

## RMIT University - APAC Accreditation assessment summary report

<b>Higher education provider</b>	RMIT University
<b>Name of the Psychology AOU</b>	Discipline of Psychology
<b>Standards version</b>	Version 1.2, 1 January 2019
<b>Purpose of assessment</b>	Re-accreditation (5 yearly cycle)
<b>Programs and level of study assessed</b>	Bachelor of Applied Science (Psychology) (Level 1) Bachelor of Criminology and Psychology (Level 1) Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology) (Level 1) Bachelor of Social Work (Honours)/Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology) (Level 1) Graduate Diploma in Psychology (Level 1) Bachelor of Applied Science (Psychology) (Honours) (Level 2) Master of Clinical Psychology (packaged Level 3 and 4)
<b>Campus</b>	Bundoora, Melbourne, online
<b>Date of site visit</b>	15 - 18 March 2022
<b>Date of APAC Board Determination</b>	15 August 2022
<b>Accreditation start date</b>	1 January 2023
<b>Accreditation end date</b>	31 December 2027

## Background and overview

This report concerns only the programs taught at RMIT's Bundoora, Melbourne and Online campuses; please refer to the separate report for RMIT's Level 1 program taught at the RMIT University Vietnam (RMIT Vietnam) campus.

The Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) last reviewed RMIT University's (RMIT) undergraduate Level 1, fourth year Level 2 Honours and postgraduate packaged Level 3 and 4 Clinical psychology programs for the purpose of re-accreditation in 2017.

At the time of the 2017 review, the undergraduate and postgraduate programs were accredited with conditions for a shortened period of time as a number of shortfalls against the Standards were identified. Following the review, all outstanding conditions were met, and the programs were since accredited without conditions.

In 2021, the Discipline of Psychology (Discipline) submitted an out of cycle initial application for accreditation of a Level 1 Graduate Diploma of Psychology bridging program to be offered online. At the time of the review, the program was accredited subject to two conditions and one monitoring requirement.

In the current 5-yearly re-accreditation, the Assessment Team considered the Discipline's 141-page self-review and attached appendices against the *Accreditation Standards*. Following the Assessment Team Zoom conference held on 24 January 2022, additional information was requested from the Discipline for review. Some of the requested additional information was received during the virtual site visit, including:

- an updated student to staff ratio calculator, detailing the current staffing profile and any vacant positions under the recruitment process
- policies and procedures for the mandatory notification to Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency of student impairment
- a variety of de-identified samples of completed logbooks outlining the required supervision and placement hours accrued throughout the program
- a variety of de-identified samples of student assessments demonstrating how *Foundational Competencies 1.4* and *1.5* are appropriately assessed within the Level 1 program
- a matrix document demonstrating the breadth of placement settings and the details of placement supervisors, including their curriculum vitae
- clarification regarding the required hours for the internal and external placements within the Level 3 and 4 Clinical program
- an update on benchmarking exercises, including any comprehensive plans for all programs
- details of the representation of the *Psychology Industry Advisory Committee* and *Student Staff Consultative Committee*, including any representation of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander persons
- information regarding seed funding support or research grants for early career researchers

- de-identified examples of instances where students have accessed the grievances and appeals procedures, including the outcomes of these appeals

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

The APAC Assessment Team conducted a virtual site visit on 15 - 18 March 2022. During the visit, the Assessment Team interviewed a range of individuals, including:

- Assistant Associate Dean of Psychology
- Associate Dean of Work Integrated Learning
- Associate Dean, School of Applied Health
- Level 1 and Level 2 Program Managers
- packaged Level 3 and 4 Program Coordinators
- Undergraduate Year Level Coordinators
- Level 1, Level 2 and packaged Level 3 and 4 Course Coordinators
- Level 1, Level 2 and packaged Level 3 and 4 academic teaching staff
- Level 1, Level 2 and packaged Level 3 and 4 current students
- Level 1, Level 2 and packaged Level 3 and 4 recent graduates
- Professional staff
- Internal and external placement supervisors
- External Placement Supervisors
- Clinic Manager, Placement Coordinator and Psychology Test Librarian
- RMIT Online staff members
- Undergraduate Teaching Committee

During the virtual site visit, the Assessment Team sought clarification on the admission and selection process for entry into the packaged Level 3 and 4 Clinical program, including how students are selected for consideration, the interview panel and the process around the offers made to students.

The Assessment Team requested further information during the site visit for review that has not yet been received at the time of finalising the draft accreditation assessment report, including:

- evidence demonstrating that *Foundational Competency 1.5* is clearly embedded, taught, and appropriately assessed as a required learning outcome throughout the Level 1 Graduate Diploma program
- clarification on the mandatory notification process, including information and documentation is provided and communicated to students
- de-identified examples of the implementation of RMIT policies and procedures for cases of ethical and professional misconduct by students and staff

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

## Key findings

The Discipline of Psychology is embedded within the School of Health and Biomedical Science (School) nested in the STEM College (College). The Discipline has a strong focus on providing applied, practical, and evidence-based education in psychology training and research. The suite of undergraduate and postgraduate programs provides students with the progressive knowledge, training and skills to competently practice as a registered psychologist or a career in academia at the completion of their studies. The Assessment Team was impressed by the strong academic governance structures in place and the strategic focused leadership that informs the supportive and collegial culture amongst staff with a shared vision for future direction.

At the time of the site visit, the Assessment Team heard of the recent staffing and structural changes that had taken place and the impacts of these changes were evident, particularly in the area of administrative support. Despite these challenges, academic staff are positive and optimistic and students are well supported during their studies. The Discipline is recognised for its strong lines of communication amongst the leadership teams, academic and professional staff, including staff based at RMIT Vietnam. There is a good level of support provided to new staff members and encouragement to further develop their knowledge and refine their skills in teaching and research.

For the Level 1 and Level 2 programs, the evidence gathered indicated that the programs are well structured, developed, and managed providing students with the essential knowledge and skills to progress through their studies in psychology. There is a good variety of authentic assessment tasks across the programs and a strong range of tools to adequately assess students' competencies. While the evidence indicates that most of the *Foundational* and *Pre-Professional Competencies* are sufficiently taught and appropriately assessed as required learning outcomes, the Assessment Team heard that students would benefit from further training and development to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a culturally appropriate and sensitive manner. Further, the Discipline is encouraged to review the timeliness of providing feedback on student assessments to ensure this is provided to students in a timely manner.

For the packaged Level 3 and 4 Clinical program, the Assessment Team heard how the recent changes raised some challenges around the management of the program, particularly impacting on placements in the Psychology Clinic. At the time of the visit, the evidence indicated that these challenges have since subsided and strategies are in place are underway to stabilise the program. Students are provided with a breadth of training opportunities to gain the knowledge and skills required to practice competently and safely in a range of settings. Additionally, the Assessment Team heard positive feedback around the management of student placements and support given to external placement providers and students were reported to have a high level of knowledge and skills to work with clients across a range of settings.

The Assessment Team heard that the online learning environments, teaching facilities and resources are fit for purpose. At the time of the site visit, the policies and protocols for the management of the Psychology Clinic are under review and clarification is required around how the Discipline ensures that the protocols in place for mandatory reporting of notifiable misconduct is clearly communicated to students. Additionally, the Assessment Team heard of the recent difficulties using *Blackboard Collaborate Ultra* recording facilities in the clinic and the plans to replace this facility with Zoom. There

are substantive opportunities for external input into the design and management of the programs and some benchmarking activities have been conducted for all programs.

The Assessment Team identified some shortfalls against the Accreditation Standards and areas for quality improvement. For the Level 2 Honours programs the Discipline is encouraged to pursue content in a broader context with a focus on the Pre-Professional Competencies. Further, the Discipline should consider providing students with more guidance and information regarding alternative pathway options should they not engage in postgraduate studies in psychology.

The Assessment Team identified several commendable areas. The Discipline is commended for its strong communication and high level of support systems for staff, specifically for new staff members and those based in RMIT Vietnam. Additionally, the Discipline is commended the opportunity to provide Honours students with research grants to support their projects.

## APAC Board determination

That the following programs at RMIT University are re-accredited until **31 December 2027**:

- **Bachelor of Applied Science (Psychology)** (Level 1) (Campus: Bundoora, Melbourne)
- **Bachelor of Criminology and Psychology** (Level 1) (Campus: Melbourne)
- **Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology)** (Level 1) (Campus: Melbourne)
- **Bachelor of Social Work (Honours)/Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology)** (Level 1) (Campus: Melbourne)
- **Graduate Diploma in Psychology** (Level 1) (Campus: Online)
- **Bachelor of Applied Science (Psychology) (Honours)** (Level 2) (Campus: Bundoora)
- **Master of Clinical Psychology** (packaged Level 3 and 4) (Campus: Bundoora)

Subject to the following conditions:

### For all programs

#### By **31 January 2023**:

1. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criterion 3.4 is met, the Discipline is to provide evidence demonstrating that the academic staffing profile is sufficient to ensure that students are supported to acquire the relevant graduate competencies.
2. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criteria 3.2 and 3.8 and Standard 5 Assessment, criteria 5.1 and 5.2 are met, the Discipline is to provide evidence demonstrating that the following competencies are integrated, clearly articulated as a learning outcome, taught and appropriately assessed:
  - i. *Foundational Competencies 1.4 and 1.5* for the Level 1 program (criteria 3.2, 5.1 and 5.2), and
  - ii. cultural responsiveness, including with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for the Level 1, Level 2 and packaged Level 3 and 4 Clinical programs (criteria 3.8, 5.1 and 5.2).

#### By **30 April 2023**:

3. 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.

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As a monitoring requirement for the packaged Level 3 and 4 Clinical program, the Discipline is to provide an update to demonstrate that the training facilities in the Psychology Clinic are well equipped to provide students with an adequate and safe experience on placement by **30 April 2023**.

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

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

1. explore options to provide students with further information regarding graduate employability opportunities following the completion of their studies.
2. for the Level 2 program, pursue curriculum and content in a broad context with a focus on the *Pre-Professional Competencies*.

## 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 RMIT University is commended for:

1. its strong lines of communication and support systems established amongst academic and professional staff.
2. the financial assistance offered to students to support research projects.
3. its commitment and the high level of support and mentorship provided for new academic teaching staff.