

University of the Sunshine Coast - APAC Accreditation assessment summary report

Higher education provider	University of the Sunshine Coast
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	<p>Bachelor of Arts (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Behavioural Science (Psychology) (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Behavioural Science (Psychology)/Bachelor of Counselling (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Behavioural Science (Psychology)/Bachelor of Criminology and Justice (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Business/Bachelor of Behavioural Science (Psychology) (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) (packaged Level 1 and 2)</p> <p>Bachelor of Behavioural Science (Psychology) (Honours) (Level 2)</p> <p>Master of Professional Psychology (Level 3)</p> <p>Master of Psychology (Clinical) (packaged Level 3 and 4)</p> <p>Programs in teach out:</p> <p>Bachelor of Business/Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology) (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Business (Human Resource Management)/Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology) (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology) (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology)/Bachelor of Counselling (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology)/Bachelor of Criminology and Justice (Level 1)</p> <p>Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology) (Honours) (Level 2)</p>
Campus	Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast, Thompson Institute

Date of site visit	28 - 31 March 2023
Date of APAC Board Determination	9 October 2023
Accreditation start date	1 January 2024
Accreditation end date	31 December 2028

Background and overview

The University of the Sunshine Coast's (UniSC) suite of Level 1 three-year sequence, packaged Level 1 and 2 four-year sequence, Level 2 fourth year, Level 3 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 2018.

At the time of the 2018 review, the undergraduate programs offered were accredited without conditions. However, the postgraduate programs were accredited with conditions 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 has since been accredited without conditions.

Since the last review, UniSC undertook a number of internal university reviews and from 2023, the Discipline of Psychology (Discipline) sits within the new School of Health (School) alongside disciplines of paramedicine, midwifery, sport and exercise sciences, occupational therapy, nutrition and dietetics and public health.

In 2022, following an internal review of its suite of programs, the Discipline advised of a number of changes to its undergraduate program offerings to enhance student development and learning and better align the learning outcomes to the APAC graduate competencies. As a result, the Discipline sought accreditation for the Level 1 Bachelor of Behavioural Science program titles and the previously accredited Bachelor of Social Science programs containing the accredited sequence of psychology units has been placed in teach out. Furthermore, the Discipline advised that, following a realignment of naming conventions across all UniSC campuses, the Sippy Down campus was renamed to Sunshine Coast campus effective from 1 January 2020.

The APAC Assessment Team considered the Discipline's 100-page self-review, including attached appendices against the *Accreditation Standards*. Following the Assessment Team conference held on 24 February 2023, subsequent information was requested and received from the Discipline, including:

- a range of samples of completed student logbooks across the entire placement journeys for the Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 programs,
- a list of the current program and unit coordinators for all programs,
- CVs for all academic teaching staff,
- a list of recent and current external placement supervisors, including details of registration and Area of Practice Endorsements (AoPE), and
- any updates and/or evidence demonstrating how the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Psychology External Program Advisory Committees have provided input into the design and management of the programs.

The Assessment Team conducted a site visit on 28–31 March 2023 at the Sunshine Coast and Moreton Bay campuses. During the site visit, the Assessment Team interviewed a range of individuals in person and via Zoom, including:

- Discipline Lead
- Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)
- Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning
- Campus Director, Moreton Bay
- Head, School of Health
- Level 1, 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 current students
- Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2, Level 2, Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 recent graduates
- Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 internal and external placement supervisors
- Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 internal and external Placement Coordinators
- Clinic Director
- Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2 and Level 2 permanent and sessional teaching staff
- Learning and Teaching Committee
- Assessment and Moderation Committee
- Professional staff.

During the site visit, the Assessment Team was provided with confirmation of the completion of the Board-approved supervisor training program for an internal placement supervisor.

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.

Key findings

The Discipline is one of several disciplines embedded within the School of Health (School) and delivers a range of scientific, research-focussed education in psychology. During the site visit, the Discipline's commitment to training competent and well-educated 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 Discipline 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, and the knowledge gained from the *PSY102 Current Directions in Psychology* unit is appreciated and commended. However, it was noted that the Level 1 programs would benefit from integrating emerging research design and approaches throughout the curriculum to better prepare students to complete their research projects in the fourth year.

For the Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 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 a provisional psychologist. While the evidence gathered confirms that most academic staff hold suitable qualifications and experience for the units that they teach, some academic staff within the accredited sequence do not appear to have the necessary qualifications or AoPE for the components that they teach.

While the evidence indicates that most of the graduate competencies are sufficiently taught, articulated and appropriately assessed as required learning outcomes across the suite of programs, the Assessment Team identified some gaps relating to:

- *Foundational Competencies 1.1xii* and *1.5* for the Level 1 and packaged Level 1 and 2 programs,
- *Pre-Professional Competency 2.1* for the packaged Level 1 and 2 and Level 2 programs,
- the application of the principles of inter-professional learning and practice for the Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 programs, and
- cultural responsiveness, including with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for all programs.

The evidence gathered by the Assessment Team indicated that the Discipline Lead is a valuable asset to the Discipline. At the time of the visit, the Discipline Lead demonstrated a great effort and commitment to provide ongoing leadership to the Discipline and to provide ongoing mentorship and support to the academic teaching team. Multiple sources of interview evidence spoke very highly of the Discipline Lead's support, responsiveness and commitment. The Assessment Team noted that the Discipline is in the process of recruiting additional academic staff to support the delivery of the programs. However, interview evidence gathered during the site visit indicated that the current lack of staffing resources has placed added pressure on the workloads for the academic teaching team across all programs and is impacting their ability to undertake research activities and necessary administrative and continuous improvement activities. It is evident that there is a significant gap in senior leadership that creates a risk to the quality of

program delivery. The Discipline would significantly benefit from appointing an additional senior academic staff member to mitigate this risk by providing support to undertake teaching and administrative duties, and to provide additional mentorship, leadership and support to the teaching team to ensure that a cohesive and collaborative pedagogy is employed across the suite of programs.

At the time of the review, the Thompson Institute Psychology Clinic was undertaking refurbishment work and as a result, the Psychology Clinic had been temporarily relocated to the Sunshine Coast campus sharing the space with other allied health disciplines, including Counselling, and Nutrition and Dietetics. The evidence gathered during the site visit confirms that the Psychology Clinic at the Sunshine Coast campus is fit-for-purpose and provides students with adequate training opportunities. However, it is recommended that the Discipline explores opportunities to preserve the confidentiality of clients waiting for appointments in the Clinic's waiting room. The evidence confirms that students and staff have access to a variety of teaching facilities and learning resources located at both campuses, and the Assessment Team was impressed by the state-of-the-art facilities located at the Moreton Bay campus and its great potential for growth. However, interview evidence indicates that the Discipline has limited access to training resources at the Moreton Bay campus, resulting in all classes running back-to-back each week and students attending classes for eight hours or more a day.

The Assessment Team identified several opportunities for quality improvement. To assist with integrating authentic content and learning experiences across the programs relating to cultural responsiveness, including with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, it is recommended that the Discipline explores opportunities for involvement with external organisations with expertise in this area. Additionally, the Discipline is encouraged to improve and strengthen its placement processes to ensure useability, effectiveness and efficiency.

The Assessment Team identified several commendable aspects of the programs. The Discipline is commended for the strong and positive experiences provided by the Outreach placement program within the Level 3 program, and its commitment to train competent psychologists to benefit the needs of the local community. Further, the Discipline is commended for providing students in their first year of study with the guidance on various pathway and employability opportunities, creating a positive student experience, and offering high levels of support from its academic teaching team and senior leadership. The mentorship and support demonstrated by the Discipline Lead is equally commendable.

APAC determination

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

- **Bachelor of Arts** (Level 1) (Campus: Sunshine Coast)
- **Bachelor of Behavioural Science (Psychology)** (Level 1) (Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast)
- **Bachelor of Behavioural Science (Psychology)/Bachelor of Counselling** (Level 1) (Campus: Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast)
- **Bachelor of Behavioural Science (Psychology)/Bachelor of Criminology and Justice** (Level 1) (Campus: Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast)
- **Bachelor of Business/Bachelor of Behavioural Science (Psychology)** (Level 1) (Campus: Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast)
- **Bachelor of Psychology (Honours)** (packaged Level 1 and 2) (Campus: Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast)
- **Bachelor of Behavioural Science (Psychology) (Honours)** (Level 2) (Campus: Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast)
- **Master of Professional Psychology** (Level 3) (Campus: Thompson Institute)
- **Master of Psychology (Clinical)** (packaged Level 3 and 4) (Campus: Thompson Institute)

That the following programs in teach out at the University of the Sunshine Coast are re-accredited until **31 December 2028**:

- **Bachelor of Business/Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology)** (Level 1) (Campus: Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast)
- **Bachelor of Business (Human Resource Management)/Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology)** (Level 1) (Campus: Sunshine Coast)
- **Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology)** (Level 1) (Campus: Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast)
- **Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology)/Bachelor of Counselling** (Level 1) (Campus: Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast)
- **Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology)/Bachelor of Criminology and Justice** (Level 1) (Campus: Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast)
- **Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology) (Honours)** (Level 2) (Campus: Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast)

Subject to the following conditions:

For the Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2, Level 2 and packaged Level 3 and 4 programs

By 31 December 2023:

1. To ensure Standard 1 Public safety, criterion 1.7 and Standard 3 Program of study, criteria 3.3 and 3.4 are met, the Discipline is required to provide evidence demonstrating that:
 - i. appointed staff are appropriately qualified for teaching, assessment and administrative duties to support the student cohorts in acquiring the graduate competencies for the packaged Level 3 and 4 programs (criteria 1.7 and 3.3), and
 - ii. the staffing profile is sufficient to support the achievement of the graduate competencies for the Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2 and Level 2 programs (criterion 3.4).

For the Level 1, packaged Level 1 and 2 and Level 2 programs at the Moreton Bay campus

By 31 December 2023:

1. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criterion 3.5 is met, the Discipline is to provide evidence that programs have the learning resources to sustain the quality of education that is required to ensure the achievement of the program learning outcomes.

For the Level 2 programs

By 31 December 2023:

1. To ensure Standard 4 The student experience, criterion 4.2 is met, the Discipline is to provide evidence demonstrating that clear and transparent admission and selection processes are adopted and employed to assess student intakes into the programs.

For all programs

By 31 December 2023:

1. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criteria 3.2, 3.8 and 3.9 and Standard 5 Assessment, criteria 5.1 and 5.2 are met, the Discipline is to provide evidence demonstrating that the following competencies are sufficiently taught, clearly articulated and appropriately assessed as required learning outcomes:
 - i. *Foundational Competencies 1.1xii and 1.5* 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. *Pre-Professional Competency 2.1* for the Level 2 component of the packaged Level 1 and 2 and Level 2 programs (criteria 3.2, 5.1 and 5.2)
 - iii. cultural responsiveness, including with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures for all programs (criteria 3.8, 5.1 and 5.2), and

- iv. the application of the principles of inter-professional learning and practice for the Level 3 and packaged Level 3 and 4 programs (criteria 3.9, 5.1 and 5.2).

For all programs

By 30 April 2024:

1. To ensure Standard 2 Academic governance and quality assurance, criterion 2.1 is met, the Discipline is to provide evidence demonstrating that head of AoU has sufficient academic, financial and administrative influence oversees and ensures the quality of programs.
2. To ensure Standard 2 Academic governance and quality assurance, criterion 2.2 is met, the Discipline is to provide evidence of a systematic and ongoing plan for external benchmarking activities.
3. To ensure Standard 2 Academic governance and quality assurance, criterion 2.4 is met, the Discipline is to provide evidence demonstrating that processes and mechanisms enable timely and appropriate revisions to program designs to address the changing needs of the profession and developments in methods of practice.
4. To ensure Standard 2 Academic governance and quality assurance, criterion 2.5 is met, the Discipline is to provide evidence that academic staff members are sufficiently supported to undertake research, professional development and teaching duties.
5. To ensure Standard 3 Program of study, criterion 3.1 is met, the Discipline is to provide evidence demonstrating that a coherent pedagogy can be articulated and that it informs the design and delivery of programs.
6. To ensure Standard 5 Assessment, criterion 5.5 is met, the Discipline is to provide evidence demonstrating that new sessional teaching staff are provided with appropriate guidance and support to equip them with the knowledge and expertise to assess student performance against the relevant APAC graduate competencies.

As a monitoring requirement, the Discipline is to provide updates on the progress and outcomes of the external benchmarking activities for all programs as part of the 2024, 2025, 2026 and 2027 annual reports.

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 met	Standard is substantially 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
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 substantially 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 Discipline of Psychology at the University of the Sunshine Coast:

1. explores opportunities for involvement with external organisations with expertise in cultural responsiveness, including with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, to assist with integrating authentic content and learning experiences across the programs.
2. explore opportunities to preserve the privacy and confidentiality of clients waiting for appointments in the Psychology Clinic's waiting room.
3. explore opportunities to improve and strengthen the placement management software system to ensure useability, effectiveness and efficiency.

Commendations

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

The Assessment Team has made the subsequent commendations following the evaluation of the programs. The Discipline of Psychology at the University of the Sunshine Coast is commended for:

1. the strong and positive experiences provided by the Outreach placement program within the Level 3 program.
2. its commitment to train competent psychologists to benefit and support the needs of the local community.
3. providing students in their first year of study with guidance on the various pathway and employability opportunities following the completion of their studies.
4. the positive student experience and high levels of support displayed by its academic teaching team across all programs.
5. the sound leadership, mentorship and support demonstrated by the Discipline Lead.