

HOW TO GUIDE 1: ORIENTATION TO ASES

This website provides essential information to guide you through the process of obtaining the Australian Service Excellence Standards (ASES) accreditation at the Certificate Level.

There are eight guides covering the following topics:

1. Orientation to ASES
2. Planning ASES Implementation
3. Internal Self-Assessment and Workplan
4. Guide to Good Evidence
5. Selecting an External Assessor
6. External Assessment (Site Visit)
7. The ASES Assessment Report and Quality Action Plan
8. Continuous Quality Improvement

This guide introduces the ASES accreditation process and provides guidance to get you started. The topics covered are:

- Getting started
 - Consider your plan
 - Consider your resources
 - Engage staff and stakeholders
 - Be realistic about timeframes
- Understanding the different ASES plans
 - The ASES Project Plan
 - The ASES Workplan
 - The ASES Quality Action Plan (QAP)

GETTING STARTED

Consider your plan

Approach your ASES implementation planning as you would any other project. Consider the task time frames and responsibilities, specific milestones and documentation at each stage.

Your key staff, and possibly members of the governing body, should be familiar with the ASES content and the accreditation process before you start planning.

Inclusive consultation and consensus will help to develop realistic time frames and ensure allocation of appropriate organisational resources towards the accreditation process.

In the words of one organisation that successfully achieved ASES accreditation:

'Don't enter into it lightly, it is a huge process and make sure you allocate sufficient time for it (e.g. lose another project). Don't try to tack it on to an already overloaded workload. Make sure the Management Committee realise that it is a HUGE project that they will need to give their support!'¹

Resources

Review the two introductory webinars:

[Webinar 1: The ASES Accreditation Process](#)

[Webinar 2: The ASES Accreditation Standards](#)

Consider your resources

Undertaking the work involved in accreditation will require both time and resources, usually in the form of staff hours.

Early on, you will focus on moving the process forward: planning, orienting and training staff, assigning tasks. Later, you will be overseeing the work being done by staff, tracking progress and reviewing drafts of new and updated documents. The governing body may also have specific tasks or particular Standards allocated to them to review.

You need to work out how these tasks will be done, and how the load can be shared.

In many organisations the lead role is taken by the CEO, another manager, a quality manager or a staff member with a keen interest in quality improvement. Often this person leads an ASES working group. Some organisations engage a temporary project officer to coordinate this work.

Resources

Helpful resources for this stage are [The Service Excellence Storybook](#) and [The NSW ASES Story](#) provided as part of this module.

Engage staff and stakeholders

Early engagement and clear communication about the process will ensure not only a successful accreditation outcome but are linked with ongoing organisational development and growth.

Although the ASES accreditation process may be led and coordinated by one person or a working group, it involves engaging the whole of the organisation – the governing body, managers, staff, clients and partner organisation - at some stage of the process.

¹ The Service Excellence Storybook, page 3: Jane Taylor, Community Development Officer, Aldinga Community Centre, South Australia .

To ensure progress and prevent disengagement you will benefit from an engagement and communication strategy that involves all key staff and stakeholders before the accreditation process commences.

The plan should provide a clear roadmap that includes:

- Identifying all relevant internal and external stakeholder groups involved in the process
- Developing specific strategies for each of the stakeholder groups from the beginning of the accreditation process.

Start thinking about these five target groups and how to engage and inform each of them:

1. Members of the governing body
2. Managers
3. Staff and volunteers
4. Clients
5. Partner organisations.

Be realistic about time frames

Allow enough time in your planning to get everything done but not so long that you lose momentum and the interest of people and organisations you have engaged along the way.

Organisations that undertake ASES accreditation for the first time usually take 12 to 18 months to complete the process, sometimes longer. The important thing is to be realistic and adjust your time frames along the way if you need to.

The NSW Department of Communities and Justice (formerly the Department of Family and Community Services) requires all funded Homelessness Services to be ASES accredited at least to the Certificate Level by 30 June 2024 and to provide the Department with their Certificate of Accreditation once received.

From October 2020, you are no longer required to lodge your indicative time frames with the Department.

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENT ASES PLANS

You may need to compile three distinct plans as part of the process to obtain ASES accreditation. Two of these are for internal use only and the third will be reviewed by the External Assessor and the ASES Team.



The ASES Project Plan

We suggest you develop a project plan to guide your organisation through all of the steps required to achieve accreditation. There are no formal templates and this is not mandatory. You are not required to submit it to anyone outside your organisation.

It is an internal document that will help to keep you on track with all the actions you need to undertake for accreditation.

The ASES Workplan

If, after completing your internal self-assessment, you identify more than five instances where your practice and documentation is not fully in place, you need to develop a process to close those gaps. We refer to this process as the ASES Workplan. Its purpose is to ensure you are ready for assessment and a site visit by an External Assessor. You do not have to submit this plan to anyone outside of your organisation.

There are two ways of generating your ASES Workplan depending on whether you undertake self-assessment manually or by using the BNG SPP platform. If you are doing it manually, then develop your own plan based on the outcomes of the self-assessment. If you are doing it on SPP, the systems will automatically generate an Excel task list which becomes your Workplan.

The ASES Quality Action Plan (QAP)

Unlike the previous two plans, this one is an official document involved in gaining ASES accreditation and follows a particular format. The Quality Action Plan (QAP) is generated by the External Assessor and contains all their recommendations to address areas where you do not fully meet the ASES Requirements.

You will need to provide details of how you will implement the recommendations in the QAP. You have 6 months to complete the QAP from the last date of your site visit. Its final draft and implementation will be reviewed by your External Assessor and the ASES Team in South Australia before your Certificate of Accreditation can be issued.

Importance of policies and procedures

A significant part of achieving accreditation often involves having policies and procedures in place that reflect the requirements of the Standards, and enable their integration into the way your organisation approaches its strategies, workflow and operations.

Note that a set of ASES referenced policies and procedures is being developed for Specialist Homelessness Services as part of this Resource Kit. You can adopt or adapt relevant policies and procedures to suit your organisation's operational context. Using this policy bank as the starting point for your documentation will save time in ensuring your policies align with ASES Requirements.