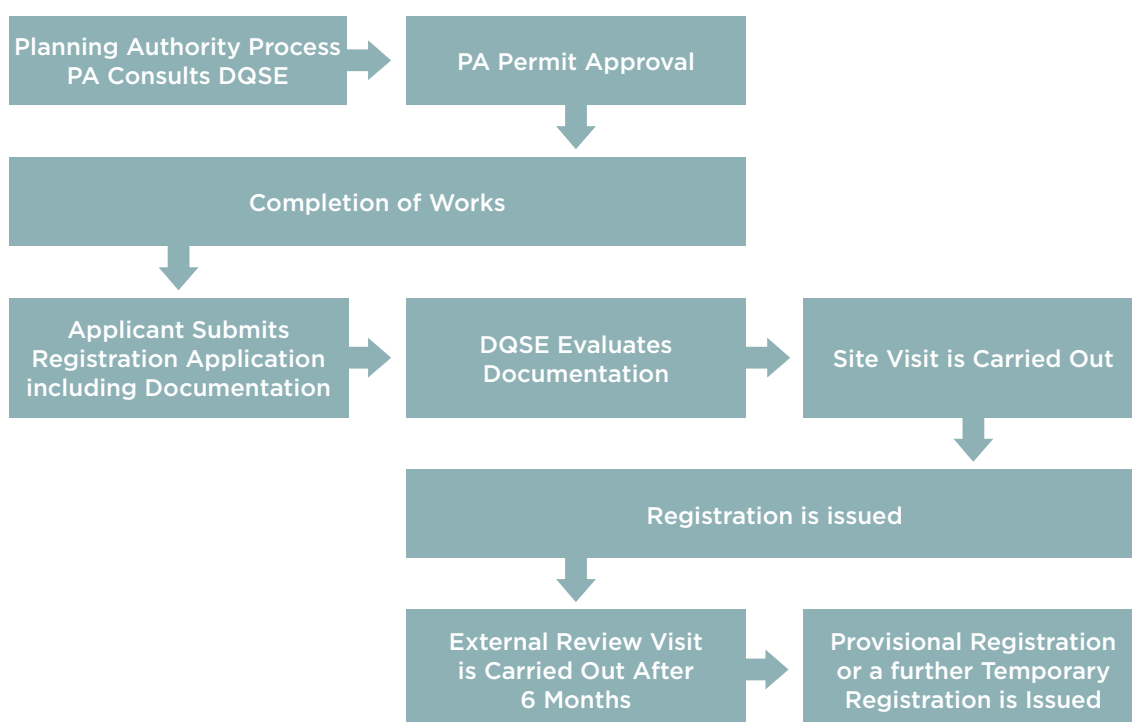


Figure 1 Procedure for Opening a new Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) centre (0-3 years)

Section 1:

The Physical Environment

Criteria related to the Premises	
1. Ground Floor	
Criteria	<p>1.1 The premises shall not be more than 0.9 metres above or below pavement level.</p> <p>1.2 On sloping sides, the ground floor level of the premises is to be calculated at the highest point of the entrance.</p> <p>1.3 The main entrance of the premises cannot be located on a stepped road/pavement.</p> <p>1.4 The premises should have an access through a road which provides unobstructed access to emergency vehicles.</p> <p>1.5 Any areas that are accessible to children are to have an opening that leads to an external area that has a size in line with the health and sanitary laws and regulation, (S.L. 552.22) and any subsequent amendments.</p> <p>1.6 Without prejudice to the requirements of Standard 1.5, the DQSE reserves the right to conduct or request third party to conduct additional reports/assessments of the premises as deemed necessary. This may also cover overlying, underlying, and surrounding areas, taking into consideration as well the use of nearby land and properties, to determine the possibility of the premises being converted into an ECEC centre (0-3 years) that poses no danger to occupants.</p> <p>1.7 Developments proposed in areas that are prone to specific hazards will need endorsement by the relevant competent regulatory Authority.</p>
2. Accessibility	
Criteria	<p>2.1 The centre should be physically accessible, as certified by a Final Compliance Certificate issued by the CRPD.</p>
3. Emergency Exit	
Criteria	<p>3.1 A fire safety report by a warranted engineer is to be submitted at registration stage.</p> <p>3.2 Emergency exits and signage need to be in line with the fire safety report.</p> <p>3.3 Every emergency path and exit must be free of any kind of obstruction at all times and must be equipped with illuminated signs.</p>

4. Child space allowance	
Criteria	<p>4.1 Child space allowance includes both indoor and outdoor areas.</p> <p>4.2 Only areas accessible to children (such as learn/play/eating/toileting/sleeping) are included in the child capacity calculation. The areas not accessible to children (such as office/reception/store/s/adult toilet/s/kitchenette/garage/staff room/laundry room/box room/server room/services areas/shafts/areas not having adequate natural ventilation/ any ramped areas) are not to be included in the calculation. Refer to Appendix 2 for calculation of child capacity.</p> <p>4.3 The required outdoor play area of the centre should be fully accessible to children for play and learning purposes. Any area not accessible to children (such as planters/well head) will be deducted from the child accessible space.</p> <p>4.4 For the purposes of determining maximum child capacity, where a large outdoor area is available, the admissible outdoor space for the calculation of the centre's outdoor play area must not exceed 30% of total ground floor area as defined above. A maximum of 25% of each separate outdoor area may be permanently covered. Refer to Appendix 2 for calculation of child capacity.</p>
Night ECEC Service Provision	<p>4.5 The child capacity at night-time is to be limited according to the number of cots and/or beds available for the overnight sleep of children as per layout arrangements described in the section dedicated to <i>Indoor Area: Resting/Sleeping room/s</i>.</p> <p>The setting of cots and/or beds should allow for appropriate distancing between cots. It is also important that the centre allows children to sleep in a restful way free from any disruption Refer to Section 5: Indoor Area.</p>
5. Indoor Area	
Criteria	<p>5.1 The indoor area must include both play area/s and quiet area/s. The layout of the indoor area must allow staff to easily supervise and engage with children. It must be large and spacious enough Refer to Section 4:Child Space Allowance to fully allow for the free movement of children between different areas and activities, including physical activities.</p> <p>The main indoor play area is to be large enough to accommodate at least one group of children keeping to the 5m² per child Refer to Section 4: Child Space Allowance.</p> <p>Play area/s</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There must be space to allow for free movement between different play areas and for children to engage in indoor activities².

2 The main play area is to be spacious enough to accommodate a group of children and their childcare educator according to specified ratios.

<p>Criteria</p>	<p>Quiet Area/s³</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The centre is to be equipped with areas where babies and toddlers can sleep and rest without being disturbed. • The quiet area would preferably be part of the same play area used by children rather than a separate room. In case that the quiet area is in a separate room, the centre is to ensure that enough staff is available for supervision. • Children napping/sleeping in the quiet area should be supervised at all times as indicated in the <i>National Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care Services (0-3 years)</i>, Standard 1.3. Use of baby monitors does not replace carer supervision. • The child capacity of the quiet area/s must be proportionate to the maximum number of children the centre can accommodate. <p><i>The location of the quiet area/s should be conducive to undisturbed sleep</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • careful control of lighting (e.g. blinds in windows, dimming) is essential; • free of draughts; • all infant cots/toddler beds must conform to EU Standards; • each child must sleep on a separate bed; • bunk beds are not allowed; • Infant/toddler bed should be age appropriate. Sizes vary – the maximum bed dimensions are 750mm x 1350mm; • aisle space is to be at least 900 mm wide; • space between infant/toddler beds is to be a minimum of 450 mm; • all furniture and room measurements are to be indicated in architectural drawings.
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6. Outdoor Play Area

<p>Criteria</p>	<p>6.1 The outdoor play area configuration and size must be spacious enough to fully allow for the organisation of activities and opportunities for play that meet the full range of children’s learning and developmental needs. Refer to Section 4: Child Space Allowance.</p> <p>The outdoor play area must be connected to the indoor activity area and can be easily and safely accessed by children.</p> <p>6.2 The design of the outdoor play area must allow staff to easily supervise and engage with children. It must also be large enough to allow for the free movement of children between different areas and during physical activity.</p> <p>6.3 The outdoor play area/s must provide for the privacy, safety and security of children and must be available for the exclusive use of the service during hours of operation.</p>
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³ Quiet areas may include spaces where shared reading, quiet time learning activities or napping/resting takes place.

	<p>6.4 The main outdoor play area (excluding other smaller outdoor areas) must represent at least 20% of the gross total ground floor area (indoor and outdoor area combined, excluding shafts, driveways, garages, planters, front outdoor areas, amongst others) as defined in Section 4: Child Space Allowance, and must be sufficiently large to contain an imaginary unobstructed rectangle of play space measuring at least 5m in length and at least 3.5m in width, of which only 25% may be permanently covered area.</p> <p>6.5 Where the outdoor area is larger than 30% of the total site area, the permissible outdoor area is calculated proportionally to the total indoor area as described in Appendix 2: Calculation for Space Capacity.</p> <p>6.6 Any secondary outdoor space that is additional to the main outdoor area and that is to be used for play purposes must be sufficiently large to contain an imaginary square of at least 3.5m by at least 3.5m. Only up to 25% of the imaginary square of a secondary outdoor area may be covered.</p> <p>6.7 Outdoor spaces at the front of the premises cannot be used for play purposes and will not be deemed to form part of the total ground floor net indoor and outdoor play area combined of the property.</p> <p>6.8 Outdoor area is to provide a natural learning experience to children⁴.</p>
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7. Ambience Control

<p>Criteria</p>	<p>Lighting</p> <p>7.1 The premises must let in adequate natural light and be well-supplemented with artificial lighting.</p> <p>Temperature</p> <p>7.2 The temperature in the areas accessible to children is to be comfortable. It should not be less than 20 degrees Centigrade and not higher than 25 degrees Centigrade:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a climate control system must be in place in order to maintain the required temperature and degree of comfort. <p>Noise control⁵</p> <p>7.3 Measures are taken to ensure that noise levels do not unduly interfere with normal speech or communication or cause any distress or harm. Such measures may include the provision of acoustic absorption materials to reduce noise levels.</p> <p>Humidity</p> <p>7.4 Humidity levels are to be maintained between 40% and 50% for the safety and well-being of the children.</p> <p>7.5 All areas are to be damp free.</p> <p>Ventilation</p> <p>7.6 There must be adequate natural ventilation in every room that is used by children. Good ventilation is particularly important in sleeping/resting, nappy changing, sick bay/containment areas. If the ventilation needs to be supplemented by mechanical means, this needs to be certified annually by a warranted engineer.</p>
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⁴ Planted areas covered in soil may be used as long as 6.4 is adhered to.

⁵ Acoustic absorption materials, soft furnishings and double-glazed windows reduce noise levels that may negatively affect children's learning and well-being.

8. Office and Reception Area

Criteria	<p>8.1 The reception area must be secure and designed in such a manner to provide the necessary privacy for the children within the childcare from any people visiting this area.</p> <p>8.2 The office must be situated close to the reception area at the entrance of the centre and must be accessible to visitors but at the same time affording children at the centre privacy and security from any third-party including visitors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the office cannot be located along a corridor that interconnects different parts of the centre that are accessible to children, but must be located near the main entrance of the centre as stated above;• the office is to be sufficiently large to enable the holding of meetings with a child's parents and/or member/s of staff and/or any professionals. <p>8.3 A landline telephone and/or centre mobile is to be available.</p> <p>8.4 Emergency services contact numbers must be affixed near the telephone and/or in any prominent place within the centre.</p> <p>8.5 A list of contact details for all children is to be kept close to the telephone in a secure place with easy access.</p>
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9. Kitchenette Area

Criteria	<p>9.1 The kitchenette area must not be accessible to children.</p> <p>9.2 It does not have to be a separate room but has to be cordoned off with appropriate barriers to render the area inaccessible to children at all times, subject to satisfying all health and safety requirements that may apply.</p> <p>9.3 It cannot form part of a corridor that interconnects different parts of the premises that are accessible to children.</p> <p>9.4 The kitchenette area cannot be located in a quiet area or combined with an office area.</p> <p>9.5 Kitchenette is equipped with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a means of keeping perishable food at a temperature at or below 4 degrees Celsius and protected from vermin and insects;• a means of cooking and/or heating food;• a means of hygienically washing dishes;• a sink connected to a hot water supply. <p>9.6 All surfaces are to be impervious to moisture and can be easily maintained in a hygienic condition.</p> <p>9.7 Any kitchen appliances should not be gas operated.</p> <p>9.8 Kitchen facilities or appliances are designed, located, or fitted with safety devices to ensure that children cannot access them.</p>
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	<p>9.9 Any kitchens used for preparation of food to be offered to the children need to comply with the relevant Food Safety Commission regulations and authorisation.</p> <p>9.10 Only items related to food and drink can be stored in the kitchenette. Any cleaning agents related to cleaning of kitchenette are to be stored in a locked cupboard.</p>
10. Food and Drink	
Criteria	<p>10.1 Children have a safe and hygienic environment during snack/meal/feeding times.</p> <p>10.2 Snack/meal/feeding times are flexible in order to meet the individual nutritional needs of each child.</p> <p>10.3 Food which is provided by parents is properly handled and stored. The centre encourages parents to follow the guidelines about healthy nutrition provided by the Health Promotion Directorate.</p> <p>10.4 Where food is provided by the centre, it is of sufficient variety, quantity, and quality to meet children's needs, and is required to comply with the relevant Food Safety Commission's regulations and authorisation.</p> <p>10.5 The centre manager, childcare educators and assistants to the childcare educators are to be in possession of a valid food handling certificate.</p> <p>10.6 Food is prepared, served, and stored hygienically. It is refrigerated and/or heated appropriately.</p> <p>10.7 The needs of children with specific dietary requirements and an individual action/emergency plan for these children is available.</p> <p>10.8 Children are supervised while eating.</p> <p>10.9 Children have free access to drinking water at all times.</p> <p>10.10 Food and liquid containers provided by parents must not be kept overnight at the centre but returned to the parents every day.</p>
11. Storage Space	
Criteria	<p>11.1 The storage space is to be used to store various items required by the centre, including educational material, spare linen, bedding, nappies, and other items used for the operation of a centre. Linen and bedding material provided by the parents must be stored individually for each child and labelled accordingly.</p> <p>11.2 There should be a separate storage space for brooms, buckets, and other cleaning materials.</p> <p>11.3 Storage spaces must not be accessible to children.</p> <p>11.4 No hanging storage can be used in child accessible areas.</p>

12. Utility Room	
Criteria	<p>12.1 A utility room⁶, complete with a laundry area that is sufficiently equipped to cater for the child capacity of the centre, must also serve for the storage of cleaning materials and other potentially dangerous substances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • this room should not be accessible to the children under any circumstances and must be locked after each use and precautionary measures must be taken to avoid accidental access to dangerous/cleaning chemicals; • cleaning materials and other potentially dangerous substances are to be stored in lockable cupboards; • the room should be designed for functional efficiency and should include a cleaner's sink; • shelving which may be adjustable with varying shelf heights is recommended. <p>12.2 Floors should have slip resistant surfaces for ease of maintenance and hygiene.</p>
13. Nappy Changing Area	
Criteria	<p>13.1 An appropriate place/s is/are designated for nappy changing facilities. It must not be situated anywhere near the food preparation area/s to avoid any possible cross contamination.</p> <p>13.2 This designated area is to have an adjacent wash basin that is suitable for bathing babies/young children.</p> <p>13.3 It is recommended that the nappy changing area should have some visibility from another area.</p> <p>13.4 The nappy changing area cannot be located in the adults' toilet.</p> <p>13.5. A storage cabinet for nappies should be located within reach. There should be no storage above the nappy changer to avoid stored items falling on the children.</p> <p>13.6 A hygienic hands-free bin with a liner and lid that is kept closed at all times should be provided for used nappies. The bin containing soiled nappies must be emptied and sanitized regularly.</p> <p>13.7 Nappy changing mats are to be changed when worn out.</p>
14. Child Bath Facility	
Criteria	<p>14.1 There is at least one age-appropriate bathing facility for washing sick or soiled children. This may be the same as the wash basin used in the nappy changing area.</p> <p>14.2 The bathing facility is to be sanitised after each use.</p>
15. Separate Toilets for Staff and Children	
Criteria	<p>15.1 A separate room/s is/are required for staff and children's toilets, each complete with a wash hand basin.</p> <p>15.2 Doors to the children's toilets should not be lockable.</p> <p>15.3 Children's toilets are to be age-appropriate.</p> <p>15.4 Centres having up to 34 children are to have a minimum of two children's toilets and hand basins, centres having between 35-70 children are to have a minimum of 3 children's toilets and hand basins with an additional toilet and hand basin for every 20 other children. The child capacity will also be limited according to this requirement.</p> <p>15.4 All toilets are to be adequately separated from areas of the centre used for play or food preparation.</p>

⁶ An area of the utility room may serve as a dressing room for cleaning staff and/or storage as per **Section 11: Storage Space**.

16. Sick Bay/Containment Area	
Criteria	<p>16.1 This area is to be used by sick children until emergency pick-up arrangements are made.</p> <p>16.2 The sick bay should be located in an area away from other children.</p> <p>16.3 This area is to be furnished with rest equipment and provided with clean bedding.</p> <p>16.4 The area is to be well ventilated and needs to have window/s that can be opened.</p> <p>16.5 Children in this area are to be supervised at all times.</p>
17. Paints	
Criteria	17.1 Only lead-free paints are permissible.
18. Indoor and Outdoor Non-slip Flooring	
Criteria	<p>Indoor flooring:</p> <p>18.1 All indoor flooring is to be certified slip resistant and indicated in the Health and Safety Risk Assessment Report.</p> <p>18.2 Any ramps are to have either a colour contrast or a distinctive pattern to demarcate the beginning and end of ramp.</p> <p>18.3 Carpets are prohibited throughout the centre, with the exception of door mats and only if edges are bound and flat to avoid tripping.</p> <p>Outdoor flooring:</p> <p>18.4 All the flooring of the outdoor play area considered in the 20% ratio must be non-slip, meeting at least the same specifications as for indoors or similar.</p> <p>18.5 The area under the outdoor play equipment (e.g. swings/slides etc.) is to be covered with soft non-slip flooring made of natural materials or material/s that does/do not present a toxic threat or an environmental health hazard to users. This is to be maintained or changed as required.</p> <p>18.6 Any area containing soil and/or vegetation is encouraged to be used by children under close supervision if the outdoor area satisfies Criteria 6.4 above.</p> <p>18.7 Outside vegetation needs to be safe for children.</p> <p>18.8 Any exposed stairs leading to the entrance of the centre are to have non-slip tape at the edges.</p>
19. Other Safety Measures	
Criteria	<p>19.1 The premises, equipment and resources used within the centre are examined and declared safe for use by children and the members of staff. A Risk Assessment Report is to be prepared by a competent person and updated as necessary and not later than every two years. Hazards which give rise to unacceptable health and safety risks are to be controlled according to their risk severity and recorded in an updated Risk Assessment Report.</p> <p>19.2 The electrical installation must be certified by a licenced electrician. Three-phase installations are to be certified by an electrician holding licence B.</p>

	<p>19.3 Power sockets are to be covered or out of reach of children.</p> <p>19.4 All electrical appliances must be submitted to a PAT (Portable Appliance Testing) regime and certified annually by a licensed electrician.</p> <p>19.5 Corners are to be covered with soft protective covering.</p> <p>19.6 Laminated/shatterproof glass windows/ doors are to be used. Protective film may also be utilised.</p> <p>19.7 Doors/windows/cupboards/drawers are to have childproof locks.</p> <p>19.8 Low-level windows/glass panels are to have protective barriers.</p> <p>19.9 All indoor and outdoor items and surfaces, furniture, equipment and materials including natural resources are safe and suitable for their intended use in relation to the children's age and competences. These need to be regularly cleaned and well maintained.</p> <p>19.10 Security gates and fencing are to be installed as required, particularly on outside stairs.</p> <p>19.11 The hot water system storage temperature is to be set at 60 degrees Centigrade. A thermostatic hot water mixing valve is also required to maintain and limit mixed hot water to a desirable 40 degrees Centigrade.</p> <p>19.12 Centres should have well stocked first aid kits. In large centres additional kits should be located throughout the centre for easy access as per Health and Safety regulations.</p>
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20. Fire Safety and Fire Protection

<p>Criteria</p>	<p>20.1 Fire extinguisher/s and fire blanket/s are properly installed, checked and serviced regularly and as required and staff members must be familiar with their use.</p> <p>20.2 All materials must be certified as fire resistant/ retardant.</p> <p>20.3 Fire exit/s must be unobstructed.</p> <p>20.4 The centre is to have a Fire Safety Plan of the premises indicating exits during evacuation. The evacuation is to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the mobility of children and how this is to be accommodated during an evacuation; • the location of a safe assembly point away from the evacuated building, busy roads, other hazards and from the evacuation points of other residents or tenants within the building or surrounding buildings; • where the centre is part of a larger building, or complex, the emergency evacuation plan is complementary and consistent with other emergency evacuation plans in place; • the supervision of children during the evacuation and at the safe assembly area, is to give due attention to the capacity of the centre and the child-to-staff ratios; • the roles of staff during the evacuation; • fire drill planning.
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	<p>20.5 Signage indicating routes of escape are clearly displayed as per fire safety report recommendations.</p> <p>20.6 Gas cylinders are prohibited.</p> <p>20.7 Fire protection measures must be adhered to⁷.</p> <p>20.8 At least two members of staff possess a Fire Safety Certificate to serve as fire wardens at the facility. A fire warden must be present on the premises during operational hours.</p>
21. Insurance Policy Cover	
Criteria	21.1 Comprehensive general liability insurance policy cover, including protection for all the occupants of the premises, is mandatory at all times.
22. Enhancing Access to, and the Use of a Digital Learning Environment	
Criteria	<p>22.1 The centre is to have a well-functioning digital learning environment⁸.</p> <p>22.2 Each key employee at the centre needs to have access to dependable digital services and IT support should be available when needed to support staff in using digital learning environment effectively.</p>
23. General	
Criteria	<p>23.1 The premises are according to Sanitary law and regulations.</p> <p>23.2 The premises are kept in a good state of maintenance, cleanliness and repair, and staff maintain and encourage good standards of hygiene.</p> <p>23.3 The centre has a waste separation procedure with separate receptacles for organic waste, recyclable waste and other waste.</p> <p>23.4 Only authorised persons are permitted entry in the indoor and outdoor areas of the centre.</p>

7 (i) Provide and manage the fire protection measures for the building: (a) means of escape; (b) signs and notices; (c) emergency lighting, (d) fire alarm; (e) fire extinguishers, and (f) fire doors and compartments. (ii) Implement and keep records of (a) fire procedures, including evacuation, (b) staff training, and (c) fire drills (iii) Ensure heat detectors, smoke alarms, and carbon monoxide detectors are installed in all locations as required by the fire risk assessment. If sprinklers are required ensure that adequate coverage is provided to all areas, including storage rooms and closets.

8 A Digital Learning Environment ensures provision of digital technology as well as digitally mediated activities that when appropriately implemented enhance children's development. A digital learning environment in childcare centres includes services and tools that enable learning, support administration, and improve communication thus enhancing the quality of childcare programs.

Section 2.

Quality of Learning and Care Provision

Prior to opening a new ECEC centre (0-3 years), the LRP needs to have a clear vision of the learning and care provision that is going to be offered by the centre to support the development and wellbeing of each child. The quality of the children's early learning and care is essential and should focus on each child's individual interests and needs. Thus, the LRP needs to ensure that the service provision offered in the centre is child-centred in its ethos, its policies and practices and its care and learning programme.

The implementation of the learning and care programme needs to be supported by clear and well-written policies, procedures and statements. The policies and procedures should reflect the centre's philosophy, values and principles. They should set down a clear, agreed and consistent way of doing things and make the centre's requirements, beliefs and decisions open and transparent to all. Having clear written policies and procedures when planning or making decisions helps to maintain effective practices and the smooth running of the centre. It provides a road map to guide stakeholders including the children's parents and families and staff members in their practice, hence ensuring the best outcomes. This has a significant impact on the quality of service that the centre provides.

The centre manager is responsible to ensure that all policies and procedures are updated regularly, fit for purpose, meet all legislative and regulatory requirements, and are shared appropriately with all staff members. All staff members need to read these policies and are responsible for implementing them in their daily work with the children and their families, as appropriate to their role. The centre manager is also responsible for making sure that staff members have adequate training so that they can properly implement these policies. It is also the responsibility of the centre manager to ensure that parents are informed about and familiar with the centre's policies and procedures and that they are in agreement with them. This will allow parents to work in partnership with the centre in all aspects of their child's learning and care experiences.

The LRP, together with the centre manager, need to collate the centre's policies and procedures in a Manual of Policies and Procedures. This document is pivotal as it guides the centre manager and members of staff in their daily work and decision-making process while it is valuable for parents. This manual is to be reviewed regularly to ensure that the policies are adequately meeting the needs of all the children and their families.

1: Manual of Policies and Procedures

<p>1. The philosophy of the centre</p>	<p>A statement which outlines the fundamental beliefs, values, and ideals and guides how the centre operates. It underpins the centre's policies, procedures, and the decisions and daily practices of all those involved in the planning, implementing and evaluating of the care and learning experiences. It is the basis for the decisions taken by the centre regarding the way it is managed, its aims and objectives, and its direction for the future.</p> <p>The centre's philosophy needs to reflect a shared understanding of the role the centre plays in the experience of the children at the centre and their families. It is based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the centre's approach to care, learning and play and the learning opportunities that are provided to the children; • the adult-adult interactions, the adult-child interactions, the children's interactions with each other and the children's behaviour; • the physical environment of the centre premises, in the way the indoor and outdoor space available in the centre is organised and utilised; • the resources that are available to cater for the different age groups, different developmental needs, and individual interests of children attending the centre.
<p>2. The centre's approach to care, learning and play</p>	<p>A policy which outlines the pedagogical goals, values and approaches that the centre employs to meet the children's individual needs and enables them to reach their full potential. It describes how the childcare educators can plan and provide activities and events – both direct and indirect, planned and spontaneous, to address children's emotional, physical, social and cognitive development and their well-being.</p> <p>The following documents can guide the centre when developing its approach to care, learning and play:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Learning Outcomes Framework for the Early Years, which follows the principles of the National Curriculum Framework (2012) • The Educators' Guide for Pedagogy and Assessment – Using a Learning Outcomes Approach. Toolkit for the Early Years Cycle (2015, pages 8-10 and 23-27) • A Language Policy for the Early Years in Malta and Gozo • A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools (2019)
<p>3. Internal Review Process</p>	<p>This policy should outline how the centre will be evaluating its provision vis-à-vis the National Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care Services (0-3 years) (2021). This should include how the centre will be collecting feedback from different stakeholders and how it will be using this information to inform improvement.</p>
<p>4. Assessment practices</p>	<p>A policy which describes the processes that the centre employs to gather and document key aspects of children's learning and development, in order to make learning visible and inform planning.</p>
<p>5. Admission to the centre</p>	<p>A policy which outlines the documentation needed and the procedures that must be followed before a child officially starts attending the centre.</p>
<p>6. Equitable opportunities</p>	<p>A policy which describes the centre's commitment in promoting, inclusion, equality and diversity in all aspects of its service provision.</p>

7. Transitions	<p>A policy which describes the centre's transition procedures related to the child's initial entry to childcare from home, from one age group to another within the centre, from centre to centre (if applicable) and from centre to kindergarten.</p>
8. Healthy eating	<p>A policy which outlines the importance given by the centre to support the promotion of children's healthy diet in line with national policies⁹. It encourages parents to provide healthy and nutritious food and drinks, including expressed milk¹⁰, for their children. The policy needs to include how food sent from home will be handled once at the centre.</p>
9. Positive Behaviour Management	<p>A policy which outlines strategies employed by the centre to encourage children's positive behaviour, and effective and consistent approaches when managing inappropriate behaviour.</p>
10. Working in partnership with parents	<p>A policy which describes how the centre will be working in partnership with the parents including communication procedures to ensure that all children's needs are met, and appropriate care is provided. The policy should also include how the formal one-to-one meetings will be held.</p>
11. Working in partnership with Early Years Professionals	<p>This policy describes how the centre will be working in partnership with other professionals including communication procedures to ensure that all children's needs are met, and appropriate care is provided. Such professionals may include, speech therapists, sensory impairment experts, play therapists, psychologists or other professionals assisting the children as needed.</p>
12. Sick children	<p>A policy which includes all procedures to be taken in case of sick children to ensure that all children, including the sick child, are protected at all times. The policy is to specify the procedures to be followed in case of an infectious disease. It should include that the centre has a right to request doctor's certification if the child is looking unwell.</p>
13. Sanitary	<p>A policy which describes sanitary procedures taken by the staff within the centre and in respect to toilet training/routine, nappy changing and bathing of the child.</p>
14. Medication	<p>A policy which covers the procedures and authorisation required for children who need to have any kind of medication administered to them during their stay at the centre.</p>
15. Immunisation	<p>A policy which explains the centre's requirements with regards to immunization. It is highly recommended that all children making use of ECEC service (0-3 years) are in line with the National Immunisation Schedule.</p>
16. Accident management	<p>A policy which describes how the centre maintains a safe and healthy environment for the benefit of all children attending the centre and the procedures taken by the centre in case of an accident. Such procedures should include an injury form which is to be signed by both the childcare educator and the parent. The policy should also outline how records of such accidents are kept at the centre.</p>
17. Emergency Preparedness Plan (Fire Safety and Evacuation)	<p>A policy which describes the safety procedures to be carried out by the centre. This should also include procedures to be followed in the event of an evacuation from the centre.</p>
18. Uncollected Child	<p>A policy which refers to the procedures to be followed by the centre in the event of an authorised adult failing to collect a child.</p>

⁹ Further information about healthy nutrition may be obtained from the Health Promotion Directorate.

¹⁰ Population Health, Southern NSW Local Health District. (2015). Encouraging and Supporting Breastfeeding in Childcare Resource Kit.

19. Child Protection	A policy which refers to the children's rights during their period of attendance at the centre, the measures taken by the centre to ensure the safety and security of each child and the procedures to be taken in case of suspected abuse. The LRP should ensure that the policy is in line with the National Policy regarding Child Protection. The policy should also have reference to the Child Protection Service (APPOĠĠ) and the MFED.
20. Data Protection	A policy which explains how the centre stores, uses and protects personal data of staff, children and parents in line with national Data Protection Laws.
21. Complaints about the service	A policy which aims to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently, and wherever possible resolved to the complainant's satisfaction. The policy should make reference to the MFED complaints procedure in case complaints are not resolved at centre level.
22. Whistle Blowing	A policy which encourages staff members and other stakeholders who have serious concerns about any aspect of the centre's work to come forward and voice those concerns and the channels that may be used when reporting such concerns. The policy should make reference to the Child Protection Service (APPOĠĠ) and MFED.
23. Staff recruitment	A policy which outlines the centre's practices and procedures when hiring staff members and promotes consistency within the employee recruiting process.
24. Staff development	A policy which refers to the practices and procedures used to develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies of staff members so as to improve the effectiveness and efficiency both of the individual staff member and of the service provision offered.
25. Staff supervision	A policy which specifies the way staff members are supervised, monitored and supported in relation to their work practices.
26. Night ECEC Service (if applicable)	A policy which informs the centre's practices and procedures adopted during night service. This should include information related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Child protection:</i> in the child protection policy reference is to be made to the Night ECEC service provision. This policy is to provide clear guidelines in relation to the physical contact considered appropriate for night time routines and when attending to the children's hygiene needs. • <i>Safe sleep practices, sleeping arrangements and procedures:</i> effective sleep practices are important factors in ensuring a child feels safe and secure. Children have different sleep patterns and should be respected. • <i>Bedtime routine including information regarding screen time:</i> according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendations (2019)¹¹, limiting screen time can provide additional health benefits. Engagement in reading and storytelling is more encouraged.

11 Further information can be obtained from: Guidelines on physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep for children under 5 years of age. World Health Organisation (2019).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Supervision of children:</i> Children should be supervised at all times as indicated in the National Standards for <i>Early Childhood Education and Care Services (0-3 years)</i>, Standard 1.3. • <i>Managing difficulties around sleeping habits:</i> This may include instances when a child fails to settle to sleep, procedures related to bed wetting and nightmares.
27. Appendices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admission form • Fees structure • Parental consent forms (agreement with centre policies, data protection, administration of medication and outings) • Injury report • Complaint form • Cleaning routines as indicated in the National Standards for Early Childhood and Care Services (0-3 years), Standard 1.3.¹² • Any other appendices

The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education may provide further guidance before, during and after the registration process so as to assist prospective Legally Responsible Persons to meet the registration criteria. Applicants may contact the DQSE as follows:

Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education

Joseph Abela Scolaro Street, Hamrun

Number: 25981400

Email address: customer-care.dqse@gov.mt

¹² These may include cleaning of premises, toilet facilities, resources etc.

Appendix 1:

Documents needed to gain the required status for operation

Documents Required	Notes
Planning Authority (PA) Permit	Every potential service provider must be in possession of a valid development permit granted by PA, fully reflecting all approved plans, and inclusive of supporting documentation and the Final Compliance Certificate (Completion) issued by the PA.
Health and Safety Risk Assessment	<p>A valid Health and Safety Risk Assessment Report which is prepared by a competent person and which is updated as necessary and not later than every two years.</p> <p>Among others, the report should include specific reference to each of the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All materials including furniture, paints and toys are certified lead free; • All furniture and toys are certified as safe, of good quality and suitable for the child's age group/s; • Indoor and outdoor flooring are non-slip; • Only safety glass/shatterproof glass is used at the facility (protective film may be utilized on glass/windows/doors); • Childproof locks on windows/cupboards/drawers installed. • All natural resources are used according to safety requirements in relation to the children's age and competences;
Engineer's Certification (Fire Safety Report, Lighting, Ventilation, Noise, Air Quality Report) and Compliance Certificate	<p>The Engineer writing out every such report must be a warranted Engineer (under the Laws of Malta).</p> <p>The potential service provider would be required to obtain a Compliance Certificate to ensure that any concerns raised in the Engineer's report have been duly addressed.</p> <p>An evacuation plan is required as part of the Fire Safety report. This plan needs to be affixed in places at the centre as specified by the Engineer. The endorsement of the evacuation plan by the CPD may also be requested in exceptional circumstances.</p>
Commission for the Rights of People with a Disability (CRPD)	The potential service provider must produce a CRPD Final Compliance Certificate when applying for registration with the Regulation and Compliance Section (RCS) under the Ministry for Education.
Registration by the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE)	The required status for provision necessitates DQSE clearance. In the case of providers seeking to open additional centres, the DQSE clearance is also subject to the quality of the provision in already existing centres.

<p>Necessary documentation for LRP and any other persons employed by the centre when children are in attendance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police Certificate of Conduct (issued within the last 2 months of application form submission) • Clearance of Protection of Minors (POMA) • Food Handling Certificate for centre manager, childcare educators and assistants to the childcare educators. Approval of requirements by MFED for centre manager and childcare educators • Fire Warden Certificate (for 2 members of staff) • Paediatric First Aid Certificate for centre manager, childcare educators and assistants to the childcare educators.
<p>Documentation pertaining to the operation of the centre</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manual of Policies and Procedures • Detailed list of fees (when charged by the centre) • General Liability Insurance Policy • Lease Agreement/Contract denoting ownership.
<p>Electrical installation and appliances</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification of electrical installation by an electrician (Wireman's Licence A or B as applicable) • All electrical appliances must be submitted to a PAT (Portable Appliance Testing) regime and certified annually by a licensed electrician.
<p>Other clearances as necessary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other clearances may be required from time to time in line with national legislation and any other relevant regulation/s.

Reference Documentation

Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) (2015). *A Language Policy for the Early Years in Malta and Gozo*. Hamrun: National Literacy Agency.

Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) (2019). *A Policy on Inclusive Education in Schools: Route to Quality Inclusion*.

World Health Organisation (2019). *Guidelines on physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep for children under 5 years of age*. Geneva: World Health Organization

Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) (2015). *Educators' Guide for Pedagogy and Assessment - Using a Learning Outcomes Approach: Toolkit for the Early Years Cycle*. Department for Quality and Standards in Education.

Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) (2015). *Educators' Guide for Pedagogy and Assessment - Using a Learning Outcomes Approach: Toolkit for the Early Years Cycle*. Department for Quality and Standards in Education.

Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) (2012). *A National Curriculum Framework for All*. Malta: Salesian Press.

Ministry for Education (MFED) (2021). National Standards for Early Childhood Education and Care Services (0-3 years). Malta.

Registration of Childcare Facilities as Educational Establishments Regulations. 2007 (MALT) (MT)

Useful links

[Application for Registration of a New Early Childhood Education and Care \(ECEC\) centre \(0-3 years\)](https://www.servizz.gov.mt/en/Pages/Education_-_Science-and-Technology/Education-Services/Early-Education/WEB2264/default.aspx)

https://www.servizz.gov.mt/en/Pages/Education_-_Science-and-Technology/Education-Services/Early-Education/WEB2264/default.aspx

[Checklist of Documentation for a New Childcare Centre](https://education.gov.mt/en/childcareservices/Documents/Redesigned%20-%20Checklist%20NEW%20v2.pdf)

<https://education.gov.mt/en/childcareservices/Documents/Redesigned%20-%20Checklist%20NEW%20v2.pdf>

[MFED Complaints Procedure](https://education.gov.mt/en/childcareservices/Pages/Complaints-Procedure.aspx)

<https://education.gov.mt/en/childcareservices/Pages/Complaints-Procedure.aspx>

Appendix 2:

Calculation for Space Capacity

Size of outdoor play area	Calculation
If the outdoor play area is between 20% and 30% of the total area, then:	<p>Total indoor area - Total indoor areas not accessible to children = Accessible Indoor area</p> <p>Accessible Indoor area + Outdoor Play Area = New total Area.</p> <p>Number of Children = New total Area ÷ 5</p>
If the outdoor play area is greater than 30% of the Total Area, then:	<p>Total indoor area - Total indoor areas not accessible to children = Accessible Indoor area</p> <p>Permissable Outdoor Area = (0.3 ÷ 0.7) x Total indoor area</p> <p>Accessible Indoor Area + Permissable Outdoor area = New total Area.</p> <p>Number of Children = New total Area ÷ 5</p>

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