

Public consultation

Overview of potential changes to the accreditation of general practices

Feedback is being sought from the general practice sector on potential changes to the accreditation cycle and assessment of general practices. This resource has been developed to provide an overview of the two proposed options, to support stakeholders to share their feedback through the public consultation. A more detailed options analysis is available [here](#).

Introduction

The National General Practice Accreditation (NGPA) Scheme supports the consistent assessment of general practices against the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) *Standards for general practices* (the Standards). The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) coordinates the NGPA Scheme, in collaboration with sector representatives.

The current accreditation process involves an announced on-site assessment against all relevant indicators of the Standards at the beginning of the accreditation cycle. This includes:

- An initial assessment
- A remediation period when one or more indicators are not met
- A final assessment, if indicators were not met at initial assessment.

Accreditation is awarded for 3 years, when fully compliant.

Issues identified

The Commission routinely seeks feedback from general practices about their accreditation experience. The main issues that have been raised include:

- **Administrative burden** - accreditation-related activities are often condensed into a short period of time, amplifying the administrative burden
- **Staff shortages and changes** - resulting in loss of corporate knowledge of accreditation processes, timelines, and requirements
- **Pressure to meet deadlines** - meaning accreditation can be viewed as a tick-box activity, rather than a reliable safety and quality assurance mechanism.

Rationale for change

Accreditation outcomes data show that just 22% of general practices that were previously accredited meet all mandatory indicators at their subsequent assessment.

This suggests that once a general practice has achieved accreditation, the current process does not effectively support general practices in continuing to meet the Standards.

Potential changes

The Commission is seeking feedback on potential changes to the accreditation cycle and assessment process.

Two options are being proposed for consideration:

1. Extended accreditation cycle with at least one mid-point review
2. Assessment conducted at short notice.

Note – You may have other suggestions or ideas on how the accreditation process and experience could be improved. These are welcomed through the [online survey](#).

Have your say

Your views are important in shaping any changes to the general practice accreditation cycle and assessment processes.

You can provide feedback by:

- Completing the [online survey](#)



- [Emailing](#) a written submission

Consultation ends **4 April 2025**.

Further information on the options being considered is available in an [options analysis paper](#).

More information on the NGPA Scheme is available on the Commission's [website](#). If you have any questions about the NGPA Scheme or this consultation, you can [email](#) the team.

Option one: Extended accreditation cycle with at least one mid-point review

This option would involve **extending the length of the accreditation cycle** to potentially **four or more years**. The accreditation process would still involve an announced routine assessment against all relevant indicators of the Standards.

There would be at least one **mid-point review** to provide insight into how the general practice is meeting the Standards in preparation for the subsequent assessment.

The general practice that is fully compliant would be awarded accreditation for four or more years.

Considerations for public consultation

There are a range of considerations for how **Option one** could be implemented. Your feedback is sought through **Section one** of the [online survey](#) on:

1.1: What should be addressed at a mid-point review?

If one or more mid-point reviews are included in an accreditation cycle, what is reviewed is a key consideration. The following options are being considered:

- All mandatory indicators
- Mandatory indicators that were 'not met' at the last routine assessment
- Safety and quality issues
- Key data.

1.2: How should the mid-point review be conducted?

There are a range of ways the mid-point review/s could be conducted including:

- On-site
- Virtual
- Video or telephone interview of key personnel
- Data upload.

1.3: How long should the accreditation cycle be?

An increase in the length of the accreditation cycle would require at least one mid-point review. The length and makeup of the accreditation cycle being considered are:

- Four years with one mid-point review
- Five years with two mid-point reviews
- Four years with annual reviews.

*Alternate suggestions or ideas for improving the NGPA Scheme can be shared in **Section three** of the [online survey](#), or through written submission.*

Option two: Assessment conducted at short notice

Short notice assessments (SNAs) would involve a routine assessment against all relevant indicators of the Standards, conducted with a **short period of notice**.

This option changes routine assessments from being scheduled at least four months before accreditation expiry, to being conducted with up to one month's notice during the accreditation cycle. SNAs must occur at least six months after the last routine assessment and four months before accreditation expiry. Fully compliant general practices receive a three-year accreditation.

SNAs would transfer the focus from preparing for an announced assessment, which become a managed event, to embedding and maintaining safety and quality requirements and an assessment of daily operations.

Considerations for public consultation

There are a range of considerations for how **Option two** could be implemented. Specific feedback is sought in **Section two** of the [online survey](#) on:

2.1: How much notice should general practices be given?

If SNAs were to be introduced into general practice accreditation, the length of the notice period under consideration include:

- 3 to 5 business days
- 6 to 10 business days
- 11 to 20 business days.

2.2: Should the length of the notice period vary according to priority factors?

It may be necessary to vary the length of the notice period according to diversity in the sector. The following factors are being considered for determining the length of the notice period:

- Rurality
- Size of general practice
- Composition of workforce.

2.3: What support would general practices need to prepare for SNAs?

Two options have been identified to support general practices to embed continuous compliance with the Standards and be ready for SNAs:

- Voluntary self-assessment
- Mandatory desktop assessment.

*Alternate suggestions or ideas for improving the NGPA Scheme can be shared in **Section three** of the [online survey](#), or through written submission.*