

Charles Sturt University - APAC Accreditation assessment summary report

Higher education provider	Charles Sturt University
Name of the Psychology AOU	School of Psychology
Standards version	Version 1.2, 1 January 2019
Purpose of assessment	Re-accreditation (5 yearly cycle)
Programs and level of study assessed	<p>Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology) (Level 1)</p> <p>Graduate Diploma of Psychology (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Psychology (packaged Level 1 and 2)</p> <p>Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) (packaged Level 1 and 2)</p> <p>Advanced Graduate Diploma of Psychological Practice (Level 2) <i>*exit degree</i></p> <p>Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology) (Honours) (Level 2)</p> <p>Postgraduate Diploma of Psychology (Level 2)</p> <p>Master of Psychological Practice (packaged Level 2 and 3)</p> <p>Master of Psychological Practice (School Psychology) (packaged Level 2 and 3)</p> <p>Master of Professional Psychology (Level 3)</p> <p>Master of Professional Psychology (School Psychology) (Level 3)</p> <p>Master of Clinical Psychology (packaged Level 3 and 4)</p> <p>Programs in teach out:</p> <p>Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology)/Bachelor of Business (Human Resource Management) (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology)/Bachelor of Business (Marketing) (Level 1)</p>
Campus	Bathurst, Online, Port Macquarie, Wagga Wagga
Date of site visit	4 - 8 April 2022

Supplementary interview sessions held	17 - 19 May 2022
Date of APAC Board Determination	11 October 2022
Accreditation start date	1 January 2023
Accreditation end date	31 December 2027

Background and overview

Charles Sturt University's (CSU) suite of Level 1 three year, Level 1 Graduate Diploma bridging, packaged Level 1 and 2 four year, Level 2 fourth year, Level 2 Postgraduate Diploma and packaged Level 3 and 4 psychology programs were last reviewed for the purpose of re-accreditation by the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) in 2017.

At the time of the 2017 review, the undergraduate and postgraduate programs offered were accredited with conditions for a shortened period as a number of shortfalls were identified against the *Accreditation Standards*. Following the re-accreditation review, the School submitted an application for initial accreditation an online offering of the Level 3 Masters of Professional Psychology program. At the time of the assessment, the Level 3 program in development was accredited with conditions as a number of shortfalls were identified against the *Accreditation Standards*. As a recommendation following the re-accreditation cycle site visit, a follow up monitoring site visit was conducted in September 2018. Subsequent to the monitoring site visit, all outstanding conditions were satisfied, and the suite of undergraduate and postgraduate programs has since been accredited without conditions.

The School of Psychology (School) is situated within the Faculty of Business, Justice and Behavioural Sciences (Faculty) and the Psychology Head of School reports to the Faculty Acting Executive Dean. The Faculty retains two positions, the Course Director for Psychology programs responsible for the undergraduate programs and Course Director for Professional Psychology programs who hold administrative roles reporting directly to the Faculty Associate Dean Academic. Since the last review, CSU and the School have undertaken some structural changes which resulted in centralised administrative functions sitting at the Faculty level.

Furthermore, in August 2020, the School advised of a number of changes to its program offerings to allow for the introduction of its newly proposed Level 3 Master of Psychological Practice and packaged Level 2 and 3 Master of Psychological Practice (School Psychology) (MPP-SP) programs and the associated Level 2 exit degree, the Advanced Graduate Diploma of Psychological Practice program offered online. Further, the School complemented the online offering with the addition of a Level 3 Masters of Professional Psychology (School Psychology) program and implemented the packaged Level 2 and 3 and Level 3 School Psychology programs for the first time in 2021.

The APAC Assessment Team considered the School's 48 page self-review, including attached appendices and a range of samples of student assessments against the *Accreditation Standards*. Following the Assessment Team conference held on 31 January 2022, subsequent information was requested and received from CSU, including:

- information regarding ethics training for the packaged Level 2 and 3 programs, specifically the schedule and delivery of this unit for students enrolled to study full time
- information clarifying the remediation processes for students within the Level 3 programs
- clarification on the informed consent process and mechanism in place to ensure that informed consent is obtained for clients of external organisations

- copies of various information sheets and consent forms including, *Information for clients and about professional supervision and case discussion*, *Information for clients about psychologists undertaking further training and working in our service*, *Information for clients about the use of video and audio recordings*, *Consent form for written case study* and *Student consent to disclose personal information*
- a response clarifying the number of placement and supervision hours required within the Level 3 programs
- a register of supervisors, detailing their qualifications, registration status including area of practice endorsement, Psychology Board of Australia (PSyBA) supervision approval status and supervision responsibilities
- copies of placement supervisor curriculum vitae
- clarification regarding any advisory committees and whether there is any external or student represented input into the design and management of the programs
- clarification on how the scientist practitioner model informs the curriculum of the programs
- examples of student feedback and evaluation data
- unit outlines for *PSY474 Counselling Skills* and *PSY421 Psychological Interventions*

Prior to the virtual site visit, the Assessment Team was provided with a pre-recorded guided tour of the range of facilities at the Bathurst, Port Macquarie and Wagga Wagga campuses, including:

- lecture, tutorial and teaching spaces
- library, resource, study and meeting rooms
- school and academic offices
- psychological laboratories
- learning, tutorial and meeting spaces and video conference facilities
- psychological test and equipment storage

The Assessment Team conducted a virtual site visit on 4 - 8 April 2022. During the virtual site visit, the Assessment Team interviewed a range of individuals via Zoom conferences, including:

- Head of School
- Acting Executive Dean

- Associate Head of School (Research)
- Course Director for undergraduate programs
- Course Director for professional programs
- Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2, Level 2, packaged Level 2 and 3, Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 Subject Convenors
- Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2, Level 2, packaged Level 2 and 3, Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 permanent academic staff
- Level 1, Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 sessional academic staff
- Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2, Level 2, packaged Level 2 and 3, Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 current students
- Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 recent graduates
- Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 Placement Coordinators
- Professional staff members (Faculty and School)
- School Learning and Teaching Committee
- School Assessment Committee

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

- *School Boards - Membership and Terms of Reference* document
- School of Psychology Board Committee meeting minutes of the meetings held on 20 October 2021 and 9 February 2022
- de-identified samples of the research projects from units *PSY568 Psychological Practice and Research 1*, *PSY569 Psychological Practice and Research 2*, *PSY570 Advanced Psychological Practice and Research 1* and *PSY571 Advanced Psychological Practice and Research 2*
- Assessment item 2 in *PSY421 Psychological Interventions* unit that covers Indigenous content
- *Outcome Evaluation Methods for the Professional Psychologist 2022*
- Placement handbooks including a copy of the *Student Guidebook (Academic)*, *Student Guidebook (Administrative)*, *Student Guidebook (Academic) (Department of Education)*

Additionally, the Assessment Team was provided with a live presentation of the Learning Management System (LMS) *Interact2* and *Quality Assurance and Reflection System (QUASAR)* sites demonstrating the layout, content and user interface of these systems.

As some virtual site visit sessions were not attended by any interviewees, supplementary interview sessions were conducted on 17 - 19 May 2022 and the Assessment Team interviewed a range of individuals via Zoom conference, including:

- Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 recent graduates
- representatives from the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Education

Although interview sessions were scheduled during and offered subsequent to the virtual site visit, the Assessment Team were not successful in meeting with any external placement supervisors to gather feedback for the packaged Level 2 and 3, Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 programs.

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 and subsequent interview sessions, as well as the information provided in a rejoinder to the draft report and the feedback session between external placement supervisors held in September.

Key findings

The School brings together a suite of programs designed to prepare students for each stage of their studies and assist them to explore career opportunities and advancement in counselling, social policy, human resources, market research, social welfare and educational and correctional facilities. At the undergraduate level, the curriculum aims to provide students with an understanding of the basis of human behaviour and equip them with a number of analytic and service directed skills. A range of Masters programs are offered to provide students with professional education and training in psychology with a specific focus upon the needs of rural and remote communities.

At the time of the virtual site visit, there was evidence that overall, the Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2 and Level 2 program offerings are well organised and managed. It is evident that the School has a well-formed committee structure and mechanisms exist within the School's management structures and committees to ensure external input is incorporated into the design and management of the programs. The Assessment Team acknowledges that the School has engaged in some external benchmarking exercises of the Honours thesis and there are plans in progress for benchmarking against other institutions. However, all programs would benefit further from systematic and ongoing external benchmarking.

The assessment and moderation processes are robust and mechanisms are in place to identify students that require extra support or extra opportunities to demonstrate competencies. The Assessment Team was encouraged by the coordination and management of the packaged Level 2 and 3 programs and the School's partnership with the NSW Department of Education to offer and deliver programs with a School Psychology specialisation appears to be working well. The evidence gathered supports that students enrolled in the professional programs have the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and competencies expected and School has sufficient external placements to deliver the breadth and depth of training required and the quality and quantity of practice education is sufficient to produce graduates to practice safely and competently across a range of settings. However, the Assessment Team was unable to verify the placement experience and research components for the professional programs during the virtual site visit nor at the additional sessions held subsequent to the virtual site visit.

The School has demonstrated a strong focus and commitment towards cultural awareness and responsiveness and there is evidence of integration of learning outcomes, particularly at the undergraduate and Honours levels. However, for the Level 4 component of the packaged Level 3 and 4 program, there are opportunities for the School to strengthen this and provide students with greater exposure in cultural responsiveness, particularly in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, both in content and assessment in education and practice. While the evidence gathered by the Assessment Team indicated that there is a multidisciplinary focus in the professional programs with a specialisation in School Psychology, there are opportunities for the School to further strengthen both the content and assessment of the application of the principles of inter-professional learning and practice throughout all the relevant programs.

The School is commended for its well-integrated and active Learning and Teaching Committee. There was a general appreciation of the leadership, guidance and support provided by the Chair, Learning and Teaching Committee by stakeholders and the Assessment Team was impressed with the Committee's overall collaborative, collegial and cohesive approach.

APAC Board determination

That the following programs at Charles Sturt University are re-accredited with conditions to **31 December 2027**:

- **Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology)** (Level 1) (Campus: Bathurst, Online, Port Macquarie, Wagga Wagga)
- **Graduate Diploma of Psychology** (Level 1) (Campus: Online)
- **Bachelor of Psychology** (packaged Level 1 and 2) (Campus: Bathurst, Online, Port Macquarie, Wagga Wagga)
- **Bachelor of Psychology (Honours)** (packaged Level 1 and 2) (Campus: Bathurst, Online, Port Macquarie, Wagga Wagga)
- **Advanced Graduate Diploma of Psychological Practice** (Level 2) (Campus: Online) **exit degree*
- **Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology) (Honours)** (Level 2) (Campus: Online)
- **Postgraduate Diploma of Psychology** (Level 2) (Campus: Online)
- **Master of Psychological Practice** (packaged Level 2 and 3) (Campus: Online)
- **Master of Psychological Practice (School Psychology)** (packaged Level 2 and 3) (Campus: Online)
- **Master of Professional Psychology** (Level 3) (Campus: Online)
- **Master of Professional Psychology (School Psychology)** (Level 3) (Campus: Online)
- **Master of Clinical Psychology** (packaged Level 3 and 4) (Campus: Online)

That the following programs in teach out at Charles Sturt University are re-accredited to **31 December 2027**:

- **Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology)/Bachelor of Business (Human Resource Management)** (Level 1) (Campus: Online)
- **Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology)/Bachelor of Business (Marketing)** (Level 1) (Campus: Bathurst, Online)

Subject to the following conditions:

For the Level 3 component of the packaged Level 2 and 3, Level 3 and the Level 3 component of the packaged Level 3 and 4 programs

By 14 October 2022:

1. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criterion 3.1 and Standard 5 Assessment, criterion 5.2 are met, the School is provide evidence

- i. demonstrating that all the relevant programs develop research literacy and skills required (*Professional Competency 3.17*) for the science-based and evidence-based discipline of psychology, and
- ii. including details of criterion-based assessment tasks and a range of samples of de-identified student assessments demonstrating that *Professional Competency 3.17* is appropriately assessed.

For the Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2, Level 2 and Level 2 component of the packaged Level 2 and 3 programs

By **12 December 2022**:

1. To ensure Standard 5 Assessment, criteria 5.3 is met, the School is to provide evidence demonstrating the use of a wider range of assessment modes to assess program learning outcomes across each program level.

For the Level 4 component of the packaged Level 3 and 4 program

By **12 December 2022**:

1. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criterion 3.8 and Standard 5 Assessment, criteria 5.1 and 5.2 are met, the School is to provide evidence demonstrating that cultural responsiveness, including with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, is further developed and integrated broadly across the program and the content is taught and appropriately assessed, including a range of samples of de-identified student assessments.

For all programs

By **12 December 2022**:

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

As a monitoring requirement, APAC requests

1. for the Level 3 component of the packaged Level 2 and 3, Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 programs, that the School set up feedback sessions between external placement supervisors and the APAC Assessment Team by **September 2022** to verify that the placement experience and research components of these programs are meeting its objectives and continues to comply with the *Accreditation Standards* (criteria 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 3.7 and 5.2), and

2. for all programs, an update on the progress and outcomes of the external benchmarking exercise to be provided as part of the 2023, 2024, 2024, 2025 and 2026 annual report.

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

	Level 1	Level 1 & 2	Level 2	Level 2 & 3	Level 3	Level 3 & 4 Clin
Domain 1: Public safety	Standard Statement 1: Public safety is assured					
	Standard is met	Standard is met	Standard is met	Standard is met	Standard is met	Standard is met
Domain 2: Academic governance and quality assurance	Standard Statement 2: Academic governance and quality assurance processes are effective					
	Standard is substantially met	Standard is substantially met	Standard is substantially met	Standard is substantially met	Standard is substantially met	Standard is substantially 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 met	Standard is met	Standard is met	Standard is substantially met	Standard is substantially met	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	Standard is met	Standard is met	Standard is met	Standard is met	Standard is met
Domain 5: Assessment	Standard Statement 5: Assessment is fair, reliable and valid					
	Standard is substantially met	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 Charles Sturt University:

1. amends wording to correct the reference to 'APAC standard 3.1 to 3.17' and for the Master of Clinical Psychology the 'APAC standard 4.2' in *Section 6 Placement characteristics of the Workplace Learning Student Guidebook (Academic)* with *Level 3 Professional Competencies 3.1 to 3.17* and *Level 4 Professional Competencies for Specialised Practice 4.2*, respectively.
2. consider a structured and standardised approach to train students on how to manage potential conflicts of interest where dual or multiple relationships exist.

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 Charles Sturt University is commended for:

1. its active and well-integrated Learning and Teaching Committee and the Committee's collaborative, collegial and cohesive approach.
2. the leadership, support and guidance provided by the Chair of the Learning and Teaching Committee.