



HUMAN SERVICES SCHEME PART 7

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR BODIES CERTIFYING PROVIDERS UNDER THE NATIONAL PANEL OF ASSESSORS PROGRAM

National Panel of Assessors Scheme

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This Scheme was developed by the Department of Social Services and endorsed by the Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand.



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Introduction

0.1 Background

The Human Services (HS) Scheme (Part 1), including the Annexes, and this National Panel of Assessors (NPA) Scheme (HS Scheme Part 7) together set down the requirements for bodies seeking Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand (JASANZ) accreditation to audit NPA providers, and certify they meet the National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS) set down by the Australian Government. The NSDS, as well as the relevant indicators of practice, are listed at [Schedule 1 of the *Disability Services Act \(National Standards for Disability Services\) Determination 2014*](#) (NSDS Determination).

0.1.1 National Panel of Assessors Program

The NPA program is a standing panel of independent assessment service providers contracted to provide assessments to support the needs of people with disability in the workplace. The NPA program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS). NPA providers can undertake three different independent assessment services to assist with the needs of people with disability in the workplace:

- **Supported Wage System:** The Supported Wage System (SWS) provides employers and eligible people with disability with a reliable process of productivity-based wage assessment. The assessment process may be used in both open employment where allowed by the relevant industrial award, and as of 1 July 2018 in supported employment (employment in Australian Disability Enterprises – ADEs), under the *Supported Employment Services Award*.
- **Ongoing Support:** Once a Disability Employment Services (DES) participant has achieved a 26-week Employment Outcome, the DES provider determines if the participant is likely to need Ongoing Support in the workplace to retain their job. An Ongoing Support Assessor will recommend if a participant requires flexible, moderate or high levels of ongoing support. Participants must work, on average, a minimum of at least eight hours a week to continue to receive Ongoing Support.
- **Workplace Modifications Services:** A Workplace Modification Assessment recommends modifications (such as equipment or assistive technology) that will assist people with disability to undertake their employment duties or search for work. The need for a Workplace Modification Assessment is determined when an Employment Assistance Fund application is assessed and includes consideration of the type and cost of the modification requested.

0.2 Foreword

The NPA Scheme applies to providers who deliver assessment services as part of the DSS funded NPA program. The assessment services are considered to be employment services under the *Disability Services Act 1986* (DSA). All organisations delivering services that are considered employment services funded by the Australian Government under the DSA are required to adhere to and be audited against the standards set out in Schedule 1 of the NSDS Determination.



0.3 Prioritising the Schemes

If there is a conflict between the HS Scheme (Part 1) and the NPA Scheme (Part 7), the requirements in the NPA Scheme (Part 7) take precedence.

The requirements of ISO/IEC 17065 also apply.

The HS Scheme (Part 1) clause numbers below e.g. P1_3.1 reference related clauses in HS Scheme (Part 1) and must be read with those requirements. NPA Scheme clause numbers are prefixed by P7 for Part 7.

1 Scope

No additional requirements

2 References

2.1 Normative references

- Human Services Scheme Part 1
- ISO/IEC 17065:2012 Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services
- IAF MD4:2018 – IAF Mandatory Document for the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Auditing/Assessment Purposes
- *Disability Services Act 1986*
- *Disability Services Act (National Standards for Disability Services) Determination 2014*
- *Disability Services and Inclusion Act 2023*

2.2 Informative references

- National Disability Insurance Scheme (Approved Quality Auditors Scheme) Guidelines 2018
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (Provider Registration and Practice Standards) Rules 2018
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (Quality Indicators) Guidelines 2018
- Human Services Scheme Part 3 – DES/SES Scheme

Note: Informative references are not accreditation or certification requirements under the NPA Scheme.

3 Terms and definitions

P7_3.1 The following definitions also apply to this scheme:

Auditor: a person appointed to conduct an audit. An auditor will be employed or contracted by a Certification body.

Certificate of compliance: the certificate that is granted to an NPA provider to confirm they are compliant with the NSDS.



Certification: process by which a certification body, accredited as conforming to the criteria in the relevant parts of this scheme, attests in writing that a client conforms to the standards.

Certification body (CB): a body accredited as conforming to the criteria specified in this scheme which audits and certifies to the standards.

Certification audit: all activities related to the initial certification of a client to determine whether the client meets the requirements of the standards. This will be done via a verification audit process.

Client: the client as defined in ISO/IEC 17065, and in the context of this scheme, any person or body providing human services that is also required to achieve and maintain third party certification in order to satisfy the requirements of a responsible body.

For the NPA scheme, the client is an NPA provider.

Close out: verification by a CB that corrective action has been implemented by a client to address a major nonconformity or nonconformity, and is effective.

Consumer: a person with disability who has had an assessment undertaken from the service provider being audited, or an employer whose employee has had an assessment undertaken from the NPA provider being audited.

Consumer may also mean family member/s or an unpaid primary carer or advocate of that person with disability. Some service providers may use the terms “client”, “participant”, and “service user” etc. in lieu of “consumer”.

Disability Employment Services (DES) provider: Disability Employment Services (DES) provider of the person with disability who had an assessment by the provider. DES providers may be included as part of the sampling component outlined at Annex C.

DSS: the responsible body applicable to the NPA Scheme (HS Part 7); specifically, the Australian Government Department of Social Services, including where acting as the program owner of the NPA program.

GovGPS: Department of Social Services Online Funding Management System. An online system to manage funding and audit information for programs and initiatives.

Indicator of Practice: a measureable element of practice that may be used to assess whether practice meets a particular standard. Indicators ensure that the expectations for conformity which each standard are clear.

For the NPA Scheme, the relevant indicators are listed in Schedule 1 of the NSDS Determination.

Major nonconformity: the requirements of a standard, or an indicator, are not met, or the outcome is ineffective. Three related nonconformities within the same standard may also constitute a major nonconformity.

Nonconformity: the requirements of a standard, or an indicator, are not fully met, or the outcome is only partly effective.



NPA Provider: organisations that are funded under the National Panel of Assessors program to deliver Supported Wage System (SWS) assessments, Ongoing Support Assessments (OSA) and Workplace Modification (WMS) assessments for people with disability in employment.

NSDS: National Standards for Disability Services are the applicable standards to the NPA Scheme. They are guided by the relevant Indicators of Practice. These standards have been allowed for via the *Disability Services Act (National Standards for Disability Services) Determination 2014, Disability Services Act 1986*.

Outcomes: outcomes for the purposes of this scheme are those identified through the NSDS which define the elements of quality support which should be achieved for people with disability receiving employment services.

Rating scale: the system used to rate conformity of a disability employment/ support service. NSDS indicators of practice are provided as descriptive guidance to the standards.

The NSDS are to be rated as follows:

- a. major nonconformity rating = 0
- b. nonconformity rating = 1
- c. conformity rating = 2

4 General requirements

No additional requirements

5 Structural requirements

No additional requirements

6 Resource requirements

6.1 Certification body personnel

6.1.1 General

P7_6.1.1 The requirements in HS P1_6.1.1 apply.

P7_6.1.1.1 Audit personnel shall undergo a National Police check at least every two years.

P7_6.1.1.2 Lead auditors who have undertaken audits as the lead auditor under HS schemes part 2-6 may be immediately signed off as the lead auditor under the NPA scheme, provided that they have completed the relevant NPA scheme training.

6.1.2 Management of competence for personnel involved in the certification process

No additional requirements

6.1.3 Contract with personnel

No additional requirements



6.2 Resources for evaluation

No additional requirements

7 Process requirements

7.1 General

No additional requirements

7.2 Application

P7_7.2.1 HS P1_7.2.1 applies and upon application for an audit with a CB, the CB shall require the NPA provider to supply a description of the NPA provider organisation, the number of NPA assessors and the services it delivers.

7.3 Application review

No additional requirements

7.4 Evaluation

Section 7.4 of HS Part 1 is diminished under this NPA scheme (HS Part 7).

P7_7.4.1 The evaluation program shall include:

- a) a remote initial audit, and
- b) a recertification audit every three years, prior to the expiration of the certificate of compliance but no earlier than six months before the expiry date.

P7_7.4.2 The CB shall have documented procedures for:

- a) conducting certification and recertification audits of a client (including reporting), in accordance with the provisions of ISO 19011. Note: if there is a conflict between ISO 19011 and HS Scheme, Part 7 or any of the subsequent parts, the requirements in this part (part 7) take precedence.
- b) identifying and recording nonconformities and the need for appropriate corrective action by clients.

P7_7.4.3 The determination of the audit process shall be proportionate to the size of the NPA provider, including its demonstrated level of management system effectiveness and the results of any previous audits.

P7_7.4.4 The CB shall plan audits to allow sufficient time and resources for the activities, e.g. to report compliance against each applicable indicator, and to fully comply with the reporting requirements in this scheme. The CB shall fully explain and clarify the requirements to the client during all stages of the certification process.

P7_7.4.5 The CB shall consider the culture and capacity of providers in remote communities, including Indigenous and multi-cultural communities, when planning audits.



P7_7.4.6 The CB shall inform the client of the name of the auditor, with sufficient notice to appeal against the appointment of the auditor.

P7_7.4.7 The CB shall perform the initial certification audit remotely. During the audit, the CB will:

- a) review the client's policies and procedures for complying with the standards,
- b) conduct an interview(s) with the client to discuss how they comply with the standards, and
- c) undertake interviews with relevant consumers and/or DES providers (refer to Annex C).

P7_7.4.8 The CB shall contact up to three (3) consumers/ DES providers of the client for an interview to discuss whether the client/ NPA provider acts in line with the requirements of the NSDS.

P7_7.4.9 The CB should evaluate the following factors in determining whether an NPA provider is compliant with the NSDS:

- a) whether the NPA provider has policies and procedures in place that directly relate to the applicable standards of the NSDS
- b) the information provided by consumers and/or DES providers
- c) optional self-assessments conducted by the NPA provider
- d) the duration of the provider's contact with consumers
- e) the level of contact required with the families and carers of consumers, and
- f) whether the client can clearly articulate how the policies and procedures are implemented when delivering assessment services.

P7_7.4.10 In conducting a certification audit the applicable NSDS and indicators of practice to be assessed are:

- a) Standard 1 – Rights
 - Indicators of Practice: 1:1, 1:2, 1:5, 1:6, 1:9
- b) Standard 2 – Participation and Inclusion
 - Indicators of Practice: 2:1, 2:6
- c) Standard 3 – Individual Outcomes
 - Indicators of Practice: 3:4, 3:5
- d) Standard 4 – Feedback and Complaints
 - Indicators of Practice: 4:1, 4:3, 4:6
- e) Standard 5 – Service Access
 - Indicators of Practice: 5:2
- f) Standard 6 – Service Management
 - Indicators of Practice: 6:1, 6:2

P7_7.4.11 The purpose of the client interviews is to understand and evaluate how NPA providers implement the policies and procedures when undertaking an assessment service. The purpose of the consumer and/or DES provider interviews is to understand whether NPA providers are undertaking assessment work in line with the NSDS.

P7_7.4.12 If an auditor finds evidence of a notifiable issue, the CB's procedures shall require it to record the details, and to immediately notify the client's manager (if applicable), and the responsible body (DSS).



P7_7.4.13 The CB is not responsible for resolving a notifiable issue, but shall report the evidence to the responsible body. Certification cannot proceed until the client's responsible body advises the CB that the notifiable issue is resolved. If the client is already certified, the CB shall seek advice from the responsible body.

P7_7.4.14 Upon completion of the audit, the CB shall hold a closing meeting with the client (NPA provider) to:

- a) advise the client of the audit findings, their conformity with each standard (and indicator), and to provide the opportunity for questions about the findings
- b) provide the client (if applicable) with documented major nonconformities and nonconformities (including the standards or indicators they relate to), explanatory comments, and the close out dates
- c) summarise any notifiable issue raised during the audit, if applicable, unless there is a justifiable reason for not doing so
- d) summarise any audit follow-up activities
- e) briefly summarise all the available avenues for resolving complaints and appeals via the CB or JASANZ, and
- f) summarise the timing of, and requirements for, preparing and conducting the recertification audits.

P7_7.4.15 The initial certification audit and recertification audit shall be conducted by a sole auditor. The auditor should consider the size and scale of the NPA provider, including the complexity of the NPA service when undertaking the audit.

P7_7.4.16 The CB shall complete an audit report that includes:

- a) a brief description of the client/NPA provider (including services delivered)
- b) an executive summary of the overall findings of the audit, including comments on the client's policies, procedures and practices to ensure conformity with the applicable standards and a summary of any identified major nonconformities or nonconformities
- c) positive and negative observations. Where appropriate, the CB should advise the client to carefully consider negative observations (e.g. opportunities for improvement) and the need for preventive actions to address potential nonconformities
- d) timeframe allocated for the audit, and
- e) an adequate description of the main evidence and audit trails used to support the ratings of standards. Qualifying comments about indicators should reflect the varying language for different service types.

P7_7.4.17 The CB shall provide the draft written report to the NPA Provider within 10 working days of the closing meeting, even if the draft decision is to not certify. The NPA provider shall have 10 working days from receiving the draft written report in which to provide a response to the CB.

P7_7.4.18 If a NPA provider formally disagrees with its CB's audit findings, the CB shall notify DSS within 10 working days of learning of the disagreement if it has not been resolved in that time.



P7_7.4.19 The CB shall consider any response provided by the NPA provider, make the final certification decision, and provide the final report to the NPA provider and DSS within a further seven working days, even if the decision is to not certify.

P7_7.4.20 The CB's procedures shall ensure that in the instance of a major nonconformity:

- a) close out shall require a follow-up meeting by the CB. For a certified NPA provider, evidence of a corrective action plan shall be presented to the CB within 5 working days of the date of issue of the major nonconformity, and close out shall require a follow-up visit by the CB within three months;
- b) the CB shall be able to justify circumstances where close out of a major nonconformity, or downgrading the major nonconformity to a nonconformity did not require a follow-up meeting;
- c) for a certified NPA provider, failure to close out the major nonconformity within three months of the date of issue, or to take action to downgrade the major nonconformity to a nonconformity; shall result in certification suspension; and
 - a. If an NPA provider has their certification suspended, referrals for new assessments will also be suspended. Assessment referrals will be turned back on once the certification is no longer suspended.
 - b. If, after three months of the certification suspension, no action has been taken to downgrade the major nonconformity to a nonconformity, certification will expire.
 - c. If certification expires, the NPA provider will be required to organise for another initial audit to be undertaken. This audit will not be reimbursed by DSS.
 - d. For a certified NPA provider, if the major nonconformity is downgraded to a nonconformity, that nonconformity shall be closed out within a further three months (maximum of six months from the date of issue to fully action a major nonconformity).

P7_7.4.21 The CB's procedures shall ensure that in the instance of nonconformity:

- a) the nonconformity (major or minor) is closed out before certification or re-certification;
- b) for a certified NPA provider, the nonconformity shall be closed out within six months of the date of issue or prior to the expiry of the certification, whatever is earlier; and
- c) a nonconformity which has been escalated to a major nonconformity shall lead to expiry of the certification.

P7_7.4.22 In the instance of certification expiry, the CB should inform DSS that the NPA provider's certification has expired due to a major nonconformity not being downgraded. The CB should advise DSS that the NPA provider will require another initial audit. The new initial audit will be organised and funded by the NPA provider.

P7_7.4.23 An extension to certification may only be considered if an NPA provider needs to delay a recertification audit due to natural disasters beyond their control (including flood, fire, earthquake, cyclone or other natural disasters), interruption of electricity or telephone service, or if an unprecedented event such as a national health crisis occurs, and communities



have to go into lockdown. An application for extension will be considered by DSS on a case-by-case basis.

P7_7.4.24 Where applicable, recertification audits shall document:

- a) close-out of each major nonconformity and nonconformity revealed previously, and
- b) any useful comparison with the results of previous audits.

P7_7.4.25 The CB shall prepare stand-alone reports of any follow-up audits outlining any major nonconformity or nonconformity and clearly document the evidence provided to support decisions to close them out or downgrade them. It is not acceptable to report follow up activity as an amendment to the original report.

7.5 Review

No additional requirements

7.6 Certification decision

P7_7.6.1 The registration approval date (the effective date) will be the date at which the certificate of compliance with the NSDS is signed by the CB and provided to the NPA provider. If the certificate of compliance is signed by the CB and then provided to the NPA provider the following day, the effective date of certification would be the date at which the CB signed the certificate of compliance.

7.7 Certification documentation

7.7.1 Certification documents shall include the name of the NPA providers' legal entity, and may also include the registered trading name. In all cases, certification documents shall clearly show that the services delivered by the organisation are certified, not the entire organisation.

7.7.2 Certification documents shall clearly state which indicators of practice under the NSDS the NPA provider has been certified against for the particular service (assessments as part of the NPA program).

7.7.3 CBs should send a copy of the certification documents to the NPA provider and to DSS.

7.8 Directory of certified services

No additional requirements

7.9 Surveillance

Section 7.9 of HS Part 1 is diminished under this NPA scheme (HS Part 7).

P7_7.9.1 The certification cycle should not normally exceed three years.

P7_7.9.2 Surveillance activities will require NPA providers to complete a self-declaration every year, except the year of recertification, and provide it to DSS. The self-declaration will be proportionate to the size and scope of the services provided. The self-declaration will advise DSS whether there has been any changes that would affect compliance of the NPA provider.

P7_7.9.3 If the self-declaration indicates that there has been changes which affect compliance of the NPA provider, DSS may request that the NPA provider undertake a new audit. This audit will restart



the certification cycle for the NPA provider.

P7_7.9.4 The certification cycle should restart with a recertification audit to confirm the continued conformity and effectiveness of the client's policies, procedures and practices relating to its services, against all the requirements of the standards. The recertification audit shall consider the performance of the client's policies and procedures over the period of certification.

P7_7.9.5 Recertification audit activities may not need to include a detailed review of the client's policies and procedures unless there has been significant changes to the policies and procedures or to the services that the client operates.

P7_7.9.6 Recertification activities should include interviews with relevant consumers and/or DES providers as per Annex C.

P7_7.9.7 When, during a recertification audit, instances of nonconformity or lack of evidence of conformity are identified, the CB shall define time limits for correction and corrective actions to be implemented prior to the expiry of certification.

7.10 Changes affecting certification

No additional requirements

7.11 Termination, reduction, suspension or withdrawal of certification

No additional requirements

7.12 Records

P7_7.12.1 The CB's records shall include the following information:

- a) clear, up to date documentation of the supporting information and rationale for all audit decisions
- b) sufficient information for the duration of the remote audit, and
- c) justification for, and documentation of any departure from the requirements in all the applicable Annexes.

7.13 Complaints and appeals

No additional requirements

8 Management system requirements

No additional requirements

Annex A – Audit Duration

Annex A of HS Part 1 is diminished under this NPA scheme (HS Part 7).

P7_A.1 Due to the size of organisations and services provided by NPA providers, audits will be undertaken remotely.



- P7_A.2 Audit duration calculations (i.e. auditor days) shall be based on an eight-hour working day including one hour for lunch and exclude all activities other than auditing.
- P7_A.3 CBs shall determine the appropriate duration of the audit, in respect to the NPA provider size. Audit timeframes should not exceed two business days per NPA provider.

Annex B– Certification of clients with multiple sites and/or outlets

Annex B of HS Part 1 is diminished under this NPA Scheme (HS Part 7). CBs will not be required to audit multiple sites under HS Part 7 given the size of the clients involved.

Annex C - Audit planning and consumer or DES provider sampling

C.1 Sampling principles

P7_C.1.1 Consumer and/or DES provider sampling is required as part of the audit for NPA providers. There is no requirement to have a mix of consumers and DES providers as part of the audit process for each client. For example, for an NPA provider audit, all consumer interviews may be with DES providers, and for another NPA provider, all consumer interviews may be with a person with disability who received the assessment service.

P7_C.1.2 At the commencement of the audit, the NPA provider must provide the CB with a list of at least five consumers and/or DES providers who have been involved in an assessment in the three months prior to the audit. The consumers and/or DES providers must have provided consent to be contacted as part of the audit. The list should include consumer and/or DES provider names, contact numbers and organisations (if relevant). The CB shall choose consumers to interview at random based on the sampling numbers in table 1.

P7_C.1.3 The CB shall ensure that the sampling approach is appropriate to the size of the organisation. A client who only delivers a small number of assessments will not require extensive consumer sampling.

P7_C.1.4 CBs should conduct the consumer interviews remotely. This may include telephone or online interviews.

P7_C.1.5 The CB shall verify that the client has obtained appropriate consent from the relevant consumers for the audit.



Table 1: Consumer sampling numbers

Organisation size	Minimum number of consumers to be interviewed (initial audit)	Minimum number of consumers to be interviewed (recertification audit)
Small – medium organisation – 10 assessments or less per month	2	2
Large organisation – greater than 10 assessments per month	3	3

C.2 Consumer file sampling

Section C.2 of HS Scheme Part 1 is diminished under this NPA scheme (HS Part 7). There is no requirement to audit consumer files as part of the audit.

C.3 Traceability of sampling processes

No additional requirements.

Annex D – Code of ethics for auditing and certification in the human services sector

No additional requirements.