

Accreditation of health service organisations

What is accreditation?

Accreditation is the process of making sure a service meets a set of standards. It is undertaken by an independent assessor. It generally occurs every three years.

All Australia public and private hospitals, day procedure services and most public dental practices must be accredited against the [National Safety and Quality Health Service \(NSQHS\) Standards](#).

Many other healthcare facilities will choose to be accredited voluntarily in order to improve the safety and quality of health care they provide.

State and territory health departments determine which health service organisations must meet safety and quality standards.

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) is responsible for writing the standards on safety and quality matters and coordinating accreditation. This is known as the [Australian Health Service Safety and Quality Accreditation \(AHSSQA\) Scheme](#).

The rules and requirements of the AHSSQA Scheme are set out in a [series of advisories and fact sheets](#).

To become accredited, health service organisations must pass an assessment to show they have meet the NSQHS Standards. Accreditation assessments are conducted by independent accrediting agencies, approved by the Commission, as part of the AHSSQA Scheme.

Being accredited does not guarantee there is no risk of a patient being harmed. It means safety and quality systems that support safe and good quality care are in place, and risks of harm are identified and managed.

How do health service organisations prepare for an accreditation assessment?

Making changes to meet the NSQHS Standards involves the entire organisation. There are four major steps including:

- Getting to know the NSQHS Standards
- Making sure there are people, funds and supports to make any changes that are needed
- Choosing an accrediting agency to do the assessment
- Completing a self-assessment and bringing together the evidence that shows the health service organisation meets the standards.

Participation in accreditation programs can contribute to continuous improvement in patient outcomes, as well as increase consumer and workforce satisfaction.

What happens during an accreditation assessment?

An accreditation assessment involves an on-site visit by people (assessors) who are independent of the health service. They look for evidence that each action in the Standards has been implemented.

During an accreditation assessment, assessors use a well-defined method of reviewing each safety and quality process described in the NSQHS Standards.

There is more information on this in [Fact Sheet 12: Assessment framework for safety and quality systems](#).

Assessors examine evidence of actual performance by reviewing hospital performance data, documentation and records, observing clinical practice, inspecting resources, testing high-risk scenarios and interviewing the workforce, patients and consumers.

Assessors rate the NSQHS Standards actions implemented by health service organisations using a standardised rating scale of met, not met and met with recommendations. See [Fact Sheet 4: Rating scale for assessment](#).

Following the initial accreditation assessment, if a health service organisation has actions that are 'Not Met' or 'Met with Recommendations' they are provided with a period of time in which to address the safety and quality issues identified and implement strategies to meet the action.

Health service organisations with a large number of 'Not Met' actions may be required to undertake a repeat assessment. See [Fact Sheet 3: Repeat assessment of health service organisations](#).

Accrediting agencies provide health service organisations with a full report on the outcome of the accreditation assessment.

Health service organisations achieve accreditation when they meet all of the actions in the NSQHS Standards.

If a health service organisation is not awarded accreditation, the state or territory regulator usually steps in. The health service organisation must make improvements to fully comply with the Standards. Then they are fully assessed again. This happens within 12 months.

How can I find out the results of a health service organisation accreditation assessment?

You can see the full results of your hospitals assessment on the Commission's [Public Reporting web page](#) safetyandquality.gov.au/consumers/public-reporting-hospital-performance-nsqhs-standards

Health service organisations are issued with a certificate or accreditation award that states they have been assessed against the NSQHS Standards.

Certificates are often displayed in the front entrance or in public waiting areas. The certificate will include the name of the health service organisation, date the accreditation assessment was performed and the accreditation expiry date.

They also have a QR code that provides a link to additional information about the results of the organisations last assessment.

How can I be involved in the accreditation assessment process?

The **NSQHS Standards** expect health service organisations to involve consumers in the design and review of its services.

Consumers from the local community should also be involved in partnership in planning, design and evaluation of health care. In this way services can be improved.

If you are a consumer, you can be involved by:

- Contacting your health service organisation for information on being a consumer representative
- Becoming a member of a quality improvement committee
- Providing feedback through complaints or feedback mechanisms
- Talking about your experience as a consumer of the health service organisation at assessment
- Becoming an assessor for an [approved accrediting agency](#).

How can I provide feedback to a health service organisation?

The Commission has published a guide for consumers called [Understanding My Healthcare Rights](#) it contains useful information and contact numbers.

Further information

For more information about the NSQHS Standards and accreditation, please visit: safetyandquality.gov.au/standards/nsqhs-standards

You can also email the NSQHS Standards Advice Centre at AdviceCentre@safetyandquality.gov.au or 1800 304 056.