



APAC Accreditation Assessment Summary Report

Higher Education Provider	Curtin University
Date of determination	4 December 2017
Standards version	June 2010 (Version 10); Rules March 2014, amendments May 30 2016
Programs of Study Assessed for Accreditation	3 year: Bachelor of Science (Psychology) Bachelor of Science (Psychology and Human Resource Management) Bachelor of Science (Psychology) and Bachelor of Commerce (Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations) Bachelor of Laws/ Bachelor of Science (Psychology) Bachelor of Science (Psychology)/ Bachelor of Commerce (Marketing) 4 year: Bachelor of Psychology Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) 5th year: Master of Psychology (Professional) 5th and 6th years Master of Psychology (Clinical Psychology) Master of Psychology (Counselling Psychology) Doctor of Philosophy (Clinical Psychology) Doctor of Philosophy (Counselling Psychology)

This is a summary of the outcomes of an APAC accreditation assessment of the School of Psychology and Speech Pathology at Curtin University. This summary highlights selected key features of the assessment. Comprehensive analysis of the assessment is contained in the full APAC Assessment Team report.

The AOU is the School of Psychology and Speech Pathology, which is located in the Faculty of Health Sciences of Curtin University, and has an identified Head, Professor Adrian North, who has full budgetary and administrative responsibilities. The School has a strong reputation for research and scholarship, achieving a ranking of 4 in the last ERA exercise.

Note: The School is potentially undergoing a change in structure in 2018, where the Speech Pathology staff and students will be relocated to a different School. The changes are not expected to impact significantly on budgetary and administrative arrangements.

The staff profile indicates appointments at all academic levels and at appropriate fractions of employment (full-time, part-time and casual) to meet the student: staff ratio. The total student: academic ratio is 18.50 : 1. All programs offered at Curtin have staff with PhDs which are completed or near completion and the clinical program is led and resourced with staff who have appropriate qualifications, experience, skills and endorsements in clinical psychology.

With regard to the counselling postgraduate programs, it became apparent at the site visit that there were two counselling staff who had employment contracts for two periods of 20 weeks (contracts in each of semesters 1 and 2), with the risk of leaving the students and staff vulnerable for long periods of course enrolment with potentially no supervision in both the research and therapy components of the program.

The Master of Psychology (Professional) program (MPP) is supported by a Level D staff member who is also the lead for the counselling postgraduate program. However, although the MPP appears to meet the academic staffing requirements, the site visit team does not deem the level of staffing to be adequate in this program as the majority of course coordination, teaching and supervision required is undertaken by the course coordinator, who appears to be operationally responsible for this program.

The staffing profile for both the Master of Psychology (Counselling Psychology) and Master of Psychology (Professional) programs requires revision.

The School has good access to appropriate teaching and research facilities. The clinic facilities which are part of the Health and Wellness Centre are appropriate, with seven consulting rooms and a group room available. All staff have their own research space and space for honours, masters and PhD students is also appropriate. The Test library is well managed and meets current teaching needs. There is sufficient administrative and technical support for teaching and research.

No courses are offered using distance education, however a number of units in Year 1 and 2 are now taught in both an on-line and on-campus mode, and Year 3 units are beginning to be offered on-line. The School uses the learning management system, which includes recordings of lectures and supporting materials. Most units have laboratory classes. Units are routinely evaluated by students. There is a psychology student council that meets 4-5 times per year and students can contact these representatives. The HOS also meets twice a year with undergraduate representatives.

There are currently three undergraduate 3 year courses offered as sequences in the Bachelor of Science, with two new courses commencing in 2018. All students complete 15 core units and elective psychology units. Core units cover major areas of study in psychology, with students developing skills in research methods, laboratory experiments and report writing. Core content areas are covered in core courses and graduate attributes are met in all required areas.

Appropriate processes are in place for assessment and awarding of credit. However, the School has not undertaken external independent moderation of its courses since its last accreditation.

The School offers a Bachelor of Psychology and Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) as four year programs. These two programs have the same structure for the first three years as the three year programs of study. They have the same four year structure, except that Bachelor of Psychology students undertake a 25% unit in Dissertation Preparation and a 25% unit Dissertation, which is a

group project, while Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) students undertake a 25% Honours Dissertation Preparation and a 25% Honours Dissertation.

In both of the four year programs, students take a core unit, Principles of Psychological Assessment, plus three further units, i.e., Quality Assurance in Psychological Research, Advanced Topics in Applied Psychology and Contemporary Professional Development, which cover the requirement for advanced theoretical and empirical psychology knowledge and understanding the role of the context in the science and practice of psychology.

The research component is 50% and students participate in individual or shared projects, with each writing up an individual report with one or more unique research questions. Students appear to be involved in all the steps of the research project. A small number of students are supervised by psychologists outside the AOU; however, all of these students also have a supervisor within the AOU.

With regard to assessment, the School and University have appropriate policies and procedures. Regarding benchmarking of the students' work, evidence was supplied of benchmarking exercises undertaken with Charles Sturt University in 2013.

Curtin University offers the following postgraduate courses: 5th year Master of Psychology (Professional) and 5th and 6th years in the Master of Psychology (Clinical Psychology), the Master of Psychology (Counselling Psychology), the Doctor of Philosophy (Clinical Psychology) and the Doctor of Philosophy (Counselling Psychology).

Staffing requirements are met for the Clinical postgraduate stream. The Master of Psychology (Professional) and the Master of Psychology (Counselling Psychology) do not meet the relevant Standards with regard to the current staffing levels. The site visit team does not consider that the MPP program has the level of staffing necessary to continue to offer this, the largest in student numbers of the postgraduate offerings at Curtin.

All postgraduate programs meet the student: academic staff ratios and the staff members who manage the placements are registered psychologists with extensive experience in their fields.

There is an Advisory/Liaison and Quality Review Committee for each of the Professional, Clinical and Counselling streams.

Curtin University is well resourced with regard to the test library holdings, computers and facilities available to students for interviewing, testing and assessment.

All core capabilities, attributes and assessment are met for the Clinical and Professional postgraduate programs. However, the site visit team was concerned about the experience of students in the Counselling streams due to the likely interrupted supervision of students, as contracts of some staff teaching in the Counselling program were semester based (i.e., 20 week term contracts each for semesters 1 and 2), thus leaving students vulnerable at critical times in their research projects.

Assessments in the postgraduate programs are varied consisting of videotaped role plays, case report writing, case formulations, case studies, critical literature reviews, theses, test administration,

examinations, behavioural, cognitive and individual/group interventions. All logbooks sighted contained details noting the practicums, casework and supervision experiences, including logged face-to-face hours with clients. Students must pass all components of their course with a minimum pass grade set at 50%, with the exception of the Professional Practice in Psychology course in the Professional program and the ethics exam in the Clinical and Counselling programs, where the minimum pass grade is 80%.

The Master of Psychology (Professional) is offered as a full-time one year program.

The course structure comprises 100% psychology and all units are delivered by psychologists. The coursework and practicum components of the program include foundational education and training in the core capabilities and attributes.

As well as the experiential learning activities that are scheduled through the coursework of the program (i.e., role plays, observation of professionals, psychometric assessment and case analysis), each student undertakes an extended external practical placement in several diverse agencies in the community where students continue to gain experience in evidence-based intervention practices and working amongst other professionals in a multidisciplinary environment. Although these placement opportunities are not offered within the AOU, the site visit team was satisfied that all students are prepared to enter their first placement with pre-placement training in ethical and professional practice, counselling and interviewing skills, and psychological assessment. Further, these placements are supervised by experienced psychologists who are Psychology Board of Australia approved supervisors. The Program Director acts also as the placement coordinator, and ensures the students meet their 300 hours of logged supervised practicums and skills training, checks that case notes and case reports are signed, and oversees the student-supervisor contracts, and mid and end of placement assessments.

The entry criterion for the Master of Psychology (Clinical Psychology) is the completion of a four year APAC accredited Honours degree in psychology with a minimum 2A Honours grade. Admission into the degree also involves the submission of an academic record, a curriculum vitae, a personal statement, referee reports, and an evaluation of the interview performance. The entry requirements for admission to the Doctor of Philosophy (Clinical Psychology) are similar to the Masters selection process, but also includes a proposed course of research.

The Master of Psychology (Clinical Psychology) is offered as a full-time or part-time program and is equivalent to two years of full-time study. The Doctor of Philosophy (Clinical Psychology) is four years of full-time study or the part-time equivalent.

The Master of Psychology (Clinical Psychology) consists of three components: coursework, research and practical placement and all units are taught by psychologists. Students must pass all three components to graduate.

The site visit team was satisfied that the coursework covered the core capabilities and attributes and evidence of coverage of the National Practice Standards for the Mental Health Workforce, practice management, storing and accessing psychology files, record keeping and managing people was provided after the site visit

Several research reports/theses were sighted during the site visit for the Master of Psychology (Clinical Psychology) program. Articulation from this program to the Doctor of Philosophy (Clinical Psychology) program is not encouraged.

Students in the Clinical programs undertake three practicums across the degree and these experiences are in a variety of settings including the AOU psychology clinic, acute care, medical, institutional and private practices and cover the lifespan issues. All students receive pre-placement education and training in ethics, professional matters and psychological assessment. The first practicum takes place in the psychology clinic on the Bentley campus in the second semester of year one for the Masters students and in semester one of the second year for the PhD students. There are two external placements and students are supervised by clinical psychologists who are also Board Approved supervisors with the Psychology Board of Australia. All logbooks, student reports, case notes, student contracts and mid and end term reviews sighted were signed by the responsible supervisor and students indicated that they were achieving their casework and face-to-face hours and were receiving adequate supervision.

The entry criteria for the Master of Psychology (Counselling Psychology) and Doctor of Philosophy (Counselling Psychology) are the same as those for the Clinical programs.

The Master of Psychology (Counselling Psychology) consists of three components: coursework, research and practical placement and all units are taught by psychologists. Students must pass all three components to graduate.

The site visit team was satisfied that the coursework covered the core capabilities and attributes and evidence of coverage of the National Practice Standards for the Mental Health Workforce, practice management, storing and accessing psychology files, record keeping and managing people were subsequently provided after the site visit.

Several research reports/theses were sighted during the site visit for the Master of Psychology (Counselling Psychology) program.

Students enrolled in the Counselling program undertake three placements external to the AOU as there is no internal counselling clinic. The first placement is generally undertaken in one of three centres that the counselling team have put a lot of energy into establishing: the Cockburn Clinic, the Challis Clinic (predominantly with refugee and indigenous clients) and the Juniper Clinic (aged care clinic). The APAC assessment team visited the Cockburn Clinic. The Masters students undertake their first placement in semester two of year one. The PhD students undertake their first placement in semester 2 of the second year. The second and third placements are in agencies external to those above.

Despite the difficulty with setting up audio-visual processes in external clinics, the field supervisors commented on the importance of direct and video/audio observation of student skills and make a real effort to ensure this happens regularly on placement. All students receive pre-placement education and training in ethics, professional matters and psychological assessment. The site team was able to examine logbooks, contracts, mid/end term reviews and coursework activities, Information provided after the site visit confirmed that all supervisors are required to sign case notes and reports, regardless of whether they are on site or off site. All field supervisors are

endorsed and hold Board approval status with the Psychology Board of Australia and students were satisfied with their placement experiences and with their supervision.

The accreditation outcomes are summarised in the attached Accreditation Summary Checklist.