



La Trobe University- APAC Accreditation Assessment Summary Report

Higher education provider	La Trobe University
Name of the Psychology AOU	Department of Psychology and Counselling
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 (Level 3)
Campus	Online
Date of site visit	27 August 2020
Date of APAC Board Determination	30 November 2020
Accreditation end date	31 December 2023



Background and overview

In September 2019, La Trobe University (La Trobe) submitted an application for an initial accreditation and advised the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) of its intent to offer a newly developed Master of Professional Psychology (MPP) program. This Level 3 program complements the current suite of psychology programs offered at La Trobe and provides a flexible alternative entry pathway into postgraduate coursework study.

Following a desktop review, the MPP program was accredited from 25 November 2019 to 31 December 2023 subject to a condition that a monitoring visit be undertaken when the first cohort of students had completed at least six months of the program. This is the report of the monitoring visit which focused on the criteria under Standard 1 Public safety, Standard 3 Program of study, Standard 4 The student experience and Standard 5 Assessment that are relevant to the rollout of the program, support available to students and whether the Department and program is adequately preparing students for their sixth-year internship year upon graduation.

The APAC Assessment Team considered the Department of Psychology and Counselling's self-review against the Accreditation Standards, along with various appendices and subsequent information requested from La Trobe following the Assessment Team teleconference of 8 July 2020.

Prior to the virtual site visit, the Assessment Team was provided with access to La Trobe's Learning Management System (LMS) to view a range of online components of the program and the following additional information:

- MPP class timetable
- PSY5NBC, PSY5PPY, PSY5EBP and PSY5PPB learning guides
- Assignment summary including marking rubric for PSY5PPA, PSY5EBP and PSY5PPB
- Student work examples and placement logbooks for PSY5PPA
- List of PSY5EBP research projects
- Description of assessments for each unit
- Department examiners meeting minutes, 25 June 2020
- Teaching and learning committee (Postgraduate) meeting minutes, 18 June 2020
- Teaching and assessment of cultural responsiveness, interdisciplinary/interprofessional practice and ethics table
- Additional external placement checklists for working from home/telehealth
- External benchmarking plans
- List of external placement agencies and supervisors



- Handbook for placement supervisors
- Health student placement agreement and Placement learning contract template
- Mid and end of placement supervisor report template
- External placement supervisor and/or onsite Psychologist curricula vitae
- Matrix of placement experiences, clients, direct hours and supervision
- Student placement handbook 2020
- Subject review reports
- Table of all semester 1 units detailing student grades

The APAC Assessment Team conducted a virtual site visit on 27 August 2020 and met with the following individuals via Zoom teleconference:

- Head of Department
- Head of School
- Course Coordinator for 2020
- incoming Course Coordinator for 2021
- Assistant Course Coordinator
- Subject Coordinators
- MPP Placement Coordinator
- Neuropsychology Placement Coordinator
- Chair, Teaching and Learning Committee (Postgraduate)
- School Director of Teaching and Learning
- current students
- Professional staff
- Placement supervisors

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 program is currently in the first year of its implementation and has undergone further development since its initial review. The Department has put in place a number of positive changes, including standardisation of course documentation, which is to be commended. Governance systems are clear and appropriate and senior staff are supportive of the program. Academic staff delivering the program are well qualified and showed a commitment to continuous improvement of the program. Pending the successful implementation of the MPP program at the Bendigo campus, the Department is considering offering a second instance of the program at the Bundoora campus in future years.

Using a flexible and integrated blended mode of online and face to face delivery, the program was intended to allow more rural and regional and non-traditional students to reach their goal of registration as a general psychologist. While the current cohort of students are mainly from Bendigo and Melbourne, it is hoped that the program will attract more rural students in time. Five of the eight units of the program are already offered within the accredited Clinical and Clinical Neuropsychology Masters programs and revised only to the extent that allows for delivery in a more flexible format. Content, intended learning outcomes and assessments remain unchanged.

At the time of the virtual site visit, students had completed the scheduled online lectures/seminar sessions as well as some full day face-to-face workshops in Semester 1 which were largely unaffected by COVID-19 restrictions. A decision was made by La Trobe to deliver the curriculum components scheduled for Semester 2 online across the three cohorts, MPP, Clinical and Clinical Neuropsychology. The Assessment Team heard positive feedback about the student experience to date with content delivery and the ability for students to learn from and with others intra-professionally from the other subdisciplines of psychology.

Interview evidence confirms that the provision of at least 60 hours of skills training during Professional Practicum A (PPA): Internal Placement occurs within the framework of a coursework unit rather than in a relevant professional setting as required by the Standards. Although students receive informal individual feedback during this internal placement, no formal supervision is provided for this skills training nor were Placement Learning Contracts in place for this simulated placement. The Department is required to further develop PPA to ensure that the skills training occurs within the context of a practical placement and that there is appropriate supervision. Alternatively, the Department could restructure PPB: External Placement to ensure that the placement is sufficient in duration to meet the requirements of the Accreditation Standards.

The Assessment Team heard that commencement of external placements was delayed due to COVID-19 with some students scheduled to begin placements in mid-September. The Department has plans in place to ensure students complete the required placement hours and acquire the *Level 3 Professional Competencies* prior to graduation. Evidence gathered indicates that assessments in the program are appropriate. However, submission of completed student logbooks, evidence of competency assignments and research projects is required to determine satisfactory skill development, along with sufficient supervision and competency-based assessments to ensure students' attainment of the *Level 3 Professional Competencies*.

The Assessment Team identified a small number of opportunities for further quality improvement. The Department is recommended to update information in the Placement Learning Contract template to replace the PsyBA core competencies with the APAC *Level 3 Professional Competencies*. The Department is also encouraged to consider ways to assist students in understanding the available options and pathways beyond the fifth year of study and the requirements of arranging the 5+1 internship year and to consider opportunities for the Department to broaden the range of research methodologies that are available for students completing the research project.



APAC Board determination

That La Trobe University's **Master of Professional Psychology** (Level 3) (Campus: Online) program remains accredited until **31 December 2023** subject to the following conditions:

By **31 December 2020**:

1. To ensure Standard 1 Public safety, criteria 1.3, 1.8, 1.9 and 1.10, Standard 3 Program of study, criterion 3.7 and Standard 5 Assessment, criteria 5.1 and 5.3 are met, the Department is to provide copies of completed student logbooks, demonstrating that students have attained their direct client hours, client related hours and supervision hours appropriately.
2. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criterion 3.6 and Standard 5 Assessment, criterion 5.1 are met, the Department is to provide copies of completed student research projects.



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

Level 3	
Domain 1: Public safety	Standard Statement 1: Public safety is assured
	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
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
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 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 Department of Psychology and Counselling at La Trobe University considers:

1. using a consistent approach when disseminating information to students
2. updating information in the Placement Learning Contract template to replace the PsyBA core competencies with the APAC Level 3 *Professional Competencies*
3. ways to assist students in understanding the available options and pathways beyond the fifth year of study and the requirements of arranging the 5+1 internship year
4. additional ways in which students can participate in inter-professional learning and practice

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 Department of Psychology and Counselling at La Trobe University is commended for the:

1. commitment to providing access to education to regional, rural, and remote communities
2. staff team's commitment to continuous improvement of the program