

University of Tasmania - APAC Accreditation assessment summary report

Higher education provider	University of Tasmania
Name of the Psychology AOU	School of Psychological Sciences
Standards version	Version 1.2, 1 January 2019
Purpose of assessment	Re-accreditation (5 yearly cycle)
Programs and level of study assessed	Bachelor of Arts (Level 1) Bachelor of Psychological Science (Level 1) Bachelor of Psychological Science and Bachelor of Laws (Level 1) Bachelor of Science (Level 1) Bachelor of Psychological Science with Honours (Level 2) Master of Professional Psychology (Level 3) Master of Psychology (Clinical) (packaged Level 3 and 4) Master of Psychology/Doctor of Philosophy (Clinical) (packaged Level 3 and 4)
Campus	Cradle Coast, Hobart, Launceston, Online
Date of site visit	1 - 4 June 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 Tasmania's (UTAS) suite of undergraduate Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2, fourth year Level 2, and postgraduate Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 psychology programs for the purpose of re-accreditation in 2016. At the time of the 2016 review, UTAS' range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs offered on campus 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 UTAS' range of psychology programs have since been accredited without conditions.

The previously accredited suite of undergraduate programs containing the accredited sequence of psychology units has been in teach out since 2019 and were replaced by a revised suite of Level 1 programs. Additionally, in 2020 UTAS submitted an application to seek accreditation for the Level 1 Bachelor of Psychological Sciences program to be offered online, at which time the program was accredited without conditions.

The Assessment Team considered the School of Psychological Sciences' 66 page self-review and attached appendices against the *Accreditation Standards*. Following the Assessment Team Zoom conference held on 14 April 2021, additional information was requested and received from UTAS, including:

- a rationale as to how protection of the public is addressed in Level 1 and Level 2 programs
- clarification on placement arrangements, including management processes to ensure that supervision hours are sufficient to enable students to practice safely and demonstrate the achievement of the required graduate competencies, as well as clarification on the statement of the requirement for 300 direct client contact hours for postgraduate programs
- any reports and action plans following the benchmarking exercises and the reports/scores of the *eVALUate student surveys* at the program and unit level
- any minutes of recent *Course Advisory Committee, Learning and Teaching Committee, Student and Staff Liaison Committee and External Engagement Committee* meetings
- clarification of which version of the *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children* is available for student use within the test library
- justification for the high than indicative student to staff: ratio (SSR) for the Level 1 and packaged Level 3 and 4 programs
- mapping of the APAC graduate competencies to the course learning outcomes for the Level 2 program to evidence clear links between learning outcomes, assessments and skills acquisition

Prior to the virtual site visit, the Assessment Team was provided with a pre-recorded guided tour of a range of facilities, including:

- the University of Tasmania Psychology Clinic located at the Hobart campus;

- Hobart campus facilities, including the resources and test kits available at the Psychometric Test Library.

The APAC Assessment Team conducted a virtual site visit on 1 - 3 June 2021. During the visit, the Assessment Team interviewed a range of individuals, including:

- Head of Discipline, School of Psychological Sciences
- Head of School of Psychological Sciences
- Associate Head of Learning & Teaching
- Level 1 and Level 2 Program Coordinators
- Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 Program Director
- Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 academic teaching staff
- Level 1 and Level 2 sessional teaching staff
- Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 current students
- Level 1, Level 2 and packaged Level 3 and 4 recent graduates
- Professional staff
- External placement supervisors
- Clinic Manager
- Placement Coordinators
- Executive Dean College of Health and Medicine

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

- evidence demonstrating how *Pre-Professional competencies 2.2 and Pre-Professional 2.4* are taught and assessed throughout the level 2 program, and
- a mapping document outlining how the revised Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 programs' unit learning outcomes align with assessments and the relevant graduate competencies and documentation that describes how each learning outcome is taught and assessed throughout the programs.

Additionally, the Assessment Team was provided with a live presentation of how the School uses the *Titanium* placement scheduling software to track student progress through placement and records management of supervision requirements and clarification on how placement and supervision hours are logged and managed during each placement experience.

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.

Key findings

The School of Psychological Sciences is embedded within the College of Health and Medicine. It strongly emphasises providing a student-centric, scientist-based approach to psychology education designed to prepare students for different stages of their studies and become work-ready. In addition, the School embraces the opportunity to provide quality psychology education to local and rural areas across Tasmania, focusing on diverse learning opportunities throughout its programs.

The Assessment Team heard views that the School is well-led under the transparent strategic direction of the School's leadership team and, specifically the Head of Discipline, is highly regarded by teaching and professional staff, providing a supportive and cohesive approach to the School's operations.

At the time of the virtual site visit, the School is undertaking a period of change in various areas, including:

- the rollout of the revised Level 1 program sequences,
- a recently established association with Open Universities Australia to deliver the Level 1 program online,
- the pending implementation of the re-designed architecture for the Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 programs,
- the shift to a multi-campus model, including the rollout of the Level 1 programs at the Cradle Coast campus; and
- the anticipated temporary relocation of the Psychology Clinic in Hobart prior to the forthcoming anticipated permanent relocation of the School of Psychological Sciences and Psychology Clinic at the new Hobart Campus.

The Assessment Team noted that the level of change at present is profound, and as a result, some areas of concern are unable to be assessed until further information becomes available for review.

However, despite the current period of change, the Assessment Team heard positive feedback from both the student cohorts and recent graduates, for which they found the academic teaching team to be knowledgeable, approachable and very supportive. Both students and graduates spoke highly of the School's programs and felt well prepared to work professionally as a psychologist. Students and graduates appreciate the service and support provided to them during their studies and look for ways to remain engaged with UTAS post-graduation, including some considering undertaking the Board Approved Supervisor training program.

Further, the Assessment Team heard strong views from the sessional teaching staff who enjoy their engagement within the program. It was evident that the School has robust, fair and transparent processes in place to induct and support new sessional teaching staff. However, for the academic teaching staff at all levels, whilst academic staff are optimistic and welcoming of the forthcoming change, the considerable level of change is placing pressure on academic staff workloads, consequently impacting the ability to carry out research activities. The Assessment Team heard the

plans for recruiting additional teaching staff across all levels, which may subsequently ease this pressure placed on staff, and the Assessment Team looks forward to receiving further updates in due course.

Additionally, the Assessment Team found that the School has some processes in place to receive feedback and input into the design and management of the programs from students and psychology professionals. However, these formal processes, such as regular collaboration with external members of the *Course Advisory Committee* and *Student-Staff Liaison Committees*, have paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the School is required to reinstate these processes and regular meetings with these committees.

Throughout the virtual site visit, the Assessment Team identified several commendable aspects. Including the guidance and support provided by the School's leadership team, which is highly valued by teaching and professional staff and students and recent graduates of the programs. Additionally, the School holds a strong reputation for its programs with external stakeholders and provides diverse learning opportunities across rural Tasmania.

The Assessment Team identified some opportunities for further quality improvement. It is suggested that the School consider ways for which further face to face learning opportunities are made available to students located at the Launceston and Cradle Coast campuses and ensure that all lectures are recorded and made available to students to access outside the scheduled lecture times. Further, the Assessment Team recommends that the School undertakes the opportunity to review the assessment of cultural responsiveness and the application of inter-professional learning and practice in the Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 programs during this phase of restructuring the programs' architectures.

APAC Board determination

That the following programs at the University of Tasmania are accredited with conditions from **1 January 2022** until **31 December 2026**:

- **Bachelor of Arts** (Level 1) (Campus: Cradle Coast)
- **Bachelor of Psychological Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Cradle Coast)
- **Bachelor of Psychological Science and Bachelor of Laws** (Level 1) (Campus: Cradle Coast)

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

- **Bachelor of Arts** (Level 1) (Campus: Hobart, Launceston)
- **Bachelor of Psychological Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Hobart, Launceston, Online)
- **Bachelor of Psychological Science and Bachelor of Laws** (Level 1) (Campus: Hobart, Launceston)
- **Bachelor of Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Hobart, Launceston)
- **Bachelor of Psychological Science with Honours** (Level 2) (Campus: Hobart, Launceston)
- **Master of Professional Psychology** (Level 3) (Campus: Hobart, Launceston)
- **Master of Psychology (Clinical)** (packaged Level 3 and 4) (Campus: Hobart, Launceston)
- **Master of Psychology/Doctor of Philosophy (Clinical)** (packaged Level 3 and 4) (Campus: Hobart)

Subject to the following conditions:

For the Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 programs

1. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criterion 3.2 Standard 5 Assessment, criteria 5.1 and 5.2 are met, the School is to provide evidence of
 - i. unit outlines for the units to be delivered in semester 1, 2022 by **1 December 2021**,
 - ii. criterion-based marking rubrics for units to be delivered in semester 1, 2022 by **31 January 2022**, and
 - iii. unit outlines and criterion-based marking rubrics for units to be delivered in semester 2, 2022 by **31 March 2022**.

2. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criterion 3.5 is met, the School is to provide an update once the temporary Psychology Clinic is in use, including evidence demonstrating that the temporary Psychology Clinic is sufficiently equipped to provide students with an adequate and safe experience to achieve the graduate competencies by **1 December 2021**.

For all programs

By **31 January 2022**:

1. To ensure Standard 2 Academic governance and quality assurance, criterion 2.2 is met, the School is to provide evidence demonstrating the progress and outcomes of external benchmarking activities.
2. To ensure Standard 2 Academic governance and quality assurance, criterion 2.3 is met, the School is to provide evidence demonstrating that appropriate formal external input is applied in the design and management of the programs.
3. To ensure Standard 2 Academic governance and quality assurance, criterion 2.5 is met, the School is to provide further evidence demonstrating that sufficient support is in place for academic teaching staff to undertake teaching responsibilities and research activities.
4. 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 School is to provide evidence demonstrating that the following competencies are integrated, clearly articulated as a learning outcome, taught and appropriately assessed:
 - i. *Pre-Professional Competencies 2.2 and 2.4 for the Level 2 programs (criteria 3.2, 3.7, 5.1 and 5.2),*
 - ii. *cultural responsiveness, including with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for all programs (criteria 3.8, 5.1 and 5.2),*
 - iii. *the application of the principles of inter-professional learning and practice for the Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 programs (criteria 3.9, 5.1 and 5.2), and*
 - iv. *students have adequate opportunities for quality and professional practice education and encounter sufficient direct client activities across a diverse range of psychological services and settings for the Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 programs (criterion 3.7).*
5. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criterion 3.4 is met, the School is to provide an update when the planned new appointments of academic teaching staff are made.

As a monitoring requirement,

1. the School is to provide a variety of samples of de-identified student assessments in the Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 programs by **31 May 2022**, and
2. a site visit is to be undertaken when the pending changes to the Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 programs offered at the Hobart and Launceston campuses and the new Psychology Clinic have been put in place to ensure that the programs are being implemented as intended and continue to meet the *Accreditation Standards*.

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

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 3 and 4 Clinical
Domain 1: Public safety	Standard Statement 1: Public safety is assured			
	Standard is met	Standard is met	Standard is met	Standard is met
Domain 2: Academic governance and quality assurance	Standard Statement 2: Academic governance and quality assurance processes are effective			
	Standard is substantially met	Standard is substantially 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	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	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	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 School of Psychological Sciences at the University of Tasmania:

1. implements more face-to-face lectures and in-person learning opportunities at the Launceston and Cradle Coast campuses
2. explores ways in which to provide students with access to recorded lectures to promote and support asynchronous learning

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 School of Psychological Sciences at the University of Tasmania is commended for:

1. its strong leadership and the consistent support and guidance provided by the Head of Discipline
2. the ability to translate skills and knowledge into workplaces, whether that be as a psychologist or in another profession, as well as the ability to encourage change in the systems and structures in practice using knowledge from their programs
3. maintaining a good reputation for the School of Psychological Sciences
4. the breadth of placement opportunities available for students in regional and rural areas
5. the accessibility of the program, and learning opportunities made for students in rural areas