

Review of the Supervisor Training and Accreditation Program (STAP)

A review prepared for the
Psychologists Board of Queensland

Prepared by

Denise Charman PhD, PRBV, MAPs (Clinical)

P.O. Box 1083, North Fitzroy 3068

Victoria

August 2007

Preface

Professional training of psychologists relies on apprentice and mentoring models. The quality of supervision is central to the ensuing standards of practice. The Psychologists' Board has a responsibility toward probationary registrants to ensure that the psychologists who are approved as supervisors are actually competent at supervising. In accordance with Section 35 of the *Psychologists Registration Regulation 2002*, a Supervisor Training and Accreditation Program (STAP) was commissioned after a tendering process. The STAP Consortium consists of a team of psychologists from diverse professional backgrounds and associations with Queensland universities. They have extensive experience in practice of the profession; in the supervision of psychologists-in-training in academic settings and in the public and private sectors; in the training of psychologists as supervisors; and in supervision research itself. Despite the credentials of the STAP Consortium and the high esteem accorded to their workshops, an independent review addressed whether the STAP was achieving the objectives stated by the Board in its contract with the Consortium. This review is limited to those narrow objectives. Many other questions remain unanswered, such as the impact of the STAP on the availability of supervisors and whether the STAP has raised the standards of supervision and practice. These are large questions, and answers depend upon appropriate empirical research. The Board has made a start in its duty to raise the standards of psychological service, and in line with requirements of assurance quality, offers this report for your consideration.

Gina Geffen, BA (Hons), PhD, FASSA, FAPS, AM
Emeritus Professor of Psychology
University of Queensland

Chairperson
Psychologists' Board of Queensland.

1. Introduction

In accordance with statutory requirements of the Psychologists Registration Regulation 2002, the Psychologists Board of Queensland (PBQ) contracted the Griffith University Consortium to develop and implement a Supervisor Training and Accreditation Program (STAP). The aim of the STAP was to accredit psychologists with general registration as supervisors for probationary registrants undertaking the Board's two year Supervised Practice Program (SPP). The Consortium was commissioned after an open tender process.

The Griffith Consortium entered into the consultancy agreement with the Board on 14th July 2004. The objective of the agreement was the development, implementation, and continuous improvement of a high quality supervisor training and accreditation program. STAP has been running for three years.

1.1 Project Aims and Objectives

This review was undertaken of the quality of service provided by the Consortium. Specifically, the aim was to determine if the Consortium has satisfactorily met the objectives as stated in the Standard Consultancy Agreement executed on 14th July 2004. The PBQ has the option to extend the arrangement for another two years.

1.2 Reference Group

The reference group for the review was comprised of nominated Board staff and key stakeholders and key informants and included representatives of registered supervisors, field placement supervisors, and probationary psychologists. The reference group provided advice about the finalisation of the work plan, feedback on initial document analysis, and provided advice on the consultation process. Membership of the Reference Group is provided in the Appendix.

2. Project Stages

2.1 Defining quality of service

The criteria for quality of service were generated directly from the objectives specified in the *Standard Consultancy Agreement, Invitation to Offer Consultancy Services: Supervisor Training and Accreditation Program* and *Tender to the Psychologist Board of Queensland for the STAP*. Quality of service would be reviewed against the objectives of STAP. Thus the review focused on:

1. The **development** of the STAP, and the quality of service in the development of the STAP
 - By assessing the quality of the STAP, for the development of supervisory skills, knowledge of best practice, issues related to knowledge (rather than skills) regarding competency
2. The **implementation** of the STAP, including the workshop component and the assessment component
 - By assessing the fee-for-service basis, provision of the STAP at a range of locations in Queensland, especially Brisbane, Gold Coast,

Toowoomba, Rockhampton, Townsville, Cairns, Sunshine Coast, and Wide Bay, at least twice annually in Brisbane and once annually at the other locations.

3. The **continuous improvement** of the STAP program through internal evaluation measures

These three criteria related to these three objectives were complemented by consideration of:

- Project management
- The satisfaction expressed by supervisors
- The numbers completing the accreditation
- Access and support for remote and rural supervisors
- The nature of any further fine tuning of the STAP;
- The way in which the STAP could complement the content of the workshop with process issues related to managing the supervisory relationship;
- The rationale for the choice of methods of assessment; and
- The future of the STAP.

2.2 Consultation & Review Procedure

The STAP Consortium had two major objectives: to develop and maintain a high quality training program to prepare supervisors for their role within the SPP; and to develop a valid and reliable process to assess attendees for accreditation as supervisors for SPP. The findings in relation to each objective are considered separately.

An audit was undertaken of available STAP related documents and other materials (see 2.3) and analysed against the “quality of service” criteria (2.1). Additionally, the reviewer prepared a semi-structured interview schedule (see appendix). Questions were developed for a SWOT thematic analysis, which aims to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to STAP. Individuals (see 2.4) were interviewed for up to an hour and notes taken.

2.3 Document analysis

Documents included in this review:

- *Standard Consultancy Agreement,*
- *Invitation to Offer Consultancy Services: Supervisor Training and Accreditation Program*
- *Tender to the Psychologist Board of Queensland for the STAP Agreement*
- The STAP reports to the Board summarising evaluation of the workshops

- APS Professional Development Activity Evaluation Forms
- Workshop evaluation forms designed by the STAP Consortium.
- *The STAP Guide for Evaluators.*
- No individual assessments were accessed because of confidentiality and privacy, though one of the Griffith Consortium members [AD] offered her own assessments.
- Viewing of Workshop materials, including workbook, videos, and PowerPoint presentation.

2.4 The Participants who took part in the review:

To ensure the trustworthiness, quality of data, gaps in information and utilisability of the review report based around the completed table, the Reference Group and the Professional Advisor were asked to identify key informants and key stakeholders who may agree to be interviewed by phone or in person in Brisbane. Participants (n=21) in the interviews are identified in this list by their primary role in the review but may actually have had other roles in addition to the role specified:

- Reference Group (n=4), which included representatives from probationary psychologists, accredited supervisors, etc.
- The STAP Consortium members (n=4)
- Accredited supervisors who have been through the STAP (n=9, along with written feedback):
- Evaluators (n=3, in addition to the above)
- Workshop attendees who have not completed assessment (n=2):

Note: in the time and resource constraint of this Invitation to Tender for the Review, only a small sample of participating psychologist supervisors were contacted by phone and in person. In late 2007, PBQ are funding STAP to undertake a large research project to evaluate the impact of accreditation.

3. The Results

3.1 The STAP Program in Brief

The training program consists of a two day workshop (the refresher component is not yet operational). The content of the workshop and the design of the assessment were developed after a literature review of evidence based practice and after consultation with key stakeholders in the Australian Psychological Society's Colleges, Head of Schools and others.

The STAP Consortium has provided 32 training workshop, with a total of 660 supervisors attending. Of these, 434 (66%) are now accredited with an additional 13% at various stages of assessment. The percentages of those who completed the training and those who were at various stages in the accreditation process are provided in Figure 1.

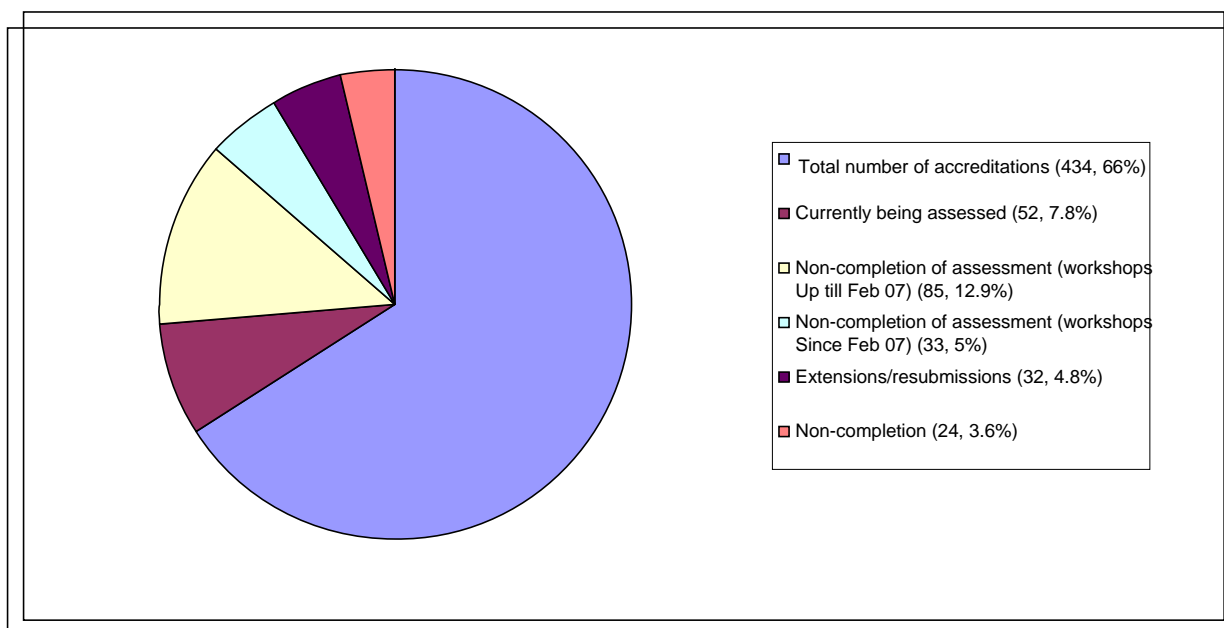


Figure 1. Proportions of workshop attendees who have completed accreditation.

In 2004 and 2005, 33 (5% of those who undertook workshop) did not complete the assessment. Staff of the STAP Consortium contacted these non-completers who gave the following reasons for not doing so:

Personal and family reasons	11 (32%)
Workload too busy	9 (26%)
Nature of their work had changed	4 (11%)
Ineligible to supervise	3 (8%)
No reason given	6 (20%)

3.2 The Analysis and the STAP Objectives

Findings from the document analysis and other data provided by STAP Consortium are summarised in Tables 1 and 2. Qualitative data for the SWOT analysis are summarised in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 1 depicts that the training program has undergone development, been taken up by more than double the number initially anticipated and the internal evaluations have informed fine tuning of the workshops and their scheduling. Table 2 depicts the issues related to accreditation. This has been a time consuming task for both supervisors and the STAP team, with a high administrative load. Two thirds of workshop attendees have satisfactorily completed the accreditation. A significant proportion has not completed the assessment and a profile could be developed of those who have not. Feedback on assessment from evaluators has been acted on. Some feedback has included the need to make a literal response to the knowledge questionnaire. In addition, many supervisors do not seem to have experience writing a self-reflective essay. This skill could be referred to the universities for consideration in their curricula.

Tables 3 and 4 summarise the qualitative analysis. Supervisors who complete the training and the accreditation report very high levels of satisfaction and increased mastery of the supervision role. The external context for the STAP has ensured that it is an accepted and valued part of professional development and an important role recognised in job descriptions. Issues regarding those supervisors who did not complete assessments emerged again. Pressures may build to adapt the assessment component further. However, the assessment is an important component of the STAP and makes it unique in that it helps ensure standards are established for an important role. National registration is likely to have implications for the content of the training and also the accreditation process.

Table 1.

STAP Objective: To develop and maintain high quality training program to prepare supervisors for their role within the SPP.

High Quality Training Program	Findings
<p>Development</p> <p>(1) Training program aims to assess knowledge & skills, over two days</p> <p>(2) A refresher every three years consisting of a one day “master class”</p> <p>(3) Two day training workshop</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training consists (1) and (2) ▪ Attracts 28 Generalist APS PD points ▪ Workbook: Developed from evidence based practice (EBP) (common factors) and in consultation with key stakeholders. ▪ Videos: This comprises role-plays using STAP key personnel. ▪ Model of supervision for generic psychologists and specialists.
<p>Implementation</p> <p>(1) Fee-for-service</p> <p>(2) Workshops Brisbane, Gold Coast, Toowoomba, Rockhampton, Townsville, Cairns, Sunshine Coast, and Wide Bay.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cost is \$645 for two day workshop ▪ Total number attended was 660 (cf. anticipated number 310 by 2008, i.e., more than double) ▪ Locations: Brisbane (1 [1]* in 2004, 2 in 2005, 10 in 2006 and 4 in 2007) and other locations 0 in 2004, 5 [1] in 2005, 9 in 2006, and 0 in 2007). A total of 32 workshops were scheduled with two cancelled due to insufficient numbers ▪ Flexible delivery across days of the week ▪ Approx 1/3 of attendees travelled outside of their own town to attend, usually for personal reasons. Rural psychs often attended Brisbane because of cheaper regional flights.
<p>Continuous Improvement</p> <p>Internal evaluation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workshop evaluations confirmed ratings are very high with satisfaction ratings of 4.4/5.0 (very good to excellent) with very high satisfaction with facilitators, especially A.D**. ▪ APS Evaluations: Modal response was 1-2, strongly agree or agree about the value of the workshop ▪ Feedback from stakeholders indicated a commitment to a quality training program based on EBP, for all types of supervision via pathways 1 &2, for universal acceptance ▪ Feedback from participants: Workbook fine-tuned based on experiences of participants, e.g., exercises & video seen as too clinical ▪ STAP includes post measures of knowledge & skills for supervisors & interviews with supervisees re impact of their supervisors training

*[] connotes workshops cancelled for insufficient enrolments

** Both APS evaluation form and STAP measures were reviewed and validated the conclusions in the summary reports provided by STAP. A sample of comments: Too long, too short, wonderful surprise, loved role plays and videos, a lot to get through, different levels of experience in same workshop, too clinical, loved presenters style, asking what is the model of supervision implicit in the workshop, admired experience and knowledge of the presenter, excellent workshop, the workshop exceeded [my] expectations in the usefulness and practicality, would have done it years ago if I had known, very comprehensive.

Table 2:

STAP Objective: To develop a valid & reliable process for accreditation as supervisors for SPP

Reliable and valid assessment & accreditation of supervisors	Findings
<p>Development (1) Assessment of individual participants re supervisory skills, takes 4-6 months (2) Knowledge of best supervision practice (3) Knowledge and understanding of SPP (4) Assessment to be reliable and valid</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Followed Principles of adult learning. ▪ Knowledge questionnaire is constructed of 21 questions directly out of workbook, thus aiming to measure mastery of content, not its application (1/5 assessment). ▪ Supervisory skills as demonstrated in the video of supervision session and analysis of the video (3/5 assessment) ▪ Self-reflection re supervisory ability essay (1/5 assessment) ▪ Assessment reliable and valid, with frequent double marking ▪ 26 trained evaluators with 10 recruited and trained to deal with surge of applications prior to May 1st ▪ Matching and selection of evaluators to ensure no conflict of interest and with consent of trainees. ▪ .Attendees receive written and verbal feedback.
<p>Implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ \$416 evaluation for accreditation ▪ In 2007, STAP processed 40-50 assessments each month ▪ Trainees were fully informed of assessment procedures in workshop, via email, in workbook. ▪ Evaluators provide timely oral as well as written feedback within 6-8 weeks. ▪ Accreditation process clear and without fear or favour (included STAP and Board members) ▪ 434 (66%) are accredited with about 13% of assessments either underway, being re-submitted or have extensions. ▪ Non-completions for those who undertook the workshop more than four months previously was 16.5%. Refer to Fig.1. ▪ 28 candidates have failed 33 components, with the self-reflective essay and the video as the most difficult pieces of assessment.
<p>Continuous Improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trainees reported that they learnt much from the assessment experience. ▪ Evaluators have identified various issues which were acted on, such as the shift from graded assessment to pass/fail. ▪ The management of the process has consistently received high praise, with its ethical practice and timely process with feedback by phone delivered as scheduled provided in the evaluators handbook.

Table 3

SWOT analysis of Training Program (from participant interviews)

SWOT analysis	Development of Workshop	Implementation of Workshop	Continuous Improvement of Workshop
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ STAP is a high quality EBP program, setting high benchmarks for others. ▪ Well sourced; well articulated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workshops delivered as specified. ▪ More than double the uptake anticipated ▪ Rural and remote psychologists value this as a networking activity supporting them even though distant from Brisbane 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ STAP continues to be finely tuned. ▪ Adaptive to needs of trainees, such as organisational psychologists.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Early difficulties related to legal matters were assisted by Griffith providing expert advice to STAP consortium. ▪ Initial resistance to imposed training (and accreditation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anecdotal reports of complaints re cost, balanced by the fact that many employers were at least partially funding fees. ▪ Supervisors in private practice can recoup fees as they charge for services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ongoing evaluations have identified gaps & content of the workshops; including workbook, video, and presentation were adapted. ▪ Unknown initial competencies
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The significance of supervision for the profession has been consolidated and emphasised. ▪ PBQ has supported STAP, via website, newsletter, promotions ▪ PBQ has the legislative responsibility for providing supervisor training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ STAP become embedded as an important component for quality in practice ▪ Major employers (Department of Health, Department of Justice, Centrelink, etc provided funding for STAP training. At least one State Government agency has STAP accreditation as a condition of employment for senior positions ▪ Supported by Brisbane Externship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Further evaluations will be undertaken by STAP with research assistant funded by Board. ▪ International and interstate interest ▪ Some metropolitan and some regional universities provide partial funding for external supervisors & some academic staff
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National registration may require changes in some components of STAP after 1/8/08. ▪ Future participants are likely to be less experienced or new supervisors and the content may need to be adjusted ▪ Some universities slow to realise impact of the legislation & need for accreditation ▪ Medicare, with client services more financially attractive than supervision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Future change in level of demand & towards less experienced supervisors may require STAP to re-negotiate frequency of workshops. If each year, about 220 psychs become eligible as supervisors, 9 workshops each year may not be viable ▪ Psychs may become supervisors due to changing work commitments prior to & when no STAP program is available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some universities provide no or minimal support for their staff and external supervisors to undertake STAP

Table 4

SWOT analysis of assessment and accreditation process based on participant interviews

SWOT analysis	Development of assessment & accreditation process	Implementation of assessment & accreditation process	Continuous improvement of assessment & accreditation process
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Procedures clear and criteria for marking explicit. ▪ STAP has set clear benchmarks for accreditation management, with multi modal assessment and externally assessed. ▪ Validity and reliability processes integral to assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cost is low compared to real cost ▪ Those who fail get support and almost all re-submit and pass 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consistent with adult learning principles the evaluation is part of the learning experience. ▪ Supervisors report anxiety about but admiration for the process and how much is learnt. ▪ Evaluators are dedicated, trained and thorough
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Time consuming for supervisors ▪ Mature supervisors who have not undergone examination procedures for many years, yet who have track records in supervision feel the procedures are unsuitable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Many hidden costs, such as re-submissions, fails etc ▪ Multiple assessment pieces and coordination of submission and evaluation place heavy administrative demands on STAP ▪ Knowledge test is cut & paste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No specific feedback is available about the individual assessment pieces. ▪ Reflective essay consistently not done well but taps into process qualities critical to EBP
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Legislative requirements set the pace for defining professional standards in supervision. ▪ Initial fears of reduced numbers of supervisors not founded. Now exceeds the pre-STAP PBQ register 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluation is well designed and could be a PD activity in itself. ▪ Further questions about the transfer of learning and developments in supervision with advice to STAP Consortium to ask such questions in their feedback from supervisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognition of need for ongoing PD, with supervisors seeking further support and training. STAP will compile feedback to inform the design of refresher. ▪ Recommend to universities re curricula for reflective practice
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National registration due to commence 1/7/08 has an uncertain impact on the long-term role for accreditation process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Griffith University auspices STAP which may pose some issues should the university change its policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maybe some external pressures to contain the assessments with its multiple components.

4. Summary and Conclusions

This review was commissioned by Psychologists Board of Queensland to determine if the STAP Consortium has achieved the objectives as specified in the tender documents and to a quality of service. The criteria for quality of service were developed and a document analysis and results from semi-structured interviews with key informants and key stakeholders were analysed for themes consistent with a SWOT analysis.

The conclusion is that the STAP Consortium has met all of the objectives specified in the tender documents with a quality of service that sets high benchmarks for professional psychology. The STAP consortium has provided a well articulated training program based on research and expert opinion about what constitutes evidence based practice. The STAP has been very competently project managed.

The initial uptake of the STAP was relatively slow. However, the overall demand for the STAP has been more than double that expected. In particular, with the deadline for being listed as an approved supervisor by PBQ looming, there was a strong surge in demand for training and accreditation. The STAP consortium put on additional workshops and recruited ten additional evaluators to deal with the workload.

The first component of STAP is the training workshops. The refresher course has not yet commenced as it is only now three years after the first training workshops were undertaken. Findings from a review of written evaluations from the workshops and the semi-structured interviews converge to indicate very high levels of supervisor satisfaction with the training component. The mean satisfaction level is the highest one could hope for in a program of this kind.

Even so, as supervisors had different levels of initial competence and experience there was a wide variety of reactions to the workshop in particular. These reactions varied from mostly whole hearted endorsement to a belief among a small minority that the workshops were not advanced enough or focussed too much on supervision as managerial process. As future participants of the workshops are likely to be those who are less experienced, the workshop would seem to be well tailored to their needs.

The second component included the assessment and was more problematic. The demands of the assessment provide opportunities for supervisors to reflect on their practice and ensure it meets a basic (high) standard. It requires supervisors to make a commitment to partake in the quality assurance measures and to supervision. The process appears to be professional and respectful. Those supervisors who completed the assessment process reported high levels of learning and satisfaction. The inclusion of the assessment represents a major strength of the STAP.

However, 16.5% of those who attended a workshop have not completed the assessments and 5% have decided not to supervise for personal and work reasons. In the opinion of the reviewer an assessment procedure should not hold a guarantee of a pass. On the other hand, some of those who have not submitted appear to be supervisors with excellent track records in supervision. It is recommended that the STAP consortium develop

a profile of those supervisors who have not submitted and determine whether there is a small subgroup that fits this category. The university model of Recognition of Prior Learning (and Credit Transfer) to give credit to those who satisfy specified criteria may be useful in this context.

Finally the big question, is the STAP making a difference to the supervision of probationary psychologists and to the profession? The STAP has resulted in standardised training and accreditation of supervisors. It has led to the building of an awareness of the importance and quality of supervision, its role, and significance for the profession of psychology. The training provides a very valued opportunity for supervisors to network, from wide variety of specialty areas in a focussed forum. Before the STAP, the quality and activity level of supervisors were largely unknown.

5. Conclusions

The Griffith Consortium has satisfactorily met the objectives as stated in the Standard Consultancy Agreement executed on 14 July 2004.

6. Observations

1. The Consortium may need to re-consider the frequency of workshops, the costs of the assessment (maybe with separate PD points) and content with national registration to become effective in 2008 to ensure financial viability
2. Recognition of Prior Learning for at least some of the assessments be considered as another pathway to accreditation
3. PBQ consider other activities to provide networking opportunities for networking, especially related to their legislative responsibilities, for example on ethics.
4. Some interim supervision arrangements for those psychologists who find themselves supervising as a result of changed work commitments such as a new position yet who have not completed accreditation.

Appendix 1

Acknowledgements

The PBQ Professional Advisor (Helen Ross) provided quantitative data and additional documents to complete gaps in information and ensure utilisability of the review report. Helen Ross also provided much needed support to establish the Reference Committee and undertake this review. Members of the Reference Committee gave their time attending meetings and reviewing the first draft of this report and gave valued feedback. Supervisors and evaluators generously gave their time and input to inform this review. Lastly to the STAP Consortium who provided extra documentation and their time and professionalism to the review process. Gina Geffen and others who also made valued contributions to this review. Any errors are those of the reviewer only.

The Reference Committee

- Assoc Professor Ken Pakenham, Board Member and Chair of the Registration, Supervision and Training Committee
- Ms Helen Ross, Psychology Coordinator
- Dr Andrea Quinn, an accredited supervisor for the Supervised Practice Program
- Ms Celeste Cotton, probationary registrant.

The Reviewer:

This project will be undertaken by Dr. Denise Charman. Dr. Denise Charman is a registered psychologist and a registered supervisor with the Psychologists Registration Board of Victoria. She is a member of the College of Clinical Psychologists and the College of Health Psychologists, Australian Psychological Society. She has had many years experience training and supervising psychologists, teachers, nursing staff and social workers. Dr. Charman has undertaken consultancies on evidence based practice, with publications in peer reviewed journals as well as those published by the Australian Psychological Society. She has had ARC grants related to program evaluation, evidence based practice and wellbeing of practitioners.

Appendix 2

The interview schedule

Introduction: The documentation for the STAP proposal had this review was built into the original proposal, so in one way this is a routine step in the STAP enterprise. However it is also an opportunity.

Questions related to the review:

What are the objectives of the review from your point of view?

What would you like the review to achieve? Identifying problems? What would you like to review to know?

Are there are particular issues

How will you know if the objectives of the review are met?

Are there any particular sensitive issues?

Please comment on the development of the STAP.

Please comment on the implementation of the STAP.

Please comment on the evaluation of the STAP.

What are the:

Strengths (of organisation in achieving the objectives)

Weaknesses (those attributes that are harmful to achieving the objectives)

Opportunities (external conditions that are helpful to achieving the objectives)

Threats to the STAP (external conditions that are harmful to achieving objectives)