

WHO's abridged prequalification assessment for medical devices

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Suggested citation. WHO’s abridged prequalification assessment for medical devices. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2026. <https://doi.org/10.2471/B09643>. Licence: [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo).

Cataloguing-in-Publication (CIP) data. CIP data are available at <https://iris.who.int/>.

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Abbreviations

BLA	Biologics License Application
DoC	Declaration of Conformity
EC	European Commission
GHTF	Global Harmonization Task Force
IMDRF	International Medical Device Regulators Forum
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
JMHLW	Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare
MDD	Medical Device Directive
MDR	Medical Device Regulation
PMA	Premarket Approval
RRA	Recognized Regulatory Authority, as listed in Table 1 below
SMDR	Singapore Medical Device Register
TGA	Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration
WHO	World Health Organization

1. Introduction

This document has been prepared by the World Health Organization (WHO) to provide an overview of WHO's abridged prequalification assessment for medical devices. WHO's prequalification of medical devices is a comprehensive quality assessment of individual medical devices through a standardized procedure aimed at determining whether a product meets WHO's prequalification requirements, pursuant to and in accordance with document PQDx_464 "*WHO's prequalification procedure for medical devices*".

If a prequalification application is accepted by WHO, WHO's prequalification assessment can take place through one of two pathways—namely, full or abridged prequalification assessment—as determined by WHO. An abridged prequalification assessment includes the following components:

- review of an abridged product dossier;
- inspection of a manufacturing site against all applicable requirements of International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 13485; and
- labelling review.

This document should be read in conjunction with document PQDx_464 "*WHO's prequalification procedure for medical devices*" (hereinafter, the "PQ Procedure for MDs"), as well as with the other relevant documents set forth in Section 7 below. For the avoidance of doubt, all requirements, terms and conditions set forth in the PQ Procedure for MDs apply to WHO's abridged prequalification assessment of medical devices as well as to any products undergoing the same. The definitions contained in the PQ Procedure for MDs apply to the terms used in this document.

2. Intended audience

This document provides an overview of the abridged pathway under WHO's prequalification assessment of medical devices. Manufacturers wishing to apply for WHO's prequalification of their product(s) should read this document before doing so, in order to be prepared for WHO's abridged prequalification assessment, if applicable.

3. Rationale for WHO's abridged prequalification assessment

The rationale for WHO's abridged prequalification assessment is that a prior regulatory approval by a Recognized Regulatory Authority (or RRA) provides a level of assurance relating to the product's quality, safety and performance in countries where it is approved, but it cannot always provide the same assurance when the product is used in other settings, including resource-limited settings.

WHO's abridged prequalification assessment aims to avoid duplication of effort and promote efficiency. WHO will review the pre-submission form and supporting documentation to determine: (a) whether or not the product is eligible for and can be accepted to undergo WHO's prequalification assessment; and (b) assuming such acceptance, whether or not the product qualifies for an abridged prequalification assessment.

The abridged prequalification assessment consists of the following components:

- review of an abridged product dossier;
- inspection of a manufacturing site against all applicable requirements of ISO 13485¹; and
- labelling review.

4. WHO's abridged prequalification assessment process

4.1. Eligibility for abridged prequalification assessment

Based on the information provided by the manufacturer as part of the pre-submission form and related documentation, WHO will determine, in its discretion, the appropriate pathway (i.e., abridged or full prequalification assessment) that will apply to a medical device. WHO will make such determination at the time it reviews the pre-submission form and will inform the manufacturer in writing.

For specific product types and/or intended uses, only full prequalification assessment may be available; in this case, the manufacturer will be notified in writing after WHO's review of the pre-submission form.

If WHO accepts a prequalification application, then the product is, in principle, eligible for WHO's abridged prequalification assessment if one of the following conditions is met:

1. The regulatory version of the product submitted for WHO's prequalification assessment has previously been stringently assessed (as defined below) and

¹ As the same may be amended from time to time.

approved by any of the Recognized Regulatory Authorities (RRAs) listed in Table 1 below; or

2. The regulatory version of the product submitted for WHO's prequalification assessment has not been stringently assessed and approved by an RRA, but:
 - a. there is another regulatory version of the product that has been stringently assessed and approved by an RRA; and
 - b. in WHO's discretion, there are no substantial differences between those two regulatory versions (including, but not limited to, substantial differences as to the product description, design, intended use, clinical indication(s), risk classification, labelling and instructions for use, quality management system, manufacturing site, key suppliers, clinical evidence, and/or lot release criteria).

Conversely, a product is not eligible for abridged prequalification assessment if:

- A. The regulatory version of the product submitted for WHO's prequalification assessment has not previously been stringently assessed and approved by an RRA, and there is no other regulatory version of the product that has been stringently assessed and approved by an RRA. The foregoing includes, but is not limited to, cases where the regulatory version of the product:
 - i. has been previously assessed and approved by an RRA, but not according to an appropriate level of stringency (i.e., lower risk classification or different risk classes than those set forth in Table 1); and/or
 - ii. has been previously assessed and approved by any regulatory authority or body other than an RRA listed in Table 1; or
- B. The regulatory version of the product submitted for WHO's prequalification assessment is not the same as the regulatory version that has previously been stringently assessed and approved by an RRA and, in WHO's discretion, there are substantial differences between the two regulatory versions.

For purposes of this document, the regulatory version of a product has been "stringently assessed and approved" only if such assessment and approval:

- has been performed by an RRA; and
- was not performed by an RRA based on reliance, recognition, or an abridged review mechanism whereby the assessment was abridged or the RRA substantially relied upon or recognised a conformity assessment performed by another regulatory authority, and
- is for the specific risk classes set forth in Table 1 below.²

² For the avoidance of doubt, if an RRA has assessed and approved a product for a lower risk classification or different risk classes than those set forth in Table 1 then—for purposes of WHO's prequalification assessment—that product will not be considered to have been "stringently assessed and approved" by an RRA.

Recognized Regulatory Authority	MD Risk classes undergoing stringent assessment
Therapeutic Goods Administration, Australia	Class IIb and Class III
Health Canada	Class III and Class IV
Notified bodies designated by European Union Member States or other countries under specific agreement	Class III (MDD)* Class IIb and Class III (MDR)
Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan	Class III and Class IV
Singapore Health Sciences Authority	Class C and Class D
Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, United Kingdom (UKCA)	Class III
Food and Drug Administration of the United States of America	Class II and Class III

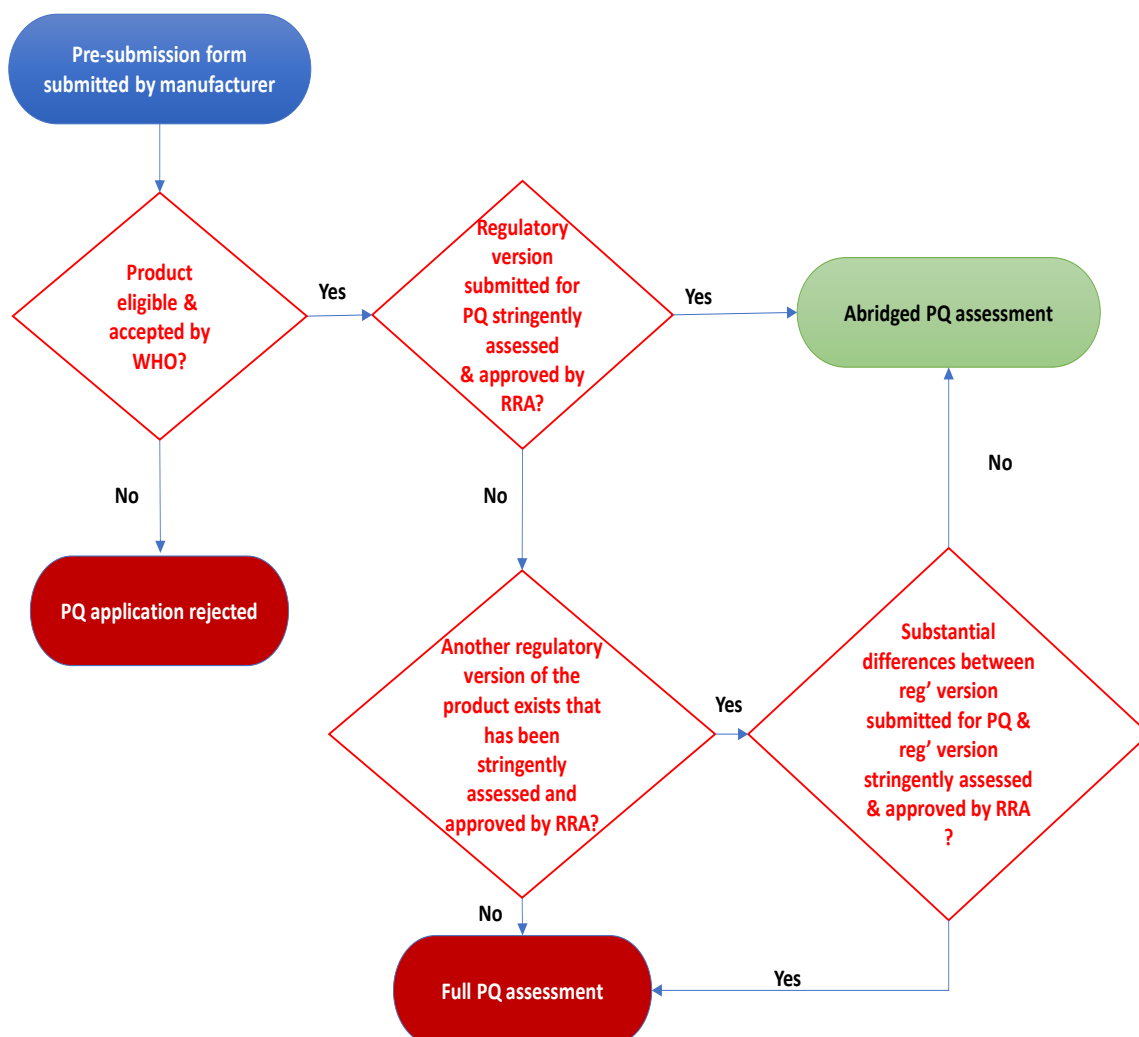
Table 1- Acceptable stringent assessments by Recognized Regulatory Authorities

*Includes only legacy devices lawfully placed on the market in accordance with the applicable transitional provisions under Article 120 of Regulation (EU) 2017/745, as amended.

If WHO accepts a prequalification application but determines that a product is not eligible for WHO's abridged prequalification assessment, then such product will be required to undergo a full prequalification assessment.

WHO reserves the right to shift from an abridged to a full prequalification assessment at any stage in WHO's prequalification assessment process, if the manufacturer fails or delays to submit satisfactory evidence that the product was stringently assessed and approved by a Recognized Regulatory Authority and/or if the product or evidence submitted does not meet WHO's requirements for abridged prequalification assessment.

Figure 1 below briefly summarizes the process for determining whether a product may undergo WHO's abridged prequalification assessment.



PQ= WHO's prequalification; Reg'= regulatory; RRA= recognized regulatory authority

Figure 1- Decision tree for determining if a medical device may undergo WHO's abridged prequalification assessment

4.2. Main differences between WHO's full and abridged prequalification assessment

WHO's full prequalification assessment process includes the following components:

- review of a full product dossier;
- inspection of a manufacturing site against all applicable requirements of ISO 13485³; and
- labelling review.

³ As the same may be amended from time to time.

By contrast, WHO's abridged prequalification assessment includes the following components:

- review of an abridged product dossier;
- inspection of a manufacturing site against all applicable requirements of ISO 13485⁴; and
- labelling review.

4.3. Assessment components

4.3.1. Pre-submission stage

To apply for a medical device to undergo WHO's prequalification assessment, the manufacturer must complete and submit electronically to WHO a pre-submission form (using document PQDx_466 "*Pre-submission form for WHO's prequalification assessment of medical devices*"), together with the necessary supporting documentation and requisite attachments, in accordance with PQDx_467 "*Instructions for completion of the pre-submission form for WHO's prequalification assessment of medical devices*".

The pre-submission form provides summary information about the product, its regulatory version and the manufacturer. The information provided in the pre-submission form and its attachments/supporting documentation will inform WHO in its decision on:

- a. whether or not the product submitted is eligible for WHO's prequalification assessment; and
- b. if the product submitted is eligible for WHO's prequalification assessment, whether or not WHO's prequalification assessment can be abridged; and
- c. determining the regulatory version accepted for WHO's prequalification assessment; and
- d. the planning of each of the components of WHO's prequalification assessment process; and
- e. determining the differences between existing regulatory versions of the product.

The pre-submission form and required documentation will be reviewed by WHO to determine, in its discretion and among other things: (i) whether the product is eligible for WHO's abridged prequalification assessment pursuant to the applicable requirements; and (ii) whether there is acceptable evidence (determined pursuant to Table 2 below) that the product has previously been stringently assessed and approved by an RRA for an acceptable risk class set forth in Table 1 above.

Recognized Regulatory Authority	Acceptable evidence of approval by the RRA for the risk classes set forth in table 1
Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration	Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) CA Certification, AU CAB CA Certification for class IIb devices and Class III medical devices

⁴ As the same may be amended from time to time.

Health Canada	Medical Device License for a class III or class IV medical device
Notified bodies designated by European Union Member States or other countries under specific agreement	CE marking under Directive 93/42/EEC (MDD)* such as: Annex II (EC Certificate – Full Quality Assurance System) + a device-specific certificate following Notified Body review of the design dossier (e.g. EC Design Examination Certificate, Design Dossier Certificate, Design Dossier Assessment Certificate, or equivalent terminology used by the Notified Body) + EU Declaration of Conformity; or Annex III (EC Type Examination Certificate) + Annex V (EC Production Quality Assurance Certificate) and EU Declaration of Conformity; or Annex III (EC Type Examination Certificate) + Annex VI (EC Product Quality Assurance Certificate) + EU Declaration of Conformity; or Annex III (EC Type Examination Certificate) + Annex IV (EC Verification Certificate) + EU Declaration of Conformity EU MDR Annex IX Certificate (QMS + technical documentation assessment); or Annex X (Type Examination) and Annex XI (Production Quality Assurance) certificates; or Annex X (Type Examination) and Annex XI Part B (Product Verification Certificate) issued under Regulation (EU) 2017/745 for Class IIb and Class III devices
Japan Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare	Pre-market certificates issued by RCB (registered certification body) or the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare (MHLW) for Class III or Class IV medical devices
Singapore Health Sciences Authority	Listing on the Singapore Medical Device Register (SMDR) following Full Evaluation Route for Class C or Class D medical devices
Approved bodies designated by Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, United Kingdom	UKCA certification issued under the Medical Devices Regulations 2002 (UK MDR 2002), including: UK Quality Assurance certification and technical documentation assessment for Class III devices; or Type Examination together with Production Quality Assurance certification issued by an Approved Body for applicable Class III device
Food and Drug Administration of the United States of America	PMA approval letter, 510(k) clearance letter [510(k) exempted products do not qualify for abridged evaluation route]

Table 2: Acceptable evidence of approval by Recognized Regulatory Authorities

* Includes only legacy devices lawfully placed on the market in accordance with the applicable transitional provisions under Article 120 of Regulation (EU) 2017/745, as amended.

For the avoidance of doubt, the other relevant terms and conditions of document PQDx_464 “WHO’s prequalification procedure for medical devices” (including, but not limited to, Section 6 (Applying for WHO’s prequalification assessment) thereof) also apply to the pre-submission stage of the abridged prequalification assessment.

4.3.2. Decision to abridge WHO’s prequalification assessment

WHO will determine, in its discretion, whether the product qualifies for WHO’s abridged prequalification assessment pursuant to and in accordance with the requirements contained and/or referenced in this document.

If conditions 1 or 2 in Section 4.1 above are met, then WHO will in principle perform an abridged prequalification assessment of the product. Conversely, if none of those conditions are met, or if conditions A or B in Section 4.1 are met, then WHO will perform a full prequalification assessment of the product.

WHO will notify the manufacturer in writing of its decision on whether or not the product will undergo WHO’s abridged prequalification assessment.

NOTE: In some cases, a product may have multiple regulatory versions and associated approvals and more than one of the different types of evidence specified in Table 2. Each of these approvals may support different aspects of WHO’s prequalification requirements, which could further facilitate WHO’s abridged prequalification assessment. Therefore, it is important for the manufacturer to provide WHO with all available evidence of previous and current stringent assessments and approvals by an RRA.

4.3.3. Abridged product dossier submission and review

If WHO determines that a product may undergo WHO’s abridged prequalification assessment, WHO will invite the manufacturer to submit an abridged product dossier. In such case, the manufacturer must submit the abridged product dossier, according to the requirements and provisions set forth in document PQDx_468 “*Instructions for compilation of a medical device product dossier (non-in vitro diagnostic) for WHO’s prequalification*”, for WHO’s screening and assessment.

For the avoidance of doubt, the other relevant requirements, terms and conditions of the PQ Procedure for MDs (including, but not limited to, Sections 6.3, 7.3 and 7.4.1 thereof) also apply to the abridged product dossier submission, screening and assessment.

4.3.4. Manufacturing site(s) inspection

If WHO determines that a product may undergo WHO’s abridged prequalification assessment, and provided that the manufacturer has met all conditions set forth in Section 6.3 of the PQ Procedure for MDs, a manufacturing site inspection will take place. The manufacturing site inspection will be conducted subject to and in accordance with the relevant requirements, terms and provisions set forth in the PQ Procedure for MDs (including, but not limited to, Section 7.4.2 thereof) and the information available on WHO’s prequalification inspection services website.

4.3.5. Labelling review

If WHO determines that a product may undergo WHO’s abridged prequalification assessment, and provided that the manufacturer has met all conditions set forth in Section 6.3 of the PQ Procedure for MDs, a labelling review will take place. The version of the

product labelling that was submitted within the product dossier will be considered for purposes of WHO's abridged prequalification assessment.

All relevant requirements, terms and conditions of the PQ Procedure for MDs (including, but not limited to, Section 7.4.3 thereof) will apply to the product's labelling review and assessment.

5. Deadlines and requests for extensions

WHO's abridged prequalification assessment will be carried out in accordance with deadlines outlined on WHO's website (see Section 7 Relevant documents below).

Whenever WHO requires additional information from the manufacturer in connection with WHO's abridged prequalification assessment, the manufacturer will be provided a deadline for the submission of the requested information. The manufacturer must use its best efforts to provide WHO with all requested information by such deadline.

WHO may grant the manufacturer additional time for the submission of the requested information in accordance with deadline extensions outlined on WHO's website⁵.

6. Outcome of WHO's abridged prequalification assessment

If a product is undergoing WHO's abridged prequalification assessment, WHO will take the prequalification decision (whether positive or negative) regarding that product only after all components of WHO's abridged prequalification assessment of the product (i.e., abridged product dossier review, manufacturing site inspection and labelling review) have been completed.

For the avoidance of doubt, all relevant requirements, terms and conditions outlined in the PQ Procedure of MDs (including, but not limited to, Section 10 and Section 11 thereof) shall apply in connection with the outcome of WHO's abridged prequalification assessment.

7. Relevant documents

This document must be read and understood in conjunction with other relevant documents applicable to WHO's prequalification assessment of medical devices which are available on WHO's prequalification of medical devices website including, without limitation, the following:

- WHO's prequalification procedure for medical devices. Geneva: World Health Organization (PQDx_464).
- Information for manufacturers on manufacturing site inspections, available on WHO's website at <https://extranet.who.int/prequal/inspection-services/vitro-diagnostics-and-male-circumcision-devices>.
- Pre-submission form for WHO's prequalification assessment of medical devices. Geneva: World Health Organization (PQDx_466).

⁵ Available at <https://extranet.who.int/prequal/medical-devices/timelines-medical-devices>

- Instructions for completion of the pre-submission form for WHO's prequalification assessment of medical devices. Geneva: World Health Organization; (PQDx_467).
- Instructions for compilation of a medical device product dossier (non-in vitro diagnostic) for WHO's prequalification. Geneva: World Health Organization; (PQDx_468).
- Product dossier checklist for WHO's prequalification of medical devices. Geneva: World Health Organization; (PQDx_469).