



**LIBERTY**  
UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL *of* BEHAVIORAL  
SCIENCES

M.A. Clinical Mental Health Counseling Online  
2025-2026 Program Handbook

Department of Counselor Education & Family Studies

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## Authority of the Handbook

The policies and procedures described in this handbook supersede those described in previous handbooks and replace all other communications on issues addressed herein. Particular policies and procedures are specific to the Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies. The policies and procedures apply to current and newly accepted students. Students who are currently taking master's courses in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling online program must adhere to these guidelines with the exception of any changes in the academic program.

## Disclosure Statement

Liberty University's the Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies 60-hour Clinical Mental Health Counseling online program is designed to provide academic course work in all areas required by the Virginia Board of Counseling for licensure as a LPC in Virginia.

The program meets state licensure in many other states as well. Information on the requirements of each state and the programs' compatibility with those requirements can be found at <http://www.liberty.edu/statelicensure>.

Additionally, students are encouraged to visit their state licensure board to further familiarize themselves with the process, requirements, and post-graduation policies and procedures. To obtain your state's web address, view [State Licensure Boards](#).

Enrollment in one of the M.A. licensure programs does not guarantee a degree from Liberty or qualification for professional licensure. Students are responsible for meeting all academic and professional requirements for graduation. Further information regarding these academic and professional requirements is outlined in this handbook. Students enrolled in the M.A. Counseling licensure program are responsible for knowing the material outlined in this handbook.

For issues regarding the program, contact Academic Advising. Then, if needed, contact Program Directors Dr. Eric Camden at [ecamden1@liberty.edu](mailto:ecamden1@liberty.edu) or Dr. Laurel Shaler at [lshaler@liberty.edu](mailto:lshaler@liberty.edu). For Practicum and Internship, please contact the respective offices [practicum@liberty.edu](mailto:practicum@liberty.edu) or [internship@liberty.edu](mailto:internship@liberty.edu). If appealing a decision made by the Practicum or Internship office, please contact Dr. April Crable at [acrable@liberty.edu](mailto:acrable@liberty.edu).

## Contact Information

### [Liberty University Executive Leadership](#)

#### Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies Administration (For further information call 434-592-4049)

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### [Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies Faculty and Staff](#)

# From the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Online Program Director

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On behalf of the faculty of the Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies (CEFS), we would like to welcome you to the M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling online program. The faculty are honored that you have chosen to pursue your studies here at Liberty University!

This 2025-2026 *M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling Handbook* serves as a guide to help you better understand the program, courses, requirements, policies and procedures, and student rights and responsibilities as of Fall 2025. The faculty consider the handbook to be “required reading” for all M.A. Licensure Counseling students, and it should be read in its entirety. Although you have access to an academic advisor, it is ultimately your responsibility to know the information contained in this handbook. Your academic advisor will assist you with registration and course information. You will also have a faculty advisor mentor (FAM) who will answer program-related questions and be assigned when you begin the program. Review this handbook periodically, and if questions arise, contact your FAM. You can find the contact information for each faculty member on our [webpage](#). Because program policies and requirements may change from one year to the next, it is essential that you always refer to the most current handbook as you plan your graduate program, enroll in classes, and arrange for field placements and graduation. You may also want to book mark our [CMHC advising page](#) for your convenience.

Although this handbook contains extensive information, it may not provide answers to all of your questions. This handbook is not intended to be a comprehensive listing of all Liberty University policies. Therefore, in addition to talking with your FAM and other professors, you can access the Liberty University [Graduate Catalog](#). For information about current University and departmental policies, please refer to the 2025-2026 [Academic Information and Policies](#).

We are glad you have chosen Liberty University! You are about to engage in the exciting process of becoming a professional counselor. As you will see in the following pages of this handbook, the process and experiences offered at Liberty are focused on ensuring a comprehensive personal and professional educational experience. As a faculty, we feel honored to accompany you on your journey. Please contact us if we can offer additional information.

We look forward to serving you.

Blessings!

Laurel Shaler, Ph.D., NCC, LCSW, LISW-CP, LPC, LMFT and Eric Camden, Ph.D., LPC, NCC, ACS  
Program Directors, Clinical Mental Health Counseling

# The M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling Online Program

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## 1.1 Accreditation

Liberty University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award associate, bachelor's, master's, specialist, and doctoral degrees. Questions about the accreditation of Liberty University may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097, by calling (404) 679-4500, or by using information available on SACSCOC's website ([www.sacscoc.org](http://www.sacscoc.org)).

Liberty is also a member of the Association of Christian Schools International.



As of January 17, 2019, Liberty's Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling online program is accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Students who conferred the 60-hour MA in Professional Counseling (that included a Practicum) on July 18, 2017, or after will receive retroactive CACREP accreditation.

CACREP is a specialized accreditation body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) to accredit masters and doctoral degree programs in counseling and its specialties. For further information on the organization, consult the agency website at <http://www.cacrep.org>. For further information on the program's accreditation, please visit the [CACREP accreditation page](#).

## 1.2 Overview

The Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies (CEFS) is a department of the [School of Behavioral Sciences](#). The graduate Counseling program, launched in 1981, is committed to providing quality professional training for healing human hurts from a perspective permeated by Christian faith. Our training in theory and the practice of counseling is designed to prepare students to work as licensed counselors in a variety of settings. The M.A. program provides foundational studies that equip students for licensure, to pursue doctoral studies and careers in community mental health and human service agencies, educational institutions, private practice, government, and business and industrial settings.

## 1.3 Mission

The mission of the Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies (CEFS) is to produce ethically and spiritually aware mental health counselors who possess the knowledge, values, skills, and personal disposition to promote the mental health and holistic wellness of clients across diverse populations with unique worldviews.

The CEFS purpose is to accomplish this mission by the professional development of the mental health counseling student across the following domains:

- 1) Attainment of scholastic competence in all coursework,
- 2) Acquisition of, and ability to apply counseling skills with a diverse population to a standard acceptable by licensed professional counselors,
- 3) Demonstration of emotional and mental stability and maturity in interaction with others, including the ability to maintain healthy boundaries, communicate appropriately, successfully manage personal anxiety or uncomfortable feelings, work collaboratively with others and resolve interpersonal conflict
- 4) Adherence to the Professional Identity and Standards outlined by the American Counseling Association's Code of Ethics and [Liberty Student Honor Code](#), and
- 5) Demonstration of the ability to integrate faith and spirituality into counseling where appropriate in an ethically competent manner

## **1.4 Purpose**

Consistent with the University's mission to develop "Christ-centered men and women with the values, knowledge, and skills essential to impact the world," the Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies seeks to educate the whole person within a framework of grace and truth, which are core values exemplified in the life of Christ and necessary for professional service; developing the knowledge, values, skills, and personal disposition necessary for effective professional service. Our mission is achieved, in significant measure, through offering rigorous academic programs, dynamic interaction with mentors and faculty, and carefully structured practicum and internships.

## **1.5 Commitment to Diversity**

Liberty University is a school founded upon fundamental Christian values like grace, truth, and love for all persons. As believers in Christ, we must demonstrate our commitment to loving others (Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28).

- We approach Counseling as a profession that fosters holistic human growth and development in the cognitive, emotional, behavioral, relational, and spiritual domains of life.
- Our Counseling approach also supports the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of others who are made in the image of God. Our vision is
- focused on nurturing an academic community of diverse people and ideas and assuring that diversity enhances academic excellence and individual growth.
- Our faculty and students are comprised of persons that represent various national, ethnic, spiritual, and/or denominational backgrounds. Learning to be respectful and appreciate other cultures will add to each student's experience at Liberty. For that reason, we are committed to nurturing and training a diverse student body in an atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation of differences.

The School of Behavioral Sciences provides an academic community for students,



faculty, and staff to teach and learn from the experiences of others and to submit personal values and assumptions for reflection and critical examination. Student learning, professional, and personal growth occurs in a climate that encourages a deepened appreciation of differences.

While recognizing the importance of all dimensions of diversity, as mentioned above, the School of Behavioral Sciences adheres to the following initiatives:

- To increase, through recruitment and retention measures, the diverse representation of students, faculty, and staff;
- Promote the full implementation of professional standards of practice and multicultural counseling competencies across the curriculum and in specialized courses;
- To include issues of diversity throughout the instructional programs and professional development activities;
- To provide departmental opportunities for students and faculty to engage in the exchange of ideas and information related to diversity; and
- To maintain ongoing educational opportunities and equality of access to our academic community.
- To equip students to ethically utilize spirituality as a force for healing when and where appropriate.

Students in the M.A. program must exhibit the [American Counseling Association's](#) and the [American Mental Health Counselor Association's](#) standards and ethics of the counseling profession regarding sensitivity to and celebration of diversity.

Liberty University does not engage in unlawful discrimination or harassment because of race, color, ancestry, religion, age, sex, national origin, pregnancy or childbirth, disability or military veteran status in its educational programs and activities. Liberty University maintains its Christian mission and reserves its right to discriminate on the basis of religion to the extent that applicable law respects its right to act in furtherance of its religious objectives. The following persons have been designated to coordinate Liberty University's compliance with certain anti-discrimination laws: Director of LU Online Disability Accommodation Support at (434) 592-5417 or [luoodas@liberty.edu](mailto:luoodas@liberty.edu); Director of Disability Accommodation Support (Residential) at (434) 582-2248 or [odas@liberty.edu](mailto:odas@liberty.edu); Title IX Coordinator at (434) 592-4999 or [TitleIX@liberty.edu](mailto:TitleIX@liberty.edu).

## **1.6 Special Student (Non-Degree) Status**

CEFS grants special admissions only under exceptional circumstances. The following must be met to be enrolled as a non-degree seeking student:

1. A student must be currently enrolled in or a graduate of a master's level clinical mental health, marriage & family counseling, or a closely related program at a regionally accredited university in order to take COUC courses as a special student.
2. Special students will not be allowed in the COUC 505, 512, 667, 692, 693, or 694 courses. However, the department will review cases for individuals who have graduated and are practicing clinicians who need additional coursework for licensure.

All inquiries should be sent to the [CMHC program director Dr. Laurel Shaler](#) for review.

# Academic Policies

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## 2.1 Program Learning Objectives

The Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling online (CMHC) provides students with an integration of academic coursework and applied learning experiences in the classroom and at supervised practicum and internships. Students are expected to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions considered essential to the professional preparation of licensed counselors. To this end, the faculty developed the following learning outcomes applicable to all CMHC students.

<b><i>M.A. Clinical Mental Health Counseling online PLOs</i></b>
<b><i>Cluster 1 2018-19</i></b>
<b>PLO 1: Apply Ethical/Legal Standards</b> Apply the ethical and professional principles, standards, and expectations that are integral to a professional counselor's role and identity.
<b>PLO 2: Apply Diverse Populations for Treatment</b> Apply the social and cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills required to work with diverse populations at all developmental stages across the lifespan in a culturally sensitive and ethical manner.
<b><i>Cluster 2 2019-20</i></b>
<b>PLO 3: Assess Counseling Skills</b> Assess the individual and group counseling skills necessary to establish and build a therapeutic relationship and will form a preliminary theoretical framework when counseling individuals at all developmental stages across the lifespan.
<b>PLO 4: Use Developmentally Appropriate Assessments</b> Use developmentally appropriate assessment relevant to the client's academic/education, career, personal, and social development and identify ethical, social, and cultural factors related to assessment.
<b><i>Cluster 3 (Includes specialty PLO) 2020-21</i></b>
<b>PLO 5: Evaluate Research and Writing Skills</b> Evaluate research and apply it to their counseling practice in accordance with best practices, and identify social and cultural implications for interpreting and reporting results.
<b>PLO 6: Integrate Biblical Principles and Secular Theories</b> Integrate faith and spirituality into counseling where appropriate in an ethically competent manner.
<b><i>M.A. Clinical Mental Health Counseling online PLO</i></b>
<b>PLO 7: CMHC -Synthesize Counseling Theories to Treat Clients</b> Synthesize counseling theories into a comprehensive bio-psychosocial-spiritual theoretical approach that informs assessment, diagnosis, and treatment planning for diverse individual, group, and family client(s) with a broad array of presenting problems and mental disorders.

See [Graduate Catalog](#).

## **Background Check**

During the first semester in the program, students complete a Criminal Background Check as a course requirement in COUC 500 (results must be received by COUC 512) and rechecked in COUC 692. Students will not be dismissed from the program solely based on the results of the background check. However, students must be aware that they may be prohibited from completing fieldwork by their field placement site if a background investigation reveals certain criminal offenses, arrests, and/or convictions. A student who does not pass a criminal background check also may not be able to obtain licensure as a professional counselor. The Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies is not responsible for a student's inability to complete the program or obtain licensure or certification due to a failure to pass a criminal background check.

## **2.2 Degree Name Change (2019)**

In Fall of 2019, as a result of a recommendation from CACREP, the title of the Master of Arts Professional Counseling degree was changed to Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling.

Students who were and are presently enrolled in the M.A. Professional Counseling will be able to complete their degree. The CMHC degree has revised prefixes and prerequisites as of Fall 2019. However, since the M.A. Professional Counseling courses are the same, students will be able to auto-sub courses (COUN to COUC). An auto-substitution document will be submitted to the Registrar Office, and students will need to request a [degree change through Academic Advising](#) if they choose this option. Students are encouraged to consult Academic Advising for any additional questions.

## **2.3 GPA Requirements and Incomplete Courses**

A student must maintain a minimum of a 3.0 GPA to remain in the program. While all course grades are averaged into the GPA, course credit toward degree completion is not granted for a grade of D or F. A student may petition the Registrar's Office for permission to retake a course in which he or she received a grade of C or below. See below for information on Incompletes. [Incomplete Policy \(including Medical Incomplete\)](#)

[Military Incompletes](#)

## **2.4 Transfer of Credits**

It is the responsibility of each applicant to supply transcripts along with a request to have the credit applied to the degree program. Students may be requested to submit the course syllabus for any coursework being considered for transfer along with a rationale of why the student believes the course meets the program's requirements. The [Office of Transfer Evaluations](#) will process the information. Questions related to transfer of credit may be directed to the [Registrar's Office](#) ([registrar@liberty.edu](mailto:registrar@liberty.edu)).

Transfer policies for the programs under the School of Behavioral Sciences can be found [here](#).

## 2.5 Independent Studies & Directed Studies

Students who need specific coursework unique to their state and not offered through our program are encouraged to seek these classes in their specific state. The departmental policy is that independent studies and directed studies are not offered for these circumstances.

## 2.6 Planned Program of Study

The following chart, Planned Program of Study, lists the courses students will take and the order and times they should enroll in the courses; this is the same chart students are required to submit to Canvas. Students are notified that this curriculum guide is a planning document; it is not a substitute for regular consultation of their Degree Completion Plan (DCP; see [Advising Guide](#)) or with their faculty mentor advisor (FAM). This guide is subject to change. Use this guide for course planning and for discussions with your faculty/academic advisor when you set up your course of study.

Students should plan carefully with the assistance of the Faculty Advisor Mentor (FAM) and the Academic Advising team. If more than one course is needed per semester to receive financial aid, students need to plan for this in advance of internship semesters. Only certain courses are permitted to be taken with internship (see below).

### CMHC Online Program Plan of Study (60 hour)

Please Note: {B & D Term=8 Weeks; A Term=16 Weeks (residential/synchronous); J Term (Intensives) 16 Weeks}			
Course Code	Course Title	Prerequisites/Course Notes	Recommended Term of Study
COUC 500	Orientation to Counselor Professional Identity and Function	None	First Semester
COUC 501	Ethical and Legal Issues in Counseling	None	First Semester
COUC 502	Human Growth and Development	COUC 500, 501, 503, 505, 510	Second Semester
COUC 503	Gate 1 – Counseling Foundations and Orientation to the Program	None	First Semester
COUC 504	Multicultural Counseling	COUC 500, 501, 503, 505, 510	Second Semester
COUC 505	Counseling Techniques *required on-campus intensive beginning Fall 2026	None  Course offered in the J term only	First Semester
COUC 508	Gate 2 – Field Placement Preparation and Professional Readiness	COUC 500, 501, 503, 505, 510	Second Semester

COUC 510	Theories	COUC 500, 501, 503, 504, 505,	First Semester
COUC 512	Group Counseling *required on-campus intensive starting Fall 2026	COUC 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 508, 510, 521, 546 Course offered in the J term only	Third Semester
COUC 521	Assessment Techniques in Counseling	COUC 500, 501, 503, 505, 510	Second Semester
COUC 546	Psychopathology	COUC 500, 501, 503, 505, 510	Second Semester
COUC 515	Research and Program Evaluation	Students must successfully complete three hours of undergraduate coursework in statistics. Those who did not complete this course in their undergraduate program may fulfill this requirement during the first two semesters in the program. <i>Call Academic Advising for suggested Statistics Courses to meet this prerequisite.</i>  Additional prerequisites include: COUC 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 508, 510, 521, 546	Third Semester
COUC 522	Career Development and Counseling	COUC 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 508, 510, 512, 521, 546, 601, 667	Fourth Semester
COUC 667	Clinical Diagnosis and Treatment Planning	COUC 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 508, 510, 521, 546	Third Semester
COUC 650	Gate 3 – Practicum Application and Fieldwork Readiness	COUC 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 508, 510, 521, 546,	Third Semester
COUC 506	Integration of Spirituality and Counseling	COUC 500, 501, 503, 505, 510	Fourth Semester
COUC 604	Crisis Counseling	COUC 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 510, 512, 515, 521, 546	Fifth Semester

COUC 692	Practicum	COUC 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 508, 510, 512, 521, 522, 546, 601, 650, and 667.	Fourth Semester
COUC 685	Gate 4 - Internship I Application and Career Readiness	COUC, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 508, 510, 512, 515, 521, 546, 601, 650, 667	Fourth Semester
COUC 601	Theory of Family Systems	COUC 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 508, 510, 521, 546	Third Semester
COUC 691	Substance Abuse: Diagnosis, Treatment, and Prevention	COUC 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 508, 510, 512, 515, 521, 546, 601, 650, 667	Fourth Semester
CEFS 670	Comprehensive Exam – CPCE	Counseling Comprehensive Exam prerequisites: COUC 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 508, 510, 512, 515, 521, 522, 546, 650, 601, 667, 685, 691, 692 *CEFS 670/671 must be taken in the same semester	Fifth Semester
CEFS 671	Comprehensive Exam - Integration	Counseling Comprehensive Exam prerequisites: COUC 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 508, 510, 512, 515, 521, 522, 546, 650, 667, 685, 692 *CEFS 670/671 must be taken in the same semester	Fifth Semester
COUC 690	Gate 5 – Internship II Application and Future Planning	COUC, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 508, 510, 512, 515, 521, 522, 546, 601, 604, 650, 667, 685, 692	Fifth Semester
COUC 693	Internship 1	COUC 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 508, 510, 512, 515, 521, 522, 546,	Fifth Semester

		601, 604, 650, 667, 685, 692	
COUC 694	Internship 2	COUC, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 508, 510, 512, 515, 521, 522, 546, 601, 604, 650, 667, 685, 690, 692, 693	Sixth Semester
Elective	Choose from any of the other level 500 -700 courses in our programs		Sixth Semester

### Recommended Course Sequence: 9 Hour Track

Semester	Courses	Semester	Courses	Semester	Courses
1 <sup>st</sup> Semester	COUC 503/Gate 1 COUC 500 COUC 501 COUC 505	2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester	COUC 508/Gate 2 COUC 502 COUC 504 COUC 510	3 <sup>rd</sup> Semester	COUC 650/Gate 3 COUC 512 COUC 521 COUC 546
4 <sup>th</sup> Semester	COUC 685/Gate 4 COUC 601 COUC 522 COUC 667	5 <sup>th</sup> Semester	COUC 690/Gate 5 COUC 515 COUC 506 COUC 692	6 <sup>th</sup> Semester	COUC 604 COUC 691 COUC 693 CEFS 670 CEFS 671
7 <sup>th</sup> Semester	COUC 694 Elective				

### Recommended Course Sequence: 12 Hour Track

Semester	Courses		Semester	Courses		Semester	Courses	
1 <sup>st</sup> Semester	COUC 503/Gate 1 COUC 500 COUC 501 COUC 505 COUC 510		2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester	COUC 508/Gate 2 COUC 502 COUC 504 COUC 521 COUC 546		3 <sup>rd</sup> Semester	COUC 650/Gate 3 COUC 512 COUC 515 COUC 601 COUC 667	
4 <sup>th</sup> Semester	COUC 685/Gate 4 COUC 506		5 <sup>th</sup> Semester	COUC 690/Gate 5 COUC 604		6 <sup>th</sup> Semester	COUC 694 COUC/CEFS Elective	



	COUC 522 COUC 691 COUC 692			COUC 693 CEFS 670 CEFS 671				
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Items to consider:

- Courses that may have flexibility: 506, 515, 604, 691, elective
- Taking 670 and 671 during practicum to allow additional semesters for retake

**Important Note:** Students must research their state's requirements for required courses needed for licensure in their specific state. Liberty University and/or the CEFS are not responsible for informing students of their state's specific educational requirements for licensure.

### Travel with LU Send

LU Send organizes international and domestic travel experiences that are linked to course credit. Details related to requirements for participation, specific destinations, and course credit information can be found here: <https://www.liberty.edu/osd/lu-send/>.

## 2.7 Course Delivery Formats

Students enrolled in the online program primarily complete their degree using a 16-week online semester with 8-week courses offered 3 times throughout the semester. The Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies offers courses in a variety of delivery formats. Below some are listed in addition to specific courses that may include a weekly synchronous component through an online platform. Please see the [Academic Calendar](#) for the semester and sub-term schedule.

### Format 1: Online Formats

M.A. Clinical Mental Health Counseling online courses are carefully designed to provide students with a full academic experience via distance learning. The University currently uses *Canvas*®, an online software platform, as its primary online instructional delivery method. Students interact with other students taking the same course, utilize links to online resources, view supplemental streaming video clips, and receive direct feedback from their professors using this innovative means of delivery.

Professors may also utilize Microsoft Teams or Webex for instructional purposes

[Canvas](#)

[Webex](#)

[Microsoft Teams](#)

### Format 2: Intensives

*J Term Intensives – Residential and Online Formats:*

This 14-16 week course is delivered using an intensive format. Students that select the residential intensive will attend 36-40 hours of classroom-based instruction at the Liberty campus in Lynchburg, VA. Students that select the online intensive will attend 36-40 hours of synchronous, video-based instruction. In addition to the class time, students are expected to complete additional work online both pre and post intensive over the duration of the term.

Intensive coursework begins at the beginning of the designated term. Students must attend every day in its entirety during the days of intensive class meetings in order to pass the course. Students are required to have all textbooks at the start of class and during each day of class during the on-campus portion of the intensive course. Not having textbooks during residency may result in a reduction in class participation grade. Students are required to have audio and video access during each day of the intensive. To ensure the confidentiality of class discussions, virtual backgrounds will not be permitted. Dates, times, and room numbers for intensive class meetings are in ASIST.

#### *Intensives Information – COUC 505 and 512*

As of Spring 2026, the only option for COUC 505 and COUC 512 will be J term. This means that students will take a semester long course that includes a one week intensive. For Spring 2026 and Summer 2026, students will have the option of taking the intensive component of these two courses either online virtually or on the campus of Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. Both options require complete attention from 8:00-5:00 Monday-Thursday and 8:00-12:00 on Friday for the weeklong intensive component of the course. There are strict attendance and participation policies for these courses as outlined in the syllabi. For all students whose degree completion plans are effective as of July 1, 2026 or later, students will be required to attend an on campus intensive at Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA for both of these courses. These courses cannot be taken in the same semester, so this will require two separate trips to the campus of Liberty University. This is to meet a CACREP requirement that students are observed in person by faculty at least twice during the duration of the CMHC program. Of note, effective Spring 2026, COUC 667 will only be offered in an 8 week online format. With additional questions, please contact your FAM.

#### **Format 3: Synchronous Courses**

Clinical Mental Health Counseling online students are required to complete three full semesters of clinical experience including practicum, Internship I, and Internship II with a weekly class meeting component. In addition to the weekly class time, students are expected to complete additional work online over the duration of the term. The student will be provided a meeting time prior to the first week of class, and the instructor will go over the details of the class structure, which will include student presentations and case analysis.

*A Term Weekly Synchronous Online Format (COUC 505, COUC 512, COUC 692, COUC 693, and COUC 694)* This 14-16 week course is delivered using a video-based classroom format. Students attend 2 hours of synchronous online instruction each week. In addition to the weekly class time, students are expected to complete additional work online over the duration of the term.

**Important:** All Students in A-term or J-term courses must have video and audio access and have their cameras turned on for the entire duration of class each day. To ensure the confidentiality of class discussions, virtual backgrounds will not be permitted. Students must attend all synchronous class sessions using both audio and video access for the entire duration of the class session and all 14-16 weeks in order to pass the class. Intensive coursework begins at the beginning of the designated term. Students must attend every day in its entirety during the

days of intensive class meetings in order to pass the course. Students are required to have all textbooks at the start of class and during each day of class during the on-campus portion of the intensive course. Not having textbooks during residency may result in a reduction in class participation grade. Students are required to have audio and video access during each day of the intensive. Dates, times, and room numbers if applicable for intensive class meetings are in ASIST.

**COUC 505 A and J terms:** In addition to class time, this course also requires 1 meeting a week, outside of the regular class time, with your assigned triad to practice and record counseling skills.

#### **Format 4: Traditional Residential**

Clinical Mental Health Counseling and Marriage and Family Counseling courses are offered in the traditional 16-week semester classroom format during the fall and spring semesters on the Liberty University campus. Our courses are delivered as one class session per week for a minimum of 2.5 hours per class. These residential experiences occur in a variety of formats, including lecture-based and experiential learning. Online students can inquire within the department to see if they qualify for this option.

## **2.8 Dual Degrees and Dual Licensure**

Students are allowed to obtain multiple degrees at the same academic level through Liberty University; however, due to the extent of overlap between required courses in the CEFS Department programs, some degrees are not eligible. For students pursuing a second degree, the number of credits that can be applied toward the second degree may not exceed the maximum amount of transfer credit allowed for that degree. If two degrees share required courses exceeding the maximum allowable transfer credit for the second degree, the student must take additional courses as substitutes for the shared courses. Questions may be directed to Academic Advising or the Registrar's Office.

Of note, students may elect to take additional courses for dual licensure to obtain licenses in both School Counseling and Professional Counseling. For most students it is recommended to pursue a [Master of Education in School Counseling](#) and take additional courses for their counseling state licensure. Students who choose this route and decide to pursue a Master of Education in School Counseling are permitted to take the classes listed below prior to practicum as long as all other prerequisites are successfully completed in the Degree Completion Plan.

Approved courses are:

- Psychopathology & Counseling (CEFS 546)
- Theories of Family Systems (CEFS 601)
- Substance Abuse: Diagnosis, Treatment & Prevention (CEFS 691)
- Clinical Diagnosis & Treatment Planning (COUC 667)

Pre-requisites to these CEFS courses can be met by the M.Ed. in School Counseling curriculum

and do not need pre-requisite override submissions/approvals. Psychopathology & Counseling (CEFS 546) must be completed before the other approved CEFS courses are attempted. All students receiving financial aid must consult with the [Student Financial Services](#) office to understand how taking courses not listed on the school counseling DCP will impact financial aid. These additional courses are NOT covered by financial aid. The suggested courses allow a candidate to apply for the [Virginia Counseling Board](#); it is the candidate's responsibility to confirm with their respective state board of counseling if the academic credit will be approved. If the candidate determines that an additional course is needed in addition to or in place of one listed above, an appeal will need to be submitted through the Registrar's office.

Please note that for CMHC students interested in pursuing school counselor certification, you will need to review your state department of education's requirements to determine what additional courses you would need to take. Additional courses taken for added certifications are not listed on your DCP, therefore they are not covered by financial aid. Students who wish to add additional certifications are highly encouraged to consult with their FAM to explore the recommended pathways to meet their educational and professional goals.

## 2.9 FAMs and Academic Advising

Liberty's **online students** in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program are placed in the CMHC Advising Center in Canvas and assigned to a Faculty Advisor Mentor (FAM). They are required to complete the Canvas modules as an orientation to the Clinical Mental Health Counseling online program. You will be invited to an open house with the program director near the beginning of your first semester, and your FAM will be able to advise you regarding program information and guidance as you strive for licensure.

- **Students must complete and "pass" all modules during their first semester in the program. Student accounts will be placed on hold until all modules are completed.**

### LUO Academic Advising

Liberty's **online students** also work with a team of academic advisors throughout their program. The academic advisors will guide students through the logistics of course advising such as registering for classes and adding/dropping courses. Students are not assigned to one specific person. Online advisors can be contacted through <https://www.liberty.edu/online/academic-advisors/>.

Liberty University's the Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies 60-hour Clinical Mental Health Counseling program is designed to provide academic course work in all areas required by the Virginia Board of Counseling for licensure as a LPC in Virginia.

The program meets state licensure in many other states as well. Information on the requirements of each state and the programs' compatibility with those requirements can be found at <http://www.liberty.edu/statelicensure>.

Additionally, students are encouraged to visit their state licensure board to further familiarize themselves with the process, requirements, and post-graduation policies and procedures.

## 2.10 Comprehensive Examination

All M.A. Clinical Mental Health Counseling online students must satisfactorily pass the comprehensive examination as a requirement for graduation. The purpose of this exam is to test both the student's knowledge of the core courses and general knowledge of counseling. This exam also prepares students for state licensure by providing them with an examination that mirrors the content and format of the [National Counselor Exam \(NCE\)](#), a multiple-choice, timed exam used for licensure by many state licensure boards.

Students must register with the Comprehensive Examination Coordinator at [CounselingCompExam@liberty.edu](mailto:CounselingCompExam@liberty.edu) at least four weeks prior to the date of the examination. The most current information is located online on the [CEFS website](#).

The Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies utilizes two separate exams to fulfill the comprehensive examination requirement. To test students' knowledge of the eight core curricular areas, students will take the 160-item [Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination® \(CPCE®\)](#), published by the Center for Credentialing and Education, an affiliate of the National Board for Certified Counselors, (NBCC®), for the majority of the examination. Students will also take the 20-item *CEFS Integration Examination* to test their knowledge of integrating faith and spirituality into counseling in an ethically competent manner.

The CPCE® covers the eight core competencies (20 items per area) as defined by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP®):

**Human Growth and Development** – studies that provide an understanding of the nature and needs of individuals at all developmental levels (COUC 502).

**Social and Cultural Foundations** – studies that provide an understanding of issues and trends in a multicultural and diverse society (COUC 504).

**Helping Relationships** – studies that provide an understanding of counseling and consultation processes (COUC 505, COUC 510).

**Group Work** – studies that provide an understanding of group development, dynamics, theories, methods, skills, and other group work approaches (COUC 512).

**Career and Lifestyle Development** – studies that provide an understanding of career development and related life factors (COUC 522).

**Appraisal** – studies that provide an understanding of individual and group approaches to assessment and evaluation (COUC 521).

**Research and Program Evaluation** – studies that provide an understanding of types of research methods, basic statistics, and ethical and legal considerations in research (COUC 515).

**Professional Orientation and Ethics** – studies that provide an understanding of all

aspects of professional functioning, including history, roles, organizational structures, ethics, standards, and credentialing (COUC 500, COUC 501).

In addition to eight core CACREP® competencies, each Liberty University M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program students are required to demonstrate competency in a ninth core area:

**Integration** – studies that provide an understanding of the integration of faith and spirituality into counseling where appropriate in an ethically competent manner (COUC 506).

Students must complete at least 39 hours of graduate coursework, including the core areas (COUC 500, 501, 502, 504, 505, 506, 510, 512, 515, 521, 522) and COUC 667, and must have an overall GPA of 3.0 before attempting to take the comprehensive examination. Once these requirements are met, students will email the Comprehensive Examination Coordinator at [CounselingCompExam@liberty.edu](mailto:CounselingCompExam@liberty.edu) when they are ready to sign up for the exams.

Students must be aware that it takes about four hours to complete the CPCE® portion of the comprehensive examination. The CEFS Integration Examination portion of the comprehensive will be taken online using Canvas. To take the comprehensive examination, students will be registered for COUC 670 (CPCE®) and/or COUC 671 (Integration) courses.

Students are allowed **three attempts** to pass both sections of the comprehensive exam. Students who have failed the CPCE® twice are required to complete a CPCE® Third Attempt Plan (CTAP) form and prepare for an additional minimum of one semester before registering for their final attempt. If after three tries, a student has not been able to pass the comprehensive examination, the student will not qualify for a master's degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. At that point, students may choose to apply to the Human Services Counseling program for possible conferral of the M.A. in Human Services degree.

The best way to prepare for the comprehensive examination is to develop a study schedule (such as three months) that allows you to spend some time preparing in each of the different areas of study. Divide your study time so that you spend roughly equivalent time preparing for each area. Study consistently. Do something relaxing and get a good night's rest the night before the examination.

Please allow two weeks for the exam results. Once these exams are processed, a notice will be sent to you immediately notifying you of the results.

There is no official study guide for the CPCE®. Since the CPCE® and the National Counselor Examination for Licensure and Certification (NCE®) are based on the same eight knowledge areas; *any study materials* developed for the NCE® should be useful for the CPCE®. A good source to start with is a book called *Encyclopedia of Counseling* by H. Rosenthal.

As you prepare for the Integration Examination, please refer to your COUC 506 presentations, textbooks and/or the following sources:

- [INTEGRATION EXAM STUDY GUIDE](#)
- Hawkins, R., & Clinton, T. (2015). *The new Christian counselor: A fresh biblical & transformational approach*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House. ISBN: 9780736943543.
- Neff, M.A. & McMinn, M. (2020). McMinn, M. R. *Embodying integration: A fresh look at Christianity in the therapy room*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. 9780830828678
- Online Free Required Resource (you are responsible for Chapters 8-11).
- Entwistle, D. N. (2015). [Integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity: An introduction to worldview issues, philosophical foundations, and models of integration](#) (3rd ed.). Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers. ISBN: 9781498223485.
  - This resource is also available through [Liberty University's library](#).

## **2.11 Practicum**

Course prerequisites for COUC 692 are COUC 500 ,501, 502, 504, 505, 510, 512, 521, 546, and 667. (COUC 667 may be taken concurrently with COUC 692 only if in B term or J term).

Visit the [Practicum website](#) for full details.

## **2.12 Internship**

Visit the [Internship website](#) for full details.

### **Succeeding in Internship**

Since most, if not all, coursework has been completed by the time of the internship experience, students contribute to the cooperating site by assisting staff in carrying out various clinical activities. In order for students to successfully pass the internship course, the student must demonstrate the ability to:

- Establish rapport and effective working relationships with client(s).
- Conduct a psychosocial history that includes client background information, behavioral observations, current functioning, quality of relationships, and resources and challenges.
- Develop client case conceptualizations that lead to accurate diagnosis using the DSM.
- Develop treatment plans that will motivate clients through the use of evidence-based strategies for clients' identified problem(s).
- Present case studies in scheduled supervision sessions.
- Maintain an effective counseling process and relationship until the client(s)' problem(s) have been resolved.
- Utilize feedback, direction, and constructive criticism from supervision and consultation in order to enhance professionalism in counseling.
- Document clinical work in a way that meets the standards of the counseling site, insurance companies, and the state in which the student is working.



- Work cooperatively and effectively within an agency setting and initiate appropriate professional relationships with mental health professionals outside that agency as needed.

### **Approval Process**

Students will submit an online application through the SharePoint submission portal by using a link posted on the [Practicum](#) and [Internship](#) websites. Students will attach their approval documents to the online application. Students will attach their approval documents to the online application. The online application with attached approval documents must be submitted by the application deadline that is displayed on the practicum/internship webpage. Blank copies of the approval documents are available for download on the practicum/internship webpage. Registration for the 692 practicum and the 693/694 internship courses occurs three times each year: approximately mid-term during the fall, spring, and summer semesters.

\*In order to begin practicum or internship, the student's site and supervisor must be approved by the CEFS Practicum or Internship staff, under the direction of the Director of Clinical Training. Because students cannot register for the Practicum or Internship until the approval process has been completed, all documents must be submitted by the posted application deadline. Once the site and supervisor have been approved, the student will receive approval from the Practicum or Internship Department to register for the course.

### **Preparation**

Because of university and state requirements for placing students in practicum and internship courses, it is essential that students begin preparing for their practicum and internship early in their programs. Students are encouraged to read the [Fieldwork Manual](#).

**Please carefully review the Practicum and Internship Field Manuals for additional information.**

### **Complete Background Checks**

Be aware that state boards review an applicant's criminal history to determine if he/she is eligible to hold a license. If you have a criminal history, you will need to contact your state board of counseling to determine if you are eligible for a counseling license in that state. Due to these varying licensure requirements, our programs require you, as a counselor in training, to complete background checks. Clearance of the background checks will be required for application to the practicum and internship.

### **Finding a Site**

Students are responsible for finding their practicum/internship site and their site-supervisor. Students are advised to allow a minimum of three to four months for the process. The practicum and internship webpages provide some suggestions for potential clinical sites.

### **[State Licensure Requirements](#)**



Students intending to seek licensure in a state other than Virginia after graduation are required to know the licensure requirements in the state where they will seek licensure because a state's fieldwork course hours and supervisory requirements may differ from Virginia. When there is a difference, students must complete the greater amount of coursework required by the state in which they intend to seek licensure (e.g., more hours of fieldwork experience or additional/specific courses). More information about state licensure board regulations can be found at the [NBCC Directory](#).

Liberty University's the Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies 60-hour Clinical Mental Health Counseling program is designed to provide academic course work in all areas required by the Virginia Board of Counseling for licensure as a LPC in Virginia.

The program meets state licensure in many other states as well. Information on the requirements of each state and the programs' compatibility with those requirements can be found at <http://www.liberty.edu/statelicensure>.

Additionally, students are encouraged to visit their state licensure board to further familiarize themselves with the process, requirements, and post-graduation policies and procedures.

### **International Practicum/Internship Policy**

The Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies is aware of many challenges that students living abroad face regarding the completion of the practicum and/or internship requirements. Therefore, the Practicum/Internship Office has created the following policy to help our students living abroad succeed in completing their practicum/internship experience.

Specific states may require internships to be taken at a site location in the state where you plan to seek licensure. If this is the case, an international internship may not be eligible towards licensure. Before identifying an international internship site, please check with your state regarding any potential residency requirements pertaining to the actual physical location of internship sites. Additionally, students are encouraged to visit their state licensure board to further familiarize themselves with the process, requirements, and post-graduation policies and procedures.

In addition to the standard application process, students looking to complete an international practicum/internship must also meet the following criteria:

- Submit required documents
  - Informed consent
  - Treatment plans
  - Recordkeeping

International practicum/internship sites and supervisors must meet the following criteria for students seeking eventual licensure in the United States:

- **Site must be sponsored by an American organization**
- **Site must follow the general guidelines established by the counseling profession in the U.S.** (e.g., ACA, AAMFT Codes of Ethics; state board regulations; etc.).

- Supervisor must be licensed in the United States.
- Supervisor must hold a valid state license in counseling, marriage and family therapy, or clinical social work and have a master's degree in Counseling, Psychology, or Social Work and/or hold a PhD or EdD in Counseling, Psychology, or a closely related field from a regionally accredited university.
- The site and supervisor approval will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Practicum/Internship office.

Students not seeking licensure in the United States:

- **Must provide Practicum/Internship Office with a written statement of their intent to not pursue licensure in the United States.**

### **2.13 Break in Enrollment**

A student breaks enrollment if he/she does not matriculate in a course at least once every academic year. Admission status is subject to the terms of any previous academic or disciplinary probation, suspension, or dismissal. Students may be required to provide official transcripts from all educational institutions attended since enrollment at Liberty. Admission decisions for re-applicants will be based on the current admission criteria of the respective degree program at the time the new application is submitted. Students who break enrollment and apply for readmission will be required to follow the current degree completion plan in effect at the time of re-entry to the University. Any military student wishing to be readmitted who broke enrollment due to deployment must contact the [Office of Military Affairs](#).

### **2.14 Time Limit for Degree Completion**

The time limit for completing the master's degree from the enrollment date of the first course taken is seven years. Any Clinical Mental Health Counseling online courses taken at Liberty, which are over ten years old, will need to be repeated in order for a student to graduate with the Clinical Mental Health Counseling or Marriage and Family Therapy degree.

### **2.15 [Course Repeat and Grade Replacement Policy](#)**

In order to graduate from the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program, a student must maintain an overall GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. A course grade of "D" or "F" cannot be used to fulfill the requirements of the program. A maximum of two courses (6 hours) with a grade of "C+/C/C-" can count toward graduation, but the student must maintain a GPA of 3.0. Students who receive a grade less than B- may repeat a course and replace the initial grade; however, students can only replace a maximum of three courses (9 credits). Both grades will appear on their transcripts, but the replaced grade will not count towards their GPA. The grades of any courses repeated beyond the nine credits will apply to their GPA. Course repeats are unlimited. In other words, students may repeat a course multiple times but may only replace a course in which a grade below B- was received three times, keeping in mind grade replacement can only be used a maximum of three times throughout the program. Once the grade replacement limit has been met (i.e., three courses have been repeated and initial grades replaced), any

additional course repeats will apply to the student's overall GPA. If a student exceeds the course repeat and grade replacement policy and is unable to maintain a 3.0 GPA with repeats or has not satisfactorily completed pre-requisite courses in order to continue with degree completion course progression, the administrative dismissal policy may be enacted. Students **should be aware that some state licensure boards do not accept any course work with a grade below B-**.

## **2.16 Administrative Dismissal**

Students may be eligible for Administrative Dismissal from the M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling online if any of the following are true:

1. It will be mathematically impossible for them to raise their cumulative Graduate GPA to 3.00 with their remaining required courses.
2. They do not have a cumulative Graduate GPA of at least a 2.7 after completion of early core counseling courses and/or a 3.0 at Practicum.
3. They have three (3) grades or three (3) courses of C+/C/C- or below applying to their degree and they have applied the repeat policy for the maximum allowed nine (9) hours or three (3) courses, and they earn two (2) or more additional grades or courses of C+ or lower.
4. They earn two (2) grades of D+ or lower.

## **2.17 Attendance**

Regular attendance in courses is expected throughout the length of the term/semester. The U.S. Department of Education requires that every university monitor the attendance of their students.

[Online Attendance Policy](#)

[Intensive Attendance Policy](#)

### **Intensive courses**

Intensive coursework begins at the beginning of the designated term. Students must attend every day in its entirety, whether in-residence or online, during the days of class meetings in order to pass the course. If meeting on campus, students are required to bring a laptop to class during each day of residency. If meeting online, students are required to obtain the adequate technology needed to connect in the online synchronous classroom.

Dates and times for intensive class meetings are in ASIST or the Course Registration Tool.

## **2.18 American Psychological Association (APA) Format**

The Graduate Counseling Program requires students to use the most current version of the APA writing style guide for all submitted coursework. The most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association is required for every student. It is imperative that all graduate students become familiar with and use this writing format.

## **2.19 [Graduation](#)**

All degree completion requirements must be fulfilled before the university will confer the M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling online degree. Students who wish to participate in the yearly Spring Commencement program must file an [Application for Graduation](#) in accordance with the calendar deadlines listed on ASIST and posted by the Registrar on the Graduation Requirements webpage. Students are advised to submit their applications well in advance of the deadline date.

# Student Expectations

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## 3.1 Professional Organizations

A significant arena in which counselors can make an impact within the field is through involvement with professional organizations. Students are encouraged to join the [American Counseling Association \(ACA\)](#) and ACA associated national, state, and local divisions as well as the [American Association of Christian Counselors \(AACC\)](#). These organizations allow students higher levels of involvement in their areas of interest. Most professional organizations and divisions offer reduced membership rates to students as well as:

- benefits such as access to their professional journals and newsletters,
- reduced registration fees for professional seminars, conferences, and workshops
- eligibility for member services (ethics consultation, liability insurance)
- involvement in activities and issues which are directly or indirectly pertain to the profession (legislation and professional credentialing, licensure, certification)
- affiliation with other professionals having similar interests and areas of expertise.

## 3.2 Academic Honesty & Plagiarism

Liberty University holds its students to high standards of ethics. One significant area of integrity in academics is honesty. Students are expected to submit only their own work. Furthermore, students are expected not to give nor receive assistance of any kind specifically regarding assignments or examinations. For more information on the *Academic Code of Honor* and *Personal Code of Honor*, see the [Liberty Way](#).

## 3.3 Academic Appeal Policy

In circumstances where a student disagrees with either a course final grade or a sanction due to an Honor Code violation, students have the right to appeal the grade or sanction through the [Office of Student Affairs](#). The procedures followed for academic misconduct, personal misconduct, or grade appeals are outlined at the [Graduate Student Affairs website](#).

## 3.4 Department Faculty-Student Interaction

The faculty is responsible to interact with students in a supervisory capacity/role. As such, faculty may provide students professional principles, guidance, and recommendations as it relates to the context of the student-client setting. The faculty are responsible to avoid dual relationships with students, such as entering a student-counselor relationship. Thus, faculty do not provide personal counseling addressing students' personal problems. If a faculty member perceives that a student is in need of personal or professional counseling, then that faculty member will recommend that the student pursue either pastoral or professional assistance from a counselor in their community.

In the event of a student's disclosure, either verbally, or in writing, of either threat of serious or foreseeable harm to self or others; abuse or neglect of a minor, elderly, or disabled person; or current involvement in criminal activity, the faculty, staff, administrator or supervisor will take immediate action. This action may include but is not limited to, immediate notification of appropriate state law enforcement or social services personnel, emergency contacts, and notification of the program director or department chair. The incident and action taken will become part of the student's permanent record.

For more information and resources, see Appendix A.

### **3.5 Professional Development, Student Support, & Administrative Review**

#### **Ethical Conduct**

All students in the M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling online program are responsible for behaving in an ethical manner throughout their training, as well as in clinical and professional settings. Violations of the [ACA Code of Ethics](#), and/or the [Student Honor Code/Liberty Way](#) and/or failure to take steps to rectify violations are considered extremely serious and may result in termination from the program.

Although students are expected to adhere to the ACA Code of Ethics and the Student Honor Code/Liberty Way as guides to their behavior throughout their program, reading the documents is just the beginning of understanding professional ethics. Being an ethical counselor-in-training involves understanding the underlying principles and values associated with professional codes of ethics that are built upon a strong commitment to biblical principles, developing a set of beliefs that guide one's everyday practice, being able to discern potential as well as realized ethical problematic situations, and having the character to stand by these when faced with challenging situations. This is an essential component of your professional development.

#### **Professional Development**

To successfully complete the Clinical Mental Health Counseling online program at Liberty University and be eligible for graduation, a student must be able to demonstrate proficiency in four areas:

1. Attainment of scholastic competency in all coursework as evaluated through the assessment of Clinical Mental Health Counseling online standards, the comprehensive examination given at the completion of the core curriculum, and by maintaining an overall GPA of 3.0.
2. Acquisition of, and ability to apply counseling skills with a diverse population and to a standard acceptable by licensed professional counselors. This ability is evaluated by faculty using the Counseling Competency Scale (CCS) in the skills courses (COUC 505, 512, 667) and by the student's approved site and faculty supervisor using the CCS during practicum/internship.

3. Demonstration of emotional and mental stability and maturity in interaction with others, including the ability to maintain healthy boundaries, communicate appropriately, successfully manage personal anxiety or uncomfortable feelings, work collaboratively with others, and resolve interpersonal conflict. This proficiency is evaluated throughout the program in all interactions with faculty, staff, administrators, supervisors, adjuncts, and fellow students and includes both verbal and written communications.
4. Adherence to the Professional Identity and Standards as outlined by the American Counseling Association's Code of Ethics and the [Student Honor Code/Liberty Way](#). This proficiency is evaluated across the program in all interactions with faculty, staff, administrators, supervisors, adjuncts, and fellow students and includes both verbal and written communications.
5. Demonstration of the ability to integrate faith and spirituality into counseling where appropriate in an ethically competent manner.

The counseling faculty will develop and evaluate students in the above areas of proficiency on an ongoing and consistent manner in all settings in which faculty and students interact. This interaction can include formal and informal settings such as classroom, online communication, advising, and personal conversations. To align with CACREP standards, all students will be evaluated through a rubric, listing the standards and expectations for various assignments in individual courses. This information will be compiled for each student and provide documentation to meet their CACREP requirements for graduation.

### **3.6 Professional Development, Student Support, & Administrative Review**

#### **Ethical Conduct**

All students in the M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) online program are required to know and adhere to the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (ACA, 2014), all applicable State laws and counselor licensing codes of ethics, and The Liberty Way (Student Honor Code) throughout their counselor training, in all clinical, professional, and personal contexts that pertain to their counselor training, and in all written and in-person or virtual interactions and communications that pertain to their counselor training. Violations of ACA Code of Ethics, other applicable State laws and counselor licensing codes of ethics, or The Liberty Way and/or failure to rectify violations are considered extremely serious and may result in dismissal from the program. Additionally, students who are considered in violation of The Liberty Way are subject to violation sanctions as described in The Liberty Way document found on the website of The Office of Academic Integrity.

#### **Assessment of Professional Development**

In keeping with the ACA Code of Ethics, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Program (CACREP, 2024), and the Southern Association of

Colleges and Schools (SACS) requirements, faculty in counselor education programs are required to assess the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and values of students in their programs. To successfully complete the CMHC online program and be eligible for graduation, a student must be able to demonstrate proficiency in four areas:

### **Administrative Hold**

A student's account may be placed on administrative hold by the program director for the following reasons:

- Dispositional concerns
- Refusal to meet via an audio and video platform to discuss dispositional concerns
- As part of an administrative review
- As part of the remediation process
- As part of the disciplinary process
- As part of the grade appeals process
- Failure to complete any of the Gate-courses

A hold may prevent the candidate from registering for courses, including practicum and internship, which would prevent them from progressing in the program until the issue has been resolved. Students will be notified of any hold placed on their account by the program director. Once initiated, the student will remain on administrative hold in the program pending the outcome of ongoing processes. As part of Administrative Review, the program director will review all of the available and relevant evidence to determine an appropriate interim action to address dispositional issues or other concerns, which may include an interim suspension of the student from courses, internships, or clinical placements. The program director may, in his or her discretion, also apply a registration hold to prevent the candidate from progressing in the program pending resolution of the issue.

### **Behavioral Concerns at Practicum and Internship Sites**

If during the Practicum or Internship, a student fails to successfully demonstrate the required skills, professional behaviors, or personal or professional dispositions in this course and/or receives failing evaluations, is dismissed from the site, or is found practicing at a site without having received approval by the department for the site, the site supervisor will notify the student's professor. The professor will write an incident report and send it to the Program Director and the department's Internship Office. The Program Director, the Director of Clinical Training, and the Leadership Team will examine the nature and reason for the skills deficit, professional behaviors, or dispositions and/or site dismissal and recommend a course of action, which could include Administrative Review for Behavioral Intervention and/or referral to Remediation and/or the Office of Community Life. Administrative Review is appropriate when a student's behavior is so concerning and/or non-professional that prompt protective action is required (see below section, "Administrative Review for Behavioral Intervention").

1. Attainment of scholastic competency in all coursework as evaluated



through the assessment of CMHC online program standards, the comprehensive examination given at the completion of the core curriculum, and by maintaining an overall GPA of 3.0.

2. Acquisition of, and ability to apply counseling skills with diverse populations, in keeping with the learning outcomes and professional standards set forth by the ACA, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), and the CEFS department. This ability is evaluated by faculty using the Counseling Competency Scale-Revised (CCS-R) in the skills courses (COUC 505, 512, 667) and by the student's approved site and faculty supervisors using the CCS-R during practicum/internship.
3. Demonstration of professional dispositions (i.e., professional behaviors) and ethical behaviors as outlined in the ACA Code of Ethics and The Liberty Way. Among these professional dispositions and ethical behaviors are consistent emotional and mental stability and interpersonal maturity. This includes the ability to maintain healthy boundaries, communicate appropriately, successfully manage personal anxiety or uncomfortable feelings, work collaboratively with others, and resolve interpersonal conflict. This proficiency is evaluated throughout the program in all interactions with faculty, staff, administrators, supervisors (faculty and site), adjuncts, and fellow students and includes both verbal and written communications.
4. Demonstration of the ability to integrate Christian faith and spirituality into counseling where appropriate in an ethically competent manner. This proficiency is evaluated throughout the program in written assignments and in course- and assignment-related communications with faculty and other students.

The counseling faculty develop and evaluate students in the above areas of proficiency on an ongoing and consistent manner across all contexts in which faculty and students interact. This interaction can include formal and informal settings such as classroom, online communication, advising, and personal conversations. To align with CACREP standards, assignment and dispositional rubrics are used to evaluate all students in individual courses. This information is compiled for each student and provides documentation to meet their CACREP requirements for graduation.

### **Remediation Process**

When a student needs support in meeting proficiency requirements, faculty in the Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies (the Department) engage the student in a supportive remediation process meant to improve the student's ability to succeed in the program. This process is positive, collaborative, and may involve the student's course professor,

his or her Faculty Advising Mentor (FAM), the Student Support and Development Committee (SSD), Program Directors (PDs), and other administrative leaders and resources.

The SSD committee is a central “hub” for the remediation process, as it connects faculty and FAM with referrals and resources. A referral to this committee can be made by faculty, FAMs, or PDs if a student needs to improve in academic knowledge/integrity, counseling skills, professional disposition, or in their ability to integrate Christian faith and spirituality into counseling.

In its approach to student success, the Department desires transparency and collaboration with students who are involved in any stage of the remediation process. Students are encouraged to be transparent and open to receiving help from the Department. Students are encouraged at every stage of the remediation process to share their perspective and any information they believe can be helpful to the successful outcome of the overall process. Students are required to be professional in all communications regarding these matters.

**The stages of remediation are as follows:**

**Note:** The PD may make a direct Stage 3 referral at any time in a student’s matriculation in the program that a PD determines the student’s deficiencies in academic knowledge, counseling skills, and/or professional dispositions warrants immediate Administrative-level review.

**Stage 1 – Faculty Support at the Course Level**

The faculty (i.e., course professor) meets with the student and gives direct feedback and, when necessary, develops a course-level action plan. The faculty documents the outcome with the SSD so that the FAM can provide support to the student as needed and maintain an ongoing record in case the student experiences additional need for FAM support in the future. If the present course-level action plan is not achieved by the student, the student will progress to Stage 2 of the remediation process.

**Stage 2 – Department Level Review**

At Stage 2, the SSD committee connects faculty and FAM with resources to provide additional support to mitigate students’ professional development deficiencies. The FAM works with faculty to provide support at this stage. If the student refuses to meet with the course professor and/or the FAM, the PD will become involved and may apply a registration hold to the student’s account. If the student is unsuccessful in completing Stage 1 or 2, the student may proceed to Stage 3.

**Stage 3 – Remediation Committee Referral**

At Stage 3, the RC may impose a registration hold, if one is not already in place.

The RC will review the information that is presented and will either:

- 1) **Refer the case back to the PD for Administrative-level handling of the case.** This sometimes happens in cases in which a student’s circumstances are not clearly remediable. The PD will then review the case and determine next steps for the student, which may include program dismissal.

**OR,**

- 2) **Email the student at his or her Liberty University email address to ask for his or her perspective on the information that has been presented to the RC.** The student will have a time limit within which to reply to the RC's initial outreach email. Once the student has replied via email to the RC's initial outreach email, the RC will then review the student's response. If the RC determines that still more information is needed, the RC will ask for additional information from the student and/or from the original referring faculty member, FAM, or PD. If the student refuses to communicate with the RC, or if the student is not engaging in the remediation process such that the RC is able to proceed with its process, the RC will refer the student to the PD, who will determine next steps with the student.

**Upon receiving requested additional information, the RC will again review the student's case and either:**

- 1) Refer the student's case to the PD because it is now clear to the RC that the student's case is better served at the course- or Administrative-level.

**OR,**

- 2) Determine that the student has already experienced sufficient course- or Administrative-level remediation and maybe released from the remediation process.

**OR,**

- 3) Determine that the student's case does, in fact, warrant a formal remediation plan.

If the RC determines that the student's case does, in fact, warrant a formal remediation plan, the RC will design a formal remediation plan that may include, among other possible remediation plan actions, requiring the student to:

- Participate in the Counseling Skills Development Resource, a skills-development program with the Department. This program is provided free of charge and is designed to improve specific deficiencies demonstrated by the student.
- Re-take a course for course/degree credit.
- Audit a course for no course/degree credit.
- Attend professional counseling by an approved counselor. Professional counseling may also be recommended or suggested but not required as part of a formal remediation plan.
- Complete psychological testing by an approved counselor or psychologist. The goal of such testing would be to confirm the student's ability to be successful in working with clients during courses such as practicum and internship. The student may be required to submit medical documentation that supports their ability to participate in coursework such as practicum or internship.

For this limited list and all other possible formal remediation action steps, any costs associated with the remediation plan are at the expense of the student.

All outside information (e.g., input from a counselor, psychologist, or medical doctor) required of and provided by the student will be handled confidentially. In some instances, the RC may request documents or information directly from the student's medical provider. If so, the student will be required to sign a release so that the medical provider can provide the necessary documents or requested information.

If the RC offers a student a formal remediation plan, the RC will email the student's plan to the student's Liberty University email address and require the student to, within a designated amount of time, either accept or decline the remediation plan. Whether accepting or declining, the student is required to respond via email to the RC within the stated timeframe for responding.

**If the student accepts the remediation plan**, he or she is expected to complete their formal remediation plan within the timeframe designated by the RC. The student will remain on a registration hold, meaning they cannot resume course enrollment until they have successfully completed their formal remediation plan and submitted all documentation required by their formal remediation plan. As soon as possible, and upon being notified by the student that they have completed their required formal remediation plan and submitted all required documentation, the RC will review the updated status of the student's case and determine whether or not the student has, in fact, successfully completed his or her formal remediation plan. If the RC determines that the student has successfully completed the plan, the RC will promptly send email notification informing the student the he or she has been released from the remediation process. The student's registration hold will also be lifted at that time. The RC will inform the PD, and the PD will inform the SSD that the student is no longer on remediation.

If, upon the RC's review, the student has not, in fact completed their formal remediation plan as written, the RC will notify the student of what remains to be completed. The student will remain in remediation until he or she has successfully completed his or her formal remediation plan, as determined by the RC.

Communication of the student's progress on the completion of their formal remediation plan to the RC is the responsibility of the student.

If the student disenrolls from the program while in remediation and then later attempts to re-enroll in the program, the remediation designation and registration hold will still be in place. The student should reach out to the PD at the time of re-enrollment to address the uncompleted formal remediation plan and registration hold. Students should be aware that, if they do not re-enroll in courses within a certain period of time or are unable to re-enroll in courses due to a registration hold, they may break enrollment and need to re-apply to the program. In those situations, admission is not guaranteed.

**If the student does not accept the formal remediation plan as presented by the RC**, the RC will consider this a rejection of the remediation process and will refer the student to the PD for further Administrative-level deliberation.

In the event that the student rejects his or her formal remediation plan, the student's registration hold will remain in effect until further notice from the PD. Or, see above for how remediation and registration holds are handled if the student disenrolls from the program and attempts to re-enroll at a later date.

### **Appeal of Remediation Plans or Other Remediation-Related Decisions**

A student may, within 10 business days of receipt of notification, appeal any remediation plan or other remediation-related decision to the RC. The student should include any reasons for rejecting all or portions of their remediation plan. The RC will then notify Administration and/or the Dean or his designee of the student's decision to appeal. Possible outcomes of a student's appeal may include:

- 1) Closing the remediation referral with no further remediation-related oversight, or
- 2) modifying the remediation plan which may include lifting or modifying any interim measures imposed by the RC – such modified plan would be offered to the student in lieu of the original remediation plan, or
- 3) dismissing the student from the program.

### **Appeal of Program Dismissal**

The appeal must be submitted in writing to the Dean of the School of Behavioral Sciences within 7 business days of notification of receiving the notice of the PD's decision. The appeal should clearly state the reason(s) the student believes the final determination should be overturned. Once received, the Dean of the School of Behavioral Sciences (or designee) will review all relevant evidence and, if necessary, speak with the student, the PD, and any others who have relevant information (e.g., members of the RC). The Dean of the School of Behavioral Sciences (or designee) will endeavor to make a determination within 10 business days of receiving the appeal. The determination to uphold or overturn the final determination will be sent to the student in writing, and the Dean of the School of Behavioral Sciences (or designee)'s determination concerning any interim action(s) will be final, pending the outcome of any separate processes. If the Dean of the School of Behavioral Sciences (or designee) overturns a dismissal, the student will have the option either to remain in the program and continue work with the RC to fully address its concerns, or to withdraw from the program.

### **Other Remediation-Related Outcomes**

For students who accept remediation but are unsuccessful in remediation, information on other Liberty University programs may be offered. In some cases, students are referred to their respective state board of professional counselors for consultation.

### **Remediation-Related Records**

All SSD referrals are part of a student's education record and remain so for at least as long as the student is enrolled in the program. The Department keeps these as an ongoing record of its efforts to support student success in the program. Such record-keeping is common and required by accrediting bodies.

### **3.7 [Harassment](#)**

Sexual harassment and/or any harassment on the basis of color, race, religion, or national origin has long been recognized as a violation of Section 703 of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended. Such behavior does not befit a committed Christian. Accordingly, Liberty University will not tolerate sexual harassment and intimidation of its employees.

### **3.8 Sexual Violence Consultation & Counseling Policy**

Liberty University is committed to providing a safe place for learning. As such, Liberty adheres to the Title IX directive of not tolerating any form of sex-based discrimination, which can include: acts of sexual violence, sexual misconduct, and disrespect for one another including non-consensual sexual intercourse, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, childhood sexual abuse, and stalking. Additionally, Liberty University is committed to supporting and coming alongside students who may be current victims of sexual discrimination and/or violence. Under Title IX, faculty are obligated to disclose to the university's Title IX office any student disclosure of a current experience of sex-based discrimination, physical violence, and/or sexual violence. For additional information and up to date policy, please reference the [Title IX information page](#).

**Thus, if a student discloses to a faculty member, verbally or in writing, that he/she is experiencing sex-based discrimination, physical violence and/or sexual violence, then the faculty member will make a referral to the Title IX office.** This process is in place so that the university can help ensure that students are offered both the support and resources needed to help them succeed in their educational endeavors. An employee from the Title IX Office will reach out to the student and offer support, resources, and information. Though faculty are required to report incidents of sex-based discrimination and/or violence to the Title IX office, students are not required to accept any offers of support, resources, or information.

### **3.9 Personal Counseling**

Students are strongly encouraged to seek group and individual counseling as a part of the educational experience. As counselor-trainees who are in the process of developing the skills, professional behaviors, and dispositions needed to become a licensed clinical mental health counselor, it is imperative that students deal with personal issues that may interfere with their ability to work with clients in a competent and ethical manner. Moreover, experiences as a client will help the counselor better understand the client's experience in counseling. For more information, see Appendix A.

### 3.10 Faculty Endorsement

Upon successful completion of the program of studies and demonstration of the requisite competencies, faculty members endorse students for certification and licensure. Upon request, the faculty will write letters of recommendation for employment in the student's specified area of specialization or for advanced studies (e.g., Doctoral programs). Endorsement only occurs when faculty believe students are qualified to perform the duties associated with credentialing or employment. Students should reach out to a faculty member who can best speak to their academic and professional performance.

In addition to credentialing and employment, faculty members endorse students for practicum and internship. Endorsement occurs only when students have successfully completed the prerequisite courses and if faculty members believe students are qualified to perform the duties associated with the practicum or internship. In compliance with the ACA Code of Ethics, regardless of academic qualifications, faculty do not endorse students whom they believe to be impaired in any way that would interfere with the performance of the duties associated with the endorsement.

### 3.11 Student Record Keeping

Students should keep copies of all class syllabi and course schedules for future use. Students should also keep copies of all clinical and supervision hours accrued in practicum and internship classes. Examination boards for counseling licensure, insurance companies, and other organizations may require proof of course content and/or clinical work by evidence of the course syllabus, course schedule, or official clinical hours spreadsheets. Do not discard old syllabi and other academic records but save them in a few formats (electronic, print, or backup) and in a secure location. It is difficult and sometimes impossible for faculty or program administration to locate old syllabi. Keeping copies of course syllabi, schedules, and clinical hours is the student's responsibility.

### 3.12 [Computer Needs](#)

Each student at Liberty University is expected to demonstrate computer literacy prior to admission to the program. Each course in the M.A. Clinical Mental Health Counseling online program requires the student to have a reliable internet connection and computer software programs. Because these are essential for your interactions and completion of the course, students **must** have access to the following:

- Microsoft Office® (Note: Microsoft Office 365® is available for free to Liberty University students at [Microsoft 365 | Information Services | Liberty University](#))
- Internet that can access Canvas and Liberty University's website
- A computer that meets the hardware/software specifications to access Canvas
- Send and receive emails via their Liberty Webmail address.

For information on recommended hardware, software, operating systems, and student discounts on computers, see the [Liberty Information Technology website](#).

### **3.13 Email Account and Communication**

Upon admission, each student is assigned a Liberty University username and email account (username@liberty.edu). **All correspondence from the university, counseling department, and your course instructor will be delivered via this email address. Students are strongly urged to check their Liberty University email accounts daily for communication from the university and counseling faculty.**

Students are expected to practice professionalism in all email communications. We live in a fast-paced world with text messaging, which encourages short and abbreviated communication. However, since you are in a counseling program, you are encouraged and expected to use full sentences and good grammar when communicating with other students and faculty. It is also an expectation that your electronic communication is pleasing to God. Being courteous and polite to peers and professors demonstrates dignity and respect, "And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them" (Luke 6:31, ESV).

Communicate complaints directly to the individual involved. Do not send a blanket email to everyone in the class or to administrative personnel until you have communicated your concerns directly to the person involved and allowed them time to respond. Do not post a message to the class on Canvas that is more appropriate for an individual. Avoid offensive language of any kind. Because students are responsible for behaving in an ethical manner throughout the course of the program, continual unprofessional, discourteous communication cannot be tolerated and may result in remediation procedures up to and including dismissal from the program.

### **3.14 Dress Code**

When on campus or in a class (in person or virtual), students are expected to comply with the dress code outlined in the *Liberty Way*. See also [Intensive Dress Code](#).

For a listing of general resources and program announcements, please visit the [Online Clinical Mental Health Counseling Advising Guide](#).



## Appendix A: CMHC Resources

[State Boards](#)

[State Licensure Information](#)

[Computer and Technology Requirements](#)

[IT Helpdesk Homepage](#)

[Graduate Catalog](#)

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 800-273-8255**

**National Mental Health Hotline | 866-903-3787**

## Appendix B

[Course Descriptions](#)