

Australian National University - APAC Accreditation assessment report

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| Higher education provider | Australian National University |
| Name of the Psychology AOU | Research School of Psychology |
| Standards version | Version 1.2, 1 January 2019 |
| Purpose of assessment | Monitoring visit (out of cycle follow up) |
| Programs and level of study assessed | Master of Professional Psychology (packaged Level 2 and 3) |
| Campus | Canberra |
| Date of site visit | 30 August 2021 |
| Date of APAC Board Determination | 11 April 2022 |
| Accreditation end date | 31 December 2023 |

Background and overview

In July 2020, the Australian National University (ANU) submitted an application to the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) seeking accreditation for a newly developed packaged Level 2 and 3 Master of Professional Psychology (MPP) program and associated Level 2 exit degree, the Graduate Diploma of Professional Psychology program. The program was developed to avoid future workforce issues in anticipation for the retirement of the 4+2 internship pathway, with both components of the combined program designed to offer a solid foundation in the theory and practice of professional psychology. The program provides sufficient breadth to form the foundation of career paths beyond traditional mental health services and allows students with the opportunity to exit the degree after the first year or continue onto the fifth year component allowing the potential to gain general registration through the 5+1 pathway.

Following a desktop review, the program was accredited from 1 June 2020 to 31 December 2022, subject to five conditions and one monitoring requirement. The monitoring requirement was imposed to allow a follow up visit to be undertaken when the first cohort of students had completed at least six months of the Level 3 component of the program to ensure that the program was being implemented as intended and continues to meet the *Accreditation Standards*.

Subsequently, in February 2021, the Research School of Psychology (School) provided a progress report demonstrating how

- clients' informed consent is obtained prior to receiving services from a provisionally registered psychologist; and
- the processes in place to ensure students have gained all relevant checks and registration requirements prior to beginning the Level 3 component of the program are appropriate

and as such, the conditions of accreditation against Standard 1 Public safety, criteria 1.5 and 1.6 were determined as met.

This monitoring visit focused on the outstanding conditions of accreditation against criteria under Standard 3 Program of study and Standard 5 Assessment relevant to the rollout of the program, support available to students, and whether the School and program adequately prepare students for their sixth-year internship upon graduation.

The APAC Accreditation Assessment Team considered the School's 13 page limited submission, including attached appendices, as well as the School's progress report submission with an update on placements, including samples of completed student logbooks and a further update on the governance structures and the capstone experience.

Following the Assessment Team Zoom conference held on 8 July 2021, additional information was requested and received from the School, including:

- updated unit outlines for PSYC8421, PSYC8422, PSYC8520, PSYC8521 and PSYC8522
- updated and recent samples of de-identified student logbooks

The APAC Assessment Team conducted a virtual site visit on 30 August 2021. During the visit, the Assessment Team interviewed a range of individuals, including:

- Director, Research School of Psychology
- Dean, College of Health and Medicine
- Associate Director Professional Psychology Programs
- MPP Associate Program Convener
- Academic and sessional staff
- Professional staff
- Placement Coordinator
- Placement supervisors
- Current students

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 packaged Level 2 and 3 MPP program is currently in the second year of its first iteration and prepares graduates to work as psychologists by providing a packaged fourth and fifth year sequence of psychology. At the time of the virtual site visit, students had already completed the first year, Level 2 component of the program, gained provisional registration through the Psychology Board of Australia (PsyBA) and commenced the Level 3 component of the program. This includes coursework, simulated supervision in the clinic and supervised placements with external placement providers.

The School is situated in the College of Health and Medicine faculty and is currently undergoing a governance restructure, and it is anticipated that the School will become a principal constituent in the new School of Medicine, Psychology, Health and Leadership. While these plans are not yet established, it is believed that the School will maintain its academic organisational unit status with shared governance, support and student services in addition to centralised professional services.

The Assessment Team heard positive feedback about the quality of the program in training and preparing students with the knowledge and skills to practice as registered psychologists and researchers. There is strong support for the program from external placement providers, including Canberra Health Services as well as senior staff in the School. The staff team delivering the program are well qualified and displayed a strong sense of collegiality and a commitment to continuous improvement.

Interview evidence gathered by the Assessment Team indicates that the students are enthusiastic about their experience in the program and felt well supported, with dedicated supervisors providing appropriate oversight. Students and supervisors spoke highly of the quality of education and training received and that students were equipped with sufficient knowledge and skills to undertake psychological services as provisional psychologists.

The Assessment Team also heard feedback from key stakeholders regarding the merit of objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs) at the beginning of the second year relating to risk assessment and mandatory reporting. The Assessment Team heard suggestions that it may be beneficial for the School to investigate the feasibility of earlier and more frequent OSCEs, as well as the possibility of additional observation earlier in the program in preparation for direct client work. Further, it was noted that some external placement supervisors might benefit from additional support and guidance regarding the supervision requirements, particularly relating to competencies and expectations of a Level 3 program and how it differentiates from other professional psychology programs.

The Assessment Team identified several commendable aspects of the program. The School is commended for the collegiality, commitment, approachability, responsiveness and proactiveness displayed amongst academic staff, particularly for its demonstrated excellence in maintaining a high-quality student experience and sense of care for student well-being and success. Further, the School is commended for its sound admission processes into the program, its focus on the application of the principles of inter-professional learning and practice throughout the program, its robust curriculum, with units appropriately scaffolded and utilised throughout both years of the program, and its demonstrated commitment to continuous improvement.

APAC Board determination

That the Australian National University's **Master of Professional Psychology** (packaged Level 2 and 3) (Campus: Canberra) program remains accredited without conditions until **31 December 2023**.

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

| Packaged Level 2 and 3 | |
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| Domain 1: Public safety | Standard Statement 1: Public safety is assured |
| | Standard is met |
| Domain 2: Academic governance and quality assurance | Standard Statement 2: Academic governance and quality assurance processes are effective |
| | Standard is 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 met |
| Domain 4: The student experience | Standard Statement 4: Students are provided with equitable and timely access to information and support |
| | Standard is met |
| Domain 5: Assessment | Standard Statement 5: Assessment is fair, reliable and valid |
| | Standard is met |

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 Research School of Psychology at the Australian National University is commended for:

1. the level of cohesion, collegiality, commitment, approachability, responsiveness and proactiveness displayed amongst academic staff.
2. its demonstrated excellence in maintaining a high-quality student experience and sense of care for student well-being and success.
3. its robust curriculum, with units appropriately scaffolded and utilised throughout both years of the program.
4. an exemplary approach to application of the principles of inter-professional learning and practice throughout the program.
5. its demonstrated commitment to continuous improvement.
6. the program's sound admission processes.