

University of South Australia - APAC Accreditation assessment summary report

Higher education provider	University of South Australia
Name of the Psychology AOU	Discipline of Psychology, UniSA Justice and Society Academic Unit
Standards version	Version 1.2, 1 January 2019
Purpose of assessment	Re-accreditation (5 yearly cycle)
Programs and level of study assessed	<p>Bachelor of Exercise and Sport Science/Bachelor of Psychology (Counselling and Interpersonal Skills) (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Human Movement/Bachelor of Psychology (Counselling and Interpersonal Skills) (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Psychological Science (Level 1) <i>* in teach out</i></p> <p>Bachelor of Laws (Honours)/Bachelor of Psychology (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Psychology (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Psychology (Cognitive Neuroscience) (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Psychology (Counselling and Interpersonal Skills) (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Psychology (Counselling and Interpersonal Skills)/Bachelor of Business (Human Resource Management) (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Social Science (Human Services)/Bachelor of Psychology (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) (packaged Level 1 and 2)</p> <p>Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) (Cognitive Neuroscience) (packaged Level 1 and 2)</p> <p>Master of Psychology (Clinical) (packaged Level 3 and 4)</p>
Campus	Magill, Online
Date of site visit	21 - 23 July 2021
Date of APAC Board Determination	29 November 2021

Accreditation start date

1 January 2022

Accreditation end date

31 December 2026

Background and overview

The Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) last reviewed the University of South Australia's (UniSA) suite of undergraduate Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2, and postgraduate packaged Level 3 and 4 Clinical psychology programs for the purpose of re-accreditation in 2016. At the time of the 2016 review, UniSA's undergraduate Level 1 and packaged Level 1 and 2 programs with a specialised stream (counselling and interpersonal skills and cognitive neuroscience) were accredited with conditions for a shortened period as a small number of shortfalls were identified against the *Accreditation Standards*. Subsequent to the review, all outstanding conditions were satisfied, and the undergraduate programs with a specialised stream have since been accredited without conditions. Additionally, the remaining undergraduate Level 1 and packaged Level 1 and 2 and postgraduate packaged Level 3 and 4 Clinical programs were accredited without conditions.

In 2020, UniSA undertook an organisational restructure and, the former School of Psychology, Social Work and Social Policy was replaced with a consolidated Academic Unit/Discipline structure. The Discipline of Psychology is now embedded within the UniSA Justice and Society Academic Unit. Additionally, in 2020, the School submitted an application to seek accreditation for the Level 1 Bachelor of Psychology program offered online. At the time of the assessment, the program was accredited subject to three conditions.

Furthermore, in 2020 APAC was notified that the program title of UniSA's range of undergraduate psychology programs had changed, and the 'psychological science' component of the Level 1 titles was replaced with 'psychology'. The Level 1 programs with the 'psychological science' component have since been placed in teach out.

The Assessment Team considered the Discipline of Psychology's 138 page self-review and attached appendices against the *Accreditation Standards*. Following the Assessment Team Zoom conference held on 17 June 2021, additional information was requested and received from UniSA, including:

- a variety of samples of complete de-identified student logbooks, as well as a rationale for how supervision is managed and placement hours are tracked
- examples of agreements between UniSA and external placement organisations, or processes for treatment plan audits and complaints
- examples of client consent forms used for external placements
- updated staff profile and student to staff ratio calculator, which includes registration and supervision status for all relevant staff
- comprehensive mapping document which maps all core units to the graduate competencies, assessments and unit and course learning outcomes for all programs
- any recent minutes for the *Program Advisory Panel* for the undergraduate programs, if available
- program handbooks for all programs, if available

Prior to the virtual site visit, the Assessment Team was provided with a pre-recorded guided tour of the Psychology Clinic located at the Magill campus.

The APAC Assessment Team conducted a virtual site visit on 21- 23 July 2021. During the virtual visit, the Assessment Team interviewed a range of individuals based at UniSA's Magill campus via Zoom conferences, including:

- Executive Dean, UniSA Justice & Society
- Dean of Programs, UniSA Justice & Society
- Dean of Research, UniSA Justice & Society
- Professorial Lead & Head of Psychology
- Professorial Lead, Research Education
- Professional staff
- Level 1 and packaged Level 1 and 2, and packaged Level 3 and 4 Program Directors
- Undergraduate online degree Program Director, Honours Coordinator, and Cognitive Neuroscience Specialisation Coordinator
- Level 1 and packaged level 1 and 2, and packaged Level 3 and 4 Course Coordinators
- Level 1 and packaged level 1 and 2 Online Course Facilitators
- Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2 and packaged Level 3 and 4 sessional teaching staff
- Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2 and packaged Level 3 and 4 current students
- Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2 and packaged Level 3 and 4 recent graduates
- Teaching and Learning Strategy Group
- Assessment and Moderation Committee
- Clinic Director, Placement coordinator and internal placement supervisor
- External placement supervisors

During the virtual site visit, the Assessment Team was provided with additional information, including:

- a handbook for academic teaching staff, including sessional teaching staff
- the placement handbook for the Level 1 program as well as clarification outlining the processes for sourcing and allocating student to placements

- clarification on the assessment objectives for *BEHL3027 Psychology Placement* unit

The findings in this report are based on the Assessment Team's evaluation of the material outlined above and interview evidence at the time of the virtual site visit, as well as information provided in a rejoinder to the draft report.

Key findings

The Discipline of Psychology is embedded within a group of disciplines and the broader UniSA Justice and Society Academic Unit. The Discipline has a strong focus on the scientist-practitioner model, research excellence and evidence-based psychology education. The suite of undergraduate and postgraduate programs provides students with the necessary training, skills and knowledge to practice competently in academia, as well as a professional psychologist. The Assessment Team was impressed by the coordination and management of the programs and the Discipline's supportive, approachable and knowledgeable culture of staff, as well as the strong leadership team and various governance committees in place.

At the time of the virtual site visit, there was substantial evidence that the Level 1 and packaged Level 1 and 2 programs are well established and managed and well supported by the cohesive academic team. The Discipline is commended for its commitment to providing authentic education in relation to Indigenous Australians integrated throughout the undergraduate programs, including its commitment to hiring indigenous Australian teaching staff to support students to further develop their skills and knowledge in cultural responsiveness. Additionally, the inclusion of the placement unit within the Level 1 sequence is very well received by students, and they appreciated the opportunity for exposure to real-life work settings. The packaged Level 1 and 2 program's training in academic research skills is a strength of the Discipline, and the Assessment Team was impressed with the number of Honours graduates who have progressed with further studies in a PhD. It was evident that the Discipline offers solid training in research, and staff are committed to attracting and producing high achieving researchers. With regard to the Level 1 online program, the Discipline and UniSA online counterparts take a proactive approach to ensure equivalence in course delivery and student experiences between online and on campus delivery and ensure that sufficient resources are readily available to support students to be successful in their studies.

For the packaged Level 3 and 4 program, the evidence indicated that the academic teaching team, particularly the Program Director is a valuable asset. The Program Director role is shared with the Clinic Director, internal placement supervisor and Placement Coordinator positions, and students, graduates, and external stakeholders spoke very highly of the program director's work ethic, responsiveness, and commitment. However, the evidence gathered by the Assessment Team indicated that there is a heavy reliance on one staff member to undertake these roles to support different aspects of the program. Further, a large part of the program is taught by sessional teaching staff, and as such, the Discipline is encouraged to consider the viability and sustainability of the current staffing arrangements.

The Assessment Team heard a range of views that the online learning environments and teaching facilities are fit-for-purpose. However, due to the limited expertise in the Psychology Clinic, there is little opportunity for students to encounter training and practice in child-based psychological services during their internal placement. In terms of external input into the design and delivery of the program, the Discipline has suitable mechanisms and working relationships in place with representatives of the psychology profession and prospective employers who contribute towards the delivery and design of the programs. At the time of the virtual site visit, there was some evidence of external benchmarking exercises which have taken place; however, the Discipline is required to develop a systematic plan for future benchmarking, as well as demonstrate progress and outcomes of these exercises.

The Assessment Team identified some shortfalls against the Standards and areas for further quality improvement. The Discipline is encouraged to consider ways to provide students with further information and guidance around career and pathway options following completion of the undergraduate and Honours year. Further, the Discipline should investigate options to provide sessional teaching staff with early access to the Learning Management System to prepare the online resources for each semester adequately.

The Assessment Team identified several commendable areas. The Discipline is commended for its collegiality displayed amongst academic staff, the knowledge, commitment and demonstrated leadership of Program Directors across all levels, and the strong integration and collaboration with UniSA Online. Additionally, the Discipline is commended for its commitment to developing and providing authentic education in Indigenous education and the inclusion of the placement unit within the Level 1 programs, which provides students with the opportunity for exposure to some real-life work experience.

APAC Board determination

That the following programs at the University of South Australia are re-accredited until **31 December 2026**:

- **Bachelor of Exercise and Sport Science/Bachelor of Psychology (Counselling and Interpersonal Skills)** (Level 1) (Campus: Magill)
- **Bachelor of Human Movement/Bachelor of Psychology (Counselling and Interpersonal Skills)** (Level 1) (Campus: Magill)
- **Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Psychological Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Magill) * *in teach out*
- **Bachelor of Laws (Honours)/Bachelor of Psychology** (Level 1) (Campus: Magill)
- **Bachelor of Psychology** (Level 1) (Campus: Magill, Online)
- **Bachelor of Psychology (Cognitive Neuroscience)** (Level 1) (Campus: Magill)
- **Bachelor of Psychology (Counselling and Interpersonal Skills)** (Level 1) (Campus: Magill)
- **Bachelor of Psychology (Counselling and Interpersonal Skills)/Bachelor of Business (Human Resource Management)** (Level 1) (Campus: Magill)
- **Bachelor of Social Science (Human Services)/Bachelor of Psychology** (Level 1) (Campus: Magill)
- **Bachelor of Psychology (Honours)** (packaged Level 1 and 2) (Campus: Magill)
- **Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) (Cognitive Neuroscience)** (packaged Level 1 and 2) (Campus: Magill)
- **Master of Psychology (Clinical)** (packaged Level 3 and 4) (Campus: Magill)

Subject to the following conditions:

For the packaged Level 3 and 4 program

By **31 January 2022**:

1. To ensure Standard 1 Public safety, criterion 1.6 i is met, the Discipline to provide evidence demonstrating that students are provided with adequate education and training in professional ethics and are assessed as competent prior to beginning their first placement.
2. To ensure Standard 1 Public safety, criteria 1.8 and 1.10 and Standard 3 Program of study, criterion 3.7 are met, the Discipline is to provide evidence demonstrating that individual supervision arrangements are sufficient and appropriate to ensure students are able to practise safely.

3. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criterion 3.4 is met, the Discipline is to provide evidence demonstrating that the staffing profile is sufficient to provide students with adequate support in the clinic with supervision during their internal placement.

For the packaged Level 1 and 2 and packaged Level 3 and 4 programs

By **30 September 2022**:

1. To ensure Standard 2 Academic governance and quality assurance, criterion 2.2 is met, the Discipline is to provide evidence demonstrating systematic and ongoing benchmarking, including the progress and outcomes of external benchmarking activities.

For all programs

By **31 January 2022**:

1. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criterion 3.1 is met, the Discipline is to provide evidence demonstrating that a coherent education pedagogy is in place that informs the suite of psychology programs.
2. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criteria 3.2, 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9 and Standard 5 Assessment, criteria 5.1 and 5.2 are met, the Discipline is to provide further evidence demonstrating that the following competencies are integrated, clearly articulated as a learning outcome, taught and appropriately assessed:
 - i. *Foundational Competency 1.5* for the Level 1 and Level 1 component of the packaged Level 1 and 2 programs (criteria 3.2, 5.1 and 5.2),
 - ii. *Pre-Professional Competency 2.2* for the Level 2 component of the packaged Level 1 and 2 programs (criteria 3.2, 3.7, 5.1 and 5.2),
 - iii. cultural responsiveness, including with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for all programs (criteria 3.8, 5.1 and 5.2), and
 - iv. the application of the principles of inter-professional learning and practice for the packaged Level 3 and 4 program (criteria 3.9, 5.1 and 5.2).

As a monitoring requirement for all programs, the Discipline is to provide an update on the progress and outcomes of the external benchmarking exercise as part of the 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 annual reports.

Table 1: Summary of findings regarding each criterion for each Standard

	Level 1	Level 1 & 2	Level 3 and 4 Clinical
Domain 1: Public safety	Standard Statement 1: Public safety is assured		
	Standard is met	Standard is met	Standard is substantially met
Domain 2: Academic governance and quality assurance	Standard Statement 2: Academic governance and quality assurance processes are effective		
	Standard is met	Standard is substantially met	Standard is substantially met
Domain 3: Program of study	Standard Statement 3: Program of study, design, delivery and resourcing enable students to achieve the required graduate competencies		
	Standard is substantially met	Standard is substantially met	Standard is substantially met
Domain 4: The student experience	Standard Statement 4: Students are provided with equitable and timely access to information and support		
	Standard is met	Standard is met	Standard is met
Domain 5: Assessment	Standard Statement 5: Assessment is fair, reliable and valid		
	Standard is substantially met	Standard is substantially met	Standard is substantially met

Quality improvement suggestions

A quality improvement suggestion refers to an action or a course of actions that should be considered by the education provider to improve the delivery and/or outcomes of the program.

The suggestions are as follows. It is recommended that the Discipline of Psychology at the University of South Australia:

1. explore ways to equip students with further information and guidance around career and pathway options following the completion of the Honours year.
2. considers the viability of the current staffing arrangements of the postgraduate academic teaching team.

Commendations

A commendation refers to a particularly significant achievement by the education provider with regard to the program.

The Assessment Team have made the subsequent commendations following the evaluation of the program. The Discipline of Psychology at the University of South Australia is commended for:

1. its collegiality, responsive and supportive culture displayed amongst academic and professional staff.
2. the inclusion of a dedicated unit exclusive to Indigenous Australian studies within the undergraduate program.
3. its strong collaboration with UniSA Online and the well-versed integration of the Level 1 Online program.
4. its impressive leadership and support provided by the senior staff members and its strong governance structures and processes in place.
5. the inclusion of a placement unit within the Level 1 program exposing students to the real workforce including some with mental health workforce and psychology profession.