

## Western Sydney University - APAC Accreditation assessment summary report

<b>Higher education provider</b>	Western Sydney University
<b>Name of the Psychology AOU</b>	School 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>	<p>Bachelor of Arts (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Arts (Dean's Scholars) (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Psychological Studies (Level 1) <i>*exit degree</i></p> <p>Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology) (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology and Criminology) (Level 1)</p> <p>Graduate Diploma of Psychological Studies (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) (packaged Level 1 and 2)</p> <p>Bachelor of Psychological Studies (Honours) (Level 2)</p> <p>Graduate Diploma in Psychology (Level 2)</p> <p>Master of Professional Psychology (Level 3)</p> <p>Master of Clinical Psychology (packaged Level 3 and 4)</p> <p>Doctor of Philosophy/Master of Clinical Psychology (packaged Level 3 and 4)</p> <p><b>Programs in teach out:</b></p> <p>Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Psychology (Level 2)</p> <p>Bachelor of Psychology (packaged Level 1 and 2)</p>
<b>Campus</b>	Bankstown, Online, Parramatta, Penrith
<b>Date of site visit</b>	17 - 20 August 2021

<b>Date of APAC Board Determination</b>	29 November 2021
<b>Accreditation start date</b>	1 January 2022
<b>Accreditation end date</b>	31 December 2026

## Background and overview

Western Sydney University's (WSU) suite of undergraduate Level 1 three year and Graduate Diploma, packaged Level 1 and 2 four-year, Level 2 fourth year and Graduate Diploma, Level 3 Masters and packaged Level 3 and 4 postgraduate Clinical programs were last reviewed for the purpose of re-accreditation by the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) in 2016.

At the time of the 2016 review, WSU's range of undergraduate, Graduate Diploma and packaged Level 3 and 4 Clinical Masters programs offered on campus, including the packaged Level 3 and 4 Clinical Masters undertaken as a double degree with a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) were accredited without conditions for a period of five years. Additionally, the Level 3 Masters program offered at the Bankstown campus was accredited with conditions as a small number of shortfalls were identified against the *Accreditation Standards*. Subsequent to the review, the Level 3 Masters program satisfied all outstanding conditions imposed and has since been accredited without conditions.

Since the last review, WSU undertook an Academic Structures Review in 2018-2019 and from 2020, the previous School of Social Sciences and Psychology became the School of Psychology (School). The School sits alongside the Schools of Health Science, Medicine, Nursing and Midwifery as part of the WSU Health Cluster and is led by the Dean who reports to the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

A number of changes to program offerings were made in 2017 and 2018 respectively and this included the accreditation of the existing Level 1 undergraduate and Graduate Diploma and Level 2 Honours programs at the Parramatta campus. The School, in partnership with Online Educational Services (OES), implemented an online Level 1 Bachelor of Social Sciences (Psychology) for the first time in 2018 and subsequent to the initial review, a follow up assessment was conducted in 2018 where the program remained accredited subject to conditions. Following the monitoring review, all outstanding conditions were satisfied and the program was accredited without conditions. The School then complemented the online offering with the addition of a degree in Psychology and Criminology in 2020. Additionally, in 2020 the School sought accreditation for the Level 1 Bachelor of Arts (Dean's Scholars) program to be offered on campus, at which time the program was accredited without conditions. Furthermore, the previously accredited packaged Level 1 and 2 Honours and Level 2 Arts Honours programs containing the accredited sequence of psychology units has been in teach out since July 2020.

The APAC Assessment Team considered the School of Psychology's 180 page self-review, including attached appendices and samples of student assessments, against the *Accreditation Standards*. Following the Assessment Team conference held on 25 June 2021, additional information was requested and received from the School, including the School's re-analysis and revised calculations of the student to staff ratio (SSR).

Prior to the virtual site visit, the Assessment Team was provided with a pre-recorded guided tour of the range of facilities at the WSU Psychology Clinic, including:

- reception area and waiting room
- eight primary consulting rooms which are all fitted with 2IP video cameras, a microphone, swipe card reader and duress alarm

- additional two overflow consulting rooms
- secure area housing the print facilities, student rooms, student group rooms and supervisory offices

Additionally, supplementary video clips walk through the School of Psychology Test Library Borrowing procedure and *Titanium Schedule Client Management System* were also provided.

The Assessment Team conducted a virtual site visit on 17 - 20 August 2021. During the virtual site visit, the Assessment Team interviewed a range of individuals via Zoom conferences, including:

- Dean and Discipline Lead
- Deputy Dean
- Academic Course Advisors
- Associate Dean (International and Engagement)
- Associate Dean (Research and HDR)
- Equity and Diversity Coordinator
- External Placement Coordinator
- External Placement Supervisors
- Head, Clinical Services and Academic Course Advisor
- Internal Placement Supervisors, including Day and Testing Supervisors
- Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 Director of Academic Programs
- Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 Unit Coordinators
- Level 1, Level 2 Sessional tutors
- Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 Sessional teaching staff
- Level 1, OES, Level 2, Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 Clinical students
- OES, Level 2 and packaged Level 3 and 4 Clinical graduates
- OES Program Director

- OES Teaching staff
- School Manager
- School and Clinic Professional staff team

During the site visit, the Assessment Team was provided with additional information including:

- External Advisory Committee (EAC) May 2021 meeting minutes
- summary of core units included in the Level 1 program detailing the units where interpersonal communication and teamwork and Indigenous Australian content is taught and/or assessed
- samples of assessment, including assignments and exam questions for *101689 Advanced Methods Assessment*, *101682 Developmental Psychology*, *101678 Motivation and Emotion*, *101680 Perception*, *101183 Psychology: Behavioural Science* and *101184 Psychology: Human Behaviour*
- samples of communications relating to engagement and consultation between 2019 and 2021, including *myVoice* surveys results for 2020
- benchmarking plan for the core units within the Level 1 to packaged Level 4 programs
- requirements of the assessment task to address *Professional Competency 3.17*
- samples of de-identified student assessments for the *101814 Clinical Research Methods* unit where the *Professional Competency 3.17* is assessed

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, as well as information provided in the rejoinder to the draft report.

## Key findings

The suite of programs offered by the School covers the foundational disciplinary breadth of psychology education at the undergraduate level and the applied and clinical areas of practice at the postgraduate level. Programs are designed to provide a clear pathway to careers as registered general or clinical psychologists, and graduates are equipped with advanced knowledge, skills and the ability to think critically and work in a broad range of sectors and industries. A key strength of the School is its commitment to translational research, education and clinical services.

The Assessment Team gathered evidence that indicates overall, the Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2 and Level 2 program offerings are well organised and established. The quality and flexibility in learning and teaching experience offered by the online programs allowed the School to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Assessment Team heard reports of poor-quality audio in recorded lectures and/or the use of old recorded lectures with outdated teaching material, which the School is required to address. While there is evidence that the staffing profile is well positioned to deliver a broad range of educational experiences to students within the School, the Assessment Team noted that there are a significant number of sessional teaching staff who lack academic custodianship of the unit they coordinate.

It is evident that the School has a robust academic governance structure and student support facilities (both academic and personal) in place. The Assessment Team gathered evidence that programs are subject to regular evaluation and refinement, with areas for improvement regularly identified and acted upon. During the virtual site visit, the Assessment Team was informed that the School recently introduced a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) unit that provides opportunities for Level 1 and Level 2 students to make use of their skills. Further, staff of the School have led the development of a *Fitness to Practice* policy which will soon be adopted by the University.

The evidence gathered by the Assessment Team indicates the professional programs produces graduates with the ability to implement effective evidence-based interventions and are competent to practice across a range of settings. The assessment processes are appropriate and supervisors evaluate student competence with the use of the *Clinical Psychology Placement Rating System (CΨPRS)* and the *Clinical Skills Assessment Tool (CSAT)*. Robust mechanisms are in place to identify students that require additional support and further opportunities to demonstrate competence.

The Assessment Team identified some shortfalls against the Standards and areas for further quality improvement. While the Assessment Team saw evidence that there is a multidisciplinary focus in the professional programs, there are opportunities for the School to further strengthen the assessment of the application of the principles of inter-professional learning and practice throughout the Level 3 Masters program. Additionally, evidence gathered by the Assessment Team indicates that all programs would benefit from further development and integration of assessments to measure students' understanding of cultural responsiveness, particularly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. While the School has sufficient external placements to deliver the breadth and depth of training required for the current student numbers, the Assessment Team recommends that the School explore opportunities to ensure that students continue to have access to a sufficient range of high-quality external placement experiences.

The Assessment Team noted several methods used in the Level 1 program to support students during COVID-19 lockdowns, including the provision of online learning. Some of the adjustments such as a *Grade Point Average-Neutral Scheme* may have flow-on consequences for the entry into the Level

2 program, particularly if the school retains their current entry requirements. Given the size of the Level 2 cohort, the School is encouraged to consider how to maintain a sustainable cohort size for the Level 2 program and the Level 2 component of the Levels 1 and 2 packaged offering.

Throughout the virtual site visit, the Assessment Team identified several commendable aspects. The School is commended for providing students with the opportunity to complete the Certificate IV in Mental Health with Wesley Mission, as well as its development in content within the WIL unit. There was a general appreciation of the leadership and support provided by the Dean and Discipline Lead by stakeholders. The Assessment Team was impressed with the overall high levels of collegiality, cohesion and satisfaction displayed amongst the staff in the Psychology Clinic and packaged Level 3 and 4 students felt well supported in their learning and training. Additionally, the School is commended for its strong partnership and continued constructive engagement with OES to deliver flexible, high-quality online learning.

## APAC Board determination

That the following programs at Western Sydney University are re-accredited to **31 December 2026**:

- **Bachelor of Arts** (Level 1) (Campus: Bankstown, Parramatta, Penrith)
- **Bachelor of Arts (Dean's Scholars)** (Level 1) (Campus: Bankstown, Parramatta, Penrith)
- **Bachelor of Psychological Studies** (Level 1) (Campus: Bankstown, Parramatta, Penrith) *\*exit degree*
- **Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology)** (Level 1) (Campus: Bankstown, Online, Parramatta, Penrith)
- **Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology and Criminology)** (Level 1) (Campus: Online)
- **Graduate Diploma of Psychological Studies** (Level 1) (Campus: Bankstown, Parramatta, Penrith)
- **Bachelor of Psychology** (packaged Level 1 and 2) (Campus: Bankstown, Parramatta, Penrith) *\*in teach out*
- **Bachelor of Psychology (Honours)** (packaged Level 1 and 2) (Campus: Bankstown, Parramatta, Penrith)
- **Bachelor of Arts (Honours) Psychology** (Level 2) (Campus: Bankstown) *\*in teach out*
- **Bachelor of Psychological Studies (Honours)** (Level 2) (Campus: Bankstown)
- **Graduate Diploma in Psychology** (Level 2) (Campus: Bankstown)
- **Master of Professional Psychology** (Level 3) (Campus: Bankstown)
- **Master of Clinical Psychology** (packaged Level 3 and 4) (Campus: Bankstown, Penrith)
- **Doctor of Philosophy/Master of Clinical Psychology** (packaged Level 3 and 4) (Campus: Bankstown, Penrith)

Subject to the following conditions:

### For the Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2 and Level 2 programs

By **31 March 2022**:

1. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criterion 3.6 is met, the School is to provide evidence demonstrating that learning and teaching environments are designed and used to enable students to achieve program learning outcomes and the relevant graduate competencies when assessed.



**For the Level 3 Masters and packaged Level 3 and 4 Clinical Masters and combined PhD programs**

By **31 January 2022**:

1. To ensure Standard 2 Academic governance and quality assurance, criterion 2.3 is met, the School is to provide evidence demonstrating relevant external input into the management of the programs.

By **31 March 2022**:

2. To ensure Standard 2 Academic governance and quality assurance, criterion 2.2 is met, the School is to provide evidence of progress and outcomes of external benchmarking activities.

---

**For all programs**

By **31 March 2022**:

1. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criterion 3.2 and Standard 5 Assessment, criteria 5.1 and 5.2 are met, the School is to provide evidence demonstrating that the following competencies are clearly articulated as a learning outcome, taught and appropriately assessed:
  - i. *Foundational Competency 1.5* for the Level 1 and Level 1 component of the packaged Level 1 and 2 programs, and
  - ii. *Professional Competency 3.4* for the Level 3 Masters and Level 3 component of the packaged Level 3 and 4 Clinical Masters and combined PhD programs.
2. To ensure Standard 5 Assessment, criteria 5.1 and 5.2 are met, the School is to provide a range of de-identified samples of student assessment tasks and the respective marking rubrics demonstrating the evaluation of:
  - i. cultural responsiveness, including with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for all programs (criterion 3.8), and
  - ii. the application of the principles of inter-professional learning and practice for the Level 3 program (criterion 3.9).

---

As a monitoring requirement, APAC requests an update on the progress and outcomes of the external benchmarking exercise to be provided as part of the 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 annual reports for all programs.

---

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

	Level 1	Level 1 & 2	Level 2	Level 3	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	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 met	Standard is met	Standard is 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	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	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	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 School of Psychology at Western Sydney University:

1. explore opportunities to ensure that students continue to have sufficient access to a range of high-quality external placement experiences.
2. consider the viability and sustainability of current staffing arrangements.

## 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 School of Psychology at Western Sydney University is commended for:

1. the leadership and support provided by the Dean, the Discipline Lead and the School Manager to OES and external stakeholders.
2. the high level of collegiality, cohesion and satisfaction displayed amongst the staff in the Psychology Clinic and the level of support provided to students in the packaged Level 3 and 4 Clinical programs.
3. providing students with the opportunity to complete the Certificate IV in Mental Health with Wesley Mission and for its development in content within the WIL unit.
4. its strong partnership and continued constructive engagement with OES to deliver flexible, high-quality online learning.