

Advisory No: GP18/01

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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 Workforce Incentive Program (WIP) Guidelines
ATTACHMENTS	
NOTES (if applicable)	Accrediting agencies must refer requests to extend a general practice's accreditation to the Commission for consideration. Applications are to be submitted no more than five months before the general practice's current accreditation.

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PURPOSE:

The intent of this advisory is to standardise processes across accrediting agencies for liaising with the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) regarding applications for an extension of a general practice's accreditation.

ISSUE:

Significant variation has been observed in how accrediting agencies' assessed and approved extensions to general practices' accreditation.

A general practice's accreditation status is a key criterion for access to funding under the Practice Incentives Program (PIP) and the Workforce Incentive Program (WIP) – Practice Stream. The Australian Government Department of Health governs, and Services Australia administers, the PIP and the WIP - Practice Stream. For details on the requirements and eligibility criteria to access funding under these programs, refer to the PIP and WIP - Practice Stream guidelines.

The Department of Health has advised the Commission that an extension to a general practice's accreditation should not be granted unless there are extenuating circumstances that significantly impede a general practice's ability to participate in an assessment.

REQUIREMENTS:

Accrediting agencies must refer all requests for extensions to a general practice's accreditation to the Commission for its consideration.

A request for an extension to a general practice's accreditation will only be considered if the request is:

- For the purpose of completing the requirements of the accreditation process in the current accreditation cycle
- Submitted no more than five months before the general practice's current accreditation expiry date
- Accompanied by evidence to substantiate claims of extenuating circumstances. Accrediting agencies must determine the types of evidence that are required. It is not intended that evidence be burdensome on practices, but it should be conclusive
- Accompanied by evidence that the general practice was implementing the requirements of the NGPA Scheme and complying with accreditation processes at the time the extenuating event occurred.

An extenuating circumstance is defined as:

- An Act of God, such as a severe weather event, fire, natural disaster or accident, extensive and prolong loss of access to utilities and technology
- Personal hardship or tragedy, such as severe illness or the death of a general practitioner or member of the workforce that is integral to the governance of the practice.

The Commission will seek advice from the general practice's accrediting agency in relation to the expiry dates, participation in accreditation processes and any other factors that may contribute to delays to the accreditation processes. The timing of the Commission's decision will be dependent on the accrediting agency providing all the required information and evidence to support the request, and whether further advice is sought from the general practice, members of the General Practice Accreditation Coordinating Committee, the general practice's accrediting agency and other relevant parties. In general, an application for extension will be processed within 10 business days.

Should the Commission approve an extension to a general practice's accreditation, the Commission will assign a revised accreditation expiry date and notify the relevant accrediting agency. This extension period will usually not exceed three months. The Commission will only consider applications for an extension to a general practice's accreditation against the same extenuating circumstance once in an accreditation cycle. Requests, in the same accreditation cycle, may be considered should different extenuating circumstances be the basis of the submission.

The Commission will *not* consider a request for an extension to a general practice's accreditation under the following circumstances:

- A general practice has not allowed sufficient time to finalise administration of accreditation decisions, for example, to complete remedial actions, comply with contracted obligations to the accrediting agency such as finalising payment, submitting documents and agreeing to assessment dates
- A request is submitted after the general practice's accreditation has lapsed
- A general practice has transferred to an alternative accrediting agency. 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)
- Where the extension is a workforce retention strategy.

Accrediting agencies must advise the Commission of any issues that relate to their obligations as an approved accrediting agency to complete assessments of general practices as outlined in Clause 3 of the *Policy – Approval under the National General Practice Accreditation (NGPA) Scheme to conduct accreditation of general practices using the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) Standards for general practices*. The Commission does not consider delays that result from the operational issues of the accrediting agency as a sufficient reason to grant an extension to a general practice's accreditation. An accrediting agency must not backdate or change the date of commencement of a new accreditation cycle.

General practices are encouraged, in consultation with their accrediting agency, to prepare for, and undertake, their assessment well in advance of their current accreditation expiry date. The schedule of assessment should allow sufficient time for remediation of indicators that are not compliant at the initial assessment, that is up to a total of 90 days or (65 business days, whichever is the greater) to enable practices to rectify any areas of non-compliance identified during assessment before the accreditation expiry date.

Where the Commission has considered a request for an extension to a general practice's accreditation status, and the general practice is not satisfied with the outcome, it may seek to appeal the Commission's decision by contacting the Commission's Safety and Quality Advice Centre on 1800 304 056 or via email accreditation@safetyandquality.gov.au.

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