



Pathology accreditation measures in response to COVID-19 – Factsheet

Last updated: X April 2020

- The Australian Government is committed to ensuring patient access to quality pathology services during the response to COVID-19. As part of this, maintaining the continued operation of the National Pathology Accreditation Program is important. In response to the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Australian Government is implementing the pathology measures outlined below.
- These changes are relevant for the pathology independent accreditation assessment body, National Association of Testing Authorities, Australia, and accredited pathology laboratories with an accreditation end date on or before 30 September 2020.

What are the changes?

The following measures are in operation until **30 September 2020**:

- Accredited pathology laboratories whose accreditation approval period should cease within the next 6 months, will be granted a continuation of their current accreditation for a period of 6 months from the date of the current end date of approval.
- Where a laboratory has a reduced capacity to meet the staffing requirements specified in the *Standard Requirements for Supervision in the Clinical Governance of Medical Pathology Laboratories*, the *Designated Person* is responsible for ensuring compliance with Standards 1.3 and 1.4 of the *Requirements for Supervision in the Clinical Governance of Medical Pathology Laboratories*. The responsibilities include the development and implementation of a risk management plan for the laboratory.
- Laboratory supervisory visits of Category GY and Category B laboratories during the response phase to COVID-19 will be undertaken by remote/ virtual assessment (e.g. Skype or other web based conference platform).
- Laboratories that have requested an Advisory Visit must undergo an interim assessment. This will include the provision of supporting documentation to the independent assessment body to confirm the readiness of the pathology laboratory to operate. The assessment review is to be complemented by a remote assessment (eg Skype) in lieu of an onsite visit.
- Laboratories that have completed an Advisory Visit and require an onsite assessment to be undertaken, will complete their assessment when the recovery phase commences.

The accreditation status of accredited pathology laboratories will be maintained during the response phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. These arrangements will be monitored however, and may be subject to change in the recovery phase of the pandemic.



Why are the changes being made?

These measures are intended to support pathology laboratories in the provision of services, particularly during a high demand period, and for accreditation assessors and laboratory personnel participating in an accreditation process to meet the social distancing requirements.

What does this mean for providers?

Accredited Pathology Laboratories with an accreditation end date on or before **30 September 2020** will be granted a continuation of their current accreditation for period of 6 months from the date of the current end date of approval.

When the recovery phase commences, pathology laboratories granted this continuation of their accreditation must apply for and obtain reaccreditation before the end date of the continued accreditation period. An assessment will be undertaken and a new assessment report will be required.

There are also measures that address supervision requirements during this exceptional period, including laboratory supervisory visits and the performance of Advisory Visits by the independent assessment body.

How will these changes affect patients?

These changes will not impact the provision of Medicare funded pathology services for patients.

Who was consulted on the changes?

The Department of Health (the Department) consulted the National Pathology Accreditation Advisory Council, Services Australia, National Association of Testing Authorities, Australia and the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia.

How will the changes be monitored and reviewed?

Unless advised otherwise, the pathology measures will operate up to and including 30 September 2020. This arrangement will be monitored and the period may be extended if necessary.

Where can I find more information?

More information about these measures or pathology accreditation standards, can be found on the [Pathology](#) or [NPAAC](#) webpages. Or you can email npaac@health.gov.au.

Any queries relating to pathology applications, can be found at [Services Australia](#).

The [National Association Testing Authorities, Australia](#) can be contacted on 1800 621 666