

Topic:	Orientation
Document type:	How-to Guide

MODULE 1: ORIENTATION

1. ABOUT THE HOW-TO GUIDES

Welcome to the How-to Guides that are part of the *NSW Specialist Homelessness Services: Quality Standards Implementation Resource Kit*.






In these Guides, we will be covering the key topics and processes of obtaining the Australian Service Excellence Standards (ASES) accreditation at the Certificate Level. The How-to Guides are divided into modules and will cover the following topics:

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

Each module will include a guiding document such as this one as well as checklists, handouts, and where relevant, templates, examples and webinars.

2. WHAT IS INVOLVED IN ASES ORIENTATION?

The key focus of ASES orientation is to provide your organisation with:

-  An introduction to the steps, timeframes and milestones involved in the accreditation process – so that you can properly plan and resource this process
-  An overview of the content of the ASES standards at the Certificate level
-  An awareness of the various agencies involved in ASES and their respective roles
-  The resources that are available to assist with ASES implementation, and
-  Enough information about ASES so that your organisation can start planning and resourcing the steps to accreditation.





3. THE RESOURCES PROVIDED IN THE ORIENTATION MODULE

The Orientation Module includes the following resources:

Resource	Description
Introductory Webinar 1: The ASES Accreditation Process and the accompanying PowerPoint	This webinar provides an overview of ASES, the key steps involved in accreditation and tips for success. The PowerPoint of the webinar is also provided and can be used as a handout.
Introductory Webinar 2: The ASES Accreditation Standards and the accompanying PowerPoint	This webinar provides an overview of the expectation of the Department of Communities and Justice, as well as an overview of the contents of the Certificate Level Standards. The PowerPoint of the webinar is also provided and can be used as a handout.
ASES Process Flowcharts	These four high-level flow charts walk you through the steps to accreditation and the key documents for each stage.
Who's Who in the ASES Landscape?	A description of roles that five different types of agencies play in NSW Homelessness ASES implementation.
The Service Excellence Storybook	A report produced by the South Australian Community and Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association Inc describing how 12 community-based organisations approached their ASES accreditation.
The NSW ASES Story	A report on how a number of Specialist Homelessness Services in NSW experienced the implementation of ASES with insights into the strategies that were helpful. The report also highlights how their experiences shaped the development of this Resource Kit.

4. KEY MESSAGES

In PREP-aring for ASES accreditation, P.R.E.P. stands for:

-  Planning
-  Resourcing
-  Engagement, and
-  Pacing.

4.1. Planning

Plan your ASES implementation much like you would plan out a project. It will have a start, a middle part and an end; it will have task timeframes and responsibilities, and there will be specific milestones and documentation that will result from it.

In Module 2: Planning ASES Implementation, we will go into more detail about this, but for now, it is important to start thinking about ASES as an undertaking that will need to be planned and coordinated.

Before you can develop a realistic implementation plan it is best that key staff, and possibly members of the governing body, develop an awareness of the ASES standards content and the accreditation process so that you know what you will be planning for.

Inclusive consultation and consensus building in the development of realistic timeframes and allocation of organisational resources specifically toward the accreditation process have been linked to positive accreditation outcomes.

In the words of one organisation which successfully achieved ASES accreditation, which is featured in the *Storybook* document mentioned above:

‘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

Watching the two introductory webinars mentioned above and obtaining a copy of the ASES Certificate Level Evidence Guide is a good place to start.

4.2. Resourcing

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

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

Early on, you will focus on moving the process forward: planning, orienting and training staff, assigning tasks, etc. 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 in your organisation, how that will be done, and how the load can be shared.

In many organisations, this role is taken by a 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 to share the load. Some organisations engage a temporary project officer to co-ordinate this work.

If you are looking for ideas, you may want to check out the *Storybook* paper that is posted as part of this Module. The *Storybook* describes how 12 South Australian organisations (which is where the ASES originally started) approached their ASES accreditation and the strategies and resources they found helpful. The *NSW ASES Story* document in this Module also identifies tools, resources and tips that helped NSW SHSs in their ASES accreditation.

4.3. Engagement

Engagement and communication are critical to ensuring not only a successful accreditation outcome but are linked with ongoing organisational development and growth.

While implementing ASES it 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.

The best strategy to ensure progress and prevent disengagement is to develop 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:

- + Identification of all relevant internal and external stakeholder groups involved in the process, and
- + Development of specific strategies for each of the stakeholder groups to be undertaken from the beginning of the accreditation process.

Again, we will be covering the development of an engagement and communication strategy in Module 2, but for now, start thinking about these five target groups:

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

What might be the different strategies you can use to engage each group in ASES?

4.4. Pacing

Pacing is related to planning and resourcing. It is about starting the ASES journey early enough so that you have enough time 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. As a general rule, organisations who undertake ASES for the first time usually take about 12-18 months to complete the process, sometimes longer. The important thing is to be realistic and adjust your timeframes 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.

As of October 2020, you are no longer required to lodge your indicative timeframes with the Department.

5. THE DIFFERENT PLANS INVOLVED IN ASES

In this Resource Kit, we will be referring to three different plans. To avoid confusion, it is worth noting now how we will be referring to them and what each one is.

5.1. The ASES Project Plan

The ASES Project Plan is one that we are suggesting that your organisation develops to guide you through all of the steps you will take to achieve accreditation. It is not mandatory, and there are no formal templates associated with it, although some are suggested in Module 2. It is an internal document, and you are not required to submit to anyone outside of your organisation. The purpose of this plan is to keep you on track with all the actions you will need to undertake for accreditation.

5.2. The ASES Workplan

Once you have undertaken your internal self-assessment and if you have any more than 5-6 requirements where your practice and documentation is not fully in place, you need to develop a process to close those gaps. We will be referring to that process as the ASES Workplan. The purpose of this plan is to ensure you are ready to proceed with an external assessment and site visit with 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 are undertaking your self-assessment manually using the ASES Certificate Level Workbook or if you are undertaking your self-assessment on the BNG SPP platform (see *Flowchart 2: Overview with Documentation* which is part of this Module). 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 is effectively your Workplan.

5.3. The ASES Quality Action Plan (QAP)

Unlike the other two plans, this one is an official document involved in ASES and it requires a particular format. The Quality Action Plan or 'QAP' contains all the recommendations developed by your chosen External Assessor to address any areas where you have not fully met the ASES requirements. It will be generated by your External Assessor, and you will need to complete the details of how you will implement their recommendations in the QAP. You have 6 months to complete the QAP from the last date of your site visit, and its final draft and implementation will be reviewed by your External Assessor and the Service Excellence Team in South Australia before your Certificate of Accreditation can be issued.

6. A NOTE ABOUT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Often a significant part of achieving accreditation is having in place policies and procedures that reflect the requirements of the standards and enable them to become integrated into the way an 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 all or some of the policies and procedures and you will need to localise the procedures to some degree to make sure they align with your organisation's operational context and local conditions. However, having this policy bank as the starting point for your documentation will save a lot of time that would have otherwise been spent on the alignment of your policies with ASES requirements.

7. GETTING STARTED

You can use the checklist on the next page to start the orientation process with your organisation.

Topic:	Orientation
Document type:	Checklist ²

No.	Steps	Status
Preliminary steps usually undertaken by the CEO/Quality Lead		
1.	Obtain a copy of the <i>ASES Evidence Guide: Certificate Level</i> and the <i>ASES Workbook Certificate Level</i> . You can obtain the <i>Evidence Guide</i> from the BNG Reading Room or by request from the NSW Homelessness Industry Partnership Email: accreditationsupport@homelessnessnsw.org.au . You can obtain the <i>Workbook</i> from the NSW Homelessness Industry Partnership.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Start an electronic file on ASES, file the Evidence Guide and decide who will have access to it during this preliminary stage.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Print some copies of the Evidence Guide to distribute at meetings (see step 6).	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Watch the two Introductory Webinars, become familiar with the flowcharts and schedule a meeting or meetings with the governing body and staff/volunteers to introduce the topic of accreditation, show the webinars and go through the flowcharts.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Before showing the webinars, consider developing your own key messages about how you will introduce the topic of quality and ASES accreditation and prepare some discussion points to use after the screenings.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Webinar screening and discussion		
6.	Screen the webinars with the governing body and staff as planned or present the PowerPoints that accompany the recordings. Table the Evidence Guides and invite participants to start reviewing and reading them. Tell people where the Guide is filed electronically and ensure all have access to it. Go through the flowcharts and start the discussion about how they can best be implemented in your organisation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	Document discussion after each presentation and identify if any issues you need to follow up before starting the planning and work allocation process for ASES.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Starting planning ASES implementation		
8.	Decide who will be the project lead on ASES accreditation and how the work will be coordinated and distributed, e.g. will there be a working group, etc.?	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	Allocate the project and guide the project lead/working group to develop an ASES Implementation Plan by following Module 2.	<input type="checkbox"/>

² This checklist has been developed to help organisations get started with ASES. It is not prescriptive but suggested as a starting point that organisations can change or adapt to suit their individual circumstances.