



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

M.A. Marriage and Family Counseling  
(Residential)

2023-2024 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 School of Behavioral Science/Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies specific. The policies and procedures apply to current and newly accepted students. The policies and procedures apply to current and newly accepted students. Students who are currently taking Master's courses in Marriage and Family Counseling must adhere to these guidelines with the exception of any changes in the academic program.

## Disclosure Statement

The 60-hour Marriage and Family Counseling degree is designed to lead to professional licensure as outlined by the Virginia Board of Counseling. Other state boards have unique licensure requirements. Therefore, before enrolling in a licensure program at Liberty University, students should consult the rules and regulations regarding Professional Counseling for the particular state that they intend to seek licensure after graduation. To obtain your state's web address, view [State Licensure Boards](#).

Enrollment in the MA 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 MA Marriage and Family Counseling Program are responsible for knowing the material outlined in this handbook. Further, if a student intends to practice in a state other than Virginia after graduation, **it is the sole responsibility of the student, not the program, to obtain information regarding prerequisites for licensure as outlined by their state board of counseling.**

For issues regarding course scheduling contact your assigned faculty advisor. Then, if needed, contact the Program Director, Dr. Nicole DiLella at [nmdilella@liberty.edu](mailto:nmdilella@liberty.edu). For Practicum & Internship, please contact the respective offices [cmhcpracticum@liberty.edu](mailto:cmhcpracticum@liberty.edu) or [cmhcinternship@liberty.edu](mailto:cmhcinternship@liberty.edu). If appealing a decision made by the Practicum or Internship office, please contact Dr. Michael Trexler at [mtrexler@liberty.edu](mailto:mtrexler@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 Marriage and Family Counseling 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 Marriage and Family Counseling program. We are honored that you have chosen to pursue your studies here at Liberty University and consider it a privilege to serve as your gateway to the profession of counseling.

This 2023-2024 *M. A. in Marriage and Family 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 2023. This handbook and the [Liberty University Graduate Catalog](#) are considered required reading for all M.A. Marriage and Family Counseling students and both should be read in their entirety. Although you are assigned an advisor when you start the program, it is ultimately your responsibility to know the information contained in this handbook. Your academic advisor will assist you in registration and course information. You will also be assigned a core faculty advisor who will answer program-related questions. Review this handbook periodically, and if questions arise, contact your core faculty advisor.

Faculty contact information is listed in this handbook and is also available online. 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. We will, as each year passes, honor the degree completion plan (DCP) under which you enrolled unless you break enrollment. If you break enrollment, you will be required to re-apply to the program and enroll under the active DCP at that time. Although there is a lot of information contained in this handbook, 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 advisor and other faculty members, you may access the Liberty University [Graduate Catalog](#).

You are about to engage in the exciting process of becoming a professional counselor, we are delighted that you have chosen Liberty University's Marriage and Family Counseling program. As you will see in the following pages of this handbook, the process and experiences offered at Liberty University are focused on ensuring a comprehensive personal and professional educational experience. As a faculty, we feel honored to accompany you on your journey.

We look forward to serving you!

Nicole DiLella, Ph.D., LPC, NCC, ACS  
Director, M.A. in Marriage and Family Counseling Program



# The Marriage and Family Counseling Program

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## 1.1 Accreditation

Liberty University is approved by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, and is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award associate, bachelor, master, and doctoral degrees. Liberty is also a member of the Association of Christian Schools International.



The M.A. in Marriage and Family Counseling program is accredited by the **Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP)**. 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 this accreditation, consult the agency website at [www.cacrep.org](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 of counselors from a faith-based perspective. Our training in theory and the practice of counseling is designed to prepare students to work as licensed counselors (LPC) or marriage and family therapists (LMFT) with diverse populations. The M.A. program provides foundational studies that equip students for licensure, to pursue doctoral studies, 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 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 purposes to accomplish this mission by the professional development of the mental health counseling student across the following domains:

- 1) Attainment of scholastic competency 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 Graduate Student Code of Honor, 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, 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 (cf. 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. This means for us that all persons possess dignity and worth because they are unique subjects of Divine Creation. 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 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 occur in a climate that encourages a deepened appreciation of differences. Therefore, we do not discriminate in our educational and counselor training programs on the basis of: race, color, creed, religion, gender, age, national/ethnic origin, sexual orientation, and physical or mental disability.

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

- To increase, through recruitment and retention measures, the diverse representation of students, faculty, and staff;
- Promote 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 develop graduate assistantships opportunities to serve diverse student groups;
- 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 standards and ethics](#) of the counseling profession regarding sensitivity to and celebration of diversity.

Liberty University admits students of any race, color, and national and ethnic origin and accords them all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or disability in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, or athletic and other school-administered programs.

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

The Department 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, we will review cases for individuals who have graduated and are practicing clinicians who need additional coursework for licensure.

All inquires should be sent to the MFC program director for reviews.

# Academic Policies

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## 2.1 Program Learning Objectives

The Masters of Arts in Marriage and Family Counseling provides students with both academic course work 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 have developed the following learning outcomes applicable to all students.

### Department of Counselor Education & Family Studies *M.A. in Marriage and Family Counseling*

<b><i>MA Marriage and Family Counseling PLOs</i></b>
<b><i>Cluster 1</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</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)</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>MA Marriage and Family Counseling PLO</i></b>

**PLO 7: MFC/COUC-Synthesize Counseling Theories to Treat Clients**

Synthesize theories of family systems and dynamic into a comprehensive systems approach to counseling that informs assessment, diagnosis, and treatment planning for marriage, couples, and family client(s) with a broad array of presenting problems.

See [Graduate Catalog](#).

## **2.2 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](#)

[Medical Incomplete](#)

[Military Incompletes](#)

## **2.3 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](#).

## **2.4 Independent Studies and Directed Studies**

Students who need specific course work 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.

## **2.5 Planned Program of Study**

The following chart list 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 fill out on Canvas. Students are notified that this curriculum guide is a planning document. It is not a substitute for regular consultation with their DCP or with their faculty advisor. This guide is subject to change. Use this guide for course planning and for discussions with your faculty advisor when you set up your course of study.

## M.A. in Marriage and Family Counseling: Residential (60 hours)

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	None	First Semester
COUC 504	Multicultural Counseling	None	Second Semester
COUC 505	Counseling Techniques	COUC 500, 501, 502	Second Semester
COUC 506	Integration of Spirituality and Counseling	COUC 501	Fifth Semester
COUC 510	Theories of Counseling	COUC 500, 501	Second Semester
COUC 512	Group Counseling	COUC 500, 501, 502, 504, 505, 510	Third 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 Ex. MATH 201, PSYC 354, or PYSC 355	Fourth Semester
COUC 521	Assessment Techniques in Counseling	COUC 500, 501, 502, 504, 505, 510	Third Semester

COUC 522	Career Development and Counseling	COUC 500, 501, 502, 504, 505, COSC 500, 501, 505, 510	Fourth Semester
COUC 546	Psychopathology	COUC 500, 501, 502, 504, 505, 510	Third Semester
COUC 601	Theories of Family Systems	COUC 500, 501, 502, 504, 505, 510	Sixth Semester
COUC 602	Assessment, Diagnosis & Treatment Planning in Family Counseling	COUC 500, 501, 502, 504, 505, 510, 512, 515, 546 (course offered in Fall and Spring semesters depending upon enrollment)	Fourth Semester
COUC 691	Substance Abuse: Diagnosis, Treatment, and Prevention	COUC 501, 504, 505, 510, 521, 546	Sixth Semester
COUC 692	Practicum	COUC 500, 501, 502, 504, 505, 510, 512, 521, 522, 546, (602 may be taken concurrently)	Fifth Semester
COUC 693	Internship 1	COUC 500, 501, 502, 504, 505, 510, 512, 515, 521, 522, 546, 602, 692	Sixth Semester
COUC 694	Internship 2	COUC 500, 501, 502, 504, 505, 510, 512, 515, 521, 546, 602, 692, 693	Seventh Semester
COUC 603	Advanced Marital & Couple Counseling	COUC 500, 501, 502, 504, 505, 510, 512, 521, 546, 601 (course offered in Fall semesters)	
COUC 610	Human Sexuality	COUC 500, 501, 502, 505, 510	
COUC 620	Counseling Children, Adolescents, and Their Families	COUC 500, 501, 502, 504, 505, 510, 512, 521, 546, 601 (course offered in Spring semesters)	

## 2.6 Recommended Course Sequence

Please note that the following plan is subject to change as we attempt to improve the curriculum and our scheduling sequence.

**MFC 9 credit sequence**

Semester	Courses	Semester	Courses
1 <sup>st</sup> Semester	COUC 500 COUC 501 COUC 502	2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester	COUC 504 COUC 505 COUC 510
3 <sup>rd</sup> Semester	COUC 546 COUC 512 COUC 601	4 <sup>th</sup> Semester	COUC 521 COUC 522 COUC 602
5 <sup>th</sup> Semester	COUC 603/610/620 COUC 506 COUC 692	6 <sup>th</sup> Semester	COUC 670 COUC 671 COUC 603/610/620 COUC 691 COUC 693
7 <sup>th</sup> Semester	COUC 603/610/620 COUC 694		

**MFC 12 credit sequence**

Semester	Courses	Semester	Courses
1 <sup>st</sup> Semester	COUC 500 COUC 501 COUC 502 COUC 510	2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester	COUC 504 COUC 505 COUC 506 COUC 601
3 <sup>rd</sup> Semester	COUC 515 COUC 521 COUC 512 COUC 546	4 <sup>th</sup> Semester	COUC 522 COUC 602 COUC 603 or 620 COUC 692
5 <sup>th</sup> Semester	COUC 693 COUC 603 or 620 CEFS 670 CEFS 671	6 <sup>th</sup> Semester	COUC 691 COUC 694

Items to consider:

- Courses that may have flexibility: 506, 515, 522, 691, elective

**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.

## 2.7 Course Delivery Formats

Students enrolled in the residential program primarily complete their degree using the traditional 16-week semester classroom format on the Liberty University campus. Residential students may choose to meet some program requirements through residential intensives and online courses. 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.

### Format 1: Traditional Residential

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.

### Format 2: One-week Residential Intensive

Students in the Marriage and Family Counseling program may take selective courses in the intensive format. These “intensive” courses are offered in and throughout each semester and summer. The intensive courses involve attending a full week (approximately) 36-40 hours of classroom-based instruction at Liberty University in Lynchburg. In addition to class time, students are expected to complete additional work online over the duration of this 16-week course.. Intensive classes are in session from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Monday – Thursday and 8:00 a.m. to noon on Friday with an hour and a half for lunch. Grades are posted according to the online A-Term deadline dates issued by the Registrar’s Office.

### Format 3: Online Format Using Canvas®

M.A. Marriage and Family Counseling 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.

## 2.8 Dual Degrees and Dual Licensure

Students seeking to obtain a second degree through Liberty may do so, but due to the extent of overlap between required courses in the CEFS Department programs, dual degrees will not be awarded within the department. For students pursuing a second degree outside of the CEFS department, 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.

Although dual degrees will not be awarded within the department, 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 financial aid 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 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.

## 2.9 Faculty/Academic Advising

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

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

***It is always the responsibility of the student to be aware of University policies and regulations and state licensing requirements affecting his or her program. Advisors cannot advise on matters pertaining to the regulations of state licensure boards.***

## 2.10 Practicum

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

## 2.11 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 many 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 located on the Degree Program Information website: <https://www.liberty.edu/behavioral-sciences/counselor-ed/degree-program-information/> 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 and 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 Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies 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 on the COUC 692: Practicum or COUC 693/694: Internship websites. 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 Practicum Manual and Internship Manuals which can be found on the Practicum and Internship links located on the Master's Degree program website:

<https://www.liberty.edu/behavioral-sciences/counselor-ed/masters/> 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. Please keep application deadlines in mind and complete the fingerprints for your background check early enough to meet the application deadline.

### **Finding a Site**

Students are responsible to find 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. **Marriage and Family Counseling students are required to have a minimum of 200 hours out of the required 240 direct hours with couples and families.** Their site should have a couple/family client population that accommodates this requirement.

### **State Licensure Requirements**

Students intending to seek licensure in a state other than Virginia after graduation **are required to know their state(s) licensure requirements 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 take the greater amount: Liberty University or the state (e.g., Florida requires 1000 hours of fieldwork experience and CA requires additional classes). More information about state licensure board regulations can be found at <http://www.nbcc.org/directory/Default.aspx> or <https://amftrb.org/>.

### **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 in order to help our students living abroad succeed in completing their practicum/internship experience. In addition to the

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

Students who are seeking licensure in the United States are responsible for knowing and understanding the requirements of the state board for the state in which they wish to become licensed.

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. You are solely responsible to find out this information. The Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies may not provide this or any other information pertaining to specific state licensure requirements.

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.**

## **2.12 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.

### **2.13 Time Limit for Degree Completion**

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

### **2.14 Course Repeat and Grade Replacement Policy**

In order to graduate from the Marriage and Family 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 two courses (6 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 six credits will apply to their GPA. There is a maximum of two **total** course repeats. In other words, students may repeat **and replace a course in which a grade below B- was received two times**, keeping in mind grade replacement can only be used **a maximum of two times in the program**. Once the grade replacement limit has been met (i.e., two 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 **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-**.

### **2.15 Administrative Dismissal**

Students will be eligible for Administrative Dismissal from the Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Counseling 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 2.7 after completion of early core counseling courses (Gate 2) and/or a 3.0 at Practicum.
3. They have two (2) grades or two (2) of C+/C/C- applying to their degree and they have applied the repeat policy for the maximum allowed six (6) hours or two (2) courses, and they earned two (2) or more additional grades of C+ or lower
4. They earn two (2) grades of D+ or lower.

### **2.16 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.

[Course Attendance Policy](#)  
[Intensive Attendance Policy](#)

### **2.17 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.

### **2.18 Graduation**

All degree completion requirements must be fulfilled before the university will confer the MA in Marriage and Family Counseling 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 Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) and AAMFT associated national, state, and local divisions, the American Counseling Association (ACA) and ACA associated national, state, and local divisions, and/or 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 and 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 *Graduate Student Code of Honor* found at the Graduate Student Affairs website:

<https://www.liberty.edu/students/community-life/graduate-and-online-students/>

## 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:

<https://www.liberty.edu/students/community-life/graduate-and-online-students/>.

## 3.4 Department Faculty-Student Interaction

The faculty are responsible to interact with counseling students in a supervisory capacity/role. As such, faculty may provide students professional principles, guidance, and recommendations related to any aspect of the counseling profession. The faculty are responsible to avoid dual relationships with students such as entering a client-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.

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

#### **Ethical Conduct**

All students in the MA Marriage and Family Counseling program are responsible for behaving in an ethical manner throughout their training, as well as in clinical and professional settings. Violations of the [AAMFT Code of Ethics](#), [ACA Code of Ethics](#), the [Graduate Student Honor Code](#), or the [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 AAMFT Code of Ethics, ACA Code of Ethics, the Graduate Student Honor Code, and the Liberty Way as a guide to their behavior throughout their program, reading it is just the beginning of understanding professional ethics. Being an ethical counselor-in-training involves understanding the underlying principles and values associated with professional Code of Ethics. These 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 principles when faced with challenging situations. This is an essential component of your professional development.

#### **Professional Development**

To successfully complete the Marriage and Family Counseling program at Liberty University and be eligible for graduation, a student must be able demonstrate proficiency in five areas:

1. Attainment of scholastic competency in all coursework as evaluated through the assessment of COUC standards, the comprehensive examination (see section 2.10 of handbook) given at the completion of 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, 602) 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 including 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 Liberty Graduate Student Code of Honor. This proficiency is evaluated during the program in all interactions with faculty, staff, administrators, supervisors, adjuncts, and fellow students including both verbal and written communications.
5. Demonstration of the ability to integrate faith and spirituality into counseling where appropriate in an ethically competent manner. This proficiency is evaluated during the program through various written and oral assignments, and through faculty and clinical supervision during practicum/internship.

The counseling faculty will develop and evaluate students on 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 [Remediation](#)**

#### **Student Support and Development**

Our department is committed to helping students be successful in their academic and professional endeavors. The student support and development committee serves to assist in this process. This committee will support students in their professional development and serve as a secondary mentor in this process. The SSD committee will connect the student with appropriate referrals and resources as needed. A referral to this committee will be made, if a student is noted to have deficiencies in any of the following areas:

- Counseling Skill Development
- Academic Integrity
- Student Support and Care (prayer, encouragement, etc)
- Student Professional/Dispositional Development

This committee exists to come alongside students and assist in student development.

#### **Administrative Review**

In keeping with the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (ACA, 2014), Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2016), and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) requirements, faculty in counselor education programs are required to assess the knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions of students in their programs. Faculty must take action if issues arise that could compromise the well-being of present or future clients. The following summarizes the School of Behavioral Sciences procedures for assessing these competencies.

## **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 the advising module during COUC 500

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 candidate 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").

**Note:** The steps within this section are specifically designed to address the unique aspects of practicum and internships, and certain steps in this section may overlap with those of other processes. For instance, the practicum or internship professor's submission of an incident report to the Program Director and Internship Office and their examination of the incident report will satisfy the early and secondary stages of the remediation process (i.e., remediation stages 1-3). Also note that remediation can be engaged at any step, as the School of Behavioral Sciences deems appropriate.

If a failing evaluation or dismissal from the site involves a violation of the University's Honor Code, the professor will fill out an Honor Code Violation form, which will be investigated by the Program Director and the Office of Community Life. At any point in this process, the student may receive a grade of "F" based on the skills deficit, professional behaviors, or personal or professional dispositions, dismissal

from their site, and/or failure to follow approval policies. The student will be placed on hold in the program pending the outcome of any ongoing process(es) (e.g., Administrative Review, the remediation process, the disciplinary process, and/or grade appeals process).

For violations that do not result in dismissal from the program, the remediation process can include requiring the student to retake certain courses, seek personal counseling, etc. If, after remediation, the student is unable to correct the deficits, the Remediation Committee will meet to decide the best course of action for the student, up to and including an “F” for the course and dismissal from the program. The final decision regarding whether the student is eligible to retake the Internship and disposition of the hours accrued during the Internship are at the discretion of the Leadership Team and based on a thorough evaluation of the incident.

**Note:** When necessary, the Department may immediately remove a student from the site upon notification of concerning behavior by the supervisor. During the remediation process, the student has an opportunity to appeal interim actions following Administrative Review, grades, honor code violations, and dismissals in accordance with the procedures outlined for the applicable process(es). See, for example, Appeals Policy (Section 3.3) and the appeal sections below for information on the appeal process. Please consult the Practicum Field Manual and Internship Field Manual for additional information.

### **Administrative Review for Behavioral Intervention**

There may be times when the School of Behavioral Sciences faculty determines that a student’s behavior is so concerning and/or non-professional, regardless of whether the student is making satisfactory academic progress, that prompt protective action is required. This is especially true when students are interacting with clients in a clinical setting. In such situations, the program director will place the student on Administrative Review. 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 the concerning behavior, 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 student from registering for courses, internships, or clinical placements (and potentially, therefore, from progressing in the program) until the behavior at issue has been resolved. The interim action should be narrowly tailored to address the concerning behavior such that it places as few restrictions as possible on the student and only as determined necessary to address the concerning behavior. Interim actions should also balance the School of Behavioral Sciences’ gatekeeping function of protecting others with promoting the student’s best interest. Administrative Review is protective, not disciplinary, in nature. Interim actions will remain in place until the program director (in consultation with the student and faculty) determines both that the concerning behavior has been resolved and that any pending processes to address the student’s behavior are complete (e.g., the remediation process or a disciplinary matter in the Office of Community Life or the Office of Equity and Compliance).

Within 48 hours of the program director’s decision to initiate the Administrative Review, the program director will notify the student in writing, which may include email, of (1) the initiation of the Administrative Review, (2) the interim action(s) imposed, and (3) the reason(s) for the Administrative Review. The program director will also notify the Registrar’s Office of the interim action(s), including

any registration hold. The student will have an opportunity to review all of the evidence that formed the basis for the interim action(s) and to respond (including the opportunity to present any relevant evidence) to the program director. Once the program director has an opportunity to review all of the available and relevant evidence, the program director will either reverse the interim action(s) or keep the interim action(s) in place, pending the outcome of any other processes (e.g., remediation). The program director may refer the student to the Office of Community Life and/or the Remediation Committee. If the student's behavior cannot be remedied to a point such that the student is qualified to continue in the program, the student may ultimately be dismissed from the program. Should the student decide to appeal the interim action(s) imposed by the program director, the student must follow the appeal procedures below.

### **Appeal of Interim Action(s) Following Administrative Review**

Students who disagree with the interim action(s) imposed by the program director following Administrative Review have an opportunity to appeal. Students must submit the appeal in writing to the Dean of the School of Behavioral Sciences within seven (7) days of receiving the notice of the program director's decision. The appeal should clearly state the reason(s) the student believes the interim action(s) should be reversed. Once received, the Dean of the School of Behavioral Sciences (or designee) will review all available and relevant evidence and, if determined necessary, speak with the student, the program director, and/or any other person with relevant information. The Dean of the School of Behavioral Sciences (or designee) will endeavor to make a determination within ten (10) days of receiving the appeal. The determination to uphold or reverse the interim action(s) will be sent to the student in writing, and the Dean of the School of Behavioral Sciences (or designee)'s determination concerning the interim action(s) will be final, pending the outcome of any other processes.

### **Remediation**

If during the course of a student's studies, a faculty, staff, administrator or supervisor believes a student lacks required skills, professional behaviors and dispositions to progress in the program, that person will begin remediation procedures aimed to provide the student with information and actions to correct the impairment/deficiency. The purpose of the remediation process is to assist the student in correcting any deficits in counseling knowledge and skills, as well as problematic personal, interpersonal, or ethical behaviors so the student may successfully continue in the program. As such, remedial instruction or interventions are closely linked to the students' developmental growth, recognizing the relationship between the alleviation of deficiencies and the development of new competencies.

We conceptualize remediation in terms of a response continuum based upon the type and severity of students' limitations, with the need to distinguish between deficient, lacks competence, and impaired:

- *Deficient*: Requires skill-based and/or academic approach
- *Lacks competence*: Requires additional ethical practice-based / conceptual approach
- *Impaired*: Requires additional intervention-based and/or therapeutic approach

The problematic behavior continuum can also be considered along the lines of Academic, Clinical, and Personal, with Academic being more related to deficiencies and Personal more related to impairments.

Clinical limitations may likely have both Academic and Personal involvement. Additionally, the program response can be considered along a continuum of education, formal remediation, and termination.

**Deficient** describes those behaviors, attitudes, or characteristics that need to be the focus of attention and change but are not considered excessive or inappropriate. Rather, they may be important components of the student's learning experience. At this level, remediation likely involves instruction and feedback to address the deficit.

**Lacks Competence** describes a deficit in developmentally appropriate clinical competencies that are needed for ethical practice. These would include areas such as performance of counseling skills and/or professional behaviors, attitudes, or characteristics, response to supervision, and/or ability application of ethics into practice. These behaviors are considered to be excessive or inappropriate, requiring remedial action beyond the course instructor or supervisor.

**Impairment** describes those behaviors that result in a significant negative impact on professional functioning. Impairment is demonstrated by one or more of the following behaviors: (a) an inability and/or unwillingness to acquire and integrate professional standards into their repertoire of professional behavior; (b) an inability to acquire professional skills to reach an acceptable level of competency; (c) an inability to control personal stress, psychological dysfunction and/or excessive emotional reactions that interfere with professional functioning.

The Type and Severity of Limitation are considered when determining the need, if any, for remediation.

#### **Students Determined to be Deficient**

- Inadequate knowledge base commensurate with status in the program
- Inadequate, but improving counseling skills
- Rudimentary ethical processing
- Simplistic, narrow, or disjointed case conceptualization
- Insufficient interpersonal skills and awareness, but willingness to develop

#### **Students Determined to Lack Competence**

- Lack of awareness of ethical principles and obligations
- Failure in responsibilities to site and/or supervisor
- Unwillingness/inability to be effective in basic counseling techniques
- Unwillingness/inability to complete appropriate documentation
- Failure to function as an effective member of the treatment team

#### **Students Determined to be Impaired (not inclusive)**

##### **Four Themes:**

- I. Interpersonal and Personal Problems
  1. Inappropriate interpersonal skills
  2. Lacks self-control (anger, impulse control) in relationships
  3. Inappropriate boundaries
  4. Misleads or exploits others
  5. Lacks awareness of the impact they have on others

6. Unwilling to receive feedback in supervision
  7. Does not take responsibility for deficiencies and/or problems
- II. Professional Competence
    1. Lacks foundational counseling skills
    2. Inappropriate affect in response to clients
    3. Does not recognize the limitations of expertise and competence
    4. Does not apply ethical and/or legal standards to practice
    5. Lacks awareness of how their beliefs and values influence practice
    6. Does not demonstrate a respect individual differences and culture
  - III. Professional Behaviors
    1. Deficits in punctuality, professional appearance, attendance, dependability
    2. Does not complete appropriate paperwork and documentation
    3. Does not adhere to the department's or their clinical site's policies
  - IV. Professional and Personal Integrity and Maturity
    1. Makes false, misleading or deceptive statements
    2. Displayed academic dishonesty
    3. Problems with alcohol/drug use or illegal activities
    4. Inappropriate sexual behavior
    5. Refused to consider personal counseling when recommended

Once the Type and Severity of Limitation are determined, there are several avenues that may be pursued when determining the need, if any, for remediation. Faculty are encouraged to consult with the program director, faculty remediation committee members, and other faculty when deciding the level of severity and which stage to engage the remediation process. Please note that the remediation process is not always linear or sequential. Faculty reserve the right to initiate remediation at whatever stage they deem appropriate for the student.

#### **Early Remediation Process (Stages 1 and 2)**

- Faculty or advisor meets with the student
- Determine an action plan for addressing deficits
- Follow-up

#### **Secondary Remediation Process (Stage 3)**

- Student Support and Development
- Notification of meeting with the director
- Assessment of problematic behavior
- Review and development of a plan
- Acceptance or appeal

#### **Remediation Committee Referral (Stages 4-6)**

- Notification
- Assessment of Problematic Behavior
  - Problems concerning attendance and approach to assignment completion
- Development of a Plan
- Acceptance or Appeal
- Provision if Unsuccessful

### **Possible Remediation Committee Recommendations for a Remediation Plan**

- Psychological or evaluation by a mental health professional
- Increased supervision
- Reduced practicum or internship
- Leave of absence
- Formal reprimand
- Formal probation
- Counseling out of the program
- Dismissal from the program
- Or any other information gathering deemed necessary in order to properly support student growth

### **Immediate Interventions**

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 Liberty University Police Department, appropriate state law enforcement, social services personnel, emergency contacts, and notification of the appropriate program chair or associate dean. The incident and action taken will become part of the student's permanent record.

### **Remediation Process for the M.A. in Marriage and Family Counseling Program**

**Note:** The remediation plan is designed to protect the student's rights under University policies and a fair process. In addition, we stress the importance of *engaging the student* in the remediation process. These principles are infused throughout the School of Behavioral Sciences program's response continuum. Once a remediation plan is initiated, student response to remediation efforts is considered when deciding student status in the program. All phases of this remediation process will become a part of the student's record. The description of the stages below does not necessarily reflect a sequential process. Instead, the faculty reserve the right to initiate remediation at any Stage 1, 2, 3, or 4-6, based on their assessment of the level of deficit and/or impairment.

**Stage 1: Notification by Advisor.** When a determination is made by a faculty member that problematic behavior of an academic, clinical, or personal nature exists, and could not be resolved on an informal basis, the faculty member discusses this with the student and her or his FAM. If problematic student behavior is brought to the attention of the department through other means (e.g., from another student, a report from university staff, evaluation from a supervisor, etc.), the student's advisor will notify the student and discuss the concerns.

The student and her or his FAM will meet to discuss the problem and collaboratively outline a **remedial action plan** to address the concerns. This interactive process should allow the student ample opportunity to react to the information presented regarding the problem area. If the problem is resolved, no further action is needed. The advisor will document the meeting, the remedial action plan, and the outcome into the student's personal record. The advisor will follow up with the faculty to

ensure that the agreed-to remedial action plan was completed and the behavioral issue was successfully resolved.

If the problem is not resolved at this stage because the student does not engage in the process, disagrees with the validity of the concerns, or does not agree with the **remedial action plan**, the advisor will notify the program director of the outcome of the meeting. A meeting will then be scheduled with the student's advisor, the program director, the student, and the concerned faculty member as appropriate. This meeting will be considered a Phase 3 remediation.

**Stage 2: Primary Assessment of Problematic Behavior:** If the behaviors addressed by the program faculty and the advisor persist, the advisor will again meet with the student and outline, verbally and in writing, the continued nature and extent of problematic behavior. Informal (e.g., interview with student and faculty) and formal (e.g., instruments) may be utilized as a part of the assessment process. This includes feedback from the student concerning the outcome of any remedial actions taken by the student in response to the concerns raised during the notification session. When it is apparent that the student is engaged in the process but has not met the goal of the initial remedial action, a collaborative approach involving student engagement will be used to evaluate and refine the **remedial action plan**. If the problem is successfully resolved, no further formal action is needed. The advisor will document the meeting; outline the agreed adaptations to the remedial action plan, and the outcome. The advisor will follow up with the faculty and the program director to ensure that the behavioral issues were successfully resolved and all agreed-to remedial mandates were implemented.

**Stage 3: Secondary Assessment of Problematic Behavior:** If the FAM or core faculty determines that the student's behaviors are at a level that requires a formal remediation process (Stage 4) or the student rejects or appeals a **remedial action plan**, a meeting will be held with the student, his or her advisor, the program director, and referring faculty member (if appropriate). The meeting date will be set to allow the student the opportunity to provide additional evidence to the group for consideration at the meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to either 1) collaboratively re-assess the problem behavior and develop a **remedial action plan** or 2) determine that the problem needs to be addressed by the program core faculty through a remediation plan. The program director will document the meeting and outcome. The program director will report the meeting outcome to the faculty Remediation Committee.

**Stage 4: Referral to the Remediation Committee:**

In cases when the outcome of the meeting of the student, advisor(s) and program director results in a decision that the situation should be brought to the Remediation Committee, a meeting of the committee will be scheduled. The student will be informed in advance of the time of this meeting and will have an opportunity to provide additional information or evidence in writing to the committee for consideration at the meeting. Once all information has been presented, the Remediation Committee will decide the level and scope of remediation required to assist the student and develop a formal Remediation Plan.

**Stage 5: Development of a Remediation Plan:** The Remediation Committee will review the presented information, examine the **remedial action plan** developed by the student and advisor, evaluate the progress made towards remediating problem behaviors, and develop a formal Remediation Plan. The



purpose of the remediation plan is to assist the student in correcting any deficits in counseling skills or personal, interpersonal, or ethical problems so that the student may successfully continue in the program. The elements of the plan will be congruent with the extent of the correction needed. Remediation Plans can include such actions as repeating particular courses, obtaining personal counseling, completing additional assignments, reviewing the ethics code, transferring to a non-licensure program, or academic dismissal from the CEFS or Liberty University.

The program director and/or other designated persons will inform the student of the decision both orally and in writing. The student will have five working days to respond in writing (and orally, if desired) to the recommendation. The committee will review the student's response to the action decided and will make a final decision regarding the disposition of the case. Should the student file no response to the action, the decision of the committee will be considered as final. The program director and the student's advisor will notify the student in writing of the outcome of the meeting.

**Stage 6: Acceptance or Appeal:** The student will be given the opportunity to accept the plan of correction or to appeal it. If accepted, the student will follow the plan as developed and regularly report progress to her or his advisor. If not fully resolved, additions, amendments, or extensions to the plan may be implemented. If the problematic behavior is corrected, no further action is needed. Four options are available to faculty when reevaluating the student: (1) continuation in the program, (2) continued probation and remediation, (3) counsel the student out of the program, and (4) dismissal from the program.

**Provision if Unsuccessful:** If the Remediation Committee determines that remediation is unsuccessful or that the student refuses to comply with the Remediation Plan, the Remediation Committee may recommend to the program director that the student be dismissed from the program.

**Final Determination Following Recommendation of Dismissal:** Based on the Remediation Committee's recommendation of dismissal, the program director will either dismiss the student from the program or allow the student to remain in the program until the concerning behavior has been fully addressed to the satisfaction of both the program director and the Remediation Committee. If the student is dismissed from the program, the program director will provide a notice of dismissal to the student in writing. If any interim action(s) were put into place following Administrative Review (e.g., interim suspension or registration hold), those interim action(s) will remain in place. If the program director allows the student to remain in the program, the student must continue to work with the Remediation Committee to address its concerns. Any interim action(s) from Administrative Review will remain in effect, and accordingly, the student should be aware that, if he or she does not re-enroll in courses within a certain period of time, he or she may break enrollment and need to re-apply to the program. In those situations, admission is not guaranteed. The student may appeal to the program director's final determination of dismissal. Should the student decide to appeal his or her dismissal, he or she must follow the appeal procedures outlined below.

**Appeal of Dismissal:** Students who disagree with the program director's final determination have an opportunity to appeal. The appeal must be submitted in writing to the Dean of the School of Behavioral Sciences within seven (7) days of notification of receiving the notice of the program director'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 program director, and any others who have relevant information (e.g., members of the Remediation Committee). The Dean of the School of Behavioral Sciences (or designee) will endeavor to make a determination within ten (10) 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 the 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 Remediation Committee to fully address its concerns, or to withdraw from the program.

### **3.7 Harassment**

Sexual harassment, like harassment on the basis of color, race, religion, or national origin is 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. See

[https://www.liberty.edu/media/1226/Liberty\\_University\\_Title\\_IX\\_Policy\\_031418.pdf](https://www.liberty.edu/media/1226/Liberty_University_Title_IX_Policy_031418.pdf).

### **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 victims of sexual discrimination and/or violence, currently, or in the past. Under Title IX, faculty are obligated to disclose to the university's Title IX office any student disclosure, either verbally or in writing, of current or past 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 <https://www.liberty.edu/title-ix/speak-up/>

Thus, if a student discloses to a faculty member, verbally or in writing, that he/she has experienced sex-based discrimination, physical violence and/or sexual violence, presently or in the past, then the faculty member will make a referral to the Title IX office. The faculty member will also notify the department chair. 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 for themselves 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 marriage and family therapist, it is imperative that students deal with personal issues that may interfere with their ability to work with

clients in competent and ethical ways. Moreover, experiences as a client will help the counselor better understand the client's experience in counseling.

### **3.10 Faculty Endorsement**

Upon graduation, faculty members may endorse students for certification and licensure. Upon request, the faculty may 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 the student is qualified to perform the duties associated with credentialing or employment.

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**

Copies of all class syllabi and course schedules should be kept by students 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 (electronic, print, or both) in a secure location. It is difficult, and sometime impossible, for faculty or program administration to locate old syllabi. Keeping copies of your 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. Marriage and Family Counseling 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 <https://www.liberty.edu/informationsevices/index.cfm?PID=24600>)
- 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 *Graduate School Code of Honor* found at the Graduate Student Affairs website: <https://www.liberty.edu/students/community-life/graduate-and-online-students/>.

For a listing of general resources and program announcements, please visit the [Marriage and Family Counseling webpage](#).

## Appendix A: MFC 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](#)