Cairnmillar INSTITUTE

What happened @ Academic Board

7 October 2026

1. WELCOME AND FORMAL BUSINESS

WELCOME AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Academic Board met for its fifth meeting of 2026 in a hybrid format.

The Chair acknowledged the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which members were meeting and paid respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

The Board confirmed the minutes of its 5 August 2026 meeting and continued its oversight of academic standards, student experience, research governance, course quality and strategic developments.

2. KEY DECISIONS/ACTIONS BY THE ACADEMIC BOARD

Research Policy and Research Data Procedure Approved
The Board approved the revised Research Policy and Research Data Procedure, subject to minor amendments. These include clearer reference to relevant NHMRC guidance, explicit inclusion of consumers in research design, and completion of agreed drafting changes.

Course Changes Noted
The Board noted course changes considered by the Course Standards Committee across psychology, counselling and psychotherapy programs. The changes strengthen placement readiness, competency alignment, curriculum sequencing and clarity of learning outcomes.

Internal Articulation Standards
The Board requested further reporting on internal applicants admitted to counselling and psychotherapy programs below the previous WAM threshold, to support oversight of consistency and academic standards.

Lived Experience Coordination
The Board endorsed more structured coordination and twice-yearly reporting for lived experience representation across relevant governance committees.

3. COURSE QUALITY AND ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Course Standards Committee (16 September)

Academic Board considered a range of course improvements, including:

- Extending the Bachelor of Psychology and Counselling placement sequence across two consecutive semesters
- Refining learning outcomes and unit titles across psychology programs to strengthen competency alignment

- Embedding Emotion Focused Therapy and revised child and family content within counselling and psychotherapy courses
- Moving therapy training earlier in the Master of Professional Psychology to improve placement readiness
- Differentiating placement learning outcomes in the Master of Clinical Psychology (Post Registration)

Placement Readiness and Growth
The Board emphasised that course growth, placement capacity and scalability require coordinated institutional planning. Students should not experience adverse consequences arising from higher-than-anticipated retention or cohort growth.

Recognition of Prior Learning
The Board supported continued review of recognition of prior learning practices for post-registration clinical psychology programs. Decisions should remain evidence-based, competency-focused and aligned with AQF and accreditation expectations.

4. STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND FEEDBACK

Graduate and Student Outcomes
The Board noted generally positive graduate outcomes, student experience and teaching quality despite substantial cohort growth.

Areas of Focus
Discussion focused on:

- Placement communication and coordination in larger cohorts
- Pressure on library holdings and psychological assessment resources
- Peer engagement, particularly for online students
- Interpreting survey results in the context of predominantly postgraduate and online cohorts

Closing the Feedback Loop
The Board supported a clear "You said, we did" approach so students can readily identify how feedback has informed improvements. Unit-level documentation will continue to clearly describe feedback received and resulting changes.

5. STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE UPDATE

Positive Feedback

Student representatives reported marked improvements in Canvas communication and Master of Professional Psychology placement communication. The transparency and responsiveness of the placement team were acknowledged, together with strong engagement from teaching staff.

Disciplinary Identity

Students proposed clearer communication of the distinctive focus, values and disciplinary identity of the Institute's schools and courses. Further work will consider how these distinctions can be communicated without duplicating existing handbook and website content.

Multicultural Peer Support

The Board supported further exploration of a student-led multicultural peer support group to encourage discussion of cultural experience, curriculum frameworks and professional practice.

6. RESEARCH, GOVERNANCE AND INNOVATION

Research Performance

The Board received an update on research activity, including:

- 27 articles published or in press
- Seven external funding applications submitted, with one successful and two outstanding
- Six projects supported through the second seed funding round
- A total seed funding investment of $55,000

Research Governance

A data bank framework and supporting requirements document have been developed through consultation with the Human Research Ethics Committee and Research and Research Training Committee.

A PhD studentship framework is also being developed to establish transparent processes for internally funded projects and candidates. The final data bank guidance and studentship framework will return to Academic Board for noting.

7. REPORT FROM THE DEAN

Accreditation and Regulatory Developments

The Board welcomed draft advice that all relevant Institute courses will be reaccredited by APAC without conditions. Positive recognition was also received for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and decolonisation work. Confirmation from APAC is expected in coming weeks.

The Dean reported continuing uncertainty regarding proposed national psychology training pathway reforms. The Board discussed potential operational, regulatory and financial implications, including supervision, provisional registration, accreditation, placements, funding and the proposed 2028 implementation timeframe.

The Institute will continue to engage through sector forums, advocate for sustainable implementation

arrangements and monitor forthcoming government decisions.

Leadership Transition

The Chair acknowledged that Professor Linda Byrne would be stepping down as Dean and resigning from Academic Board. Members thanked and congratulated Professor Byrne for her significant leadership, dedication and contribution to the Institute, and noted that she will remain with Cairnmillar.

8. VET AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Highlights included:

- Commencement of the fourth term of the Diploma of Counselling
- Development of an emerging leaders program based on the Diploma of Leadership and Management
- Consideration of reintroducing the Certificate IV in Career Development Practice
- Continued delivery of Board-approved supervision and professional development programs

The Board noted the continued development and diversification of the VET and Professional Development portfolio.

9. REPORT FROM STUDENT SERVICES

Student Services reported:

- More than 2,000 applications for 2027
- Approximately 230 students already accepting offers and enrolling
- Strong interest in undergraduate psychology and the counselling and psychotherapy suite
- Semester 2 unit evaluations opening across 1,184 unit enrolments
- Continued planning for 2027 curriculum configuration, unit scheduling, timetables and course handbooks
- Introduction of group interviews for the high-volume Master of Professional Psychology applicant cohort

The Board acknowledged the strong level of interest in 2027 courses and the collaboration between Student Services and Faculty.

10. LIVED EXPERIENCE AND INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE

The Board supported stronger coordination among lived experience representatives serving on Academic Board, Course Advisory Committees and the Human Research Ethics Committee.

Future arrangements will include:

- An early-year report outlining planned activities and priorities
- An end-of-year report on progress and outcomes
- Mechanisms to connect and support representatives across governance committees
- Consideration of training and leadership development opportunities

The Board also noted the suggestion that stigma and discrimination be considered when graduate and course learning outcomes are next reviewed.

MEETINGS IN 2026

- Wednesday 11 February (Online)
- Wednesday 8 April (Onsite)
- Wednesday 10 June (Online)
- Wednesday 5 August (Onsite)
- Wednesday 7 October (Onsite)
- Wednesday 25 November (Onsite)