

Implementing the National Safety and Quality Medical Imaging Standards

The National Safety and Quality Medical Imaging (NSQMI) Standards are a safety and quality framework for medical imaging that uses a risk-based approach.

The Standards can be used by any medical imaging practice. They aim to protect the public from harm and improve the quality of imaging delivered. When fully implemented, patients, funders and regulators can be confident that an imaging provider is committed to delivering safe, high-quality services and continuously improving them.

Standards development has involved extensive consultation with consumers, practitioners and providers, professional and peak bodies, and other sector representatives. It has also included a review of recent literature, best practice and evidence-based care.

The NSQMI Standards replace the 2016 Diagnostic Imaging Accreditation Scheme (DIAS) Standards.

The NSQMI Standards include the:

- **Clinical Governance Standard**, which describes the clinical governance, and safety and quality systems required to maintain and improve the reliability, safety and quality of medical imaging.
- **Partnering with Consumers Standard**, which describes the systems and strategies to create person-centred imaging services and partner with consumers in their own care.
- **Clinical Safety Standard** describes the systems and processes for minimising clinical risks and ensuring patients receive appropriate, safe, high-quality care.
- **Technical Safety Standards**, which describes the systems and processes needed to ensure a safe environment and appropriate use of imaging technology.

Revised standards

All standards must periodically be updated to take account of changes in models of care, evidence or practice and consumers' needs.

The fourth edition of the Diagnostic Imaging Accreditation Scheme (DIAS) Standards has been reviewed to address gaps in clinical governance, consumer and patient engagement, and ensure compliance with regulatory requirements.

There are four National Safety and Quality Medical Imaging Standards, with most imaging practices already meeting many of these requirements. Those practices that already comply with the DIAS Standards can build on these strategies.

Implementing the NSQMI Standards

The NSQMI Standards apply to providers who use medical imaging to diagnose, treat, investigate, and monitor patients' conditions. To be eligible for Medicare rebates, imaging providers will be required to be accredited to the NSQMI Standards.

Assessments will be coordinated by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) as part of the Australian Safety and Quality Medical Imaging Accreditation (ASQMIA) Scheme. This Scheme provides a nationally consistent framework for imaging provider assessment. Accreditation assures consumers, funders and regulators there are safety and quality systems to minimise the risk of patient harm.

Imaging providers are accountable for compliance with the standards, however implementing the requirements of the NSQMI Standards is the responsibility of all members of the imaging workforce.

Risk-based standards

- Provide practices with the flexibility to implement standards in a way that is relevant to its services, size and complexity
- Fosters a quality and continuous improvement culture by requiring ongoing monitoring and review of risk and performance evaluation

A risk-based approach requires imaging practices to:

- Identify patient and other risks
- Prioritise and implement strategies based on the extent of the risk
- Use risk to determine the level of oversight and effort required to mitigate the risk

Not applicable actions

The four NSQMI Standards cover 53 actions. Not all actions apply to all imaging providers. Where an action is not relevant to an imaging practice it can apply to its accrediting agency to have the action formally considered not applicable and, therefore, not assessed. Actions that can be considered not applicable will be released by the Commission to ensure consistency between accrediting agencies.

Implementation support

Implementation guidance has been drafted to support imaging providers and other stakeholders better understand the intent of the standards. The suggested strategies and examples of evidence are not mandatory and should not be used as a checklist.

Some examples of evidence listed in the guide flag changes to the accreditation scheme, where observation of practice by assessors may be another way in which evidence of practice can be obtained.

Assessing NSQMI Standards

Accreditation is a formal process where trained external assessors review performance of an imaging practice against standards. Assessors seek evidence that actions are fully implemented.

The ASQMIA Scheme is being reviewed. Under DIAS, medical imaging providers undertook a desktop assessment every 4 years. Desk top assessment is the least robust form of assessment. It considers written evidence of what an organisation should do, rather than what happens on a day-to-day basis. Public consultation on the ASQMIA Scheme is scheduled for late 2024.

Assessment to multiple sets of National safety and quality standards

Imaging providers already accredited to a set of national safety and quality standards, such as the National Safety and Quality Health Service or Primary and Community Healthcare Standards will not be assessed to multiple sets of standards. The two sets of standards will be mapped to remove duplication, and the NSQHS Standards and those actions unique to the NSQMI Standard will be assessed. A NSQMI Standards Module containing only actions unique to medical imaging will be developed for these providers.

For more information

For more information, please visit: safetyandquality.gov.au/NSQMI-Standards

You can also contact the [Safety and Quality Advice Centre](#) or phone 1800 304 056



© Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care 2024