KEY ACTIONS
for healthcare services
and accrediting agencies

Conducting desktop assessments to the National Safety and Quality Primary and Community Healthcare Standards

Assessment to, and the awarding of accreditation to the National Safety and Quality Primary and Community Healthcare Standards (Primary and Community Healthcare Standards) provide assurances to the community that a healthcare service has the systems and processes in place to meet expected patient safety and quality standards of health care.

There are four models of assessment available for healthcare services seeking accreditation to the Primary and Community Healthcare Standards (see **Table 1**):

This flexible approach recognises the varying stages of readiness and engagement across the sector. In most instances, a healthcare service may choose what model of assessment it undertakes, dependent on their level of readiness.

In circumstances where a healthcare service is required to be accredited to the Primary and Community Healthcare Standards to satisfy regulator, contractual or licensing requirements, the relevant regulator must stipulate the model of assessment to be used.

What is a desktop assessment?

Desktop assessment is a method of assessment that primarily involves a document review of evidence provided by a healthcare service to demonstrate implementation of standards. They are generally conducted remotely by appropriately qualified assessors and allow for follow up questions or clarification with the healthcare service during the day(s) of the scheduled assessment.

When can a desktop assessment be conducted?

Desktop assessments can be conducted in the following circumstances:

- As the assessment approach for Stage One assessment model

- As a component of the Stage Two and Three assessment models, comprising a desktop assessment and virtual or on-site assessment.

Please note: Further guidance can be provided on desktop assessment conducted as part of Stage Four regulator-stipulated short-notice assessment model.

Requirements for a desktop assessment

When conducting a desktop assessment:

- ✓ Accrediting agencies and assessors must comply with the requirements of the Australian Health Service Safety and Quality Accreditation (AHSSQA) Scheme and ensure assessment processes are rigorous

- ✓ Assessors conducting the desktop assessment must have the appropriate skills, qualifications and training

- ✓ Desktop assessment must be conducted over a specified period-of-time. The healthcare service may not make adjustments or amendments to evidence submitted during this period

- ✓ A point of contact at the healthcare service must be specified and available throughout the desktop assessment period to answer any questions assessors have

- ✓ Evidence provided must demonstrate how systems and processes are implemented, monitored, reviewed and improved

Accrediting agencies and healthcare services should refer to the guidance provided in **Attachment 1** when proceeding with a desktop assessment.

Table 1: Models of Assessment

Model of assessment	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Assessment method	Desktop assessment	Desktop assessment + virtual assessment comprising observations and interviews	Desktop assessment + on-site visit comprising observations and interviews	Regulator-stipulated short-notice assessment comprising of desktop assessment + on-site visit
Accreditation cycle	Two years	Three years	Three years	Three years
Number of cycles at this assessment level	Two assessment cycles*	■ One assessment cycle for healthcare services involving physical examinations, therapies or procedures upon patients ■ Otherwise unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited
Public recognition	Certificate of Accreditation (Stage 1)	■ Certificate of Accreditation (Stage 2) ■ Registered on the Commission's website	■ Certificate of Accreditation (Stage 3) ■ Registered on the Commission's website	■ Certificate of Accreditation (Stage 4) ■ Registered on the Commission's website
Certificate	Issued by the accrediting agency	Issued by the accrediting agency	Issued by the accrediting agency	Issued by the accrediting agency

* Approval for an extension to use a certain model of assessment for more than the specified limit of assessment cycles in any particular case may be granted by the Commission in exceptional circumstances based on criteria that includes a risk assessment, the nature of the healthcare service's participation in the assessment process, its IT capacity, availability of other safety and quality data and evidence feedback on safety and quality performance against national or state-level agreed indicators.

Questions?

For more information, please visit: **www.safetyandquality.gov.au/pchs**

You can also email the Safety and Quality **Advice Centre** or call 1800 304 056.

safetyandquality.gov.au

Attachment 1: Guidance on conducting desktop assessments

Preparing a desktop assessment

Accrediting agency

- Agree with the healthcare service on the conduct of the assessment including
  - the assessment objective, criteria and scope
  - assessment dates and timeline to upload the required evidence prior to the assessment
  - the technology to be used and how privacy and security requirements will be met
- Allocate assessor(s) and ensure they
  - know and understand their role and responsibilities for the assessment
  - have the appropriate skills, qualifications and training
  - understand the risks and limitations of desktop assessments, particularly in relation to the robustness of the assessment
- Inform the healthcare service that
  - access to the agencies file sharing platform will not be available during the review and after the assessment is finalised
  - mechanism for submitting additional evidence, if requested, during the period of documents review
  - the consequences if the healthcare service does not follow an assessor's reasonable direction regarding sharing documents
- Ensure the mechanisms for communicating during the assessment are secure and all records of conversations and files held by the agency are fully deleted at the end of the assessment

Healthcare service

- Submit pre-assessment documents to the accrediting agency using the agreed secure file sharing platform including
  - an overview of the healthcare service
  - the healthcare service's self-assessment
  - supporting evidence, such as policies and procedures, minutes, audits and reports to demonstrate actions are met
- Nominate a contact person who is available to the assessor(s) throughout the assessment
- Confirm access to file sharing platform and mechanisms for communicating during the assessment

Conducting a desktop assessment

Accrediting agency

- Conduct the document review on the days agreed between the assessor(s), the health services and the agency
- Review all documents submitted by the healthcare service and assess evidence of compliance with the Primary and Community Healthcare Standards. Using the *Primary and Community Healthcare Standards Guide for Healthcare Services* and Commission resources when required
- Complete the assessment report, including
  - the relevant assessment model stage
  - actions where there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate full compliance
  - barriers, technical difficulties or enablers encountered during the assessment

Healthcare service

- Ensure the designated contact remains available throughout the assessment to answer any questions the assessor(s) may have and provide any further evidence if requested by the assessor(s)
- Make documents available securely to assessors during the desktop review

Following a desktop assessment

Accrediting agency

- Delete documents and images accessed through the file sharing platform at the conclusion of the assessment
- Use the agency's monitoring systems to evaluate the effectiveness of the assessment conducted including but not limited to
  - training of assessors
  - design of the assessment plan
  - information and instructions provided to healthcare service
- Complete assessment reports in accordance with the requirements AHSSQA Scheme
- Ensure assessment reports and testimonials specify the model of assessment used
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the desktop assessment and provide feedback to the Commission