

Advisory No: GP18/01

TITLE	Extensions to accreditation status
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COMPLIANCE	Mandatory
APPROVED FOR DISTRIBUTION BY	CEO
REVIEW DUE DATE	28 February 2020
INFORMATION IN THIS ADVISORY APPLIES TO:	All approved accrediting agencies assessing general practices
KEY RELATIONSHIP	Not applicable
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LINKAGES TO OTHER ADVISORIES and/or DOCUMENTATION	Practice Incentives Program Guidelines Practice Nurse Incentive Program Guidelines
ATTACHMENTS	
NOTES (if applicable)	The Advisory has been updated to clarify that changes to the accreditation cycle, including back dating the commencement date, is not permitted.

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Extensions to accreditation status

PURPOSE:

The intent of this advisory is to:

- Standardise processes across accrediting agencies for assessing applications for extensions to general practices' accreditation status.
- Clarify that changes to the accreditation cycle, including backdating the commencement date, is not permitted.

ISSUE:

The Australian Government Department of Health governs, and the Australian Government Department of Human Services administers, the Practice Incentives Program (PIP) and the Practice Nurse Incentive Program (PNIP). Both departments have observed variation in accrediting agencies processes for assessing applications for, and granting of, extensions to general practices' accreditation status.

The Department of Health has advised the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) that extensions to general practice accreditation status should no longer be granted unless there are extenuating circumstances that significantly impede the practice's ability to participate in an assessment.

A *receiving accrediting agency* is an accrediting agency that a general practice applies to for future accreditation services.

REQUIREMENTS:

Accrediting agencies will no longer grant extensions to general practice accreditation status unless the practice provides evidence of extenuating circumstances that significantly impede its ability to participate in an assessment.

Accrediting agencies may only grant extensions to accreditation statuses when general practices are impacted by:

- Acts of God, such as severe weather events, fire or natural disasters
- Personal hardship or tragedy, such as the death of a general practice staff member, or relative of a staff member, that is integral to the governance of the practice.

Extensions to general practices' accreditation statuses should not exceed three months. Applications for extensions beyond three months must be referred to the Commission for consideration.

Applications for extensions by general practices should be supported by evidence to substantiate claims of extenuating circumstances. Accrediting agencies must use discretion in determining the types of evidence that is required to support applications for extensions. It is not intended that this evidence be burdensome on practices but it should be conclusive.

Applications from general practices for extensions based on any other circumstance must be referred to the Commission for consideration. Applications referred to the Commission will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Advice may be sought from members of the

General Practice Accreditation Coordinating Committee. A response will be provided within five working days.

Accrediting agencies are also required to refer to the Commission any extension requests that relate to the operational capacity of the accrediting agency to complete assessments. Practices will not be penalised for delays that result from operational issues associated with the accrediting agency.

General practices are encouraged, in consultation with their accrediting agency, to undertake their assessment well in advance of their expiry date. The schedule of assessment should allow sufficient time for remediation, up to a total of 90 days (65 business days), to enable practices to rectify any areas of non-compliance identified during assessment, before the expiry date.

No extensions will be granted to general practices that have not allowed sufficient time to finalise administration of accreditation decisions. A general practice is not accredited if the assessment process is not completed before the expiry date. Where there is a gap between the expiry date of their previous cycle and the subsequent awarding of full accreditation for the new cycle, accrediting agencies must not backdate or change the date of commencement for the new accreditation cycle to maintain continuous accreditation of a general practice.

For general practices to access funding under the PIP/PNIP and the Workforce Incentive Program (WIP) when implemented, general practices must maintain ongoing and continuous accreditation status. Should a general practice not maintain its accreditation status, their PIP/PNIP/WIP-Practice Stream payments may be withheld (refer to the PIP/PNIP/WIP guidelines). The practice will become eligible for payment once it has achieved and maintained accreditation that is ongoing and continuous for an entire quarter.

Extensions are not available to practices transferring between accrediting agencies. It is a requirement that the receiving accrediting agency, if they accept the practice as a client, maintain the practice's existing accreditation cycle and schedule of assessment (refer to Advisory GP18/02).

General practices with concerns about decisions of their accrediting agency in relation to extensions to accreditation statuses can contact the Commission's Advice Centre on 1800 304 056.