



APAC Accreditation Assessment Summary Report

Higher Education Provider	Charles Darwin University (CDU)
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 Psychological Science Bachelor of Psychological Science (Graduate Entry) 4 year: Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours) 5th and 6th years Master of Psychology (Clinical)

This is a summary of the outcomes of an APAC accreditation assessment of the School of Psychological and Clinical Sciences at Charles Darwin University (CDU). 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 Theme of Psychology within the School of Psychological and Clinical Sciences, and has an identified Head who has academic control of the undergraduate program, but control of the postgraduate program is by a Level D academic with postgraduate qualifications in psychology. The Head of the AOU does not appear to have financial or administrative control related to any of the accredited programs in psychology,

The AOU has 10 full time staff, one of whom is the Head of School who has only a 10% allocation to teaching in psychology. There are a further two staff employed on fractional appointments, one of whom is on a graded increase from current 0.5 FTE to full time in January 2018. Ten staff have PhDs and four are employed at Level D or E. The total student: academic staff ratio was reported to be 21.5:1. The recent consolidation of staffing was seen as a significant achievement and staff were very optimistic in making plans for the future based on a more stable staffing complement.

It was difficult to obtain exact information about the number of staff teaching into the Master of Psychology (Clinical) due to discrepancies in the documentation. It appears that there are currently eight staff coordinating units, supervising students and/or teaching into the postgraduate program. All but two of these staff have PhDs and three are registered psychologists with an Area of Practice Endorsement in Clinical Psychology. However, the team was advised that one of the Endorsed Clinical Psychologists will be moving to a new role within the School and this role will be taken by a

provisionally registered psychologist. If this were to be the case, APAC must be advised of any such changes to staffing.

The AOU is supported by two administrative staff who are employed by the School, as well as centralised technical support staff. Administrative and technical support was considered by staff as adequate for their needs and the administrative staff described their workload as manageable. There appeared to be positive, mutually respectful working relationships between academic and administrative staff. However, the Psychology Clinic does not currently have access to administrative staff and Masters students are currently responsible for all administrative functions, which is not appropriate. The team was advised that it is planned for one of the School's administrative staff to provide administrative support to the Clinic one morning per week in 2018.

The AOU has access to appropriate teaching and research facilities. There is a computer lab for Honours students, Masters students have a dedicated work space with access to computers, and research students have a dedicated desk and computer in a wider School centralised HDR students' hub. To ensure equity between internal and external students, all students have access to statistical software and other software for research to access from their personal computers.

The Psychology Clinic consists of four consulting rooms, one of which is set up as a play room, and one which has a table for conducting assessments as well as a seating area with couches. All rooms have video-recording facilities that are operating via a central control room. One room is also equipped with a one way mirror for live observation.

The psychology test library is located within the Psychology Clinic and is overseen by the Clinic Coordinator, a Level C academic. The School has a budget for upgrading the content of the test library. Staff are aware of the need to upgrade to the current version of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-V).

Undergraduate psychology units are all offered on-line and most are also offered in on-campus mode. On-line units are supported by recorded lectures, PowerPoint slides, recommended readings and some also have textbooks. On-line students who are in Darwin are invited to attend on-campus lectures, and all on-line students have access to listen to live lectures and ask questions via text. All laboratory and research training is conducted via software to ensure consistency between on-campus and off-campus students. No residential schools are offered for undergraduate units.

Most teaching staff advertise their 'office hours' for students to attend for consultation. Other sources of communication between students and staff are the learning management system 'discussion boards' and email. However, the team was informed by students of inconsistency in staff approachability and variable levels of satisfaction with staff responses to students' questions. Lack of access to staff to gain clarification of assessment requirements or to discuss issues about assessment results was reported as of concern.

Assessment requirements are equivalent for on-campus and external students. Staff are required to provide feedback on assessments within three weeks.

CDU has a centralised system for collecting student evaluations for all units. Response rates were reported to be good and the Head of School discusses results with teaching staff. Comparisons

between the performance of on-campus and on-line students are conducted, and results are found to be comparable.

CDU offers two three year sequences: a Bachelor of Psychological Science and Bachelor of Psychological Science (Graduate Entry).

The Bachelor of Psychological Science consists of a total of 13 core psychology units and six electives. Students who complete the Bachelor of Psychological Science (Graduate Entry) must have completed a Bachelor degree and must complete two of the three core first year psychology units, three of the five core second year psychology units, and two of the five core third year psychology units.

The team was provided with comprehensive documentation that mapped almost every graduate attribute to every unit. Inspection of unit outlines and assessment tasks did not support the extent of coverage, and particularly the assessment of all the graduate attributes as claimed. There was evidence that the core units provide students with education and training in all the core psychology graduate attributes. However, given that students in the Bachelor of Psychological Science (Graduate Entry) course are not required to complete all the core units, there is no assurance that these students achieve all the graduate attributes.

Assessment tasks include reports, written assignments, tutorial contribution/discussion board postings, reflective writing, and on-line (multiple choice) examinations. Uninvigilated on-line multiple choice tests are used in the majority of undergraduate units, and contribute between 35% and 60% of students' marks for these units. A further 10-20% of total marks come from tutorial participation or discussion board postings, where grading criteria are typically not provided. Some examples of assessments that do not appear to be modelling appropriate ethical practice were also noted, such as fabricating data for analysis, administering psychological tests on members of the general public, and undertaking behaviour modification on volunteers. It is recommended that the AOU reviews the rigour of assessment practices and considers modifying some assessment tasks to ensure they meet ethical standards.

School-level processes are in place to review student results and unit-level distributions of scores. However, moderation of students' marks on individual assessment tasks does not appear to be practised consistently, and there is not always transparency of marking criteria or their application. There has been no external independent moderation of assessment for many years although staff commented that there have been many new staff with different backgrounds working in the School which has provided different perspectives.

There are processes in place for dealing with student appeals and cases of plagiarism or other unethical conduct as well as for awarding credit and advanced standing.

There is one fourth year program, the Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours), which is offered as a one-year full time, on-campus experience only and comprises 100% study in psychology. The fourth year includes advanced education and training in the core psychology graduate attributes, including theoretical, empirical and some practical introduction to psychological testing and assessment, evidence-based approaches to psychological intervention, and professional and research ethics. It is noted that the ethics unit is largely co-taught with the Master of Psychology

ethics unit. The research component is 50% of the overall Honours grade, assessed through a written literature review, an oral presentation of the research proposal and a 8,000-12,000 word journal article.

Assessment in the four coursework units comprises a range of tasks including reflective writing, written assignments, reports, seminar presentations and simulated practice. As with the three-year undergraduate program, concern was raised about the rigour of assessment practices in the 4th year.

Honours projects are marked by two examiners, not the supervisor. An independent third marker is engaged if there is a significant discrepancy between the marks awarded by the original markers.

There was a perception by students that there would not be First Class Honours awarded due to the limited size of the cohort. A list of Honours grades from the last three years was requested. This showed variation in grades from a Pass to a High Distinction, with only one High Distinction in 2013 and none in the other two years. There has not been any benchmarking of Honours theses since 2011 and evidence of external audit of student work is required.

CDU currently offers one postgraduate professional program, the Master of Psychology (Clinical). There are currently six students enrolled in the second year of the course, and no students were admitted in 2017 due to the need to recruit a new program coordinator. A Level D academic commenced in the role of program coordinator in July 2017.

The current student: staff ratio is 6:1. The team was advised that there is a plan to admit more than six students to the course in 2018 and therefore the student: staff ratio should be monitored.

Evidence was submitted of a proposed course advisory committee and the team was advised that the Course Advisory Group had met in June 2017. This minutes of the meeting showed it pertained to both the undergraduate and postgraduate psychology programs, with the aim of preparing for the APAC accreditation visit and reviewing the current program offerings. A specific advisory committee for the Master of Psychology (Clinical) is required, with student representatives from all years of the course and a minimum of four external representatives.

The CDU Psychology Clinic is not currently accepting referrals, which was acknowledged to lead to a significant disruption of the important services that the Clinic provides to the community. Some students were still engaging in some specialist assessment work in the Clinic under supervision.

Detailed mapping of the course content and assessments to the core capabilities and attributes was provided. According to the unit outlines and samples of assessments provided, there appears to be appropriate coverage of core capabilities. A variety of appropriate assessment tasks are used across the coursework units, including written assignments, simulated practice, case reports and examinations. Students are required to pass every assessment task.

The Master of Psychology (Clinical) is available for full time study over two years only. The course consists of 15 compulsory units; nine coursework units, three thesis units, and three placement units, which are integrated across the two years of the course. The coursework includes adequate coverage of the core capabilities and attributes and the National Practice Standards for the Mental Health Workforce are addressed. However, there is insufficient evidence that practice management,

storing and accessing psychology files, and record keeping are covered in depth. There is also no evidence of content on managing people.

Students undertake an individual research project across the second to fourth semesters of the course in an area relevant to clinical psychology under the supervision of a staff member of the School. The thesis is written in the form of a 6,000 word literature review and a manuscript suitable for publication in a journal.

Students complete three placements following successfully completing the coursework units in the first semester. Given the overlap in the majority of the teaching in the ethics and professional practice units with the 4th year ethics unit, and that one third of this common time consists of student presentations, this is considered inadequate training in professional ethics for provisionally registered psychologists commencing their first placement.

Students complete their first placement at the CDU Psychology Clinic, which includes experience in both assessment and therapy cases with children and adults. Students reported feeling well prepared for their first placement and placement supervisors' reports were generally favourable about trainees' skills and attitudes. The availability of suitable placements and in particular, suitably qualified and trained supervisors, is one of the biggest challenges faced by the program. The AOU relies on paid external supervisors for internal and external placements. The placement coordinator is responsible for ensuring that students obtain a range of experiences on their placements and that they receive supervision from a range of supervisors. Inspection of placement documentation indicated that students completed appropriate supervision contracts, mid-placement reviews were conducted, and logbooks showed satisfactory records of placement activities, practice hours and supervision hours. A sample of case reports was inspected in the Clinic and these were found to be of good quality and appropriately co-signed by supervisors.

Given that the CDU Psychology Clinic was not currently in operation and that there had not been an intake into the Master of Psychology (Clinical) in 2017, a follow up site visit will be undertaken during 2018 in order to review the progress of this course.

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