School of Education
M.Ed. in School Counseling Program

Assessment Process & Program Modifications Summary
2012-2014
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Assessment Process Overview

The aim of assessment is primarily to educate and improve candidate performance, not merely to audit it. The school counselor licensure program at Liberty University maintains a continuous cycle of evaluation and revision in order to achieve its mission of developing competent professionals with a Biblical world view for Christian, public, and private schools.

Our comprehensive assessment process involves systematic procedures for evaluating our candidates and our program using both formative and summative feedback. The process- and outcome-driven practices include assessments of program objectives, learning environment, professional identity, academic performance, personal and professional development, professional practices, and professional knowledge and skills using the framework of the CACREP Standards.

Assessment processes are participatory in that multiple stakeholder perspectives are included. Candidate competencies and program objectives are assessed using both quantitative and qualitative measures at multiple points throughout a candidate’s matriculation through the program.

Program and Learning Assessment Cycle (PLACE)

The M.Ed. in School Counseling program systematically applies the Program and Learning Assessment Cycle for Excellence (PLACE), a comprehensive assessment approach, and makes use of LiveText, an electronic data collection management system, to capture candidate learning outcomes and to determine to what extent the program’s objectives are being met for the purpose of continuous program improvement. PLACE was developed for our unit and has since been adopted institution-wide. PLACE requires that programs establish outcomes and targets, collect and analyze data, report findings, and create and implement improvement action plans when targets are not met.

Figure 1.1, PLACE Cycle for Systematic Program Assessment
The five cyclical elements of PLACE (Figure 1.1) are as follows: (1) Purpose & Goals, (2) Data Collection, (3) Data Analysis, (4) Action Plan, and (5) Implementation. At the end of each academic year, program faculty members participate in the “Assessment Retreat”. During this retreat, faculty members analyze data collected in LiveText using approaches and instruments outlined in this handbook to identify and target areas needing improvement.

**Candidate Assessment**

Ten program objectives comprise candidate competencies addressed in program course content that is built on the CACREP Standards, the competency indicators of the Virginia Department of Education, and Liberty University’s School of Education Conceptual Framework: 1) **Knows** (knows Christian values, moral dimensions, and ethical implications synthesized with academic knowledge), 2) **Implements** (implements skills as a gift from God, because teaching/leadership is a calling from God, and 3) **Believes** (believes and practices personal integrity, social responsibility, sensitivity to the needs of others, and the betterment of humanity consistent with our mission to prepare competent professionals with a Biblical worldview for Christian, public, and private schools).

The mission of the School of Education at Liberty University is to develop competent professionals with a Biblical worldview for Christian, public, and private schools.

*Figure 1.2, School of Education Conceptual Framework*

**Candidate Learning Objectives**

1. Candidate enhances K-12 student learning and student personal-social, career, and academic development through appropriate application of outcome research, professional, legal, and ethical standards and an understanding of multicultural counseling theory, the academic mission of schools, the ASCA Model, and school counselor roles/functions.

2. Candidate demonstrates an understanding of the social and cultural foundations of counseling, obstacles to learning, advocacy for programming, policies, climate, instruction, and learning opportunities that result in K-12 candidate learning and personal-social, career, and academic development for all candidates.
3. Candidate demonstrates the ability to improve K-12 student learning through an understanding of the principles and theories of human growth and development throughout the life span and their implications for professional school counseling.

4. Candidate applies an understanding of life span career development theories, career awareness, career exploration, career planning and career assessment tools, developing and implementing career programs, resulting in K-12 student learning and career development.

5. Candidate applies an understanding of counseling theory, techniques, best practices, and systems theory to enhance K-12 candidate learning and personal-social, career, and academic development through individual and group counseling in a multicultural society.

6. Candidate applies an understanding of consultation models, referral processes, systems strategies, leadership principles, supervision practices, systems strategies, and works with parents and teachers, collaboratively, to design a comprehensive school counseling program that results in enhanced K-12 student learning and personal-social, career, and academic development.

7. Candidate demonstrates an understanding of group theory, techniques, and group facilitation knowledge, skills, and processes that results in developmental group guidance, K-12 student learning, and personal-social, career, and academic development.

8. Candidate demonstrates appropriate knowledge and skills related to counseling theory, techniques, developmental issues, and creating, implementing, and evaluating programs/strategies that enhance K-12 student learning and student well-being (e.g., resiliency, crisis management, transitioning, abuse and suicide assessment, peer helping, drop-out prevention, drug, alcohol, violence programming).

9. Candidate uses the knowledge, skills, processes, and appropriate application of student assessment relative to school counseling practices, including individual and group assessment, resulting in K-12 student learning.

10. Candidate enhances K-12 student learning and personal-social, career, and academic development as well as accountability and the effectiveness of the counseling program through the appropriate application of technology, data, and research, and implementation of program evaluation.

Faculty members teaching each course provide continuous candidate assessment for mastery of the knowledge, skills, and practices delineated in the ten learning objectives and stated as learning outcomes on the course syllabi. In addition, each course in the program includes a comprehensive benchmark assignment in LiveText that uses rubrics to assess learning outcomes. This learning outcome data is reviewed by the program leadership team annually. Candidates are assigned to a faculty mentor, who serves as a key member of the remediation team for candidates who may need additional assessment and support.
In addition to continuous assessment of candidate learning outcomes, there are multiple points of assessment conducted sequentially during the candidate’s matriculation through the program to promote success and to provide support and/or remediation as needed.

**Points of Candidate Assessment**

Assessment points include, but are not limited to a series of four “gates”. Each gate requires passage before a candidate can progress to the next level of the program. Gate 1 represents admission to Liberty University Graduate Studies. Gate 2 is application to candidacy to the M.Ed. in School Counseling Program. Gate 3 is application for internship. Gate 4 is application for graduation and licensure. Each point assesses the candidate’s readiness to advance to the next phase in the program. Data for candidate assessment using the instruments/approaches noted below is maintained in *LiveText*:

**University Admissions Assessment (Gate 1—admission to the university)**

- Successful completion of graduate application for acceptance to Liberty School of Education.
- Approved transcripts (graduation from a regionally or nationally accredited bachelor’s degree program required).
- Review of GPA (at least 3.0 GPA in good standing from an accredited program).
- Completion of the Online Graduate Writing Exam if the most recent degree indicates a GPA of less than 3.0. Information related to taking this exam is located at: [http://www.liberty.edu/academics/graduate/writing/index.cfm?PID=18192](http://www.liberty.edu/academics/graduate/writing/index.cfm?PID=18192).
- References.
- Statement of understanding.
- Exam results.

**Program Candidacy Assessment (Gate 2—admission to School Counseling Program/advancement to candidacy)**

- Successful completion of Gate 2 application.
- Applicant essay (writing sample).
- References.
- Graduation from a regionally or nationally accredited bachelor’s degree with at least 3.0 GPA in good standing.
- Successful completion of 6-9 credit hours of EDUC courses.
• Complete mandatory School Counseling Orientation through *LiveText* (includes career exploration and reflection on career goals).

• Admissions decision by committee based on review of all of the above.

• Upon admission to the School Counseling Program, candidates meet with assigned faculty mentor (advisor) to review program of study.

• Statement of understanding.

**Year One Assessment: (practicum experience at the end of year one/start of year two)**

• Site supervisor’s formal assessment at the end of the practicum experience using the *Practicum Evaluation of Candidate Performance* form (competencies include basic attending skills, counseling techniques, professionalism, and dispositions).

• Candidate’s formal assessment of the practicum placement with the *Evaluation of Site Supervisor by Student* form (assesses placement site and site supervisor).

• Candidate self-reflection/evaluation of basic counseling skills development using the *Clinical Skills Self-Assessment for Taped Sessions* form.

• Peer feedback related to basic counseling skills via shared tapings.

• Case analyses and skills feedback from faculty supervisor and peers during group supervision using the *Case Presentation for Supervision* form.

• Review of *Field Experience Summary* (FES) and *Demographics Placement Survey* form to ensure candidates are working in diverse settings with diverse populations.

• Proof of candidate membership(s) in professional counseling association(s) during practicum.

**Year Two Assessment: (Candidacy for Internship; Passage through Gate 3)**

• Successful completion of Gate 3 application.

• Successful completion of all EDCE courses and EDUC 600.

• Candidate continues to maintain no less than a 2.5 GPA.

• Praxis II School Counseling Exam or the candidate’s state equivalent exam.

• Proof of candidate membership(s) in professional counseling associations.
Year Three Assessment: (internship experience at the end of year two/start of year three)

- Site supervisor formal evaluations (preliminary and final in each setting) of candidate performance using the Advanced Competency Assessment (ACA) form. (competencies include dispositions and the knowledge, skills, and practices identified by CACREP for the specialty of School Counseling and state requirements for school counselor licensure).

- Candidate formal assessment of the internship placement with the Evaluation of Site Supervisor by Student form (assesses placement site and site supervisor).

- Candidate self-reflection/evaluation of basic counseling skills development using the Clinical Skills Self-Assessment for Taped Sessions form.

- Peer feedback related to basic counseling skills via shared tapings.

- Case analyses and skills feedback from faculty supervisor and peers during group supervision using the Case Presentation for Supervision form.

- Review of culminating program Portfolio during the final semester of internship.

- Review of required experiences in diverse settings with diverse populations using the Field Experience Summary (FES) form and Demographics of Placement survey.

End of Program Assessment: (Gate 4—graduation and application for licensure)

- Review of internship hours (no less than 600 hours).

- Review of practicum hours (no less than 150 hours).

- Review of GPA (no less than 2.5 GPA).

- No more than two grades of C; no grades below a C.

- Degree Audit
  Completion of all courses listed on the degree completion plan.

  Proof to state licensure boards of mastery of specific content areas as evidenced by completion of state-approved program and a passing score (set by state) on the Praxis II or other required state licensure/certification exam for school counselors.

  - Exit Survey.

After Program Completion:

- Follow-up survey to employers (Employer Survey).
Follow-up survey to graduates/alumnae (Alumni Survey).

Program evaluation by internship site supervisors (Program Evaluation).

**Dispositions Assessment**

Dispositions are systematically assessed throughout the program by faculty, site supervisors, and the candidates themselves. Dispositions are assessed using an intentional model called SCRIP, an acronym for Social Responsibility, Commitment, Reflective Practice, Integrity, and Professionalism. Each disposition is aligned with advanced competencies derived from the Virginia Department of Education Endorsement Competencies and the CACREP Standards. Dispositions are assessed by internship and practicum site supervisors on formal written evaluations, and candidates self-assess on each of the dispositions at the conclusion of each intensive (in-residence) course. Faculty members complete a rubric and provide feedback regarding the candidate’s self-evaluation of dispositions. Data assessing dispositions are stored in LiveText.

- Candidate self-assessment of dispositions in EDCE 661, EDCE 512, and EDCE 505; faculty assesses the assessment based on observations/interactions during the course using a rubric.

- Site Supervisors assess dispositions in EDCE 698 using the Practicum Evaluation of Student Performance form (online advising guide).

- Site Supervisors assess dispositions in EDCE 699 (Part I--semester I) using the ACA (online advising guide).

- Site Supervisors assess dispositions in EDCE 699 (Part II--semester II) using the ACA.

**Program Assessment**

*Faculty members* are assessed at specific points in time and on an ongoing basis. At the conclusion of each course taught, candidates complete the End-of-Course survey, assessing course content, delivery, and instructor. Adjunct/affiliate faculty members in the M.Ed. in School Counseling Program are also assessed annually by an instructional mentor assigned on the date of hire. Full-time residential faculty members within the School Counseling Program conform to the university faculty evaluation process by submitting a complete portfolio every three years and an annual evaluation by the assigned Dean of the School of Education. The program’s leadership team reviews CV annually, asking for updates to assess the level of commitment/expertise of program faculty (e.g., presentations, conference attendance, service to the community, service to the profession). The leadership team continuously seeks to maintain a diverse, well-qualified team of core and affiliate faculty. Demographic data indicates that forty percent of the faculty teaching in the M.Ed. in School Counseling Program are Caucasian and sixty percent are African-American, West Indian, Latino, and not-reported. The program’s twelve core faculty members consist of four males (3 Caucasian; 1 African American) and eight females (4 Caucasian; 4 African American).
Curriculum changes are made as needed on an ongoing basis by the Subject Matter Expert (SME) and Lead Faculty member of assigned program courses. These faculty members also serve as members of the Academic Committee, assessing course content annually to ensure course syllabi and materials required for the course are current and reflect best practices. Each spring, faculty members participate in syllabi reviews. There are three groupings of benchmark courses based on our conceptual framework of Knows, Implements, and Believes. Syllabi are evaluated by faculty to assess how adequately the syllabi represent the objectives and structure of each course and comply with Liberty University standards. Online and residential faculty are organized into clusters with multiple faculty members, not associated with the course, reviewing the same syllabus. Faculty members complete a short survey following the review of their assigned course. Survey outcomes are compiled and reviewed by the School of Education Leadership Team and are forwarded to the SME for the course. As a result of the survey review updates are made to syllabi, when applicable, based on faculty input. The results are also forwarded to Liberty University’s department of Institutional Effectiveness.

Candidates complete the End-of-Course survey at the conclusion of each course, offering suggestions for course content and delivery improvement. These surveys are examined at the end of each semester by faculty members teaching the course and those conducting evaluations of the faculty member teaching the course. Surveys are examined again during the end-of-year Assessment Retreat and program changes are recommended and voted on by all faculty members in the School of Education Department meetings.

The M.Ed. in School Counseling Program is evaluated by four groups of stakeholders: 1) current candidates, 2) alumni, 3) site-based practicum and internship supervisors, and 4) employers of our graduates. Data collected by stakeholder program assessment is stored in LiveText. Additionally, each semester members of the Community Advisory Council (CAC) meet to discuss School of Education programs, including the School Counseling Program. These meetings are facilitated by an Associate Dean for the School of Education and consist of unit program directors and local school division personnel (e.g., superintendents, principals, teachers, school counselors). During the CAC meetings updates are shared and information is exchanged to improve both university and school practices to promote K-12 student academic, personal/social, and career development.

1. **Current candidates** evaluate the M.Ed. in School Counseling Program in several areas using the Exit Survey (end of program), the Evaluation of Site Supervisor by Student form (during practicum and internship), and End-of-Course Survey (continuous). Using these instruments, candidates assess the following major aspects of the program and provide suggestions for modification: a) quality of preparation, b) faculty mentoring/academic advising, c) connection to the program and other students, d) resources, e) program orientation, f) quality of practicum and internship experiences, g) structure and delivery of curriculum, and h) suggestion for modifications.

2. **Alumni** are invited via email to participate in the Alumni Survey (every two years) that assesses the following aspects of the M.Ed. in School Counseling Program: a) preparation and readiness for practice, b) program strengths, and c) suggestions for program modifications.
3. In addition to assessing specific candidate competencies, **site-based internship supervisors** complete a **Program Evaluation Survey** (ongoing) that assesses: a) our candidates overall preparation, b) the program’s orientation, c) the resources, and d) the counselor supervision training module.

4. **Employers of our graduates** are asked via email to complete the **Employer Survey** (every two years) to assess the following aspects of our program: a) preparation for the professional practice of school counseling, b) competence as a school counselor, c) program strengths in preparing the candidate for practice, and c) suggestions for program modifications.

**Use of Assessment Findings for Program Modifications (2012-2014)**

**CACREP Self-Study Program Review**

As part of the CACREP Self-study and accreditation processes, the Liberty University School of Education faculty conducted extensive evaluations of the M.Ed. in School Counseling Program. The **Executive Summary of Program Modifications for the CACREP Self-Study** is listed below and available to stakeholders on the School Counseling program web site at: [http://www.liberty.edu/academics/education/graduate/index.cfm?PID=2126](http://www.liberty.edu/academics/education/graduate/index.cfm?PID=2126).

**Use of Findings:**

- Legislation was passed to change specific course prefixes to EDCE (Education Counselor Education).
- Course prefixes differentiate concentration and professional courses from education core courses.
- Clinical practice laboratories were added.
- Hired Clinical Director (full-time, residential faculty member).
- Hired Faculty Mentoring Director (full-time, residential faculty member).
- Degree completion plan changes:
  - Added EDCE 698 (one semester of 150 hours of practicum) (CACREP III.F).
  - Added 2nd semester of internship (EDCE 699) (300 hrs, for a total of 600 hrs.).
  - Course prefix changes.
  - Edited existing assignments, as needed, and revised syllabi.
  - Added course prerequisites.
  - Course sizes for practicum and internship limited to 12 students.
  - Added faculty facilitated group supervision of practicum and internship students.
  - Require taping of counseling sessions for practicum and internship.
  - Required formal counselor supervision training and orientation for site supervisors.
  - Implemented a **LiveText** (data management system) Field Experience Module.
  - Implemented a new advising system through Gate 2; faculty mentor assigned to each student.
  - Dedicated residential faculty position to serve as faculty advisor (faculty “mentor”).
  - Created a Comprehensive Assessment Process document illustrating ongoing systematic program evaluation.
  - A Formal Employer Survey was created.
  - Redesigned School Counseling **Exit Survey**.
  - Redesigned School Counseling **Alumni Survey**.
• Redesigned School Counseling Program Evaluation by site supervisors.
• Required all students to take the Praxis II, School Counseling Exam, or their state’s equivalent.

Assessment Retreat

At the close of each academic year, the School of Education holds an “Assessment Retreat”. Data reports are provided by the Assessment Coordinator for the School of Education. Faculty teams interpret the data from the candidate assessment and program assessment tools noted in this handbook to determine the effectiveness in meeting previous targets and to establish new targets and action plans, as needed.

Teams also review student and graduate data to assess cultural diversity of our population of candidates and graduates to promote the inclusion of underrepresented populations. Currently (2014-2015), 1,594 students are enrolled in the School Counseling Program of which 222 are male and 1,372 are female. The minority enrollment is almost double that of the Caucasian population enrolled in the program and includes African-American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, and Hispanic/Latino students. Currently the program leadership team is tracking graduate data to ensure all candidates are being successful in the program. In 2014, graduates consisted of 39 males and 182 females. Fifty-seven percent of graduates were Caucasian and forty-three percent of graduates were African American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Mixed Race, and unknown.

Also, during the retreat, faculty teams assess the assessments. A series of program assessments are reviewed by faculty members outside of the program in order to make the review more objective. Faculty members rate the degree to which assessment activities accurately require candidates to perform in the identified candidate learning outcomes. Next, they rate the effectiveness of the rubric to evaluate candidate proficiency on the learning outcome(s). Lastly, they review actual candidate samples of work in order to norm the evaluation process—the goal being to increase objectivity among multiple faculty members who review the course benchmark assignments.

Use of Findings:

A review of LiveText data, 2013-2014, for the benchmark assignment student learning outcomes for EDCE 522 (Career Development and Counseling), EDCE 504 (Social and Cultural Foundations in Counseling), EDCE 611 (Child and Adolescent Counseling in the Schools), and EDCE 660 (Principles of School Counseling), revealed that 32 of our students lacked competency in the four program courses that had professional ethics components in the benchmark. For this reason, we made EDCE 501, Professional, Ethical, and Legal Issues in Counseling, a prerequisite to EDCE 698 (Practicum) to ensure these competencies were mastered prior to clinical experiences.

A review of LiveText data for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 Advanced Competency Assessment (ACA), which is the evaluation of student performance by the site supervisor during the School Counseling Program internship, demonstrated a need to strengthen our group counseling preparation for school counselors in training. We created a structured group course (EDCE 512) to replace the group counseling course (COUN 512), which covers all group standards named by
CACREP and provides a focus on psycho-educational groups for school-age populations. We are seeing a slow improvement in this ACA competency. However, a slow improvement is expected, since many students are still on older degree completion plans, thus continuing to take COUN 512.

A review of LiveText data for the Field Experience Summary (FES) form submitted at the end of internship for academic year 2012-2013 indicated that many students were not obtaining the array of collaborative, multicultural experiences, and professional memberships for optimal preparation and professional identity development, respectively. Discussions with students during our residential classes revealed that some students did not know about these requirements until internship when it was too late to get the experiences. As a result, we edited our handbook and added this to our Gate 2 (admittance into the M.Ed. in School Counseling Program) application. A review of data for the FES submitted at the end of internship for academic year 2013-2014 revealed improvements in all areas.

Feedback from students, alumni, site supervisors, and members of our Community Advisory Committee (CAC), revealed the need to require both the child and adolescent counseling courses since our candidates will be licensed to serve both populations, and to emphasize counseling in the schools. In response, we merged existing courses (COUN 611, Counseling Children and their Families and COUN 620, Counseling Adolescent and their Families) into EDCE 611, Child and Adolescent Counseling in the Schools). Additional courses specific to school counseling were also requested, so we developed EDCE 660, Principles of School Counseling and replaced EDCE 661, Consultation, Coordination, and Referral with EDCE 661, School Counseling Program Development and Evaluation.

Exit Survey data revealed a need for a central document specific to the School Counseling Program. In response, the School Counseling Program Handbook was created. The Handbook is revised by the Program Leadership Team with faculty team feedback. Exit Survey data further revealed a need for benchmark assignments to be more reflective of an assignment that embodies cumulative course content and in an applied fashion. Benchmark assignments for the School Counseling program were modified to included applied activities that would allow for greater assessment of a candidates ability to transfer theory to practice.

A review of End-of-Course survey data resulted in modification of existing assignment rubrics to more clearly delineate what is expected of students for a given assignment. Also, student comments on the end-of-course evaluations revealed discrepancies between Blackboard rubrics and LiveText rubrics. Rubrics were synchronized.

A review of Alumni Survey data for 2012-2013 and 2013-2014, reveals satisfaction with program preparation. Graduates rated how prepared they feel on a scale of 1-4 with 1 being the most desirable result. The mean score was 1.26 on sixteen competencies grounded in the CACREP School Counseling Specialty Standards. Responses also indicate that graduates feel competent in the practice of school counseling with all respondents rating themselves above average. Examining the pattern of responding to the open-ended survey questions, graduates view the University’s learning environment and the M.Ed. in School Counseling Program faculty as program strengths. Pattern of
responses related to suggestions for improvement indicate a desire to have earlier access to the Portfolio. Candidates now have Portfolio access upon completion of Gate 2, Admission into the M.Ed. in School Counseling program.

A review of Employer Survey data for 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 reveals satisfaction with graduate preparation. Employers rated the preparation of our school counselors in practice on a scale of 1-4 with 1 being the most desirable result. The mean score was 1.04 on sixteen competencies grounded in the CACREP School Counseling Specialty Standards. Responses also indicate that employers feel our graduates are competent in the practice of school counseling with all employers rating our graduates well above average. Employers rated our graduates in preparation and competence higher than the graduates rated themselves, although graduate ratings were above average in both areas also (see above). No patterns of responding to the open-ended survey questions by employers were noted; several had no suggestions for improvement.