



APAC Board Communique

February 2017

The APAC Board met recently to finalise a number of outstanding accreditation determinations from 2016, which was an unusually busy year in relation to new programs and follow-up visits.

As well, the Board signed off on a Supplementary Submission concerning our proposed new *Accreditation Standards for Psychology Programs*. This was in response to a request from the Psychology Board of Australia (PsyBA) for more information on a number of aspects of the proposed Standards.

The format of the proposed standards is very different from that of the existing standards, and the PsyBA understandably wished to be reassured that the core elements of existing standards which it sees as assuring quality remained in the proposed standards, albeit in an altered framework and with greater freedom for providers to innovate program structures and presentation. We were able to provide detailed comparisons as to how the old standards and the proposed standards compare and provided practical case studies as to how particular quality issues might be addressed under the proposed standards, as compared with the existing.

In essence, in keeping with our concern to measure outputs rather than inputs, our assessors will focus less on rigid requirements relating to staffing levels and program structures, and more on the quality of the work produced by graduates and the quality of their performance in practical settings. This means providers will have more freedom to develop innovative ways of producing this level of quality in their students.

For example, while hierarchical in nature, the graduate competencies in the proposed standards do not prevent different levels of graduate competencies from being packaged together, provided the program of study meets the requirements of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF) accreditation standards. Packaging is designed to allow for the flexibility that education providers need to meet the varied needs of their different cohorts of students and supports innovative approaches to the delivery of programs of study. To ensure quality of the programs of study and consistency in the outcomes, packaging rules are included in the proposed standards, both in the preamble and the Graduate Competencies themselves.

This approach is a significant shift from the current standards which are prescriptive in the qualifications that it allows providers to offer, and is a necessary change to accommodate current, and to anticipate future, education needs for the psychology profession.

Adding to this flexibility, the proposed standards allow students to exit and re-enter formal education at different AQF levels, provided they have demonstrated through assessment that they hold the relevant level of Graduate Competencies.

Professor Simon Crowe

Chair APAC Ltd