

Technical Bulletin: Deadline for Private Providers of COVID-19 Testing and Sampling

14 June 2021

Department of Health & Social Care has now formally announced that there will be an extension to the deadline for obtaining accreditation for private providers of COVID-19 testing (including Point-of-Care Testing) and sampling. The amendment to the legislation requires that providers have until 30 June 2021 or four months after completing stage 2 UKAS Appraisal, whichever is the later, to receive a positive recommendation. Providers then have until 31 August 2021 or six months after completion of stage 2 UKAS Appraisal, whichever is the later, to achieve accreditation.

What this means

- Providers must have their assessment before 30 June 2021 or four months after completing stage 2 UKAS Appraisal with an outcome from the assessment that the Lead Assessor recommends that accreditation be granted (there may still be findings to clear).
- Providers must have cleared all findings and completed any other conditions of the recommendation (i.e. achieved accreditation) by 31 August 2021 or six months after completion of stage 2 UKAS Appraisal.

How this will work

In order to meet the deadlines, UKAS has defined a process by which the requirements must be met:

1. Providers must work with UKAS to ensure that an assessment takes place before the provider's deadline. UKAS will make providers aware of the deadline during the assessment booking process to ensure that the provider will receive their recommendation by 30 June 2021 or within four months of stage 2 UKAS Appraisal approval (whichever is later).
2. The UKAS Assessment Team will define when evidence should be submitted to UKAS to ensure providers have the best opportunity to achieve accreditation within six months of stage 2 UKAS Appraisal. **The deadline to submit evidence will be no longer than one month.**
3. UKAS will review evidence submitted as quickly as possible, and this will be within two weeks, and provide feedback to the provider. Alternatively, UKAS may schedule a closeout meeting with a provider to review evidence on the date evidence is due to be submitted. The approach to evidence review will be confirmed with you at, or soon after, your assessment and any closeout meeting will be formally scheduled by the UKAS customer liaison team.
4. It is incumbent on the provider that evidence provided demonstrates that the improvement actions to clear any findings have been implemented at the first opportunity (i.e. at the first round of evidence). However, as part of the feedback provided from the evidence review, UKAS will specify if further evidence is required to clear any of the findings. Providers must provide this within one week of receiving their feedback.
5. UKAS will endeavour to review the second round of evidence as soon as possible and provide feedback to the provider.

Note: Should a provider's evidence require additional rounds of review, there is a high risk that deadlines could be exceeded. Should findings not be cleared by 31 August 2021 or six months after completion of stage 2 UKAS Appraisal, whichever is the later, you will be required to stop providing a COVID-19 testing service (whether this is sampling, testing or POCT) until accreditation is achieved.

Other requirements of the legislation

- If a provider does not receive a positive recommendation by the above deadlines, then they must stop providing a COVID-19 testing service (whether this is sampling, testing or POCT) until a positive recommendation is received (for instance, at a subsequent assessment). **Note: original deadlines for achieving accreditation would still apply i.e. 31 August 2021 or six months after stage 2 UKAS Appraisal approval, whichever is the later.**
- If the provider does not obtain full accreditation within the relevant timeline, they must stop providing a COVID-19 testing service (whether this is sampling, testing or POCT) until accreditation is achieved.

For queries on stage 2 UKAS appraisal or stage 3 UKAS accreditation you should contact medlabscustomerservice@ukas.com. *Please ensure you always quote your UKAS customer number and assigned Project reference in the subject and body of your email so this can be processed without delay.*

For other queries relating to UKAS accreditation of private-sector providers of COVID-19 testing, please contact covid@ukas.com. *Where applicable, please ensure you quote your UKAS customer number and assigned Project reference in the subject and body of your email.*