

Guidance on out-of-cycle assessment of general practices

This fact sheet provides guidance to general practices accredited under the National General Practice Accreditation (NGPA) Scheme on requirements for out-of-cycle assessments, when there are material changes that could increase risks of patient harm.

Accreditation cycle

General practices accredited under the NGPA Scheme must be assessed every three years to maintain accreditation. During this cycle, general practices may undergo changes for various reasons, such as ownership or operating model transitions, expansion of the general practice, or relocation of physical premises. Some changes can significantly increase the risk of patient harm, in which case a review of compliance with the RACGP *Standards for general practices* (5th edition) (the Standards) may be necessary. However, not all situations warrant an out-of-cycle assessment.

Risk Management

General practices are responsible for identifying and managing the risks associated with organisational changes. Examples of material changes that may increase the risk of patient harm are listed in **Box 1**.

Box 1. Examples of material changes

- Change of ownership and governance
- Change of key members of the leadership team and/or board, or prolonged gap in hiring key personnel
- Expansion of all or part of the general practice
- Change of the operational model
- Relocation
- Merger of one or more general practices.

Guidance on out-of-cycle assessment

A general practice that undergoes material changes must first ensure that it continues to meet the RACGP definition of a general practice, as outlined in the '[Accreditation](#)' section of the Standards. If there is uncertainty about whether the definition is still met, the practice may seek advice from the [RACGP](#).

The general practice must, as soon as practical, notify its accrediting agency of the changes and confirm whether it continues to meet the definition or no longer meets it.

- If the general practice no longer meets the definition, its accreditation may be withdrawn.
- If the general practice continues to meet the definition, the accrediting agency should, based on the information provided, refer to **Table 1** to determine:
 - whether an out-of-cycle assessment is warranted
 - what type of assessment should be conducted
 - how the existing accreditation expiry date and accreditation certificate is impacted.

When unsure, the accrediting agency should seek advice from the [Commission](#) on whether an out-of-cycle assessment is warranted to ensure safety and quality systems are maintained.

Timing

If a routine assessment is due within eight months of the changes taking place, and the risks can be assessed at the routine assessment, an out-of-cycle assessment is not warranted.

Outcome

Some out-of-cycle assessments may result in a new accreditation certificate being issued, for example if a general practice's name and/or address have changed. This should be discussed with your [accrediting agency](#).

Costs

All costs of the out-of-cycle assessment are the responsibility of the general practice being assessed.

Questions?

For more information, contact the Safety and Quality Advice Centre at AdviceCentre@safetyandquality.gov.au or call 1800 304 056.

For more information

Please visit: safetyandquality.gov.au/ngpa

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Table 1 Changes that may require out-of-cycle assessments

Change	Requirement for an out-of-cycle assessment	Type of assessment	Impact on current accreditation expiry date and accreditation certificate
Change of ownership of a general practice without a period of shutdown or with a brief period of shutdown	May be required where there is a substantial change in the organisation's governance policies and processes resulting from the change in ownership	Desktop review of relevant mandatory indicators	No change to the accreditation expiry date New accreditation certificate <i>may be</i> required if the name of the general practice has changed
Change of ownership of a general practice with an extended period of shutdown	Required	Desktop review of relevant mandatory indicators Interviews with relevant team member(s), which could be undertaken virtually	No change to the accreditation expiry date New accreditation certificate <i>may be</i> required if the name of the general practice has changed
Change of key members of the leadership team and/or board, or prolonged gap in hiring key personnel	May be required if all, or the majority of leadership positions are changed within a short period of time May be required if all, or the majority of leadership positions have not been filled for a prolonged period of time	Desktop review of relevant mandatory indicators Interviews with relevant team member(s) which could be undertaken virtually	No change to the accreditation expiry date
Expansion of all or part of the general practice to allow for new areas of practice or increased service complexity and scope	May be required with significant increase in risk to patients	On-site or virtual assessment where the physical environment of the practice needs to be reviewed and relevant team member(s) interviewed for suitability of the added scope	No change to the accreditation expiry date

Change	Requirement for an out-of-cycle assessment	Type of assessment	Impact on current accreditation expiry date and accreditation certificate
Change of the operational model (from a general practice with physical premises ¹ to a non-premises-based model, or vice versa) without relocating	Required	Review mandatory indicators relevant to the changes, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practice facilities and layout • practice information • business policies and processes • information security • health records, equipment and medication management. Review must be conducted on site if changing to a premises-based model and virtually if changing to a non-premises-based model	No change to the accreditation expiry date New accreditation certificate <i>may be</i> required if the name of the general practice has changed
Relocation of an accredited general practice	Required	See Advisory GP26/02: Relocation assessment of accredited general practices	
Merger of general practices where all practices are accredited	May be required where there is a substantial change in the organisation's governance policies and processes resulting from the merger	Desktop review of relevant mandatory indicators Interviews with relevant team member(s), which could be undertaken virtually	The expiry date will be the date of the organisation with the earliest accreditation expiry date New accreditation certificate <i>may be</i> required if the name and/or address of the general practice has changed

¹ Physical premises is defined as a building or rigid structure, including a bus or van, managed by the general practice where clinical assessments of patients take place.

Change	Requirement for an out-of-cycle assessment	Type of assessment	Impact on current accreditation expiry date and accreditation certificate
Merger of general practices where one or more of the merging general practices are not accredited	May be required where there is a substantial change in the organisation's governance policies and processes resulting from the merger with an additional practice	Desktop review of relevant mandatory indicators if merging into a currently accredited general practice Interviews with relevant team member(s), which could be undertaken virtually	The expiry date will be date of the organisation with the earliest accreditation expiry date New accreditation certificate <i>may be</i> required if the name and/or address of the general practice has changed
	New assessment if merging into an unaccredited general practice	Follows routine initial and final assessment with remediation period for any 'not met' indicators	New accreditation certificate