



Communique

Positive response to APAC Call for new Assessors

APAC recently called for Expressions of Interest for undertaking the role of Accreditation Assessor. Chair of the APAC Accreditation Committee, Associate Professor Caroline Hunt, reports that there has been an excellent response, from very well credentialed senior academics from around the country.

The selection process is currently underway, and new assessor training will take place early next year.

Psychology Board Discussion Paper on ending the higher degree exemption from sitting the national psychology exam. (Psychology Board Consultation Paper 25)

The Psychology Board of Australia has issued this discussion paper, and is currently taking submissions from stakeholders.

APAC has made a formal submission, which will be made public by the Board in due course.

Review of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for Health Professions (NRAS Review)

APAC has recently written to the Australian Health Ministers Council, and to the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC), expressing our concern at some of the conclusions reached in the NRAS Review Report.

We have noted:

- APAC is concerned that the Report is critical of accrediting agencies in number of respects; and that these criticisms are, to a significant extent, unfounded.
- The financial analysis used to support some of the criticisms is seriously inadequate, (and is to be redone). A number of the figures relating to APAC and the other councils are incorrect, and the cost of psychology accreditation in the UK has not been calculated correctly.
- To the extent the figures can be relied on, even when adjusted to correct an obvious error, APAC's costs are extremely low, in comparison with other Australian accrediting authorities and with the UK.
- APAC and the other Accreditation Councils recognise that there has been some 'doubling-up' of accreditation requirements by the different accreditation councils which adds to the administrative burden of higher education providers. The councils have been trying for some time to align their processes and protocols where appropriate, but have been hampered by limited resources.
- The Report implies that Accreditation Councils are able to progress workforce reform (*Report p 49*). This appears to be a misunderstanding of the role of Accreditation Councils.

Government determines workforce needs, and achieves change through the higher education sector and the registration boards.

- In response to the suggestion that some Accreditation Standards are too prescriptive, APAC notes that our Standards are currently under review.

APAC is working with the other Accreditation Councils to ensure that any new arrangements do not compromise the fundamental link between accreditation of courses and the quality of patient care as well as the health and wellbeing of the community.

Revision of APAC Standards

APAC is currently working on a revision of our standards for accreditation.

A review of APAC Standards commenced in 2012, with a consultation draft released for stakeholder feedback that year. Feedback was incorporated into the second consultation draft of the Standards which were released for stakeholder feedback in 2013. In 2014 the APAC Board formed a standards working party which continued the development of the Standards, taking into account stakeholder feedback from the second consultation. In undertaking this second tranche of work, a new direction has been taken, which will ensure alignment with stakeholder expectations and a degree of consistency with Standards recently reviewed and developed by other health accreditation councils.

The overall goal of the project is to replace the current APAC accreditation standards with new standards which:

- Reference the International Project on Competence in Psychology (IPCP)
- 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, other health professions' accreditation standards, the Draft Higher Education Standards Framework).

The new standards:

- will meet relevant Australian and international benchmarks, including in particular recently revised standards of the other Health Professional boards
- will be based on the available research and evidence base
- will be finalised after wide-ranging consultation with stakeholders
- will take account of AHPRA's Procedures for development of accreditation standards and the National Law.
- will promote opportunities to increase cross-professional collaboration and innovation
- will support and facilitate opportunities for inter-professional learning
- will respond to input provided by relevant stakeholders on indigenous curriculum content, and will address the removal of barriers to participation in psychology programs by indigenous students
- will encourage the use of alternative learning environments, including, where appropriate, simulation.

It is expected that a draft of the new standards, along with a draft 'Evidence Guide' will be available for stakeholder feedback in the first quarter of 2016. A communications program will be undertaken at that time, with the intention of ensuring all stakeholder groups have ample opportunity to provide input.

Professor John Dunn

Chair, APAC Ltd