

COUNSELOR EDUCATION: CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING, MA

The Masters of Arts Degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling is designed to prepare students for employment in public and private mental-health settings. The curriculum offers course work and applied experiences in specialty areas, including couple/family counseling, addictions counseling, play therapy, and work with unique populations.

The clinical mental health counseling program is 60 credit hours and meets accreditation criteria put forward by Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).

Admissions

Cohort admission decisions for MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling are made once annually in the fall. Additional admission opportunities may become available for the spring if all spaces are not filled.

In addition to the minimum Graduate School admission requirements, to be considered for regular admission an application must include:

- CV/Resume
- A Statement of Purpose consistent with goals of the program. This must include details on the goals and purpose in seeking graduate training
- 3 letters of recommendation from persons who can attest to the applicant's potential for success in graduate school

Admission decisions are made based on application materials submitted and applicant interview with admission committee. After reviewing application packets, the Admission Committee, which is comprised of program faculty members, will schedule applicant interviews. Dates and times of interviews will be determined and communicated to potential candidates by program faculty.

While GRE or MAT is not required for admission, an applicant with a GPA below 3.0 but with a score of 300 or higher (verbal and quantitative combined) on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or a score of 50th percentile or higher on the Miller Analogies Test (MAT), may be considered for Admission with Permission to Continue.

Applicants may be eligible to be considered for Admission with Permission to Continue if they do not fully meet the requirements for regular admission. Applicants who do not meet at least one criterion for Admission with Permission to Continue will not be considered. A decision to admit an applicant with Permission to Continue will be based upon several factors including the combination of the GPA and admission test scores (if provided), the applicant's goals, and previous work experience.

A composite GRE score of 300 or better is required for all candidates, irrespective of degree program, who are seeking an appointment as a college-sponsored Graduate Assistant.

See the Admission Criteria section of this catalog for more information.

Curricular Requirements

All Counselor Education Master's degree programs have a planned program of study. The plan follows the appropriate requirements for accreditation in that area. Once an academic advisor has been assigned, students should make an appointment to discuss their preferences and career aspirations. The program of study that a student accepts when

they enter the program will be the one they will follow until they graduate. If there are any changes, they need to be approved by the advisor.

While the majority of courses will be offered through the Program in Counselor Education (designated as BCE), many required courses will be offered by affiliated programs. Students will likely enroll in courses in Educational Psychology (designated as BEP), Educational Research (designated as BER), School Psychology (designated as BSP), and other areas. These courses afford the opportunity to take advantage of the expertise of faculty in other programs in the College of Education.

Code and Title		Hours
Required Courses		
BCE 512	Counseling Theory Proc	3
BCE 513	Career Development	3
BCE 514	Counseling Skills	3
BCE 516	Practicum Counseling II (pass/fail)	3
BCE 517	Professional Counseling	3
BCE 518	Intro to Clin. Ment. Hlth Cnsl	3
BCE 521	Group Procecd Coun Educ	3
BCE 522	Indiv & Group Appraisal	3
BCE 528	Adv Sem. Clin. Ment. Hlth Cnsl	3
BCE 611	Multicult. Approach Counseling	3
BCE 613	Substance Abuse Counseling	3
BCE 650	Couns Stratg Fam Relatns	3
BEP 550	Life Span Development	3
BER 500	Intro Educatn Research	3
BER 540	Statistical Methods In Educ	3
BSP 660	Psychopathology	3
BCE 525	Intern Sch Clint Ment Hea Cou	12
Total Hours		60

Transfer Credit

Graduate School information about Transfer Credit.

Comprehensive Exam

The policy of the UA Graduate School is that a comprehensive examination or summary project must be completed by all students seeking to graduate from any UA graduate program. The content and scheduling of the master's comprehensive examination in Counselor Education is consistent with this expectation. Per Graduate School policies, students have two (2) opportunities for successful performance on the comprehensive examination established for their program/department.

Eligibility for the initial attempt to secure a passing score on the master's comprehensive examination in Counselor Education is granted in the semester in which students are completing their master's internship. Because the completion of a student's master's internship typically occurs in the semester of anticipated graduation, the timing of initial access allows for a second attempt to be completed during that semester. The second attempt can be scheduled to occur no less than three (3) weeks subsequent to notification of a failure on the student's initial attempt for a passing score on the master's comprehensive

examination. A passing score on the second attempt of the master's comprehensive examination can then allow the student to graduate as planned. Otherwise, the Graduate School policy limiting students to two (2) opportunities for successful performance on the comprehensive examination will lead to the student's dismissal from the program.

Graduate School information on Comprehensive Exams.

Fieldwork/Practicum/Internship Requirements

While the skills necessary to performing classroom, settings are fundamental to the educational process, a significant element of the training program or any degree sought in the Program in Counselor Education is the applied experiences. In many ways, the activities associated in typical classroom work such as examinations, presentations, research papers, and special projects are the building blocks for the work a counselor does in the field: serving their clients! The curriculum in the program features a variety of practical, applied requirements. These are typically noted as "practicum" or "internship" on the student's Program Planning Records. As was noted previously, the academic advising process is critical in the sequence of the student's applied experiences in that the general rule is "practicum precedes internships" and deviation from that sequence is not allowed. Again, the academic advisor is quite aware of this principle and will assist in course selection from the annual academic schedule to ensure both efficient and effective progress in your preparatory program.

A. Practicum

As an initial experience in applied work, students typically engage in closely supervised work with clients in courses noted as "practicum." For clinical mental health students. BCE 516 Practicum Counseling II typically involves 2 hours of weekly group supervision and one hour of weekly individual supervision with client contact throughout. University supervision for clinical mental health students is provided on campus. Students enrolled in BCE 516 may wish to secure a practicum placement at distant sites, but the expectation for on-campus supervision is not compromised. Some practicum courses are noted as "Pass/Fail" courses, meaning that performance expectations for students in these courses are NOT tied to the completion of an academic semester.

Since practicum is a prerequisite to internship and features expectations for certain skills levels, students may not be allowed to proceed to the next course in their applied experiences. Such a decision reflects the fundamental commitment of our program to quality service to clients, a position we advocate, and we expect all affiliated with our program to advocate. Practicum placements are typically arranged prior to the semester in which the student anticipates enrolling for course credit. Pre-placement arrangements should be discussed and approved by the faculty listed in the University Schedule for the section of the practicum in which the student is enrolled

Documentation. Students are responsible for retaining cumulative documentation of all practicum activities. The program requires completion of a supervised practicum in the student's designated program area of 100 clock hours. Each student's practicum includes all of the following:

Required CACREP 2016 Standards for Practicum Students:

- Students complete supervised counseling practicum experiences that total a minimum of 100 clock hours over a full academic term that is a minimum of 10 weeks.

- Practicum students complete at least 40 clock hours of direct service with actual clients that contributes to the development of counseling skills.
- Practicum students have weekly interaction with supervisors that averages one hour per week of individual and/or triadic supervision throughout the practicum by (1) a counselor education program faculty member, (2) a student supervisor who is under the supervision of a counselor education program faculty member, or (3) a site supervisor who is working in consultation on a regular schedule with a counselor education program faculty member in accordance with the supervision agreement.
- Practicum students participate in an average of 1 ½ hours per week of group supervision on a regular schedule throughout the practicum. Group supervision must be provided by a counselor education program faculty member or a student supervisor who is under the supervision of a counselor education program faculty member."

B. Internship

The internship is considered to be the culminating academic experience and, consequently, occurs at the end of a student's training program. Expectations for internships are rather demanding in terms of placement duties and hours of commitment. Essentially, students completing the internship have the option of either one full-time placement (40 hours per week for 6 hours of credit for SC and 12 hours for CMHC) or two (2) consecutive half-time placements (20 hours per week for 3 hours of credit per semester for SC or 6 hours credit for CMHC). Student interns perform the duties of a counselor in a setting in which the student aspires to work upon graduation. Students employed in full-time work should anticipate meeting this challenge. The culminating internship experience must feature at least 600 hours of internship-related activity in the placement, of which at least 240 hours are in direct contact with clients. As with practicum, internship placements are prearranged during the semester prior to enrollments. For school and clinical mental health students, on-campus supervision is provided weekly.

Prearranged Placement. Internship placements are to be arranged and approved by the University Supervisor of Internships prior to the beginning of the semester/term for which the intern is enrolled for internship credit. To assist in making the internship experience as meaningful as possible, students are responsible for making preliminary contacts with prospective internship site placements. (This activity is very much like a job interview, a procedure we ALL hope you will undertake in the future!) Prospective interns are encouraged to develop their vita and arrange to interview with a prospective site supervisor. (A copy of the Program Planning Record may be helpful for students to discuss their academic experiences.)

Internship responsibilities and duties. The internship is an academic course and, therefore, is subject to the same scrutiny and the same rights of due process for faculty and students as with any other academic course. For this reason, the syllabus features the same language and accompanying documentation as with any other course. However, because of the uniqueness of each student's internship placement, determination of an academic grade must be based on evaluations of each student's work in that setting. No syllabus could possibly be developed to address each aspect of each intern's placement. Therefore, to clarify the expectations of the intern, the site supervisor, and the university supervisor, each intern is responsible for developing an internship agreement specifying the nature of their duties. This document serves two (2) critical purposes: (a) it becomes the basis for clarifying the agreements among all parties involved in the internship, and (b) it serves as a reference for assigning a final internship grade.

At the point of pre-approval for the internship placement, all parties will have a verbal understanding of the expectations for the internship placement. Interns should develop an initial draft of the internship agreement for discussion with their site supervisor during the first week of the placement to ensure that all desired aspects of the internship experience are addressed (copies and guidelines are provided in supplemental handouts). Once approved by both the site supervisor and the intern, draft documents are printed on University of Alabama letterhead and signed by all parties (original document retained in University files; copies provided to intern and site supervisor). Supervision contracts are developed by each student to define roles and responsibilities of the counseling supervisor, site supervisor, and the student during practicum and internship. Departures from the stated contents of the internship agreement are to be discussed by and agreed upon by all parties. Grade determination for interns is based upon successful completion of the elements of the internship agreement.

Orientation, assistance, consultation, and professional development opportunities are provided by the counseling program faculty to site supervisors. All internship forms and supervision training are electronically provided to site supervisors.

Documentation. Interns are responsible for retaining cumulative documentation of all internship activities. The program requires completion of a supervised internship in the student's designated program area of 600 clock hours, begun after successful completion of the practicum. The internship is intended to reflect the comprehensive work experience of a professional counselor appropriate to the designated program area. Each student's internship includes all of the following:

Required CACREP 2016 Standards for Interns:

- After successful completion of the practicum, students complete 600 clock hours of supervised counseling internship in roles and settings with clients relevant to their specialty area.
- Internship students complete at least 240 clock hours of direct service.
- Internship students have weekly interaction with supervisors that averages one hour per week of individual and/or triadic supervision throughout the internship, provided by (1) the site supervisor, (2) counselor education program faculty, or (3) a student supervisor who is under the supervision of a counselor education program faculty member.
- Internship students participate in an average of 1½ hours per week of group supervision on a regular schedule throughout the internship. Group supervision must be provided by a counselor education program faculty member or a student supervisor who is under the supervision of a counselor education program faculty member."

Internship Evaluation. Evaluations of internships are secured from two (2) sources at the conclusion of the internship placement. The first source of evaluation is derived from the site supervisor using the Internship Performance Evaluation rubric. The second source of evaluation is derived from the student. These evaluations, along with the Summary of Internship Activities, are due to the university supervisor as noted on the schedule for internship. Site supervisor evaluations offer formal ratings of performance and a recommended grade based on the Internship Performance Evaluation rubric.

Site Supervisors Requirements for Practicum and Internship:

Prospective site supervisors must meet the following CACREP and program criteria:

- A minimum of a master's degree in counseling or related profession with equivalent qualifications, including appropriate certifications and/or licenses.
- A minimum of two (2) years of pertinent professional experience in the program area in which the student is enrolled.
- Knowledge of the program's expectations, requirements, and evaluation procedures for students (faculty will provide additional information if necessary).
- Relevant training in counseling supervision.

The Procedure for completing a prearranged practicum or internship is:

1. Prospective intern interviews with prospective site supervisor.
2. Prospective intern discusses placement opportunity with university supervisor.
3. Prospective intern discusses placement opportunity with prospective site supervisor.
4. If an unapproved site, university supervisor visits site to determine placement suitability based on prospective intern's training and aspirations as well as the program
5. If approved, UA supervisor informs both site supervisor and intern of approval.

Student Insurance. Prior to 8/18/20, students are enrolled for UA liability insurance through registration for any practicum or internship in Counselor Education per policy of the Office of Risk Management. Students must complete the liability form each term and return the form to BCE instructor for course. Beginning from 8/19/2020, all students who plan to start practicum or internship for counseling/supervision practices are responsible to purchase individual liability insurance for professional counseling at their own expense and submit a copy of insurance verification to the Practicum/Internship Coordinator prior to their practice.

Time Limit for Degree Completion

Graduate School information on Time Limits.

Student Progress Requirements

Each student enrolled in a degree-seeking status in every degree level of study in Counselor Education is involved in a Student Performance review near the end of the Fall and Spring semesters. The rubric used is the Faculty Review of Student Performance and Review of Student Dispositions. The faculty review professional and personal strengths and concerns, while monitoring progress. This form entails five sections: academic skills, clinical skills, ethical and professional behaviors, personal characteristics, and the four professional dispositions, endorsed by the College of Education are also included.

Within each section, faculty members will discuss their observed student performance or individual characteristics/dispositions over various indicators and rate a student on a four-point scale: advanced, target, developing, and unacceptable. If dispositions do not meet the minimum standard of "Target," a concern for remediation plan is raised. Student data on their dispositions are also aggregated to help faculty members annually evaluate program objectives for the purpose of program improvement.

Based on this evaluation, students will receive one of the following based on rubric scores: (1) A letter stating exemplary progress in the program, (2) Communication that there were no concerns related to progress in the program, (3) Communication to meet advisor because of a provisional recommendation, and (4) An action plan is required (Remediation). Such reviews are regular components of the training program. Student reviews

are conducted with the participation of all Program faculty. Results of student evaluations are entered into each student's record and discussed with the student and their advisor.

In instances of concern about a student, pertinent materials and observations about the student are examined and discussed among the faculty and remedial decisions are determined according to the Selection, Review, Retention, and Dismissal Policy noted in the appendices of the Student Handbook. Due process issues affecting student evaluations are followed in accordance with all published guidelines in materials from the Graduate Catalog and University of Alabama Faculty Handbook.

Academic Misconduct Information

Graduate School information on Academic Misconduct.

Withdrawals and Leave of Absence Information

Graduate School information on Withdrawals and Leave of Absence.

Academic Grievances Information

Student Complaint Procedures

Step 1. (optional) Student raises the issue of concern with the faculty member involved and tries to resolve the concern to the satisfaction of both parties. If the student is not comfortable with taking this first step, the student may proceed to Step 2.

Step 2. If the first Step is taken, and no resolution is found, the student may file a formal complaint or grievance with the Department Head and offer any documentation in support of the grievance. As indicated above, the student may also start the grievance process with a formal complaint to the Department Head. Once in receipt of the complaint, the Department Head is expected to work with the two parties to find a resolution to the mutual satisfaction of the parties. The Department Head is also expected to keep a documented record of the effort and to forward all documentation, as it pertains to the complaint, to the Senior Associate Dean if the complaint remains unresolved. Step 2 should take no longer than two weeks.

Step 3. Should the problem remain unresolved, the complaint (and all the accumulated documentation) is forwarded to the Senior Associate Dean to come under University grievance policies as outlined in the University's Faculty Handbook. The Senior Associate Dean then investigates the grievance, surveys the documentation pertaining to the case and provides a summary and a recommendation to the Dean. The Dean then renders a final decision. This final Step should not take any longer than two weeks.

Step 4. If the student is not satisfied with the decision offered by the Dean, the student may appeal to the Office of Academic Affairs

Graduate School information on Academic Grievances.

Grades and Academic Standing

Graduate School information on Grades and Academic Standing.

Graduate School Deadlines

Information on Graduate School Deadlines.

Application for Graduation

Information on the Application for Graduation.