

KEY ACTIONS
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 a number of national accreditation schemes, including the National General Practice Accreditation (NGPA) Scheme.

NGPA Scheme

The NGPA Scheme commenced in January 2017 with the primary aim to support the consistent accreditation of general practices nationally. Its aim is to ensure that 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 \(5th edition\)](#) and the [RACGP Standards for point-of-care testing \(5th edition\)](#).

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 a key requirement for access to the Department of Health's programs such as [Practice Incentives Program \(PIP\)](#), [Workplace Incentive Program \(WIP\) – Practice Stream](#) and [MyMedicare](#).

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](#).

Approved accrediting agencies

One of the Commission's roles 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.

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

General practices will need to commence coordination of assessment processes between 12 to 18 months from its accreditation expiry date. An accreditation cycle is generally three years, with an assessment occurring before the end of each three-year cycle. The initial assessment should be undertaken at least four months and no more than eight months before this expiry date. This gives general practices time to have:

- 5 business days after the initial assessment to receive the interim report of 'not met' indicators which they must address
- Up to 65 business days (90 days) for remediation of any of the indicators identified as 'not met' at the on-site assessment.

Accrediting agencies then have 20 business days (30 days) to provide the general practice with its final report, which completes the assessment process.

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

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 an accreditation assessment outcome decision made by an approved accrediting agency; or
- Appeal a decision by the Commission regarding an accreditation extension request.

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

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

Relocating to other premises

The relocation of any health service creates additional safety and quality risks for patients. This is also true for general practices. For this reason, a general practice that plans to relocate are required to notify its accrediting agency as soon as practical.

The accrediting agency will work with the general practice during the transition to ensure a relocation assessment is completed. This assessment is required to ensure the safety and quality processes remain in place as other premises become operational and that the general practice continues to comply with the RACGP Standards.

The general practice that intends to relocate are also required to notify Services Australia of the move and provide them with an accreditation certificate that includes the new address following the relocation assessment.

Further information on relocation assessments is available in [Advisory GP18/03 Physical relocation of a general practice to other premises](#).

Transferring between accrediting agencies

General practices now have greater choice when seeking accreditation services and may choose to 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.

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