

University of New England - APAC Accreditation assessment summary report

Higher education provider	University of New England
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 Arts (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Business (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Psychological Science (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Science (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Social Science (Level 1)</p> <p>Graduate Diploma in Psychology (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Psychology with Honours (Level 2)</p> <p>Master of Professional Psychology (Level 3)</p> <p>Doctor of Philosophy (Clinical Psychology) (packaged Level 3 and 4)</p> <p>Master of Psychology (Clinical) (packaged Level 3 and 4)</p> <p>Programs in teach out:</p> <p>Bachelor of Psychology with Honours (packaged Level 1 and 2)</p> <p>Bachelor of Arts with Honours (Level 2)</p> <p>Bachelor of Science with Honours (Level 2)</p> <p>Bachelor of Social Science with Honours (Level 2)</p>

Campus	Armidale, Online
Date of site visit	6 - 9 September 2022
Date of APAC Board Determination	14 March 2023
Accreditation start date	1 January 2024
Accreditation end date	31 December 2028

Background and overview

The Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) last reviewed the University of New England's (UNE) Level 1, Level 1 bridging, packaged Level 1 and 2 four year, Level 2 fourth year Honours and Graduate Diploma, Level 3 Master of Professional Psychology (MPP) and packaged Level 3 and 4 Clinical Masters and Doctorate programs for the purpose of re-accreditation in 2017.

At the time of the 2017 review, the Level 1, Level 1 bridging packaged Level 1 and 2 four year, Level 2 fourth year and Graduate Diploma and packaged Level 3 and 4 Clinical Masters and Doctorate programs were accredited without conditions. Further, the Level 3 MPP program was accredited subject to one condition for a shortened period of time as a shortfall was identified against the *Accreditation Standards*. Following the review, the outstanding condition was met and the Level 3 MPP program has since been accredited without conditions.

The APAC Assessment Team considered the School of Psychology's (School) 110 page self-review and attached appendices against the *Accreditation Standards*. Following the Assessment Team conference held on 12 July 2022, additional information was requested and received from the School, including:

- details of the selection criteria for appointing staff and how the School ensures that academic staff are appropriately qualified for their roles
- clarification around the current staffing profile, including an updated student to staff ratio (SSR) for the 2022 cohorts
- the unit level Student Evaluations of Learning and Teaching (SELT) data for the Level 1 programs
- clarification regarding the Course Advisory Boards (CAB) for all programs, including the frequency of when these meetings are held
- clarification and the details around the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the UNE and Avondale University, and how the School ensures that these programs meet the *Accreditation Standards*

Prior to the virtual site visit, the Assessment Team was provided with a pre-recorded guided tour of the UNE Psychology Clinic and test library facilities located at the Tablelands Clinical School.

The APAC Assessment Team conducted a virtual site visit on 6 - 9 September 2022. During the visit, the Assessment Team interviewed a range of individuals, including:

- Head of School
- Acting Dean, Faculty of Medicine and Health
- Director of Clinical Psychology Program
- Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 Program Coordinators

- Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 Unit Coordinators and permanent teaching staff
- Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 sessional teaching staff
- Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 current students
- Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 recent graduates
- Clinic Director
- Placement Coordinators
- Internal and external placement supervisors
- Learning and Teaching Committee
- Professional staff

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

- details of the assessment requirements for the *PSYC421 Professional Practice 1* and *PSYC423 Professional Practice 2* units, including any marking rubrics for all assessments
- a variety of de-identified samples of completed student assessments for all assessments within each unit of the Level 2 program, including for *PSYC421 Professional Practice 1* and *PSYC423 Professional Practice 2* units
- the unit level SELT data for the Level 2, 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, as well as information provided in the rejoinder to the draft report.

Key findings

The School is embedded within the Faculty of Health and Medicine (Faculty) and has a focus on delivering scientific and evidence-based education and training in psychology. It was evident that the University is a leader in online delivery with an aim to provide flexible, contemporary and effective education and training to students in any location around the country, particularly across rural and remote based areas. The School's overarching student-centred pedagogical approach is supported by a cohesive and dedicated team of academic staff and practitioners. Throughout the virtual site visit, the Assessment Team was impressed by the School's strong sense and emphasis for protection and safety of the public as a guiding principle. This was particularly evidenced by the due diligence and stringent processes and procedures presented in the UNE Psychology Clinic.

The Assessment Team gathered evidence confirming that the Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2 and Level 2 programs are well established, coordinated and maintained to keep up with contemporary developments within the psychology profession. Interview evidence confirms that students appreciate the high level of support provided by academic teaching staff and the accessibility of lecturers to ensure success in their studies. While the evidence indicates that most of the *Foundational* and *Pre-Professional Competencies* are sufficiently taught, articulated and appropriately assessed as required learning outcomes throughout the programs, the Assessment Team identified a gap relating to *Foundational Competency 1.5*, particularly in teamwork, for the Level 1 and Level 1 component of the packaged Level 1 and 2 programs (the latter being in teach-out mode). For the Level 2 component of the packaged Level 1 and 2 and Level 2 programs, the Assessment Team heard that further education and training in content relating to cultural responsiveness, including with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures is required.

With regard to the Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 programs, the evidence gathered confirms that the programs are well-designed to provide students with a breadth of training and learning opportunities to work with rural and regional communities within diverse settings. The School's focus on providing accessible psychological services to communities across the country via Telehealth is well received by the industry and students appreciate the authentic learning experiences and assessments to strengthen their skills and knowledge. While the evidence gathered confirms that academic staff are well experienced and suitably qualified for the components that they teach into, the Assessment Team heard of some instances where markers of assessments may not have held appropriate qualifications for the units that they are marking. Within the UNE Psychology Clinic, the evidence confirmed that the facilities and resources are well maintained and fit-for-purpose.

Further, specifically for the Level 3 program, the School is commended for its innovative use of cutting-edge technology to provide students with safe and effective simulated placement experiences. However, due to the online format of the Level 3 program, the Assessment Team heard that, occasionally, there are some challenges with accessing commonly used psychological assessment test kits for skills practice, such as the *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children* and *Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale*. Additionally, interview evidence indicated that there is some inconsistency in what the School considers individual supervision to be, which has led to insufficient hours accumulated relative to group supervision.

Interview and documentary evidence confirms that the School has established strong and collaborative working networks with its external stakeholders providing and utilising feedback and input into the ongoing design and management for all programs. At the time of the virtual site visit, the School has MOUs in place with various other education providers to conduct regular external benchmarking across its suite of programs.

The Assessment Team identified several commendable aspects of the programs. Interview evidence confirms the School's high level of genuine care for students welfare, a positive student experience and the protection of the public in the UNE Psychology Clinic, and providing students with an authentic learning experience in psychology education. The School's strong relationships established with industry professionals and utilising external input and feedback from key stakeholders into the design and management of the programs is commendable. Further, the School is commended on its commitment to providing mental health services to rural and regional communities, and its smooth and effective transition to Telehealth services and its ability to provide continuity in the operation of the UNE Psychology Clinic during the COVID-19 pandemic.

APAC Board determination

That the following programs in teach out at the University of New England are re-accredited with conditions until **31 December 2028**:

- **Bachelor of Psychology with Honours** (packaged Level 1 and 2) (Campus: Armidale, Online)
- **Bachelor of Arts with Honours** (Level 2) (Campus: Armidale, Online)
- **Bachelor of Science with Honours** (Level 2) (Campus: Armidale, Online)
- **Bachelor of Social Science with Honours** (Level 2) (Campus: Armidale, Online)

That the following programs at the University of New England are re-accredited until **31 December 2028**:

- **Bachelor of Arts** (Level 1) (Campus: Armidale, Online)
- **Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Business** (Level 1) (Campus: Armidale, Online)
- **Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws** (Level 1) (Campus: Armidale, Online)
- **Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Armidale, Online)
- **Bachelor of Psychological Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Armidale, Online)
- **Bachelor of Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Armidale, Online)
- **Bachelor of Social Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Armidale, Online)
- **Graduate Diploma in Psychology** (Level 1) (Campus: Armidale, Online)
- **Bachelor of Psychology with Honours** (Level 2) (Campus: Armidale, Online)
- **Master of Professional Psychology** (Level 3) (Campus: Online)
- **Doctor of Philosophy (Clinical Psychology)** (packaged Level 3 and 4) (Campus: Armidale, Online)
- **Master of Psychology (Clinical)** (packaged Level 3 and 4) (Campus: Armidale, Online)

Subject to the following conditions:

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

By 30 June 2023:

1. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criteria 3.2 and 3.8 and Standard 5 Assessment, criteria 5.1 and 5.2 are met, the School is to provide evidence demonstrating that the following competencies are sufficiently taught, integrated and appropriately assessed as required learning outcomes:
 - i. *Foundational Competency 1.5* (teamwork) for the Level 1 and Level 1 component of the packaged Level 1 and 2 programs (criteria 3.2, 5.1 and 5.2)
 - ii. cultural responsiveness, including with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for the Level 1 and Level 1 component of the packaged Level 1 and 2 programs (criteria 5.1 and 5.2) and the Level 2 component of the packaged Level 1 and 2, and Level 2 programs (criteria 3.8, 5.1 and 5.2)

For the Level 3 program

By 30 June 2023:

1. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criteria 1.8 and 1.10 is met, the School is to provide evidence demonstrating that student receive appropriate and sufficient individual placement supervision during their studies.

For the Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 program

By 30 June 2023:

1. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criterion 3.6 is met, the School is to provide evidence demonstrating that students have sufficient access to psychological tests to practice their skills in administering assessments prior to commencing placement to support their development of the graduate competencies.
2. To ensure Standard 5 Assessment, criterion 5.5 is met, the School is to provide evidence demonstrating that all assessors are suitably qualified for their roles.

As a monitoring requirement, the School is to provide an update on the progress and outcomes of the external benchmarking exercises as part of the 2023, 2024 and 2025 annual reports for all programs.

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

	Level 1	Level 1 and 2	Level 2	Level 3	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	Standard is substantially met	Standard is met
Domain 2: Academic governance and quality assurance	Standard Statement 2: Academic governance and quality assurance processes are effective				
	Standard is met	Standard is met	Standard is met	Standard is met	Standard is 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 substantially 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
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

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 the University of New England:

1. explores ways to ensure that students enrolled in the Level 2 component of the packaged Level 1 and 2 and Level 2 programs are equipped with appropriate skills to support their mental health and well-being throughout their studies.

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 the University of New England is commended for:

1. the high level of genuine care for student welfare and positive student experience.
2. its strong relationship with industry professionals, utilising external input and feedback from key stakeholders into the design and management of programs.
3. providing students with authentic learning experiences and assessments, particularly in the Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 programs.
4. its commitment on providing mental health services to the wider community, with a particular focus on rural and regional areas.
5. the smooth and effective transition to Telehealth services and its ability to maintain continuity in the operation of the UNE Psychology Clinic during the COVID-19 pandemic.