



***Counseling Graduate
Student Handbook***

**Department of Health &
Human Development**

Table of Contents

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Introduction, Mission, Objectives, and Faculty</i>	3
<i>Guidelines for Graduate Students</i>	7
<i>Policies</i>	11
<i>Professional Affiliations</i>	18
<i>Faculty Expectations of Students</i>	19
<i>Graduate Assistantships</i>	20
<i>Comprehensive Examinations</i>	20
<i>Appendices</i>	
Graduate Program Prerequisites	25
Handbook Acknowledgment Form	26



Program Mission

The mission of the counseling program is to prepare interpersonally skilled and culturally competent professional counselors who facilitate the psychological growth and development of those they serve. These counselors also help those who experience difficulties in overcoming or resolving interpersonal, vocational, and emotional adjustment problems associated with modern living.

The program prepares students to be employed as counselors in schools, community/mental health agencies, and private practice. The major goals of the program are to train practitioners who:

- Preserve the integrity of the counseling field and who demonstrate knowledge and skills in each of the eight common core areas of counseling.
- Serve as effective counselors in schools, community agencies, and private practice.
- Provide leadership in educational and human services settings.
- Implement effective programs and interventions that enrich the quality of life for individuals, families, groups, and organizations.
- Strive to enhance the worth, dignity, self-respect, and positive development of themselves and of individuals and groups within their employment context.

Values of the Program

The values of the counseling program are consistent with the mission and values promoted by Montana State University. These values include:

- Excellence in teaching, research, service, and support activities.
- Free exchange of ideas in the spirit of academic freedom and professional responsibility.
- Contributions to the greater understanding and resolution of societal problems.
- An open and trusting environment in which individuals can expect ethical treatment and civility in all interactions.
- Respect for human diversity, pluralism, and community.
- Shared governance, teamwork, and collaboration in decision-making.
- Personal commitment and contribution to the university's greater good.

Program Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes

Program objectives and student learning outcomes are developed and revised when necessary through self-study on a regular schedule. This evaluation process is based on input from program faculty, current and former students, and personnel in cooperating agencies. Program objectives and outcomes are based on the eight core areas of study as designated by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP):

Professional identity
Career development
Assessment

Social and cultural diversity
Helping relationships
Research and program evaluation

Human growth and development
Group work

Students will:

Be able to conceptualize clients and apply concepts from the eight common core areas in their work with clients.

As measured by:

Successful completion of portfolio assignments and benchmarks;
Successful completion and passing of the comprehensive exam;
Feedback from internship supervisors and employers;
Feedback from current and former students;

Students will:

Learn to be effective counselors in schools, community agencies, and private practices.

As measured by:

Successful completion of portfolio assignments and benchmarks
Successful completion and passing of the comprehensive exam;
Feedback from internship supervisors and employers;
Feedback from current and former students;

Students will:

Learn to provide leadership in educational and human service settings.

As measured by:

Feedback from internship supervisors and employers;
Feedback from current and former students;

Students will:

Learn to implement effective programs and interventions for individuals, families, groups, and organizations.

As measured by:

Successful completion of Benchmarks and grades of 'B' or better in basic skills, practicum and internship courses;
Feedback from internship supervisors and employers;
Feedback from current and former students;

Students will:

Learn to enhance the worth, dignity, self-respect, and positive development of themselves and of individuals and groups within their employment context.

As measured by:

Intermittent benchmark reviews conducted by committee members;

Grades of 'B' or better in counseling skills, practicum, and internship courses;

Feedback from current and former students;

Introduction

We would like to congratulate you on your admission to The Graduate School here at Montana State University. Our faculty in the Department of Health and Human Development would like to welcome you. We hope that you will have a meaningful learning experience as you work towards your graduate degree. It is important for you to understand that as a graduate student you belong to a college and a department. Officially, you are a graduate student in The Graduate School who is planning and working on a program of study in the Department of Health and Human Development. Consequently, you have the responsibility of keeping apprised and following the policies and guidelines of two entities on campus. While this document outlines guidelines of our department, it is essential that you read, understand, and follow the guidelines and policies of The Graduate School. You can access their policies and guidelines in The Graduate School section of the *Montana State University Bulletin* or in The Graduate School section of the MSU webpage: <http://www.montana.edu/gradschool>. Our department has a variety of disciplines and a diverse faculty with many different research interests. The following is a list of our core and adjunct faculty members.

Core Faculty in Counseling

Program Leaders

Rebecca Koltz, PhD, Associate Professor; Marriage and Family; Graduate Coordinator

Office: 210E Herrick Hall
Phone: 994-3299
E-Mail: rebecca.koltz@montana.edu

Mark D. Nelson, EdD, Professor; School Counseling

Office: 121 Herrick Hall
Phone: 994-3810
E-Mail: markn@montana.edu

Anna Elliot, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

Office: 210 Herrick Hall
Phone: 994-3245
Email: anna.elliott@montana.edu

Counseling Faculty

Edward Dunbar, PhD, Assistant Professor

Kara Hurt-Avila, PhD, Assistant Professor

Human Development Clinic

Heidi McKinley, PhD, LCPC

Office: Human Development Clinic; 1501 S. 3rd

Phone: 994-5993

Non-tenure-Track Faculty

At times we use non-tenure track faculty to teach courses in the program due to a variety of reasons. We expect and appreciate that our students treat those individuals that they would give core faculty in the program.

Guidelines for Graduate Students

The following guidelines have been developed to facilitate your progress from admission through graduation. Responsibilities are outlined regarding the role of the student, the committee chair, and the graduate committee. Expectations and procedures for theses and professional papers are listed.

Responsibilities

Role of the Student

To reiterate, all graduate students in our department are matriculated into The Graduate School and design their program of study within the Department of Health and Human Development. Consequently, students must follow and meet the expectations/policies of both The Graduate School and our department. Prior to enrollment, the student may be assigned a temporary advisor to assist with registration for the first semester of classes. Generally, program leaders serve as advisors for students who have been selected into a particular program. For example, if you have been accepted into mental health counseling, the program leader for mental health counseling will serve as your advisor.

The Graduate School requires that by the end of the *second semester* a graduate committee be formed and a *program of study* be filed in their office. Students failing to submit a program of study by this date will be seen as failing to achieve satisfactory progress. Consequently, the student will be placed on academic probation and will become ineligible for financial aid, including graduate assistantships and work study. The chair of a student's committee is usually the program leader for the major area of study. Additionally, two other committee members are selected from the counseling program in consultation with the student's chair. Signatures on your program of study are also required from the department head and the dean of The Graduate School.

Within the limits of university regulations and program requirements, the student is the chief architect of his/her program of study. The student must be aware of all procedures, forms, and deadlines required by the department and The Graduate School. His/her chair and committee are available for guidance and consultation. Please consult The Graduate School's website (www.montana.edu/gradschool) for forms and specific information.

It is the student's responsibility to arrange periodic conferences with his/her chair to review progress and deal with questions that may arise. Students usually meet with their chair at least once each semester to review their progress and plan the next semester's course work and activities.

Registration Information

There are several items regarding registration for classes that require your attention. In order to register, you will first need an advisor code (sometimes called a "PIN"). Your PINs for

registration will be entered each semester into "DegreeWorks" found in "MyInfo." For registration, please go to www.montana.edu and click on "MyInfo" and then click on "Registration/Advising Information" for the current semester.

From time to time, faculty will distribute e-mail messages to your MSU e-mail account. One is automatically set up for you when you register for classes. You are expected to check this account for important messages but can forward it to your preferred e-mail address if you wish.

Incoming students are often interested to know if there are any activities that they can undertake before the first day of classes. Faculty will expect you to read the counseling graduate handbook (<http://www.montana.edu/hhd/graduate/counseling> and click on "Counseling Graduate Handbook") sometime during the summer semester. I would like to personally encourage you to read this handbook before the first day of class. Summer semester in your first year can be very busy and you may find it to be a struggle to read the handbook later.

Role of the Committee Chair

The chair helps the student plan his/her program and serves as a liaison between the student and The Graduate School. The chair advises the student in selecting committee members with reference to faculty expertise that will be most helpful to the student's objectives.

The chair has a responsibility to be available for periodic consultations with the student. During these consultations, the chair will review the student's concerns and assist him or her in planning future activities.

Counseling students are reviewed every semester by the department faculty regarding their personal development, professional development, academic progress, counseling skill development, and career orientation. The review is discussed with each student each semester during academic advising in preparation for the next semester. Problems that arise through this review or from any other source will be addressed in a manner that is described in the *Policies* section of this handbook.

Role of the Graduate Committee

The purpose of the committee is to provide guidance and to protect the student's interests throughout the completion of the graduate program. The committee has the responsibility of approving the student's program of study.

The committee has a duty to observe the standards and protect the interests of the university regarding the academic quality of work being done under its supervision.

If a committee member must be replaced, the new member is bound by the agreements of the previous committee. Any professor who disagrees with prior agreements should not accept an assignment to that committee.

Academic Standards and Program Progression for Counseling Students

The primary objective of the counseling program is the education and training of persons entering the counseling profession. Graduates of the program may be recommended for certification as school counselors or be able to pursue post-graduate clinical practice and supervision in pursuit of state licensure as a professional counselor. As educators, faculty members have a responsibility to provide students appropriate educational experiences and sufficient guidance and supervision. Because professional counseling--whether conducted in schools, agencies or private practice--requires high levels of professional maturity and interpersonal skills, our curriculum offers a number of learning courses which are designed to foster students' personal development, relationship skills, and professional orientation. The courses include self-exploration and skill acquisition regarding personal values, professional issues, personal and professional relationships, and group dynamics.

Our counseling program is taught through a variety of curriculum formats to include in-person, blended (online/onsite), and fully online (in the case of some of our electives). Faculty use their expertise to create a learning environment to best teach the topics of study. Additionally, our program has a full summer program. All courses in the summer are offered in a blended format to allow for more flexibility with work, clinical, and home life schedules.

As licensed professional practitioners, faculty members also have a responsibility to the public (future clients) to ensure that counseling students who care for them are competent to do so with effectiveness and a high standard for quality care. This legal responsibility also extends to mental health agencies and school administrators, to all licensed and credentialed professionals providing care within those agencies, and to the counseling students themselves. As helping professionals we must be committed to safeguarding client safety and providing quality care.

The student, upon admission to any of the counseling programs, assumes the obligations of performing and behaving according to the standards set by the counseling programs. Mere satisfactory *academic* performance does not, in and of itself, constitute a *successful* progression throughout the counseling programs.

In keeping with the standards of the counseling profession, the counseling programs expect students to demonstrate ethical behavior. Expected behaviors include but are not limited to abiding by the guidelines for academic integrity; respecting the privacy and confidentiality of clients, students, and faculty members; placing priority on the health, safety, and welfare of clients; and avoiding prejudicial or discriminatory behavior in relationships with clients, students, and faculty members.

Some examples of misconduct would be sharing confidential information, fabrication or falsification of information in the classroom or clinical sites, misrepresenting the counseling program, any form of cheating, including plagiarism, misrepresentation of one's qualifications, and aiding or facilitating dishonesty or unethical behavior in others. Any violation of the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice of the American Counseling Association will result in disciplinary action and may be grounds for immediate dismissal from the program.

Where there is failure on the part of the student to meet reasonable standards of performance or behavior, or when, in the judgment of a faculty member, reasonable supervision is

inadequate to ensure client welfare, the faculty member has the authority to remove a student from the clinical setting.

The criteria which will be considered in denying the student access to clients are: demonstrated emotional instability, indifference or insensitivity to client safety and progress, lack of professional judgment, any unethical conduct as outlined in the current Code of Ethics of the American Counseling Association, any health condition which makes it impossible for the student to carry out her/his work without jeopardizing client safety and progress, or any other condition or circumstance which constitutes an unreasonable risk to the safety and well being of the client. A student in a counseling program may be referred to appropriate resources for assistance with problems which are non-academic in nature but which might impair the student's effectiveness as a professional counselor.

Whenever, pursuant to the foregoing, denial of student access to a clinical setting results in the student being dismissed from the counseling program, the student shall be fully informed of the decision and its consequences and shall be afforded the right to a meeting with his/her graduate committee. Appeals are to be conducted according to MSU's Student Academic and Conduct Guidelines and Grievance Procedures (http://www2.montana.edu/policy/student_conduct)

Program Plans

The Graduate School has two options for program plans: Plan A and Plan B. The counseling program uses Plan B. With this plan, the program of study requires additional coursework/training, rather than doing a thesis. Counseling faculty emphasize practical application and clinical preparation in all three counseling programs. Consequently, we do not offer a thesis option and students will pursue Plan B in their program of study.

Students interested in pursuing doctoral programs may choose to do a Professional Paper/Project; however, students must consult with their committee chair within the first year of their program if interested, and no later than mid-semester during the spring of the first year. A Professional Paper/Project promotes inquiry and academic scholarship into a variety of areas and methodologies. The project is elective credits that would be pursued *in addition to the 48- or 60-credit degree requirements*, and within the normal two-year program of study.

Policies

University Bulletin Policies

All graduate students in our programs are *expected* to review the policies and procedures for successful completion of master's degrees in the current *MSU Bulletin*. This information can also be found on The Graduate School's webpage at <http://www.montana.edu/gradschool/>.

Grading Policy

The department maintains high academic standards for admission and retention in the program. Careful evaluation of students' performance and feedback to students are seen as essential components of a quality graduate education. Assigned grades for course work is one important form of feedback students receive. Grading criteria vary across several considerations (type of course content, length of course, number of credits, etc.). In general, grades reflect the following range of assessments of students' performance in a course:

Excellent to outstanding performance. "A" is the highest grade possible and is an indication of an outstanding level of performance. "A-" is considered to be an excellent level of performance. It is not expected that all students will achieve this level of performance, nor is it expected that students will achieve this in every course.

Good to very good performance. "B+" is considered very good performance, "B" is considered to be good performance. Grades of a "B" in graduate courses are not indicative of reservations about student's preparation for continuing in the program or entering the profession. "B-" is considered adequate performance; however, in clinical courses a B- may be indicative of concerns that will prevent students from moving forward clinically in the program (see information below).

Additionally, in clinical courses (Basic skills, Practicum, and Internship) grades of B- or lower are considered inadequate performance and not the level of mastery expected in clinical courses. Students will likely be required to repeat the course (If Basic Skills is not passed then the student will not be able to take additional coursework until the course is repeated and passed. Also, if the grade is low enough faculty may question the appropriateness of the student continuing in the program. Adequate performance in academic classes is not always indicative of good counseling skills. Students in this program must demonstrate both.

Not the level of mastery expected in graduate education. Students earning "C" grades or lower will be required to repeat the course and/or do extra work to increase their mastery of the course material. Repeating the course and/or extra work may be required in courses that are considered essential to the students' continuation in the program and entry into the profession.

Inadequate mastery of course content. “D” grades may bring into question the appropriateness of the student continuing in the program and entering the profession. Repeating the course and/or extra work will be required.

Failure. “F” grades are cause to question the appropriateness of the student continuing in the program and entering the profession. If the student’s graduate committee decides that the student will be allowed to continue in the program, repeating the course and/or extra work will be required.

While grades are an important form of feedback and evaluation, they do not provide a complete picture of student performance. Grades serve as a single indicator for what is usually a complex array of performances. Also, one grade is usually required to cover a continuum of quality of performance. For example, “B” grades may be assigned for performance ranging from “adequate for graduate-level work” to “very good performance.” For this reason it is important that students receive other forms of quantitative and qualitative feedback from faculty and peers (e.g., written comments, conferences, letters of recommendation, etc.).

Students are encouraged to seek additional feedback from faculty and peers in areas where they feel they would benefit from more information. Students are also encouraged to seek further information from faculty if they are uncertain about grading criteria or the meaning of a grade.

Leave of Absence, Withdrawal, and Problem Remediation of Graduate Students

Students wishing to withdraw from graduate school may do so at any time. Please let your advisor know if you are withdrawing so that your position in the graduate program can be made available to another student. Students should contact The Graduate School to pursue the withdrawal procedure.

Students wishing to take a leave of absence need to reach an agreement with their chair concerning the leave. The student should write a letter to the chair describing the leave, and a copy should be filed with The Graduate School. The letter should include the reasons for the leave of absence and its duration.

Students who do not have an agreement for a leave of absence with their chair (and a letter documenting that agreement) and do not take classes for one semester will be withdrawn from the graduate program to allow opportunities for other students. Students who are withdrawn for nonattendance will need to reapply for admission to graduate school if they desire to resume their program.

Problems may arise regarding student progress through the graduate program. Potential problems include inadequate academic performance (grades lower than a “B”); inadequate skill development (lower than a “B” grade in competency development, practicum, and/or internship courses); inadequate progress on the graduate program (average of less than one sixth of the total credits needed to graduate completed per year); impairment of functioning (causes could include health problems, stress, mental illness, substance abuse and/or dependence); or violations of standards of ethical conduct. These and other problems will be addressed in the following manner:

First, the chair will discuss the problem with the student and develop plans for remediation. If the student is in agreement with the plans for remediation, then there will be a follow-up meeting at a designated time at which point progress regarding problem remediation will be assessed. The chair will keep documentation of the discussion addressing the problem and the discussion concerning progress and its remediation. If the student and the chair cannot reach an agreement about the problem in need of remediation, the manner in which the problem will be addressed, or an agreement about the assessment of progress in the remediation of the problem, the student will meet with the entire graduate committee. The student may also ask to meet with any other program faculty or the entire program faculty. If the student's committee is in agreement that the student is failing to remediate identified problems within an appropriate time span, the student may be counseled out of the graduate program and into alternative career or academic programs which are better suited to his/her needs and abilities. Students wishing to contest problem remediation plans, or being counseled to withdraw from the program may do so by following the university's student grievance procedures which are referenced in the *MSU Bulletin*.

Background Checks

The counseling program at Montana State University requires background checks before allowing students to see clients in the community. This means that in the fall of your first year you will be given paperwork to complete for a background check. The program utilizes university guidelines when evaluating background check information. The following is a summary of our policy.

Results from a background check will be considered in the following manner:

If the background check reveals criminal records or other serious misconduct (other than minor traffic violations), the authorized initiator will consult with MSU Legal Counsel and the university police chief. The authorized initiator in most cases will be the program leader for each counseling program. In such cases, the authorized initiator, MSU Legal Counsel, university police chief, and, if determined necessary, the department head of Health and Human Development shall make an initial determination as to whether the background check results would disqualify the candidate from being allowed to see counselees in the community.

The group's consideration shall include, but not be limited to, the following factors:

- a. number of offenses or misconduct and the circumstances of each;
- b. length of time between the offense or misconduct and the application for program and/or time spent in the program;
- c. other relevant history;
- d. evidence of applicant's rehabilitation efforts;
- e. severity of the offense or misconduct; and
- f. relevance of the offense or misconduct to responsibilities of being a professional counselor.

To the extent required by the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), students will be informed, in writing, notice of adverse information discovered in the background check and given an opportunity to respond. Upon conclusion of the review, written notice will be sent to the student regarding the program's decision of eligibility for placement in the community with regard to practicum and internship and continued placement in the program.

All results of the background check will remain confidential, will be maintained by authorized initiators, and will be disclosed only to those individuals involved with the program who have a need to know. *Students may not proceed to practicum without completing this background check.*

HIPAA Policy

Faculty, students, and supervisors are required to adhere to all legal and ethical standards at all times. It is the students' responsibility to review ACA guidelines prior to beginning to see clients. Your access to confidential client information subjects you to legal and ethical obligations. It is imperative that you comply with all information security policies. Your access to confidential client information subjects you to legal and ethical obligations. During your skills course you will receive an encrypted thumb drive. You must use this thumb drive when you are taking sessions to your supervisor to receive supervision on, turning in sessions for graded review, and any other activity that would require transfer and subsequent viewing of sessions. If you lose your assigned encrypted thumb drive, you must report the lost drive immediately to your supervisor. Failure to do so is a HIPAA and ethical violation, and may result in a written warning to dismissal from the program.

Endorsement Policy

Program faculty members endorse students only for the professional credential and/or employment for which the student has been prepared. Preparation includes course work, practicum, and internship experiences related to the credential or employment position they are seeking. Information about the positions and credentials that each of the programs prepares students for is offered in the program descriptions at the end of this handbook. Further information can be obtained from faculty and the Career, Internship and Student Services (<http://www.montana.edu/wwwcp/>) center on campus.

If graduates from the MSU Counseling Program want to come back to the program and take coursework to fulfill requirements to obtain a different certification/licensure then this may be a possibility; however, it is always dependent upon available room in classes and permission of the instructor. Additionally, if you take an internship class to gain specific clinical experience in that area, it is your responsibility to secure a site.

We only allow this option for graduates of our program, and it is only possible if there is room in the program courses. You cannot just register for coursework without contacting the Graduate Coordinator of the program. Finally, this is not an available option for one or two courses. This option is for those who will commit to a course of study to obtain a different licensure.

Program Evaluation and Improvement

The graduate programs are continually being evaluated and improved. Students offer evaluation on every course and the advising they receive. When students graduate, they are asked to evaluate their entire program. Former students are asked to again evaluate the quality of preparation they received in their program after they have been working in the field for several years. Agencies and schools that offer internships to students and agencies and schools that employ graduates are asked to evaluate the programs. Results of the comprehensive exams and reviews of students' progress

offer evaluative information regarding the quality of the programs. The programs undergo accreditation reviews during which they are evaluated in relation to regional and national standards. The faculty continually monitors the literature from professional and consumer organizations regarding graduate education and continually evaluates the programs in relation to the ideas presented by those organizations.

Information from all of the sources mentioned above provides guidance for improvement of the programs. This information and suggestions for improvements are presented in a meeting for all faculty and students, which occurs at least once each year. Students are encouraged to attend these meetings to gain information and to offer input on potential program improvements. Because some program improvements may take place while students are pursuing their programs, it is especially important that students be informed and have input. The date, time, and location of these meetings will be posted on the informational bulletin board and announced in classes.

Practicum Placement Requirements for Marriage and Family and Mental Health Students

Students will be allowed to enroll in practicum only after successfully completing HDCO 521 Counseling Skills (successfully is with a grade of B or better). Practicum is only offered in the spring semester. Marriage and family and mental health students do their practicum at the Human Development Clinic. Additionally, once students begin their clinical rotation they must continually be enrolled in clinical work. If circumstances necessitate a break then students will be required to audit the HDCO 521 Counseling Skills course.

The Human Development Clinic was established to involve counseling graduate students in supervised experiences offering the following services:

Individual counseling	Marriage and family counseling
Consultation	Professional development
Education and training workshops	Referrals
Group counseling	Scientific inquiry

Services are available to individuals, couples, and families in Gallatin County and southwest Montana. Graduate students will provide services under the supervision of licensed mental health professionals. Students will receive a handbook for the Human Development Clinic during a clinic orientation, and are responsible to follow all policies and procedures.

Practicum Placement Requirements for School Counseling Students

Students will be allowed to enroll in practicum only after successfully completing HDCO 521 Counseling Skills. Practicum is only offered in the spring semester. School counseling students complete their practicum in a school arranged for them by the school counseling program leader.

Internship Placement Requirements

Students will be allowed to enroll in an internship course only after successfully completing one semester of practicum. Students will receive an internship handbook during their first week of internship. They are responsible for all policies and procedures in that handbook. Students will only be allowed to enroll in internship during their last two to three semesters of study, depending on the requirements of their placement site. In addition, Marriage and family and mental health students must be continually enrolled in clinical work once they take HDCO 521 Counseling Skills. If students take a break from clinical work, they may be required to retake HDCO 521 Counseling Skills. All internship placements must meet the approval of the prospective intern's program leader.

Internship placement sites must meet the following requirements:

- An on-site supervisor who is licensed as a mental health professional must agree to meet with the student in a supervisory capacity an average of once per week throughout the duration of the internship. Supervisors for school counseling interns must hold the appropriate certifications for their field.
- The site must provide opportunity for the student to see an adequate number of clients in order to meet the direct service requirements for each program.
- Adequate space that allows for confidential counseling sessions must be provided to the intern.
- At no time will an intern be allowed to see clients on the premises of the internship site without someone, for example, a supervisor, another student, or another professional, also being on site. Some students may wish to pursue an internship in a private practice setting. This will only be approved if the above conditions are met. On some occasions, a site will be able to offer clients but not supervision. These sites may be approved if an appropriate off-site supervisor is obtained and the intern adheres to the aforementioned policy regarding not seeing clients alone.

Internship is an important step in the development of the counselor in training, and there is an expectation that once approved for internship, the student will be able to act with some degree of autonomy. Interns should remember, however, that they are still in training and are, by no means, ready to counsel without supervision and consultation. At no time should a student in the counseling program engage in her/his own private practice, and at no time will students be allowed to engage in counseling practices without being enrolled in an appropriate clinical course, that is, practicum or internship. Students can be removed from the program for engaging in unethical conduct should any of the above policies be violated.

Rights and Responsibilities for Practicum and Internship Placements

The Ethical Guidelines of the American Counseling Association (ACA) will govern all activities of practicum and internship:

Client's/Counselee's Rights

Clients/counselees have the right to:

1. Appropriate services provided in a professional manner.
2. Confidentiality about their involvement with the counseling, within the boundaries of the training environment and the ethical guidelines of ACA.

3. Refuse recording or completion of research instruments at any time. However, because recording and research are critical to the purpose of the training, client refusal to allow recording may necessitate referral. As a student always consult with your supervisor.
4. Discuss their involvement at the site with their counselor's supervisor and review with the supervisor any information collected concerning their involvement with the clinic.
5. Withdraw from services at any time.

University Supervisor Responsibilities

The supervisor has the responsibility to:

1. Assure clients'/couselees' rights as listed above.
2. Establish relationships with campus and community agencies to facilitate referrals if necessary.
3. Make decisions regarding the suitability of client issues for counselors in training, and help the counselors in training make referrals if client issues are not appropriate for the limitations of a training clinic.
4. Ensure high quality preparation and continuous supervision of the student counselors in training.

Professional Affiliations

Given that all three of the counseling programs at Montana State University are CACREP-accredited, we tend to follow the American Counseling Association (ACA) philosophy that students should be trained as counselors first and then as specialists in a particular area of focus. ACA is thus the parent organization of marriage and family counselors. Students who join that association will receive the *Journal of Counseling Development* and *ACA Today*, a newspaper dedicated to counseling issues and events.

As part of their professional development, students are strongly encouraged to participate in local, state, and national organizations that reflect commitment to the counseling field in general as well as their specified areas of interest. It is recommended that students join the Montana Counseling Association (MCA) and attend the annual conferences sponsored by MCA. Students are also encouraged to join the American Counseling Association and any ACA divisions that promote their area of specialty. Specifically, mental health counseling students should affiliate themselves with the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AHMCA); school counseling students with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA); and marriage and family counseling students with the International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors (IAMFC).

Professional Licensure

Upon successful completion of their programs of study, marriage and family and mental health counseling students will have completed the educational component for licensure as a professional counselor in Montana. Up to 1500 hours of supervised counseling experience obtained during graduate training may be applied to the 3000 hours of supervised experience required for licensure. A minimum of 1500 remaining hours must be obtained during post-graduate work under the supervision of a licensed professional counselor, social worker, psychologist, or psychiatrist.

Upon successful completion of their programs of study, school counseling students will be eligible for a license as a school counselor from the Montana Office of Public Instruction.

Professional Certifications

National Certified Counselor

Graduates may obtain national counselor certification upon successful completion of the National Counselor Exam (NCE). As counseling graduates of a CACREP-accredited program, students may take the NCE during their semester of graduation. This exam is identical to the one used for Montana state licensure. In addition, qualified licensure applicants may only sit for the exam upon successful completion of their counseling programs and 3000 hours of supervised counseling experience. Contact the Testing Services (<http://www.montana.edu/ehhd/centers/testing/>) in Reid Hall or the Montana Board of Social Work Examiners and Licensed Professional Counselors (http://bsd.dli.mt.gov/license/bsd_boards/swp_board/board_page.asp) for additional information and an exam schedule.

Faculty Expectations of Students

Students pursuing degrees in counselor education are expected to grow and develop in three areas:

Knowledge Base

Students are expected to increase their knowledge of facts, theories, and clinical procedures in counseling and related disciplines. In addition, students are expected to be able to think independently and utilize academic and professional resources. Students must learn to see themselves as part of a collaborative learning community that includes both higher education and community resources. Students must become proficient at understanding, analyzing, and critiquing the counseling research knowledge base.

Counseling Skills Development

Students are expected to master applied skills in communication, appraisal, conceptualization, treatment planning, and client-specific counseling techniques. Students are expected to understand and participate in the process of ethical decision-making and to recognize professional and ethical challenges. Students should recognize and be able to make appropriate referrals, seek supervision when necessary, and accurately identify personal and professional limits. At the completion of graduate studies, students must be able to form a working therapeutic alliance with a variety of clients, recognize mental disorders, and implement appropriate therapeutic interventions.

Personal Development

Counseling is a complex set of skills that involves the whole person. Students' personal issues are invariably stirred during the development of counseling skills. Students must learn to keep personal issues from distorting the counseling relationship and attend to their personal issues by consulting with their chair, and possibly by seeking personal counseling. No trainee, however psychologically healthy, is without personal struggles – it falls on a continuum from blind spots to truly abusing the counseling relationship. In few other professions is one's level of personal and psychological development so implicated in one's work.

Developmental Concerns

Program faculty will not provide counseling to students because of the danger of special interests and dual roles. At the same time, when faculty members identify areas that may inhibit professional effectiveness, they will identify these concerns to the student and suggest resources that the student may use for assistance. In some instances, students will be asked to refrain from clinical practicum or internship until the identified issues are resolved. Ultimately, students may be asked to withdraw from the program for personal and/or academic reasons.

Graduate Assistantships

Assistantships

There are potentially three paid assistantships available to second-year students in the counseling program. Information regarding the GTA application is available in the spring semester. The positions require a commitment of 19 hours per week throughout the academic year and includes assistance in the first-year counseling program classes. Applicants need to remember that if selected the GTA positions are always pending adequate funding. The GTA position includes a partial tuition waiver and a monthly stipend. The position begins when contracts start for the academic school year on August 15th. Instructors of record for the courses you will be helping with will contact you for meetings after this time.

Comprehensive Exams

Each candidate for a master's degree, including professional and/or seamless degrees, must pass a written and/or oral comprehensive examination. The examination covers subject matter included in the graduate program and any other materials which the examining committee considers to be pertinent.

Counseling students nearing completion of their programs are reminded that a comprehensive examination is a requirement for the degree. Please confer with your chair so that proper arrangements can be made to take your comprehensive examination. When planning your graduate program with your chair, be aware that counseling comprehensive exams are administered once a year during spring semester.

After the first two weeks of spring semester, comprehensive exam information will be posted on the graduate student bulletin board, south of the lounge on the second floor of Herrick Hall. Application forms and additional information will be posted for graduate students to plan and prepare for the comprehensive exam. You must complete an application form, which serves as notice of your intent to take the exam. In addition, be sure to read all information posted on the graduate student bulletin board.

Students must be enrolled for a minimum of three credits during the semester they are taking comprehensive exams. If a student has completed his or her course work, he or she is then eligible to enroll for HDCO 589 Graduate Consultation. Students will complete the comprehensive exam following all procedures listed below and in the format requested within the exam.

Examination Composition and Format

The exam will be administered as a take-home exam. It will require that students integrate and apply information from all aspects of their degree program. All students are therefore required to

demonstrate that they understand and can apply knowledge from human development, counseling, and research.

The examination must be formatted following the guidelines of the current edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. Students must complete the exam once they have received it. A student who does not submit an exam on the due date will receive a score of fail.

Preparation for the Comprehensive Examination

Comprehensive Exams Serve Three Purposes

1. To allow an assessment of students' comprehensive understanding of the knowledge and skills thought by the counseling faculty to be a necessary basis for entry into the profession of professional counseling. Thus, the exam is one method through which faculty members seek to ensure that graduates are adequately prepared for future professional roles.
2. To offer an assessment of the quality of the curriculum. Deficits and strengths in the training offered by the faculty can be identified through the exam.
3. To determine whether students have adequately mastered the subject matter and have the ability to integrate and apply this knowledge adequately.

Preparing for the Exam

1. The comprehensive exam is intended to assess knowledge that students have attained through their graduate studies. The best preparation for the exam is careful study in each of the graduate courses taken prior to the exam. Review of notes and readings from prior course work should be done several weeks prior to the exam to refresh students' awareness of the material. Material from any or all courses in the graduate curriculum will be applicable in preparing for answering exam questions. Students are urged to organize study groups to share materials, quiz each other, and offer emotional support during this period.
2. Most of the problems found in exam answers are not the result of students' lack of knowledge but the failure of students to convey their knowledge and understanding in the writing of the exam. Listed below are suggested guidelines for writing practice answers and writing answers during the exam.
 - a. *Treat the exam as an essay.* Write an introduction, a body and a conclusion. In the introduction, state the exam question you will address in the body of your essay. The single most prevalent problem in students' responses to exam questions is that they do not answer the question that was asked. Given the pressure of an exam situation, students may present what they know even if the information was not requested in the question. While this information may be accurate or even profound, if it does not answer what was asked, readers will be unable to assess if the student knew the information that was requested and will consistently lower their evaluation of the answer.

- b. *Outline the question.* Another major problem with answers to questions concerns when a section or sections of an answer have been neglected or omitted. This may occur because students become over invested in the first part of their answer and either fail to save time for, or forget altogether, later parts of the answer. A rough outline will make clear all the parts that need to be addressed. It allows organization of which information fits best in which parts, reducing the likelihood of redundancy. Outlines free students to concentrate on the part of the question they are working on because the other parts are listed on paper rather than having to be carried in their minds. If some information relevant to a later part of the answer comes to awareness while working on an early part, it can be noted in the outline and recalled when appropriate. Outlining allows allotting a certain amount of space for each part of the question, helping to prevent overemphasis in one area.
 - c. *Provide accurate information.* While this may seem obvious, it is sometimes overlooked. The evaluation of an answer is typically more severely damaged by presentation of inaccurate information than failure to present accurate information. Students are urged to concentrate their answers on what they are confident is accurate; omitting information which they are unsure is accurate.
 - d. *Reference key points.* Referencing demonstrates that information provided in an answer is derived from the common knowledge base of the profession as represented in published literature. Referencing allows readers to verify statements made in answers. If a reader disagrees with a point in an answer, referencing it redirects the argument from the reader and the student to the reader and the reference. Referencing must follow APA format, with the author's name and date of publication essential.
 - e. *Write clear, short, simple sentences.* Introductory, transition, and summary statements may help ensure that major points will be clear to the reader. The comprehensive exam is not the time to demonstrate prowess at subtly conveying meaning buried in a richly textured atmosphere. Ensure that your reader will know what it is you are saying. A writing style that conveys a sense of mystery may result in readers thinking something is being hidden, perhaps ignorance. Writing directly to the point, emulating Hemingway as opposed to Steinbeck or Edgar Allen Poe, is considered preferable.
 - f. *Write a conclusion.* The conclusion will readdress the exam question and briefly note how it was handled. This serves to integrate and close the exam question. At times, writing the conclusion helps a student identify missing or weak areas. Thus, the student can rectify this problem before turning in the exam.
 - g. *Reread the answer.* This may be the third most important guideline. The unique situation of the comprehensive exam can generate remarkable misstatements, omissions, and contradictions in students' writing. The student when rereading the answer prior to submitting it will identify most of these problems. When rereading, students should correct errors they identify.
3. The above recommendations regarding the preparation for and writing of comprehensive exams are offered as guidelines for directing enthusiasm and lowering the anxiety that students often experience when approaching this task. Remember that everyone evaluating

the answers has taken comprehensive exams and has some empathy for the experience. At best, the comprehensive exam may be relished as the quintessential academic experience, a rite of passage, providing students with the opportunity to review and integrate what they have learned. At worst, it may be regarded as “just another sign along the road.”

Evaluation of Exams

The exam will be distributed to two faculty readers. These readers will score the exam as either pass or fail. If both readers score the exam as a “pass,” then the student and The Graduate School will be informed that the comprehensive exam was successfully completed. If one reader scores pass and the other scores fail, then a third faculty reader is used and their score determines whether the exam is a pass or fail. If two readers score the exam as a fail, then the student and The Graduate School will be informed that the comprehensive exam has not been successfully completed. Students who fail the comprehensive exam may take the exam for second time the following spring semester and undergo the same examination procedure. Students are expected to provide a new and fresh set of responses to the exam. If a student fails to successfully complete the comprehensive exam for a second time, then he or she will be dismissed from the Department of Health and Human Development and The Graduate School without receiving a graduate degree. The exam will be evaluated according to the following scale:

- Pass
- Fail

Pass

A score of pass will be assigned when in the professional judgment of the faculty reader:

- All questions are thoroughly addressed and the information included is correct, and well referenced.
- The student demonstrates breadth and depth of content as well as a high degree of integration and conceptual understanding of each question
- The student must demonstrate clear, organized thinking, synthesis and analysis of material, good writing skills, and accurate referencing.

Fail

A score of fail will be assigned when in the professional judgment of the faculty reader:

- The major points of the question are either incorrectly presented or absent from the answer.
- The student fails to demonstrate both breadth and depth of content nor does he or she demonstrate an integration or conceptual understanding of each question.
- Although some of the response is correct, important information has not been included or has been incorrectly stated.

Scoring Policy

The comprehensive exam must receive a score of pass by at least two readers. A failed comprehensive exam must be retaken within one year of the first administration of the comprehensive. The Graduate School policy requires a lapse of at least 60 days before a failed

exam can be retaken. Failure to pass the exam a second time will constitute failing the comprehensive and will result in being dropped from the program (*MSU Bulletin*).

Upon Completion of the Comprehensive Exam

Scoring of the exam will normally take 15 working (business) days. The chair will inform his or her students of their grade. The chair will also notify committee members of the results and circulate required documentation for signatures.

Appendices

Graduate Program Prerequisites

Student Acknowledgement of Handbook

Graduate Program Prerequisites

Students applying to graduate programs within the department will be evaluated for previous course work in human development, family science, psychology, sociology, research methods, and statistics. Each program has content areas that are critical to success of performance in graduate courses. Therefore, if students are found to be deficient in previous course preparation, they will be required to take approved course work prior to entering the program or during the first year of their enrollment and maintain a grade average of 3.0. Deficiency courses cannot be used as credit toward the degree program. It is the responsibility of the student to turn in a copy of the transcript with the course and grade posted to their program leader.

Marriage and Family Counseling

- Human Growth and Development
- Abnormal Psychology (Must be completed by December of first year)
- Statistics course (Must be completed by December of first year)

Mental Health Counseling

- Human Growth and Development
- Abnormal Psychology (Must be completed by December of first year)
- Statistics course (Must be completed by December of first year)

School Counseling

- Human Growth and Development
- Special Education or Exceptional Needs
- Upper Division Statistics and Research Design (Must be completed by December of first year)

Student Acknowledgment of Counseling Graduate Student Handbook

A copy of this page is to be filed with your program leader during your first semester of enrollment. Please sign below, have your program leader sign below, and then make two copies, one for your records, and one to give to your instructor of HDCO 502 Counseling Ethics and Professional Orientation, by Monday following the orientation meeting. Your grade in HDCO 502 will be dropped one full grade if you do not return this form on time. If you have already read the *Counseling Student Handbook*, please review it again before signing this form, as a few changes have been made recently.

Thank you.

The Counseling Graduate Program Faculty

I, (please print your name) _____
have read the Counseling Graduate Student Handbook in its entirety. I understand and accept the policies and information contained in the Handbook. I have discussed matters that are unclear to me with my program leader. I understand that the policies and procedures may change through the course of my program of study, and if changes and/or additions to this handbook occur my program leader and/or the graduate coordinator will inform me of that information.

My first semester of enrollment in the counseling program was _____

My program is (circle one) **MFC** **MHC** **SC**

Student Signature

Date

Program Leader and/or Graduate Coordinator Signature

Date