

## La Trobe University- APAC Accreditation assessment summary report

<b>Higher education provider</b>	La Trobe University
<b>Name of the Psychology AOU</b>	Department of Psychology, Counselling and Therapy
<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 Business/Bachelor of Psychological Science (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Commerce/Bachelor of Psychological Science (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Criminology/Bachelor of Psychological Science (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Cybersecurity/Bachelor of Psychological Science (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Psychological Science (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Laws (Honours)/Bachelor of Psychological Science (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Psychological Science (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Psychological Science (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Science/Bachelor of Psychological Science (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) (packaged Level 1 and 2)</p> <p>Bachelor of Psychological Science with Honours (Level 2)</p> <p>Master of Professional Psychology (Level 3)</p> <p>Master of Clinical Psychology (packaged Level 3 and 4)</p> <p><b>Programs in teach out</b></p> <p>Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Psychological Science (Level 1)</p> <p>Doctor of Philosophy/Master of Clinical Neuropsychology (packaged Level 3 and 4) #</p> <p>Doctor of Philosophy/Master of Clinical Psychology (packaged Level 3 and 4) #</p>

	<a href="#"># Refer to the note on page 8 for further details</a>
<b>Campus</b>	Albury/Wodonga, Bendigo, Melbourne (Bundoora), Online
<b>Date of site visit</b>	18 - 21 April 2023
<b>Date of APAC Determination</b>	11 September 2023
<b>Accreditation start date</b>	1 January 2024
<b>Accreditation end date</b>	31 December 2028

## Background and overview

La Trobe University's (La Trobe) suite of Level 1 three-year, packaged Level 1 and 2 four-year, Level 2 fourth-year, packaged Level 3 and 4 Masters and combined Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Clinical psychology and Clinical Neuropsychology programs were last reviewed for the purpose of re-accreditation by the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) in 2018.

At that time, the undergraduate and postgraduate programs delivered at the Albury/Wodonga, Bendigo and Melbourne (Bundoora) campuses were accredited for a shortened period as a number of shortfalls were identified against the *Accreditation Standards*. Following the re-accreditation review, all outstanding conditions were satisfied, and the suite of programs have since been accredited without conditions.

In 2019, the Department of Psychology and Counselling submitted an application for accreditation for the Level 3 Master of Professional Psychology program to be delivered online. At the time of the review, the program was accredited subject to one condition that a monitoring visit to be undertaken when the first cohort of students had completed at least six months of the program. Subsequent to the initial review, a virtual monitoring site visit was conducted in August 2020 and the program remained accredited subject to two conditions. Following this review, the outstanding conditions were satisfied and the program was accredited without conditions.

In September 2020, the Department advised about proposed revision of the content of many subjects of the undergraduate programs to address APAC 2019 *Accreditation Standards* and labour market needs.

In 2021, the University initiated an organisational restructure which led to the establishment of the current Department of Psychology, Counselling and Therapy (Department) within the School of Psychology and Public Health (School).

Further, in November 2021 the Department advised of a number of changes to its Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 Clinical programs to recognise the level of workload for students on placement and refine research training, as well as to align the programs with the *2019 Accreditation Standards*. Based on the information received, it was determined that the proposed changes constituted a material change to these programs and a condition was imposed on the programs to ensure ongoing compliance with the Standards. Following the material change assessment, the outstanding condition was satisfied, and the programs have since been accredited without conditions.

The Assessment Team considered the Department's 175-page self-review, including attached appendices against the *Accreditation Standards*. Following the Assessment Team conference held on 17 February 2023, subsequent information was requested and received from the Department, including:

- the current enrolment number for all programs, and
- clarification regarding the entry requirements relating to the weighted average mark for the Level 3 program.

Prior to the site visit, the Assessment Team was provided with a pre-recorded guided tour of the La Trobe University Psychology Clinic (Clinic) and other facilities.

An APAC Assessment Team conducted a site visit on 18 - 21 April 2023 at the Melbourne (Bundoora) and Bendigo campuses. During the visit, the Assessment Team interviewed a range of individuals in person and via Zoom located at the Bundoora, Bendigo, and Albury/Wodonga campuses, including:

- Head, Department of Psychology, Counselling & Therapy
- School Senior Manager
- Senior Manager, Business Partnering, Academic Services
- Course Management Advisor
- Other professional staff members
- Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2, Level 2, Level 3, and packaged Level 3 and 4 Program Coordinators
- Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2, Level 2, Level 3, and packaged Level 3 and 4 Unit Coordinators
- Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2, Level 2, Level 3, and packaged Level 3 and 4 Assistant Coordinators, permanent and sessional academic staff
- Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2, Level 2, Level 3, and packaged Level 3 and 4 current students
- Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2, Level 2, Level 3, and packaged Level 3 and 4 recent graduates
- Honours Research Supervisors
- Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 Internal Academic Clinical Placement Coordinators
- Level 3 External Placement Supervisors
- Clinic Director, Clinical Services Senior Coordinator, Test Librarian
- Director, Clinical Training
- Packaged Level 3 and 4 program internal and external placement supervisors
- Associate Dean, Learning and Teaching
- Coordinator, Learning and Teaching

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

- clarification around new staff qualifications and experience,

- clarification around who marks the Honours research proposals and final reports, and the process of how this is decided, and
- clarification around the overarching educational philosophy and pedagogical approach adopted across the programs, and how the Department ensures that progressive learning and development of competencies is supported by coherent teaching practices.

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

## Key findings

The Department is one of several academic units embedded within the School and delivers a range of scientific and research-focussed educational programs in psychology. During the site visit, the Department's commitment to training competent psychologists that benefit the regional-based local communities was evident. There is a sense of a strong, collegial, and supportive relationship between academic and professional staff and students, and interview evidence confirmed that students feel well supported by the Department throughout their studies.

During the site visit, the Assessment Team gathered evidence indicating that the undergraduate programs are well managed and coordinated. Academic staff demonstrated great passion and commitment to support the student cohort and to provide an excellent student experience. Interview evidence confirmed that overall, students have a positive experience during their studies. For the postgraduate programs, students and supervisors spoke highly of the quality of education and training received and that students are well trained and competent to practice as (provisionally) registered psychologists.

The evidence gathered by the Assessment Team indicates that all graduate competencies are sufficiently taught, articulated and appropriately assessed as required learning outcomes across the suite of programs. While there is some evidence that students receive some education related to cultural responsiveness, including with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, across the suite of programs, further development of this competency is required to ensure that its sufficiently taught, clearly articulated as a required learning outcome, and appropriately assessed.

During the site visit, interview evidence indicated that the Head of Department is recognised as an exceptional leader by staff. The evidence confirms that the Head of Department demonstrates exceptional engagement in all aspects of the Department and provides effective mentoring and support for the academic teaching team. Multiple sources of interview evidence spoke highly of the Head of Department's support, responsiveness, and commitment. The Assessment Team noted that the Department is in the process of recruiting additional academic staff to support the delivery of the programs.

The evidence gathered during the site visit confirms that the Clinic at the Melbourne (Bundoora) campus is fit-for-purpose and provides students with adequate training opportunities. The Assessment Team noted the School's plans for building a new multidisciplinary clinic to be located at the Melbourne (Bundoora) Campus. Further, students and staff have access to a variety of teaching facilities and learning resources located at Albury/Wodonga, Bendigo and Melbourne (Bundoora) campuses.

The Assessment Team identified several opportunities for quality improvement. Considering that the workload for the current academic staffing profile is under increasing pressure following a recent reduction in the staffing profile and changes to the curriculum and the Level 3 program growth, the Department is encouraged to consider the viability and sustainability of the current staffing arrangements to ensure adequate workload balances. Additionally, it is recommended that the Department explores ways to strengthen the induction processes for new academic staff. It is also recommended that the Department explores opportunities to seek expert advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and/or cultural safety advisors and consumers to contribute towards further developing content related to cultural responsiveness across the programs.

The Assessment Team identified several commendable aspects of the programs. The Department is commended for its strong supportive environment, and collegiality displayed amongst teaching and professional staff and its high level of commitment, approachability, responsive feedback, strong communication lines, and support provided to students. The Department's strong research culture that contributes to the University's overall Excellence Research for Australia results, and its reliance on evidence-based approaches within the Level 2 programs is commendable. Further, its teaching practices to ensure professional skills can be utilised within various industries at the completion of undergraduate studies was commended. Its provision of a process to support Honours supervision, its effective review processes to ensure the quality of programs, and its engagement in extensive benchmarking activities are also commended.

## APAC determination

That the following programs at La Trobe University are re-accredited with conditions until **31 December 2028**:

- **Bachelor of Business/Bachelor of Psychological Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Albury/Wodonga, Bendigo, Online)
- **Bachelor of Commerce/Bachelor of Psychological Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Melbourne (Bundoora))
- **Bachelor of Criminology/Bachelor of Psychological Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Bendigo, Melbourne (Bundoora))
- **Bachelor of Cybersecurity/Bachelor of Psychological Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Melbourne (Bundoora))
- **Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Psychological Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Bendigo, Melbourne (Bundoora))
- **Bachelor of Laws (Honours)/Bachelor of Psychological Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Bendigo, Melbourne (Bundoora))
- **Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Psychological Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Melbourne (Bundoora))
- **Bachelor of Psychological Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Albury/Wodonga, Bendigo, Melbourne (Bundoora), Online)
- **Bachelor of Science/Bachelor of Psychological Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Bendigo, Melbourne (Bundoora))
- **Bachelor of Psychology (Honours)** (packaged Level 1 and 2) (Campus: Albury/Wodonga, Bendigo, Melbourne (Bundoora), Online)
- **Bachelor of Psychological Science with Honours** (Level 2) (Campus: Albury/Wodonga, Bendigo, Melbourne (Bundoora), Online)
- **Master of Professional Psychology** (Level 3) (Campus: Bendigo, Online)
- **Master of Clinical Psychology** (packaged Level 3 and 4) (Campus: Melbourne (Bundoora))

That the following programs in teach out at La Trobe University are re-accredited until **31 December 2028**:

- **Bachelor of Laws/Bachelor of Psychological Science** (Level 1) (Campus: Bendigo, Melbourne (Bundoora))
- **Doctor of Philosophy/Master of Clinical Neuropsychology** (packaged Level 3 and 4) (Campus: Melbourne (Bundoora)) #
- **Doctor of Philosophy/Master of Clinical Psychology** (packaged Level 3 and 4) (Campus: Melbourne- (Bundoora)) #

# *the coursework components for these programs in teach out were not assessed as part of the re-accreditation assessment as the Department advised APAC that the remaining students in these programs have successfully completed all coursework requirements.*

Subject to the following conditions:



**For all programs**

**By 31 December 2023:**

1. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criterion 3.8 and Standard 5 Assessment, criteria 5.1 and 5.2 are met, the Department is to provide evidence demonstrating that cultural responsiveness, including with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures is sufficiently taught, clearly articulated and appropriately assessed as a required learning outcome.

**By 30 April 2024:**

2. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criterion 3.1 is met, the Department is to provide evidence demonstrating articulation of a coherent pedagogy into the programs of study design and delivery to support students in gaining the graduate competences and learning outcomes related to cultural responsiveness, including with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

---

As a monitoring requirement for the Level 3 program, the Department is to provide a report by **31 December 2023** detailing how the Department will ensure that the processes and arrangements are sufficient to support the size of the cohort, including:

1. evidence that there are sufficient placements opportunities available to students,
  2. evidence that external organisations providing direct client activities have robust quality and safety policies and processes and meet all relevant regulations and Standards,
  3. details of sufficient supervision arrangements to ensure that all graduates will be able to practise safely upon the completion of their studies, and
  4. details of sufficient staffing to support the student cohorts in acquiring the *Level 3 Professional Competencies*.
-

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	<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 met	Standard is 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 programs.

It is recommended that the Department of Psychology, Counselling and Therapy at La Trobe University:

1. considers the viability and sustainability of the current staffing arrangements to ensure appropriate workload balance.
2. explores opportunities to strengthen the induction processes for new academic staff.
3. explores opportunities to seek expert advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and/or cultural safety advisors and consumers to contribute towards further developing content related to cultural responsiveness across the programs.

## Commendations

A commendation refers to a particularly significant achievement by the education provider with regard to the programs.

The Assessment Team have made the subsequent commendations following the evaluation of the programs. The Department of Psychology, Counselling and Therapy at La Trobe University is commended for:

1. its strong supportive environment, collegiality displayed amongst teaching and professional staff, including senior management, and effective management processes and leadership provided by the Head of Department.
2. the high level of commitment, approachability, responsive feedback, strong communication lines and support provided to students.
3. receiving a 'well above world standard' ranking regarding their quality of research activities.
4. its reliance on evidenced-based approaches for the Level 2 programs.
5. its teaching practices review to ensure students acquire professional skills that can be utilised by various industries at the completion of the Level 1 program.
6. its provision of a process to support Honours supervision.
7. its effective review processes to ensure that the quality of units and programs.
8. its engagement in extensive benchmarking focusing on multiple aspects of courses, units and assessments.