



REVISED ACCREDITATION STANDARDS – ALMOST READY FOR RELEASE

APAC is pleased to advise that revised *Accreditation Standards: Standards for Psychology Programs incorporating the Graduate Competencies* will soon be released for public consultation.

1. BACKGROUND

For health professions registered under the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (AHPRA) accreditation of programs and the development of program accreditation standards is undertaken by an approved accreditation council for the profession, in this case APAC.

APAC is required by AHPRA and the Psychology Board of Australia to maintain accreditation standards that are contemporary and relevant, and therefore the standards are reviewed regularly. The current version of the standards dates from 2010.

In undertaking a review APAC must ensure that all the relevant stakeholders have input into any review and development of accreditation standards through wide-ranging consultation. The standards must meet relevant Australian standards, be internationally benchmarked and must be based on the available research and evidence. In addition, relevant statutory requirements must be met, the standards must be fit for purpose, and be consistent with local and international best practice.

These are among the requirements set out by AHPRA in its *Procedures for the Development of Accreditation Standards (2014)*.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE CURRENT REVIEW

The overall goal of the Standards Review is to replace the current accreditation standards with new accreditation standards which:

- meet the requirements for review of program accreditation standards by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency; and
- take account of relevant regulatory changes in the education sector (e.g. Australian Qualifications Framework, the Higher Education Standards Framework (2015), other health professions' accreditation standards, and the threshold learning and teaching academic standards for health, medicine and veterinary science).

The project also addresses the objectives required by AHPRA that:

- Standards meet relevant Australian and international benchmarks
- Standards are based on the available research and evidence base
- Stakeholders are involved in the development and review of standards and there is wide ranging consultation
- In reviewing and developing standards, the accreditation authority takes account of AHPRA's Procedures for development of accreditation standards and the National Law.

3. INNOVATIONS

Since 2012 a number of other health and care sector accreditation standards have been approved both in Australia and overseas that have public safety at their core, and this aligns with the National Law's objective of protecting

the public. The first domain in our new standards relates to this objective.

In addition, at the request of the Psychology Board of Australia, the new Standards will for the first time cover Program of Study requirements for Area of Practice competencies.

In keeping with contemporary practice, our focus in assessing standards will move from an inputs-based approach to an outcomes-based approach: we hope this change will allow for more flexibility in the ways providers may choose to structure programs, and allow for innovative approaches to learning and teaching.

4. THE PROCESS

After an extensive consultation process based on a revised version of the 2010 Standards, proposed draft standards were released for consultation in May 2014. Following stakeholder feedback and consultation it was decided to restructure the content of the standards, making a clear delineation between the standards themselves and the evidence required to assess them, and in doing this, moving the focus of the evidence from inputs to an outcomes-based approach.

A steering group was set up to undertake the work:

- Professor Nancy Pachana (Convenor)
- Professor Caroline Hunt
- Associate Professor Lesley Bretherton
- Ms Ann Doolette
- Professor Lyn Littlefield

Professor Maree O'Keefe was engaged to help revise the Standards and in addition she and Ms Suzy McKenna undertook a review of relevant and recent literature on program accreditation standards and competence standards to identify suitable standards nationally and internationally for mapping and benchmarking. This work was

then developed further and its content tested with a number of key internal and external stakeholders.

4. PROPOSED FORMAT

The new format proposed for our standards is consistent with the revisions being undertaken by a number of the other Health Profession Accreditation Councils. The content of the Standards and supporting material consists of:

- The **Standards**, consisting of five Domains - each of which has a headline **Standard statement** describing the threshold standard to be met by the provider.

Associated with each Domain are **Criteria** that demonstrate the outcomes required for achievement of the domain standard. All criteria must be met to meet the relevant domain standard. These Criteria are articulated to be threshold and measurable.

- The **Competencies**, associated with *Domain 3 Programs of Study* in particular, which set down the competencies to be achieved by a graduate at each of four levels.

The **Standards**, **Standards Criteria** and **Competencies** will together form the ***Accreditation Standards for Psychology Programs incorporating the Graduate Competencies*** eventually to be approved by the Psychology Board of Australia.

- In addition, there will be an **Evidence Guide** that provides guidance as to how compliance with each standard is to be achieved. The Evidence Guide is not part of the standards.