

FACT SHEET
for general practices

Overview of the National General Practice Accreditation Scheme

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) is responsible for managing national accreditation schemes, including the National General Practice Accreditation (NGPA) Scheme.

This fact sheet provides an overview of the NGPA Scheme and the common processes that support these assessments. For detailed requirements and rules relating to the NGPA Scheme, refer to the Commission's [website](#).

NGPA Scheme

The NGPA Scheme commenced in January 2017 with the aims of:

- Supporting the consistent accreditation of general practices nationally
- Ensuring assessment processes are robust, and the outcome data generated is accurate and timely.

General practices participating in the NGPA Scheme are assessed against the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) [Standards for general practices](#) and the RACGP [Standards for point-of-care testing](#).

Accreditation of general practices is voluntary and is designed to review the systems for managing risks and to improve the quality of patient care.

Achieving and maintaining accreditation is required for access to the Department of Health and Aged Care's programs such as:

- [Practice Incentives Program \(PIP\)](#)
- [Workplace Incentive Program \(WIP\) – Practice Stream](#)
- [MyMedicare](#).

It is the responsibility of the general practice to be aware of current requirements and comply with them to maintain eligibility.

Approved accrediting agencies

A key Commission function in administering the NGPA Scheme is to approve accrediting agencies.

Approved accrediting agencies are vetted by an industry panel and found to have the capacity and workforce to undertake assessments. Further, they have agreed to work with the Commission to ensure the assessment process is rigorous, transparent, and reliable.

There are [four accrediting agencies](#) with approval to assess general practices and award accreditation under the NGPA Scheme:

- [Australian Council on Healthcare Standards](#)
- [AGPAL Group of Companies](#)
- [Global-Mark Pty Ltd](#)
- [Quality Practice Accreditation Pty Ltd](#)

General practices that want to achieve or maintain accreditation are required to contract one of these four approved accrediting agencies to undertake their assessment.

Accreditation cycle

An accreditation cycle is generally three years, with an assessment occurring at the beginning of each accreditation cycle.

Accredited general practices should ensure compliance with the standards throughout the accreditation cycle and may commence coordination of assessment processes between 12 to 18 months from their accreditation expiry date. The initial assessment should be undertaken at least four months and no more than eight months prior to their accreditation expiry date to minimise the risk of the expiry date lapsing. This ensures accrediting agencies and general practices comply with the timelines of the NGPA Scheme including:

- An initial report listing any indicators rated 'not met' to be issued within five business days of the conclusion of the initial assessment
- A final assessment to be conducted following a remediation period of up to 65 business days (90 days) to address any 'not met' indicators
- A final report to be issued and an accreditation outcome to be determined within 20 business days (30 days) of completion of the final assessment.

The accreditation flow chart for the NGPA Scheme can be found [here](#).

General practices that are not accredited should consult an accrediting agency to coordinate an assessment process.

Notification of significant risk

The likelihood of a patient experiencing a significant risk from a general practices is very low. However, from time to time, lapses and errors may occur that result in an increased risk of harm to patients accessing care from a general practice.

Where an assessor identifies a significant risk during an assessment, it must be reported in line with the requirements stipulated in [Advisory GP18/04: Notification of significant risk](#).

General practices where a significant risk is identified must have their final assessment conducted on site, or virtually if operating without dedicated physical premises.

Standardised repeat assessment

Repeat assessments apply to general practices with 20% or more of mandatory indicators rated 'not met' following the initial assessment.

The repeat assessment must be conducted within 6 months of the completion of the recent assessment.

Further information on standardised repeat assessment is available in [Advisory 23/03: Standardised repeat assessment of general practices](#).

Extensions and Appeals

In some limited instances, a general practice may wish to:

- Seek an extension to the timeframe of the assessment process
- Seek an extension to their period of accreditation awarded, either in advance of the expiry date or retrospectively
- Appeal a decision by the Commission regarding an accreditation extension request
- Appeal on the basis the accrediting agency has not followed processes set out in the NGPA Scheme.

A request for extension or appeal can only be granted by the Commission and must be submitted using the [Requests for approval form](#).

Further information on extensions and appeals is available in [Advisory 23/02: Requests for extensions and appeals](#).

Relocation

Relocating a general practice may create additional safety and quality risks for patients. For this reason, a general practice that plans to relocate is required to notify their accrediting agency as soon as reasonably possible to ensure a relocation assessment is completed within 3 months of relocation.

General practices should consult their accrediting agencies to determine their eligibility for accreditation and the exact timing of their relocation assessment.

As at 3 September 2024, relocating general practices need to provide Services Australia with a copy of an updated accreditation certificate within 6 months of relocating to maintain access to PIP and WIP - Practice Stream payments.

Further information on relocation assessments is available in [Advisory GP24/01: Assessment following relocation of physical premises by an accredited general practice](#).

Transferring between accrediting agencies

General practices choose their preferred accrediting agency when seeking accreditation services and may change their accrediting agency at the end of a contracted period or during their accreditation cycle.

A general practice that decides to transfer to another accrediting agency is required to:

- Ensure all outstanding obligations to the existing accrediting agency are finalised
- Sign a services contract with the new accrediting agency prior to or immediately following the cancellation of the existing contract for accreditation
- Maintain (or shorten) its existing accreditation cycle and schedule of assessment.

Accrediting agencies are required to maintain a general practice's existing accreditation cycle, which means the timing of the general practice's next assessment should remain unchanged.

Further information on the transferring accrediting agencies is available in [Advisory GP18/02: Transferring accreditation between accrediting agencies](#).

Questions?

For more information, please visit the [NGPA webpage](#) on the Commission's website: safetyandquality.gov.au

You can also email the Commission's Safety and Quality Advice centre at AdviceCentre@safetyandquality.gov.au or call 1800 304 056.

safetyandquality.gov.au



© Australian Commission on
Safety and Quality in Health Care 2024