

# COUNSELOR EDUCATION: SCHOOL COUNSELING, MA

The Master of Arts Degree in School Counseling is designed to provide prospective school counselors with the skills necessary to establish and conduct effective developmental guidance and counseling programs in the pre-k-12 school setting. Students are trained through a comprehensive curriculum and internship program that qualifies them for work at all levels of school counseling. The school counseling program meets accreditation criteria of The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CEAP; formally NCATE) and Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).

## Admissions

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 must include a statement of goals and purpose in seeking graduate training.
- 3 letters of recommendation, consistent with goals of the program from persons who can attest to your potential for success in graduate school, are required.

Admission decisions are made each semester. Admission decisions may be made in the summer if openings remain after May admission decisions have been completed. Applicants should be aware of the following priority dates and allow adequate time for applications to be reviewed:

- May 1: Priority deadline for all application materials to be considered for fall admission
- October 15: Priority deadline for all application materials to be considered for spring admission

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

While the GRE is not required for regular 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) may be considered for Admission with Permission to Continue. Applicants who do not fully meet the GPA or admission test score requirements may be eligible to be considered for Admission with Permission to Continue. Applicants who do not meet at least one criterion for Admission with Permission to Continue are not considered for admission. A decision to admit with Permission to Continue into to the program will be based upon several factors including the combination of GPA and admission test scores (if provided), goals, and previous work experience.

Applicants must also meet the fingerprinting requirement for background clearance.

Please be reminded that delays in processing applications are both necessary and inevitable. In this way, we can ensure adequate provision of faculty and Program resources for students admitted to the Program in Counselor Education.

Applicants without prior certification and/or professional educational experience may be considered for admission to this CACREP-accredited program.

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

## Curricular Requirements

All Counselor Education master's degree programs consist of 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 entering the program will be the one followed until graduation. 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, including courses in Educational Psychology (designated as BEP), Educational Research (designated as BER), School Psychology (designated as BSP), and other areas. These courses will afford students the opportunity to take advantage of the expertise of faculty in other program areas.

Candidates must present a GPA of at least 3.25 on all courses in the program, with no grade below a C. Passing scores on a comprehensive exam and the appropriate Praxis assessment(s) are required.

Code and Title		Hours
<b>Foundations of Professional Studies:</b>		
BEP 550	Life Span Development	3
BCE 611	Multicult. Approach Counseling *	3
<b>Educational Research:</b>		
BER 500	Intro Educatn Research	3
BER 540	Statistical Methods In Educ	3
<b>Instructional Support Area:</b>		
BCE 512	Counseling Theory Proc	3
BCE 513	Career Development	3
BCE 514	Counseling Skills	3
BCE 516	Practicum Counseling II	3
BCE 521	Group Procecd Coun Educ	3
BCE 522	Indiv & Group Appraisal	3
BCE 613	Substance Abuse Counseling	3
BSP 660	Psychopathology	3
<b>Additional Requirements:</b>		
BCE 511	Principles Of Guidance	3
BCE 517	Professional Counseling	3
BCE 523	Prog Development & Mgt	3
BCE 650	Couns Stratg Fam Relatns	3
Elective (with advisor approval only)		3
SPE 500* or advisor approved elective		3
<b>Internship:</b>		
BCE 525	Intern Sch Clint Ment Hea Cou (spanning grade levels P-12)	6
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>60</b>

### Footnotes

- \* If the student took an Introduction to Exceptional Children course as an undergraduate, substitute another 500-level course with advisor approval. SPE 500 is an ALSDE requirement for certification.

## Transfer Credit

In compliance with regulations established by the Alabama Department of Education and outlined in the Alabama Administrative Code, coursework used to meet Class B certification requirements may not be used to meet requirements for Class A certification.

Graduate School information on 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.

Concurrent with comprehensive exams, students must submit the following documents: (1) current curriculum vita, (2) personal theory paper, and (3) an additional paper, project, or presentation that the student believes is their best work in their area of study and preparation.

Graduate School information on Comprehensive Exams.

## Fieldwork/Practicum/Internship Requirements

While the skills necessary to performing in the 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 your program features a variety of practical, applied requirements. These are typically noted as "practicum" or "internship" on your Program Planning Records.

### A. Practicum

As an initial experience in applied work, school counseling students engage in closely supervised work with students in the schools in course noted as "practicum." BCE 516 typically involves at least 1.5

hours of weekly group supervision and one hour of weekly individual supervision with student contact throughout. University supervision for school counseling 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.

The Practicum course is 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 until they have "passed" the course. Such a decision reflects the fundamental commitment of our program to quality service to students, 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 or students 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 1½ 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 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) or two (2) consecutive half-time placements (20 hours per week for 3 hours of credit per semester for SC). Student interns perform the duties of a school 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 or students. As with practicum, internship placements are prearranged

during the semester prior to enrollments. For school counseling 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 your Plan of Study 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, your 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 or students 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 1 ½ 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:

1. A minimum of a master's degree in counseling or related profession with equivalent qualifications, including appropriate certifications and/or licenses.
2. A minimum of two (2) years of pertinent professional experience in the program area in which the student is enrolled.
3. Knowledge of the program's expectations, requirements, and evaluation procedures for students (faculty will provide additional information if necessary).
4. 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 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.

## Additional Academic Requirements

All students are required to complete fingerprinting for background clearance before going into the schools. A passing score on the Professional School Counselor Praxis subject assessment is required.

Students who do not have valid professional educator certification (valid teaching certificate in AL) and two years of full-time acceptable professional educational work experience prior to admission to the School Counseling/MA program will be required to take and pass the National Counselor Examination (NCE) before applying for certification in Alabama.

### *Electronic Learning Management System Requirement*

A designated, electronic learning management system is required of all students in programs leading to professional educator certification.

Students in the School Counseling program are required to maintain a VIA/Watermark account. Students are required to submit (1) Showcase of Resources for Advanced Certification Students (i.e., School Counseling

Portfolio), at three checkpoints, throughout their program of study and (2) assignments for CACREP-affiliated course.

## Academic Misconduct Information

Graduate School information on Academic Misconduct.

## Withdrawals and Leave of Absence Information

Graduate School information on Withdrawals and Leave Absence.

## Academic Grievances Information

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.

## Certification

To be eligible for Alabama Class A School Counselor certification based on a State-approved program, students must:

- maintain a GPA of at least 3.25 on all courses with no grade below a C
- earn a passing score on the appropriate, Alabama approved Praxis for School Counseling
- hold at least a valid Alabama Class B professional educator certificate in a teaching field, a valid Class A professional leadership certificate, or a valid Class A professional educator certificate in another area of instructional support

Students must complete the proper application form for Alabama certification. A student who does not apply for professional certification within 60 months after completing a State-approved program will be required to meet the current program.

According to Alabama regulations, individuals admitted to a Class A program based on a professional educator certificate from another state must earn the prerequisite Alabama certification before applying for Alabama Class A (master's level) certification.

Alternatively, individuals who have completed at least the master's degree level CACREP-accredited school counseling program may apply for Alabama certification in school counseling through the CACREP-Accredited School Counseling Program Approach.

Students who plan to seek employment in other states must secure the proper professional licensure application forms from those states' departments of education and are responsible for knowledge about professional licensure requirements in those states.