

Charles Darwin University - APAC Accreditation assessment summary report

Higher education provider	Charles Darwin University
Name of the Psychology AOU	Discipline of Psychology
Standards version	Version 1.2, 1 January 2019
Purpose of assessment	Re-accreditation (5 yearly cycle)
Programs and level of study assessed	Bachelor of Behavioural Science (Level 1) <i>*in teach out</i> Bachelor of Psychological Science (Level 1) Bachelor of Psychological Science (Graduate Entry) (Level 1) Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours) (Level 2) Master of Psychology (Clinical) (packaged Level 3 and 4)
Campus	Casuarina, Online
Date of site visit	31 May - 3 June 2022
Date of APAC Board Determination	28 November 2022
Accreditation start date	1 January 2023
Accreditation end date	31 December 2027

Background and overview

Charles Darwin University's (CDU) suite of Level 1 three year and bridging, Level 2 fourth year and packaged Level 3 and 4 Clinical 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, a follow up monitoring site visit was conducted in June 2018 to review the Level 2 Honours and packaged Level 3 and 4 programs. Subsequent to the monitoring site visit, the programs remained accredited with conditions for a shortened period of time. Following the monitoring review, all outstanding conditions were satisfied and the suite of undergraduate and postgraduate programs has since been accredited without conditions.

The APAC Assessment Team considered the Discipline of Psychology's (Discipline) 94 page self-review, including attached appendices against the *Accreditation Standards*. Following the Assessment Team conference held on 13 April 2022, subsequent information was requested and received from CDU, including:

- clarification and evidence demonstrating how the guiding principles are articulated throughout the suite of programs,
- the advertised position description for the Clinic Manager role, including how long the position has been vacant, the interim plans in place to ensure client and student safety in the Clinic and details of the position's workload,
- clarification and detail of the formal academic governance structures,
- details of the research supervision workload, including how many hours are allocated per student and how many students a supervisor is allocated,
- examples of the signed agreements between CDU and external placement agencies, and
- a curriculum mapping document for the Level 1 Graduate Diploma program demonstrating how the *Level 1 Foundational Competencies* are appropriately assessed as required learning outcomes.

Prior to the virtual site visit, the Assessment Team was provided with a pre-recorded guided tour of the range of facilities at the Casuarina campus, including the College of Human and Health Service's (College) Health Immersive Virtual Education (HIVE) and the Wellness Centre Psychological Services clinic.

The Assessment Team conducted a virtual site visit on 31 May - 3 June 2022. During the virtual site visit, the Assessment Team interviewed a range of individuals via Zoom conferences, including:

- Head of Discipline

- College Dean
- Level 1, Level 2 and packaged Level 3 and 4 Program Coordinators
- Level 1, Level 2 and packaged Level 3 and 4 Unit Coordinators
- Level 1, Level 2 and packaged Level 3 and 4 sessional academic teaching staff
- Level 1, Level 2 and packaged Level 3 and 4 current students
- Level 1, Level 2 and packaged Level 3 and 4 recent graduates
- Placement Coordinator
- Wellness Centre Manager
- Internal and external placement supervisors
- College Manager
- Quality Manager
- Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning
- Associate Dean, Research and Innovation

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

- the figures provided in the Student to staff ratio (SSR) calculator,
- the processes or protocols in place for students who are making slower progress in obtaining direct client contact prior to their external placements, and
- where and when content relating to suicide risk assessment is covered within the packaged Level 3 and 4 program.
- Where and how content relating to the assessment and treatment for a range of psychological disorders are taught and assessed in Level 3 and 4 programs.

Additionally, the Assessment Team was provided with a live presentation of the Learning Management System (LMS) *Learnline Ultra* sites demonstrating the layout, content and user interface.

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 additional information provided in the rejoinder to the draft report.

Key findings

The Discipline is one of seven disciplines embedded within the College and offers a range of scientific, evidence-based and research led programs of study in psychology. The Assessment Team was impressed by the developments to strengthen the Discipline and the suite of programs since the last re-accreditation review and its initiative to ensure contemporary developments across the programs was recognised. The programs offer high quality education and skills training in psychology, specifically drawing upon the Northern Territory's distinct community needs, including providing mental health services specifically tailored to rural and regional communities and First Nations people. It is evident that the Discipline's leadership team provide staff with clear direction and guidance to achieve its objectives.

At the time of the review, the Discipline undertook a significant review of its Level 1 programs to realign the curriculum with the *Accreditation Standards*. As a result, the Discipline delivers two versions of the Level 1 Bachelor of Psychological Science program (WPSYS1 and WPSY2) with the plan for the WPSYS2 sequence to replace the superseded WPSYS1 sequence. Likewise, the Discipline delivers two Level 1 Bachelor of Psychological Science - Graduate Entry programs (WPSYG1 and WPSYG2) with the intention to conclude the WPSYG1 sequence and replaced solely with the WPSYG2 sequence. The evidence gathered by the Assessment Team confirms that the Discipline's transition plans are appropriate and meet the requirements for continued accreditation. The passion and dedication from academic staff to support the student cohort in their development and learning was evident within the undergraduate programs and interview evidence confirmed that staff are knowledgeable and committed to providing an excellent student experience. However, the Assessment Team noted that many academic staff members teaching into the undergraduate programs are early career academics and recently commenced in their roles at CDU. As a result, development of a coherent learning and teaching pedagogy is required across the programs to ensure consistent and progressive learning and assessment of the graduate competencies.

For the packaged Level 3 and 4 program, the Discipline is commended for the significant improvements made to the curriculum, opportunities for skills training, and the Psychology Clinic infrastructure and facilities. At the time of the virtual site visit, the Discipline faced ongoing challenges with the recruitment of suitability qualified and experienced academic staff to teach into the program and the vacant Clinic Director position. However, evidence confirms that the program is supported by highly experienced senior academics who are experts in their area of teaching in sessional contract positions. As such, the evidence confirms that students continue to have access to student-centred, quality education and training opportunities, as well as research and clinical supervision to safely practice and develop their skills and competence and advance their careers in psychology.

The Assessment Team heard a range of views that the teaching facilities located at the Casuarina campus and the CDU Wellness Centre, as well as the online learning platforms are fit-for-purpose. The Discipline has adopted and employed a range of mechanisms to ensure that internal and external contribution is made for continuous improvement to the suite of programs, including establishing a plan for systematic external benchmarking activities.

The Assessment Team identified some shortfalls against the Standards and the Assessment Team recognised the unique challenges that the Discipline faces with attracting, recruiting, and retaining academic staff to teach into the suite of psychology programs. As areas for quality improvement, the

Discipline is encouraged to explore ways to provide students with further guidance on career and further study pathway options following the completion of their undergraduate studies and develop learning materials specifically designed to enhance the student experience within online units. Furthermore, the Assessment Team recognises that while certain constraints restrict the Discipline to attract and recruit academic staff, the Discipline is encouraged to continue to explore further strategies to support and retain staff members to teach into the programs long term.

The Assessment Team identified several commendable areas. The Discipline is commended for its commitment to provide rural and remote communities with access to psychology education and its commitment to serve the distinct needs and support the workforce of the local Northern Territory community. The leadership, mentorship and guidance provided by the Head of Discipline and Program Coordinators are highly valued and appreciated, as well as the collaborative and collegial approach displayed amongst staff is commendable. Furthermore, the Discipline is commended on its development and strong integration of authentic and meaningful content and assessment relating to cultural responsiveness, including with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the application of the principles of inter-professional learning and practice within the suite of programs.

APAC Board determination

That the following programs at Charles Darwin University are re-accredited until **31 December 2027**:

- **Bachelor of Behavioural Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Casuarina) **in teach out*
- **Bachelor of Psychological Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Casuarina, Online)
- **Bachelor of Psychological Science (Graduate Entry)** (Level 1) (Campus: Casuarina, Online)
- **Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours)** (Level 2) (Campus: Casuarina)
- **Master of Psychology (Clinical)** (packaged Level 3 and 4) (Campus: Casuarina)

Subject to the following conditions:

For all programs

By **31 January 2023**:

1. To ensure Standard 2 Academic governance and quality assurance, criterion 2.2 is met, the Discipline is to provide an update on the progress and outcomes of the external benchmarking activities.

For the Level 1 programs

By **31 January 2023**:

1. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criterion 3.1 is met, the Discipline is to provide evidence demonstrating that a coherent pedagogy is utilised to ensure progressive learning and development of the *Level 1 Foundational Competencies*.

As a monitoring requirement, the Discipline is to provide:

1. a variety of samples of de-identified student assessments for the redesigned sequence of the Level 1 programs by **31 January 2023**.
2. evidence that academic staff workloads for the Level 1 program are reasonable and achievable to enable adequate and timely feedback given to students on their assessments and staff are supported to undertake research and scholarship activities by **31 January 2023**.

3. confirmation when the new Level B academic to teach into the Level 1 program has commenced in their position or by **31 January 2023** (whichever occurs sooner).
4. an update on the progress and outcomes of the external benchmarking exercises as part of the 2024 and 2025 annual reports for all programs.

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

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3 and 4 Clinical
Domain 1: Public safety	Standard Statement 1: Public safety is assured		
	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
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 substantially met	Standard is met	Standard is 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
Domain 5: Assessment	Standard Statement 5: Assessment is fair, reliable and valid		
	Standard is met	Standard is met	Standard is 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 Discipline of Psychology at Charles Darwin University:

1. explore options to provide students with further information regarding career and pathways options following the completion of their undergraduate studies.
2. consider developing learning materials that are specifically designed for online learning and engagement.
3. explore further strategies to attract and retain qualified academic staff to ensure staff feel supported in their positions.

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 Discipline of Psychology at Charles Darwin University is commended for:

1. its passion, commitment, and drive to provide high quality psychology education and training in rural and remote communities, as well as promoting and encouraging psychology education amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
2. its commitment to serve and support the specific needs of the Northern Territory community.
3. its collaborative collegial approach and the overall high levels of commitment and passion displayed amongst the staff, particularly for the packaged Level 3 and 4 Clinical programs.
4. the positive leadership, approachability, and support provided by the Head of Discipline.
5. its development and strong integration of content and assessment relating to cultural responsiveness, including with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the application of the principles of inter-professional learning and practice across the suite of programs.