



## APAC Accreditation Assessment Summary Report

Higher Education Provider	La Trobe University
Date of Determination	26 November 2018
Standards Version	June 2010 (Version 10) & Rules for Accreditation (2014, amendments 2016)
Programs of Study Assessed for Accreditation	<p><b>Three year undergraduate programs:</b> Bachelor of Psychological Science Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Psychological Science Bachelor of Criminology/Bachelor of Psychological Science Bachelor of Cybersecurity/Bachelor of Psychological Science</p> <p><b>Four year program</b> Bachelor of Psychology (Honours)</p> <p><b>Fourth year program:</b> Bachelor of Psychological Science with Honours</p> <p><b>Postgraduate professional program:</b> Master of Clinical Psychology Master of Clinical Neuropsychology Doctor of Philosophy/Master of Clinical Psychology Doctor of Philosophy/Master of Clinical Neuropsychology</p>

### Overview

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This is a summary of the outcomes of an APAC accreditation assessment of the Department of Psychology and Counselling, School of Psychology and Public Health, La Trobe University, and its programs of study. This summary highlights selected key features of the assessment. Comprehensive analysis of the assessment is contained in the full APAC Accreditation Assessment report.

Psychology is taught at three of La Trobe's campuses (Melbourne, Albury-Wodonga and Bendigo).

Professor Stephen Kent is an academic psychologist and Head of the School of Psychology and Public Health. The Head of the AOU, the Department of Psychology and Counselling, Associate Professor Pauleen Bennett (promoted since the Site Visit to Professor Level E), is based at the Bendigo campus.

All three years of the undergraduate degree are offered at all three campuses. The stand-alone 4<sup>th</sup> year program, Bachelor of Psychological Science with Honours is only offered at the Melbourne campus, while the 4-year program Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) is offered at Melbourne, Albury-Wodonga and Bendigo campuses. The postgraduate programs in Clinical Psychology and in Clinical Neuropsychology are offered at the Melbourne campus only.

The Head of the AOU reports that she has sufficient delegated authority to make decisions about resources, and has sufficient academic, financial and administrative control.

There is a very strong research culture at La Trobe and since a restructure it is expected that much closer relationships between Psychology and the staff in the Research Centres will be developed. However, it would appear that there may not be the necessary and appropriate level of staffing.

There are policies and procedures in place to ensure quality programs, supported by the Teaching and Learning Committee and the Staff Student Consultative Committee. The School of Psychology and Public Health was reviewed externally in early 2018.

The majority of the psychology staff is based at the Melbourne campus. Casual staff complements the academic staff on each of the campuses, providing tutorials and supervision of the live-streamed classes.

All undergraduate lectures are live-streamed and a member of the teaching team is present in each class on each campus, to encourage and facilitate interaction and discussion. All materials for tutorial classes are identical across all campuses, and students receive an equivalent experience. Assessment tasks are identical across all campuses and all markers mark assessment tasks from students from all campuses as part of the total cohort. However, there is no senior psychology academic located at the Albury-Wodonga campus to provide leadership and day-to-day support to the junior staff based there.

The Campus Head is very supportive and interacts with the psychology staff regularly, and the Head of the AOU regularly holds meetings by video/teleconference with the staff. Academic staff occasionally travel between Melbourne and Albury-Wodonga, however the staffing levels are not quite sufficient on the Albury-Wodonga campus.

All of the degrees offered are consistent with the relevant degree nomenclature and duration of study.

The majority of staff are based at the Melbourne campus. There are also several research staff located in the various research centres that provide research supervision, and there is a large number of casual teaching staff appointed to assist with tutorials and marking. It is recognised that the full-time appointment at the Bendigo campus will improve the overall student:staff ratio.

There is a good proportion of staff across levels B - E in the AOU, although most of the senior staff is located at the Melbourne campus. While the Head of the AOU is based at the Bendigo campus, she attends the Melbourne campus weekly, and is available by phone and Zoom on a daily basis for staff at both the Melbourne and Albury-Wodonga campuses.

There is considerable overlap in the coursework for the Clinical and Clinical Neuropsychology students, and all students undergo their initial placements in the first year of their training in the psychology clinic on campus.

While appropriate leadership and support for the clinical and clinical neuropsychology programs is apparent, the externships coordinator for the clinical neuropsychology program is level A, is part time and also teaches in 4<sup>th</sup> year. This role involves a great deal of administration and in the absence of sufficient dedicated administrative support, the workload for this member of staff appears to be very high. There are plans to increase this staff member's fraction and to support an application for promotion to Level B.

There are some difficulties with the centralised administration system at La Trobe which is located at the School level. Staff reported that there is insufficient administrative support to the

Department with many time-consuming administrative functions now being handled by the academic staff. The Head of the AOU reports having sufficient administrative support.

Subsequent to the visit, the AOU advised that it appointed two part-time receptionist/administrative officers for the Psychology Clinic. These new appointments address issues resulting from the public coming into the clinic and having to find their own way to the waiting area.

The lecture and tutorial facilities for live streaming the classes are more than adequate and the equipment is contemporary and works well. Research facilities are very well resourced and staff and students report access to more than adequate facilities for the conduct of their research.

The Test Library is managed by a senior postgraduate student under the oversight of the Director of the Clinic. There is an adequate number and range of tests that are up to date. Requisitions for new or replacement test materials are typically approved without difficulty.

The AOU has an adequate learning management system, and all subjects have a subject guide, tutorial guide and the content is consistent across all campuses. There is a structured tutor training program run by the Department. La Trobe no longer requires students to attend lectures or tutorials and so staff are currently addressing how best to engage students to attend and to ensure that the quality of the education does not suffer through a lack of attendance or engagement.

Each of the undergraduate 3 year sequence of psychology programs require the completion of 13 core Psychology subjects and 11 elective subjects. There is very little content relating to intercultural diversity and indigenous psychology apart from in one elective. The staff are keen to undergo a review of the undergraduate content and intend to embed cultural content throughout the undergraduate degree.

The Department also offers an elective 3<sup>rd</sup> year placement subject that students spoke very highly of. This subject helps to prepares students for employment and the Department should be commended for this.

There has not been any benchmarking or external moderation of the undergraduate program and the AOU is planning to undergo a review of the undergraduate program.

There is only one 4<sup>th</sup> year program of study for which accreditation is sought and that is the Bachelor of Psychological Science with Honours which is offered on the Melbourne campus. There is also a 4-year Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) degree offered at all three campuses. The first three years of this degree are identical to that in the undergraduate three year Bachelor of Psychological Science degree.

Students reported satisfaction with the processes of getting into Honours, being allocated a research supervisor and the support and supervision they are receiving. However, it is apparent that students may be supervised by a researcher from one of the research centres in the School. These research staff are not formally part of the AOU and the AOU will need to ensure at least one academic from the AOU is allocated to co-supervise with any projects that are supervised by a member from outside the AOU.

Students attend a range of seminars, *Theory, Intervention and Assessment*, *Psychology Research Methods* as well as completing *Ethics and professional issues* workshops and on-line modules. The

thesis component is of an appropriate length and weighting and is marked by two independent assessors. In 2017 a benchmarking/audit of theses was conducted by academic colleagues at Murdoch University. A range of assessments were inspected, and all were appropriate, as were marking and feedback.

There is considerable overlap of coursework in the two postgraduate streams and the clinical and clinical neuropsychology staff teach across both programs. The student:staff ratio is satisfactory.

There is a Liaison Committee for each professional program which meets twice annually. There appears to be sufficient resources for students in both programs, and the Test Library and the institutional library are satisfactory. Students in both Master's programs have access to a dedicated room with a sufficient number of computers.

While the rooms in the Psychology clinic are suitable for client work including for working with children, the facilities are somewhat 'tired' and in need of a refurbishment. The recently appointed part-time receptionist/administrative officers will address issues of students seeing clients without a receptionist on site. The lack of duress buttons should be addressed.

The content for the core capabilities all appear to be met satisfactorily with the exception of ethics and professional issues. The existing coverage is inadequate as core ethical content such as managing boundaries, multiple relationships, ethics and social media, advertising, and self-care may not be covered in any structured way for all students.

A variety of appropriate assessments are used, and staff are currently working on introducing OSCEs in both programs as an additional assessment method. Supervision, logbooks, and procedures for assessment and for student appeals are appropriate.

Entry requirements, selection and length of the programs are all appropriate, as well as course structure.

That students in both the clinical and clinical neuropsychology streams are exposed to both clinical and neuropsychological content is a strength of the La Trobe programs. Students reported being very satisfied with the coursework and the assessment, and felt well prepared for working with clients.

Students may be supervised by a researcher from one of the research centres in the School. These research staff are not formally part of the AOU. The AOU will need to ensure at least one academic from the AOU is allocated to co-supervise with any projects that are supervised by a member from outside the AOU.

All students complete an observation placement in semester 1 where they get the opportunity to observe senior clinical staff conducting assessments and/or therapy. Students all complete 1000 of supervised professional practice over the course of the degrees. The supervisors in the internal clinic and in the external placements are all suitably qualified, fully registered and endorsed appropriately, and are signing progress notes, client files and log books regularly.

The external placements listed appear to be suitable. The external supervisors were very positive about the program and the students.

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