



PROPOSED STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION OF PSYCHOLOGY COURSES

CONSULTATION PERIOD ENDS, MORE REVISIONS MADE

After extensive consultation with a range of internal stakeholders on the final version of the proposed Accreditation Standards, a public consultation period was held in June and July of this year.

Feedback from submissions was analysed and revisions and responses developed based on discussions with the APAC Board and the APAC Accreditation Assessment Committee.

In all we received 118 submissions, including some from overseas. Most of the submissions were from higher education providers, or from individual academics, but there were also many individual private practitioners who provided input. We valued especially the input received from students.

Approximately half of the submissions concerned competencies for the Counselling Psychology Area of Practice. The remainder covered a wide range of matters, with a small number of key concerns reappearing in many submissions.

Overall, the response was positive in regard to the new format and new approach in the Standards. Stakeholders welcomed a more outcomes-focused approach with increased flexibility in relation to inputs, and in design and delivery aspects of programs. However, many expressed concern that the less restrictive approach to inputs could have unintended negative consequences.

Understandably, even those with positive feedback nevertheless provided detailed explications of negative responses, and some sections of the proposed Standards have been redrafted to address the problems articulated.

In some cases, clarification has been provided as to why the concerns were not able to be addressed. In this latter group the issues tend to relate to aspects of psychology education which are not the remit of APAC; the standards are intended to apply to the content of courses which are accredited for the purposes of registration as a health professional under the National Law. APAC recognises that many students are not on pathways to professional registration, but the Standards are not intended to reflect this.

As well as the key issues noted above, which were common themes in the larger submissions, many very helpful suggestions were made as to minor changes to wording or content which would improve understanding or more accurately reflect good practice in particular situations. Many of these suggestions have been incorporated in the amended draft of the standards. For example, we received a comprehensive joint submission from AIPEP (Australian Indigenous Psychology Education Project), AIPA (Australian Indigenous Psychology Association) and IAHA (Indigenous Allied Health Australia) and have made a number of changes throughout the documents as a result.

Next Steps...

The revised drafts of the Standards go to the Psychology Board of Australia (PsyBA) this month. The process thereafter, leading to final approval, will take some months. Therefore, our hopes that some providers might have been willing to test the new Standards in 2017 will not be fulfilled. However, during 2017 we will undertake the development of new rules, and will ensure that our assessors and providers are well-briefed in the content and application of the standards. The details of transition arrangements are subject to PsyBA approval, but they are expected to be similar to the arrangements proposed during the public consultation period.