



**Western Kentucky University  
Department of Counseling & Student Affairs**

**Student Handbook**

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## THE DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING AND STUDENT AFFAIRS (CSA)

Welcome to Western Kentucky University and to the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs (CSA). The purpose of this student handbook is to provide the information necessary for students to proceed successfully through their academic programs in the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs. This handbook is subject to revision at any time, at the discretion of the University, College and/or Department. Students are responsible for understanding the contents of this handbook, as well as policies and guidelines outlined by the [WKU Graduate School](#), the [WKU Graduate School Catalog](#), and the [WKU Student Handbook](#).

### **Mission of the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs (CSA)**

The mission of the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs is to provide graduate education, conduct research, and offer service in the fields of Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling; Clinical Mental Health Counseling; and Student Affairs. Faculty members are committed to social action and advocacy, preparing graduates to provide highly competent and culturally aware services, providing clinical and educational experiences that meet or exceed national accreditation standards, ensuring that graduates have credentials necessary to qualify for certification and licensure, and promoting the continued education of counselors and student affairs personnel.

The major goals of graduate education in the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs at WKU are to instill in each student an understanding of and a capacity for scholarship, critical thinking, academic rigor, and intellectual integrity. Faculty and graduate students have a shared obligation to work together to foster these goals through relationships that advance judicious inquiry, demonstrate individual and professional integrity, and encourage common respect.

### **CSA Objectives**

1. Counseling and Student Affairs Programs will provide relevant, practice-oriented programs designed to build an applied, theoretical knowledge base while assisting students in the development of professional/clinical competence in a culturally diverse society.
2. As part of their programs of study, students will obtain academic course work and supervised clinical experiences necessary to seek appropriate state or national credentialing in their chosen profession.
3. Academic and clinical education will prepare graduates with the skills desired by prospective employers.
4. The Clinical Mental Health Counseling and Marriage, Couple and Family Counseling programs will obtain and maintain accreditation from CACREP; Student Affairs will maintain their respective credentials.

## Departmental and Program Accreditation

The Counseling and Student Affairs School Counseling Programs are housed in the WKU College of Education and Behavioral Sciences. The professional education unit is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and the Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board. WKU is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The Clinical Mental Health Counseling and Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling programs are accredited by the [Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs \(CACREP\)](#). Accreditation is the process by which an association or agency grants public recognition to a university, college, or academic program that has met certain established qualifications or standards. Accreditation is both a process and a condition. The criteria for evaluation are the result of extensive input from educators and practitioners. In accordance with program and department accreditation, documents associated with ongoing program review are located on the [CSA website](#).

## Course Offerings

The majority of courses within the graduate degree programs are offered face-to-face and/or in hybrid form. This is a deliberate decision made on behalf of the Department faculty given the value that they place on experiential, application-based, and hands-on learning. However, in order to create and maintain an international and national presence, all of the graduate certificate programs housed in the Department can be completed on-line. All face-to-face courses are offered at the main campus in Bowling Green, Kentucky. See <https://www.wku.edu/csa/> for Course Offerings.

## Talley Family Counseling Center (TFCC)

The TFCC is housed within the Department and is sustained through an endowment from Betty Talley, and her late husband, Dr. Page Talley. Students from the Clinical Mental Health Counseling and Marriage and Family Counseling programs apply for year-long internship placements in the TFCC and provide clinical counseling and support services to community members as well as WKU students, faculty, and staff. The interns provide over 1,200 direct hours of therapy, education, and outreach on campus and within the community during each academic year. View the [TFCC website](#) for more information.

## DEGREES, CERTIFICATES AND PROGRAMMING

The Department of Counseling and Student Affairs offers master's degrees (MAE), graduate certificates, school counseling certification programs, as well as Joint Undergraduate-Master's programs (JUMP) in the following areas:

### Master's Degree Programs

- [Clinical Mental Health Counseling \(CMHC\)](#)
- [Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling \(MCFC\)](#)
- [Student Affairs in Higher Education](#)

Elective courses are selected in consultation with one's advisor. Elective courses in the CMHC and MCFC programs may be used to fulfill the requirements for (a) KY School Counseling Certification eligibility; (b) the CSA Addictions Education

Graduate Certificate (AE); (c) the CSA College and Career Readiness Graduate Certificate (CCR); or (d) to fulfill content requirements for the Association for Play Therapy (PTh) credential. Elective courses are offered pending faculty availability and enrollment.

## **Online Graduate Certificate Programs**

A certificate program is a coherent course of study that is compatible with the stated mission and goals of WKU and appropriate to the field of higher education (SACSCOC). Certificates lead to the acquisition of a defined set of skills or expertise that will enhance employability or meet a professional development need. A certificate earned at WKU does not imply licensure or credentialing to practice.

- **Addictions Education (AE)**

This interdisciplinary certificate program prepares students to provide counseling, education services, and/or support services to individuals experiencing addiction issues. Individuals who complete the program will be knowledgeable about the various components of addictions and gain skills related to their professional field such as prevention strategies, assessment procedures, intervention skills, treatment planning, and recovery support. This program is appropriate for both licensed eligible mental health professionals (i.e., Professional Counselors, Social Workers), as well as bachelor level employees (i.e., mental health support professionals, human resources administrators and staff). Those interested in becoming a credentialed and/or licensed alcohol and drug counselor in Kentucky or elsewhere, must meet state requirements. Those may differ from the course content offered in the Addictions Education Certificate. That is, the Addictions Education certificate does not imply license to practice. Students are encouraged to contact the affiliate state licensure board if interested in becoming a Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselor.

- **College and Career Readiness (CCR)**

This certificate program is for graduate students who are interested in the college and career readiness of P-12 students; with a specific focus on interacting and intervening with this target population, as well as developing professional relationships with school-related stakeholders. The College and Career Readiness (CCR) certificate is created to support the career and college readiness needs of local, regional, and national P-12 students. It is offered online through WKU's Bowling Green campus; courses are taught by CNS faculty with the integration of experts from local businesses and schools. Students will have opportunities to participate in action research and service learning consultation activities. This certificate program plays a leading role in Kentucky's economic and social development by preparing CCR graduates to prepare P-12 students to join a high-quality educated workforce in an area of local, regional, and national need. Additionally, it meets the needs of area schools by providing specific training to the personnel being hired or asked to work with students in the areas of college and career readiness. It also serves to help build and maintain networks between districts and industry in Bowling Green.

- **International Student Services (ISS)**

College campuses have become increasingly internationalized in recent decades. International student populations have grown, study abroad has become a standard of the higher education landscape, and as a result, the student population has developed new needs. The Certificate in International Student Services offers graduate-level students preparation to manage educational exchange, lead campus internationalization, and provide international student services. Students pursuing the Certificate in International Student Services may complete the certificate program by itself or along with the MAE in Student Affairs. Successful graduates will have earned their certificate through theory-based instruction, application of material through internship, and an international experience.

- **Career Services**

The Certificate in Career Services (CCS) is designed to provide helping professionals with advanced knowledge and skills needed to better serve students and clients within the context of a volatile and ever-changing employment landscape. Graduates of this certificate program will be better prepared to assist students to be more engaged in the educational experience through appropriate academic major and career choice, which may lead to higher retention of current students and successful transition to the workforce. Moreover, the CCS program complements the master's degree programs in a wide variety of helping professions.

### **Joint Undergraduate Master's Program (JUMP)**

The Department of Counseling and Student Affairs offers a Joint Undergraduate-Master's Programs (JUMP) in Counseling and one in Student Affairs. Undergraduate students in good standing (must have a GPA of 3.00 or above) can apply to either program, and after being admitted can take graduate courses towards both their undergraduate and graduate degree. See [WKU Graduate Catalog](#) and [CSA website](#) for details.

### **Graduate Research**

There are various opportunities to engage in research activities. Students who are interested should reach out to faculty to join them in their research projects. See WKU [Graduate School](#) for additional opportunities and resources including: graduate student research grants, travel awards for conferences and research, Office of Sponsored Programs, and TopSCHOLAR.

## **ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND PROCESS**

The Department of Counseling and Student Affairs admissions process employs a holistic approach to evaluate each applicant's potential to be successful as students and, upon graduation, counseling or student affairs professionals. This approach involves the submission of materials that allows department faculty members to develop a more complete picture of applicants in terms of academic aptitude for graduate-level study, potential success in forming effective counseling relationships, respect for cultural differences, and relevance of career goals to their prospective programs of interest. Faculty rate application materials and rank the applications according to these categories. Highly ranked applicants are invited to interview with



faculty and current students in an individual or group setting. After the completion of the interview, admissions decisions are made based on application ratings and interview evaluations collectively. The application process is competitive with a limited number of openings. International applicants should follow the [WKU's International Admissions](#), as well as Department policies.

The Department of Counseling and Student Affairs is subject to WKU's [Graduate School's](#) policies related to admissions. International applicants will follow the Department admissions processes and should comply with WKU's policies regarding the admission of international students.

Students are responsible for understanding WKU's policies related to Enrollment, Matriculation, Registration, and Completion. See [CSA website](#) and [WKU's Graduate School website](#).

### **Admission to JUMP**

Pending admittance, JUMP students complete a *Statement of Intent* with their CSA graduate advisor. JUMP students are responsible for completing an [Application for Admission to WKU Graduate School](#) when they have completed their undergraduate degree. Only after which are they eligible for a Graduate Assistantship.

### **Transfer of Credit**

According to the [WKU Graduate School Catalog](#) transfer credit(s) may be accepted if earned at regionally accredited institutions of higher education. Students transferring credit from an international institution must submit an official transcript evaluation of credit from an international credential evaluation service recognized by the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) before equivalencies are determined. All transfer coursework must be documented on an official transcript with a grade of "B" or better. Transfer credits must be applied toward a graduate program awarded by WKU, are subject to approval by the appropriate academic department, and must comply with all other university policies. Plus, and minus grades are recorded as the letter grade only. In cooperative or joint programs with other universities, credits earned in the program at these institutions are not considered transfer credits. At least one-half of credits applied toward degree or certificate requirements must be earned at Western Kentucky University.

***Transfer Credit into Counseling Programs*** are only approved pending a thorough process which includes the review of syllabi and one's transcript. Students are advised that any change to the department's planned programs can compromise their pursuance of state licensure and credentialing. While faculty can advise students on appropriate course substitutions, it is ultimately the student's responsibility that transferred courses meet state licensure requirements. All course substitutions for required courses within the counseling programs must address the applicable CACREP standards within the course desired to be substituted. Clinical courses (i.e., group, techniques, practicum, and internship) are not considered for transfer credit. Elective course substitutions must be appropriate for degree completion. Students must ensure that the course they intend to use for transfer of credit has at least 3 semester



credit hours. Transfer courses must be at least 5 quarter hours of credit to satisfy transfer of credit conditions for one 3-credit semester course. Transfer credit also must have been earned within the six-year time limit for degree completion. See [WKU Graduate School](#) for additional information.

### **School Counselors seeking Professional Counselor Licensure**

School Counselors who have completed 60 hours of counseling courses, may be eligible to apply for the Kentucky License Professional Counselor Associate (LPCA) credential. The Kentucky Board of Licensure for Professional Counselors has been approving licensure for graduates of School Counseling degrees pending all requirements are met (including a supervised 600-hour internship and diagnoses-related course). As an academic program, the department does not assure anyone licensure unless they have graduated from the department's CACREP-accredited programs. Inquiries should review the state application requirements and follow up with the respective board; if eligible, they should contact the Department's Counseling Clinical Coordinator to discuss courses that need to be completed. Students must apply to the WKU Graduate School as a non-degree seeking student and request to be registered if the course is closed to non-majors.

### **Professional Counselors seeking School Counseling Credential**

The Department of Counseling and Student Affairs offers a CACREP accredited, 60-hour graduate degree in Clinical Mental Health Counseling that offers curriculum eligibility for the Kentucky School Counselor credential. In order to be eligible for the School Counselor credential, students must complete this specific CMHC curriculum. The Department does not currently offer another pathway to becoming credentialed as a Kentucky School Counselor.

### **Non-degree Seeking Students**

Students who wish to enroll in counseling courses but who are not interested in degree completion typically must be formally admitted to WKU Graduate School and to the counseling program. Students who have not yet been accepted into the counseling program may be allowed to take selective courses in the counseling program pending the following: (a) formal admittance to [WKU Graduate School](#) and (b) a 3.0 minimum cumulative GPA in earned bachelor's degree. Students who have not been admitted to a program are not eligible to enroll in any of the department's clinical courses (CNS 590, 591, 595, or 596) without prior approval from the Clinical Coordinator. Many counseling courses are capped for accreditation reasons and are guaranteed to admitted students only. Academic success as a non-degree seeking student in courses does not assure acceptance into the counseling program.

### **Financial Assistance**

There are a variety of ways to secure financial assistance. Many funding opportunities are located on the [CNS website](#). For general information regarding loans, grants, scholarships, and up-to-date information regarding financial assistance, visit [WKU Student Financial Assistance](#).

**Graduate Assistantships.** Western Kentucky University awards graduate assistantships (GA) to select graduate students in programs across campus.

(JUMP students are not eligible for Graduate Assistantships.) Graduate Assistants must maintain a GPA of 3.0 to maintain employment contract. The Graduate Assistantship is a one-year contract that may extend to two years pending need, budgetary allowances, as well as informal and formal evaluations of their previous work. GAs hired in the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs are expected to fulfill department specific expectations and responsibilities (i.e., involvement in departmental marketing and recruitment activities) and as stated in their contractual agreements with the University and the Department.

## **ENROLLMENT AND MATRICULATION**

### **New Student Orientation**

All students are required to attend the Department of Counseling New Student Orientation prior to the completion of their first enrolled semester in the Department. The New Student Orientation includes information about the department, programs, faculty, as well as expectations for students. Enrollment in the Blackboard New Student Orientation includes quizzes related to the content. Students who do not attend or complete the online New Student Orientation by the end of their first enrolled semester will not be able to enroll in the subsequent semester. Throughout their tenure in the department, students are responsible for knowledge and understanding of the contents within this Handbook, as well as all WKU policies and procedures related to student enrollment and matriculation.

### **Advising and Program Planning**

Upon admission, each student is assigned a faculty advisor from the student's program area in the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs. Students can begin to register for courses on their own after having met with their advisor to discuss their respective Planned Program. Students may enroll in a second semester only after having completed the New Student Orientation and having completed the Program of Study (must be completed within first semester or after 12 hours of course work). Students are responsible for registering for courses in a timely fashion in order to secure the course section most preferred as some courses have enrollments caps. Students are responsible for following their Planned Program and notifying their advisor of any changes. Some courses are only offered once a year and some require prerequisites. Failing to follow the plan can delay graduation, as well as create other scheduling conflicts, all of which are not the responsibility of the Department.

Students are expected to maintain contact with their advisors throughout their academic tenure to discuss degree progression and completion, program experiences, career preparation, as well as leaves of absences. Students should give faculty at least 2 business days to respond. Faculty also have a nine-month appointment with the university and thus typically have scheduled office hours only during the fall and spring. Students should reach out to faculty with this in mind.

- ***Progress through the Program.*** Students are encouraged to suspend any intentions of "speeding through the program." Depending on work schedules, family commitments, and other responsibilities, most will be able to complete their program in 2 to 4 years. Students should consult with their advisors the

best course for their progress in the program. Based upon their observations of a student's progress, faculty may notify the student that it is in their best interest to decrease credit-hour load for any given semester.

- ***Withdraw from Courses and/or Program.*** Students may be advised or may elect to withdraw from courses or their program at any time during their enrollment. Students may apply for admission to another degree program at the university and, if admitted, transfer into that program the number of credit hours allowed by the university. In such cases, the student's advisor will work with the student to assist the student in choosing an appropriate course of study.
- ***Change in Programs.*** Students desiring to change programs within the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs should do so in consultation with their current advisor; and must apply for and be admitted to the program they want to pursue using Departmental and Graduate School admissions procedures.
- ***Practicum and Internship.*** Various requirements (i.e., prerequisite courses, attendance at the orientation) must be met in order to apply for enrollment in Practicum and Internship. Refer the respective program's Practicum/Internship Manual for details. Students should contact their advisor and the program's Clinical Coordinator at least one full semester prior to the semester they intend on enrolling.
- ***Comprehensive Exams, Graduation, and Credentialing.*** Students should familiarize themselves with the Department's guidelines, of which are outlined in this Handbook and on the department's website.

## **Academic Standing**

[WKU's Graduate School](#) states that graduate students must maintain a 3.0 grade point average (GPA) for all courses taken at WKU and those graduate courses transferred to WKU to fulfill graduate program requirements. Students must maintain a minimum grade point average of 3.0 in the academic program and a cumulative (overall) GPA to earn a degree or certificate. If a student's overall GPA falls below 3.0, the student will be placed on academic probation. Students placed on academic probation are not eligible for graduate assistantship appointments. The student will have one additional full-time semester or the equivalent (9 semester hours) to remove the academic probation by raising their cumulative GPA to a 3.0 or higher. If the GPA remains below a 3.0 after completing 9 hours of coursework on probation, the student will be academically dismissed from Graduate School. Individual academic programs may also apply more restrictive criteria regarding probation and dismissal. Students may be dismissed by the program for failing to make satisfactory progress toward a degree or certificate. Students will be dismissed from the program for having failed twice the comprehensive examination for the graduate degree. Dismissal from an academic program will result in dismissal from the Graduate School.

Students may also be dismissed from programs for reasons other than failure to maintain a satisfactory grade point average. Expectations regarding student conduct

are described in the Western Kentucky University Student Handbook and apply to students in all programs. Additional program-specific policies regarding student conduct and dismissal from a program for non-academic reasons may also apply. Students should contact their advisors for more information regarding expectations for appropriate student conduct.

Candidates for graduate degrees and certificates are required to maintain a B average (3.0 GPA) in all course work. Further, a grade of C or lower may not be used in meeting requirements for any of the designated Practice Preparation Sequence courses or in Practicum or Internship. Graduate students who fail to maintain a 3.0 GPA in their graduate courses are automatically placed on academic probation by the Graduate School; and are not eligible for graduate assistantships. Once on academic probation, students have the equivalent of one full time semester (9 hours for graduate students) to obtain a 3.0 GPA. Students who do not achieve a 3.0 GPA at the end of this time are academically dismissed from Graduate School and cannot register for additional classes. Those dismissed may appeal this graduate policy. For additional information and the most recent policies please visit the latest WKU Graduate School Catalog.

Instructors may give students an Incomplete "X." This grade is given only when a relatively small amount of work is not completed because of illness or other reason satisfactory to the instructor. A grade of "X" received by a graduate student, with the exception of thesis courses or similar projects, will automatically become an "F" unless removed within twelve (12) weeks of the next full term (summer term excluded).

### **Academic and Professional Performance**

Students enrolled in the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs are informally and formally observe and reviewed by faculty within courses (i.e., across face-to-face, virtual and asynchronous settings), as well as outside of the classroom setting (i.e., extracurricular activities; hallway interactions) for potential fit for the discipline being sought. That is, academic performance alone is no guarantee of success or retention in the program. Counseling students are reviewed during the fall and spring semesters by full and part-time faculty on the following criteria according to a 4-point scale:

- 1/Needs Remediation: does not meet expectations
- 2/Needs Support: meets expectations minimally or inconsistently
- 3/Meets Criteria: meets expectations consistently
- 4/Exceeds Expectations

JUMP students are expected to receive ratings of at least 3 across all criteria. Students receive a letter indicating the summarizing the faculty's review. Some information was adapted from TAMU's Distance Learning's *Orientation: Expectations for Graduate Study*, Virginia Tech Graduate School's *Building Graduate Community: Expectations for Graduate Study*, and Adapted from William and Mary (2010) *Criteria for Professional Performance Evaluation*.)

1. Respects divergent points of view
  - o Engages openly and respectfully in conversations in which divergent perspectives are being addressed
2. Awareness of diversity and non-discrimination
  - o Demonstrates competence in knowledge, attitudes, skills related to diversity through observable behavior and interactions with others
  - o Engages in opportunities to build multicultural competencies
3. Academic performance
  - o Cumulative grade meets WKU Graduate School standards
  - o Assignments are turned in on time
  - o The includes meeting graduate writing standards. The Department of Counseling and Student Affairs requires students to follow the [Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association](#) (APA). Student should study the manual for guidance on paper format, tables and figures, in-text citations, references, mechanics of style, grammar, and use of bias-free language. Students should consult with [WKU's Writing Center](#) for further assistance and support.
  - o Is proactive about academic performance
4. Appropriate in-class behavior including course attendance and participation
  - o Demonstrates ability to listen to others with patience
  - o Able to articulate content and able to offer analysis of content
  - o Tone of voice, verbal and nonverbal sharing are adequate, appropriate and respectful
  - o Timely attendance is required during all scheduled class meetings. When attending class virtually, students must use the video option during the entirety of the class while demonstrating that they are free of distractions (i.e., multitasking, attending to other business). Exceptions will be determined in consultation with the department head. Consequences for unexcused absences include receiving an "F" or "Incomplete" in the course; and will be determined in consultation with department head.
  - o Students are responsible for understanding each course's policy related to late or missing assignments. including the consequences for not following it.
5. Collaboration, contribution to positive environment
  - o Students should be able to demonstrate that they are prepared for each class meeting (i.e., completed all required reading). They can expect to invest about 3-4 hours outside of class each week for each unit or credit of coursework they are enrolled in. During this time, they can spend time studying the required reading and researching additional sources to help improve their knowledge and skill base.
  - o Participates
  - o Works well with other students
6. Reflective practice
  - o Engages in thoughtful practice (i.e., about course and clinical work)
  - o Reveals insights related personal successes and areas for opportunity
  - o Open to self-examination
7. Accepts personal responsibility
  - o Engages personal responsibility

- o Accepts personal mistakes; avoids blaming others
- 8. Personal & professional growth
  - o Seeks development opportunities outside of the classroom
  - o Seeks consultation with faculty regarding growth and improvement
- 9. Receives, gives, and integrates feedback
  - o Invites and welcomes feedback from others
  - o Demonstrates having incorporated such feedback
  - o Able to verbalize the importance of external feedback
  - o Demonstrates eagerness for feedback
- 10. Ethical and legal boundaries (per respective profession)
  - o Students are expected to adhere to their respective profession's ethical codes and standards of practice
  - o Security of Media. Some courses (technique and methods courses, practicum and internship) may require recorded (audio, video) of a student's application of course content with a volunteer. Students are responsible for (a) ensuring that the individual being recorded has been provided informed consent about the purpose of the recording, its use, who it will be shared with, and when it will be destroyed; (b) formatting the recording to the instructor's or supervisor's preference; (c) keeping the recording secure from any other source by means of password protection, lock boxes; and (d) are destroyed through appropriate means.

## **Department Support, Remediation and Dismissal Process**

When faculty members have identified a student as having concerning and/or problematic behaviors (i.e., academic performance, social interactions with peers or professors, supervision) the department will implement a support, remediation and dismissal process. Such behaviors may have been already noted in the student's Professional Performance Review. The support, remediation and dismissal process consist of three levels.

### ***Level One***

The student will meet with the Department Head, his or her advisor and/or faculty who have observed the student as needing support. During this meeting, concerns will be discussed and the student will have the opportunity to share how s/he may need support. The student will be presented with a Level One Support Plan which will include expectations, as well as prescribed steps that will help the student address the identified concerns. Support Plans may include any of, although not limited to, the following:

Additional clinical work, such as an additional practicum or internship  
 Personal mental health counseling  
 Additional academic course work  
 Additional supervision  
 Additional practice of and assessment in certain skills

The student will implement the Plan, with departmental support as needed. A copy of the plan will be placed in the student's file.

### ***Level Two***

When the identified concerns are substantial, or when the student does not meet the expectations and steps outlined in the Level One Plan, the student will meet with the Department Head and faculty to discuss the identified concerns and necessity of remediation. The student will be notified that failure to meet the expectations outlined in this Level Two can result in dismissal from the program. Remediation plans may include any of the steps noted in Level One, such as but not limited to:

- Additional clinical work, such as an additional practicum or internship
- Personal mental health counseling
- Oral examination
- Additional academic course work
- Additional supervision
- Additional practice of and assessment in certain skills

A copy of the plan will be placed in the student's file.

### ***Level Three***

Level Three is dismissal from the student's program and the Department. Level Three is implemented when student progress toward remediation goals is minimal or when concerned faculty and the Department Head believe achieving remediation goals is unlikely. A student may be dismissed (without having been placed on Level One or Level Two) due to certain behaviors that are deemed as unacceptable by Departmental faculty. That is, these behaviors can result in the student's immediate dismissal without any remediation rights. Appeals of dismissal from the program and Department can be submitted to the Dean's Office in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences. School Counseling students' dismissals are also reviewed by the college's Professional Education Council.

## **Practicum and Internship**

Students enrolled in the Counseling and Student Affairs graduate degree programs, as well as the College and Career Readiness graduate certificate program are required to complete a practicum and/or internship/s. Enrollment in these courses (CNS 503, 590, 591, 595, 596) must be approved by the program's Clinical Coordinator. Students should prepare for practicum and/or internship at least a semester prior to enrollment by studying their program's respective Practicum and Internship Manual and resources posted on the CSA website; contacting the program's respective Clinical Coordinator; and working towards the completion of all prerequisites. Students are responsible for securing their own practicum or internship placement by following the guidelines outlined in the respective program manual. While students may have met the academic requirements to enroll in Practicum, approval is also based upon the faculty's observations of the student's readiness. Attendance at all practicum and internship class meetings is required.



## **Prerequisite Requirements for Counseling Students (CMHC and MCFC)**

All counseling students must have completed the Practice Preparation Sequence of courses with a grade of B or better in order to be eligible for placement in Practicum: CNS 554 Group Counseling; CNS 555 Social and Cultural Diversity; CNS 558 Counseling Theories; CNS 559 Techniques of Counseling; CNS 560 Professional Studies in Clinical, Family and School Counseling. Students are eligible to enroll in CNS 596(1) Internship if they earned at least a B in Practicum (CNS 591); to enroll in CNS 596(2), a B or better must be earned in CNS 596(1). Counseling students must also attend the Practicum and Internship Orientation that is held in the spring prior to the fall of enrollment. Students should see the website for details and make arrangements to attend.

## **Comprehensive Exams, Graduation, and Credentialing**

Western Kentucky Graduate School policy stipulates that all students enrolled in master's-level programs in the University must successfully complete a culminating experience of their master's-level studies. In the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, the culminating experience is the Comprehensive Exam of which measures students' mastery of knowledge in their respective sought-after profession including but not limited to social and cultural diversity, theory of practice and process, methods and techniques, research and program evaluation, ethics and legal issues. A passing score on the comprehensive examination is required to graduate.

Students are eligible to take the Comprehensive Exam after fulfilling the following requirements: application for graduation upon earning 18 graduate hours; completion of any required research foundations and/or specified research course(s) (i.e., CNS 598) on the program of study; be currently enrolled in the last semester of the degree program or have completed all content course work associated with the program; be in good standing academically; and completion of any additional requirements as specified by the department(s) directing the program. Students typically take their comprehensive exam during the semester they will graduate.

If order to request accommodations for either exam: (a) a formal accommodation must have been filed with the WKU [Student Accessibility Resource Center \(SARC\)](#); (b) a signed letter requesting such must be on university letter head from SARC indicating what specific accommodations are being sought; and (c) the letter must be included with this application in one PDF document. This PDF document must be submitted with the comprehensive examination application.

## **Comprehensive Exam (CPCE) for the Counseling Programs**

The [Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Exam](#) (CPCE) serves as the Comprehensive Exam for all Clinical Mental Health Counseling and Marriage, Couple and Family Counseling students. It is a land-based exam offered only at a verified Pearson location. Students can choose the test date, time, and location (nearest Pearson location is Nashville). The exam is similar to the [National Counselor Exam](#) (NCE) in that it covers the following content areas:

- a. Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice
- b. Social and Cultural Diversity
- c. Human Growth and Development
- d. Career Development
- e. Counseling and Helping Relationships
- f. Group Counseling and Group Work
- g. Assessment and Testing
- h. Research and Program Evaluation

Per the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs's policy, students pass the CPCE Comprehensive Exam when their scores fall above or below one standard deviation of the national average for that particular exam offering. In the event of not earning a score within the standard deviation of the national average, students are required to take an essay examination. The essay exam includes 2 questions that are provided at the time/date of the exam. Students have 4 hours total to complete this proctored exam via ZOOM or on campus. Students can use resources of their choice (hard copy and/or electronic) to the exam. If that exam is not passed, students are required to take an oral examination.

## **National Certification Examination (NCE)**

Graduates from a CACREP-accredited counseling program meet the educational requirements to earn the [Nationally Certified Counselor \(NCC\)](#) credential after passing the multiple-choice National Counselor Exam (NCE). This certification through the National Board of Certified Counselor (NBCC) indicates to the public and employers that the counselors have met the national standards set by the counseling profession. The National Counselor Exam (NCE) is also required to obtain full LPCC licensure in KY. See <https://lpc.ky.gov/>. During their last semester in the program, students may take the exam versus waiting until after graduation. The benefits of taking the exam while still enrolled include a reduced exam fee, as well as having recently prepared for the CPCE, a similar exam. The NCE is offered mid-to-late in the last semester of enrollment. Students apply for the exam through the CPCE & NCE Application located on the CSA Website.

In order to take the CPCE (and if desired, the NCE), students must complete the CPCE and NCE Application which is available on the Department website. Deadlines are as follows: If graduating in the spring (May), the application is due no later September 1 of the previous year. If graduating in the fall (December), the application is due no later than April 1 of that year. The exam must be taken by

March 31st to graduate in May of that year; and by October 31st to graduate in December of that year. Exceptions are not provided.

### **Comprehensive Exam for the Student Affairs Program**

The Comprehensive Exam for the Student Affairs program includes a multiple-choice examination and a two-question essay examination. The multiple-choice examination has been developed by the Student Affairs faculty in the department. Results of the comprehensive exams will be released when all incomplete grades (i.e., IP, X) have been resolved.

In order to take the Comprehensive Exam, students must complete an application which is available on the Department website. Deadlines are as follows: If graduating in the spring (May), the application is due no later March 1. If graduating in the fall (December), the application is due no later than October. The Comprehensive Exam will be scheduled on a Saturday typically in April and November. Students should visit the CSA website and contact the Student Affairs Program Coordinator well in advance for details.

### **Graduation**

Students are responsible for reviewing [WKU Graduate School's Degree and Certificate Completion Checklist](#) at least a full academic year prior to anticipated graduation as the application for graduation is due the semester. All degree and certificate requirements must be completed by the student by the last day of the term. The Graduate School begins auditing degrees and certificates for completion the week following the final day of the term. The degree audit confirms that the student has: completed all coursework (earning a "C" or higher/no incomplete grades) in their program within the time limit; earned a minimum cumulative and program GPA of 3.0; passed the comprehensive exam; and applied for graduation. Degree audits are completed within four to six weeks after the term concludes. Upon recommendation of the audit, the University Registrar confers the degree and/or certificate in May, August, or December. Students may check their transcript for completion on TopNet (Student Services/Student Records/Unofficial Academic Transcript). Degrees and certificates will be mailed within 3-6 weeks after the conclusion of the term. The Graduate School does not confirm degree or certificate completion prior to award; however, enrollment verification may be requested.

Students are responsible for preparing and applying for graduation the semester prior to completing the program. To begin the application process for graduation, students should visit [WKU Registrar](#).

## **WKU'S OFFICE OF STUDENT CONDUCT**

The Department of Counseling and Student Affairs adheres to the policies and guidelines outlined by WKU's Office of Student Conduct and in the WKU Student Handbook. Students should become familiar with these resources including [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), [due process](#), [Student Code of Conduct](#), [Title IX](#), and [Kentucky State Law](#).

## **Academic Integrity**

Students are held to the expectations related to Student Conduct noted in the latest [WKU Student Handbook](#) and in the [WKU's Graduate Catalog](#). Academic integrity is an essential component of an academic community. Every student is responsible for fostering and maintaining a culture of academic honesty by committing to the academic values of honesty, integrity, responsibility, trust, respect for self and others, fairness, and justice. In addition, students are expected to abide by the code of ethics for their profession and the student code of conduct for the university.

The University expects students to operate with the highest standard of integrity in all facets of the collegiate experience. Broadly defined, academic misconduct is any unethical self-serving action in the performance of an academic activity, deliberate or unintentional, that affords a student an unfair, unearned, or undeserved advantage. (Excerpt from the WKU Student Handbook, 2016). The maintenance of academic integrity is of fundamental importance to the University. Thus, it should be clearly understood that acts of plagiarism or any other form of cheating will not be tolerated and that anyone committing such acts will be held accountable for violation of the student code of conduct. Students who commit any act of academic dishonesty may receive from the instructor a failing grade in that portion of the course work in which the act is detected or a failing grade in a course without possibility of withdrawal. The faculty member may also present the case to the Office of Student Conduct.

***Dishonesty.*** Such as cheating, plagiarism, misrepresenting of oneself or an organization, knowingly furnishing false information to the University, or omitting relevant or necessary information to gain a benefit, to injure, or to defraud is prohibited.

***Cheating.*** No student shall receive or give assistance not authorized by the instructor in taking an examination or in the preparation of an essay, laboratory report, problem assignment or other project which is submitted for purposes of grade determination.

***Plagiarism.*** To represent written work taken from another source as one's own is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious act. The academic work of a student must be his/her own. One must give any author credit for source material borrowed from him/her. To lift content directly from a source without giving credit is a flagrant act. To present a borrowed passage without reference to the source after having changed a few words is also plagiarism. Students who have plagiarized an assignment or otherwise cheated in their academic work or examination may expect an "F" for the assignment in question or "F" for the course, at the instructor's discretion.

***Other Types of Academic Dishonesty.*** Other types of academic offenses, such as the theft or sale of tests or forging signatures may be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs for disciplinary sanction.

It is the position of The Office of Student Conduct that among the violations of misconduct considered to be of an especially serious nature are those that represent a threat to the safety and health of members of the University Community. These include but are not limited to harassment, physical violence or threat of violence, non-consensual sexual contact, rape or any form of sexual violence. Students are expected to understand [WKU's Student Conduct policies](#) including Investigative Procedures, Complaint Process, Complainant Rights, Respondent Rights, Appeal Procedures.

**Student Grievance Procedure** Western Kentucky University (WKU) is committed to equal opportunity in its educational programs and employment. The University is an Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer, and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, marital status, age, uniform service, veteran status, or physical or mental disability. On request, WKU will provide reasonable accommodations, including auxiliary aids and services, necessary to afford an individual with a disability an equal opportunity to participate in all services, programs, activities, and employment. The University has published policies and procedures for investigating and/or addressing discrimination or harassment in its educational programs and/or employment. Students who believe they have experienced discrimination or harassment in such programs, activities, or employment, can consult any of these sources: [WKU Policies](#), [WKU Student Handbook](#), and the [Graduate School](#).

### **Student Concerns and Resolutions**

When students have concerns or complaints regarding an academic issue or grade, they should follow the [WKU's Student Academic and Grade Complaint Procedures](#). The procedure generally follows the steps below:

1. Student brings the concern or complaint to the faculty member involved.
2. If the student and faculty member are unable to resolve the concern, the student contacts the Department Head
3. If the student is unable to reach a satisfactory resolution at the departmental level, the concern is brought to the college level (i.e., Deans Office).
4. Should the student want to appeal the decision made at the college level, a formal written notice of appeal can be submitted.

Students who pursue a formal complaint are responsible for ensuring they are informed and have knowledge of University policies in official University publications.

## **EXPECTATIONS OF GRADUATE STUDENTS**

The Department of Counseling and Student Affairs faculty are privileged to work with the students who are accepted in our programs. Along with Academic and Professional Performance expectations, faculty expect students to assume a dedication to personal, professional and interpersonal development, accountability and responsibility for their success in the program.

## **Introspection, Self-Awareness and Cultural Sensitivity**

The emphasis on personal and interpersonal development is a vital aspect of the Department's programs. Understanding one's own perspectives, interpretations, beliefs, experiences, and emotions is a crucial step towards understanding and relating to others, as well as enhancing one's professional counseling and helping skills. Faculty will actively engage students in activities that promote the development of their self-awareness and commitment to creating atmospheres of safety among their peers, in the classroom and with those whom they serve. These activities may involve taking necessary emotional risks in class discussions, including providing and accepting honest and direct feedback from peers and sharing personal biases and related areas of growth. For example, students will have opportunities to explore their own family of origin issues and identify biases and assumptions. Introspection and personal development are considered an essential part of becoming a counselor and student affairs professional.

Engaging in self-reflective activities may be experienced as challenging, uncomfortable and even distressing. Often faculty will students to continue processing those activities by seeking personal counseling. Reflection often reveals that the pursued profession is not a suitable match for them. In such cases, faculty will help students, as needed, to explore more appropriate career choices and assist students with exiting the program in a committed and caring manner.

## **Self-Care and Support**

Faculty in the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs are committed to their own life balance as well as encouraging that among students. In conjunction with feedback from previous students, they recommend the following:

- Keeping a calendar to stay on track and to best anticipate deadlines (in all areas of life)
- Considering how and eliminating distractions that are impeding one's own wellness and success in courses and programs. Sometimes distractions include engaging in anxiety provoking conversations among peers (i.e., trying to clarify a course assignment versus going directly to the instructor; complaining about an instructor versus voicing such directly to that instructor) and being pulled into triangles with other students and faculty. If students are struggling with or have questions about anything related to enrollment and matriculating through the program (advising, comprehensive exams, coursework, graduation), they are responsible for seeking direction first and foremost from the faculty member or advisor.
- Maintaining a non-judgmental stance towards self (and peers) particularly when feeling unmotivated, tired and overwhelmed.

Faculty are available as advisors and mentors; support can also be found through WKU. Students are encouraged to:

- Seek out faculty to gain clarification and direction about assignments.
- Seek out and maintain a relationship with advisors throughout their program of study so as to successfully complete and meet deadlines associated with



practicum and internship placement, comprehensive exams, graduation and beyond.

- Engage with faculty, mentors, peers for support related to life balance, taking necessary “breaks” and developing creative self-care practices.
- Students often see reference letters for credentialing, employment and doctoral school from professors. Professors are more likely to provide references and support if they are familiar with students beyond the classroom setting. Thus, students are advised to seek and engage in relationships with faculty throughout their academic tenure.

## **Professional Counseling**

Faculty may encourage or required students to engage in professional counseling. This may be in response to the student’s need for additional support; or due to the faculty’s responsibility to assure that graduates from the department can demonstrate certain requisite competencies: a sufficient knowledge base, essential helping skills for working with a diverse population, the ability to function effectively in interpersonal relationships, and a value system rooted in an appreciation for personal growth and goals of the counseling and student affairs profession. In addition, students are expected to behave in an ethical, conscientious and professional manner. Students shall be knowledgeable of the general standards and professional ethics set forth by their respective professional organization(s).

## **Stay Engaged in Department Communication**

Immediately after admission into the Department, students should use and regularly check their WKU email addresses as they are responsible for the contents of all email communications (including those sent through the respective student mailing lists.)

## **Involvement in WKU Registered Student Organizations (ROIs)**

The Department houses the two [WKU Registered Student Organizations](#) including the Counseling Graduate Association (COGA) and the Student Affairs Graduate Association (SAGA). The purpose of these ROIs is to promote individual wellness and professional development of current and past students as well as alumni of WKU’s counseling and student affairs programs. Through membership in these organizations, students and graduates have opportunities to engage in service, professional development, develop leadership skills and create life-long relationships among peers. The department’s ROIs sponsor professional networking opportunities, social activities, academic enrichment and community support related activities. Members of ROIs also engage in departmental recruitment and informational activities for future members of the respective professions. Students should contact the department’s faculty advisor and/or [CSA website](#) for additional details.

## **Complete Online Course Evaluations**

Students have the opportunity to provide feedback about their courses and instructors through confidential [Online Course Evaluations \(SITE\)](#). While this anonymous feedback can provide helpful information, such feedback may be more conducive to programmatic and academic improvement if shared in a respectful manner directly with the instructor. Faculty receive the course SITE report shortly after final grades are due.



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Students enrolled in the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs are encouraged to engage in their respective professional communities; including attending events and activities that strengthen their professional, personal and interpersonal development. For example, the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs, as well as other offices on campus sponsor free professional development workshops to students and the public. Membership in state, regional and national professional organizations also provide students with extensive opportunities to learn more about their field, to create and engage in relationships with professionals across the country, and to develop leadership skills. Examples of professional organizations that faculty, students and graduate have been active in are listed below.

### Counseling-Related Associations

***American Counseling Association (ACA)*** The American Counseling Association is an organization of counselors, students, faculty and related members interested in, or working in, the counseling profession. There are also [18 chartered divisions](#) that provide leadership, resources and information unique to specialized areas and/or principles of counseling.

***Kentucky Counseling Association (KCA)*** is the state branch of the American Counseling Association and is an organization of counseling professionals who work in educational, health care, residential, private practice, community agency, government, business and industry settings.

***American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA)*** This association works to enhance mental health counseling through licensing, advocacy, education and professional development.

***Association for Play Therapy (APT)*** The Association for Play Therapy (APT) is a national professional society established in 1982 to foster contact among mental health professionals interested in exploring and, when developmentally appropriate, applying the therapeutic power of play to communicate with and treat clients, particularly children.

***American School Counselors Association (ASCA)*** The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) supports school counselors' efforts to help students focus on academic, career and social/emotional development so they achieve success in school and are prepared to lead fulfilling lives as responsible members of society. ASCA provides professional development, publications and other resources, research and advocacy to school counselors around the globe.

***Kentucky School Counselor Association (KSCA)*** is a non-profit organization that represents Kentucky school counselors. We are made up of an elected board, appointed positions, and community liaisons. We support school counselors through professional development, resources, and advocacy at the state and national level. We empower school counselors to lead systemic

change by delivering to all students an ASCA National Model Program, aligned with state standards for academic, personal/social, and career development.

***EMDR International Association (EMDRIA)*** A membership organization of mental health professionals dedicated to the highest standards of excellence and integrity in EMDR.

***North American Society of Adlerian Psychology (NASAP)*** The North American Society of Adlerian Psychology's mission is to foster and promote the research, knowledge, training, and application of Adlerian Psychology, maintaining its principles and encouraging its growth. Founded in 1952, NASAP thrives today as a society for a broad spectrum of professionals in the fields of education, psychology, psychiatry, counseling, social work, pastoral care, business, and family education.

***Kentucky Tennessee Society of Adlerian Psychology (KTSAP)*** is affiliate of the NASAP and was co-founded by Dr. Jill Sauerheber and is housed within the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs.

***Somatic Experiencing International*** The leading authority on the SE™ method and is a major provider of training and educational programs. SE is a body-oriented therapeutic model that helps heal trauma and other stress disorders. Developed by Peter Levine, Ph.D., it is the result of the multidisciplinary study of stress physiology, psychology, ethology, biology, neuroscience, indigenous healing practices, and medical biophysics, with more than 45 years of successful clinical application.

## **Student Affairs Associations**

***American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)*** The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) is the primary advocacy organization for the nation's community colleges. The association represents more than 1,000 2-year, associate degree-granting institutions and nearly 12 million students.

***American Association for Higher Education and Accreditation (AAHEA)*** AAHEA is the individual membership organization that promotes research, collaboration, scholarship, best practices, evidence-based research to move together into the era of increasingly digitized education. A leader in the transition from old norms to new standards for a new age. The association equips individuals and institutions committed to such changes with the knowledge they need to bring those changes about.

***American College Personnel Association (ACPA)*** College Student Educators International is a values-centered leadership association that has worked to boldly transform higher education since 1924. Student affairs and higher education professionals, faculty, and students trust ACPA to deliver high-quality educational programs, provide access to modern research and scholarship, and promote leadership at all levels through a racial justice and decolonization lens.

**College Student Personnel Association of Kentucky (CPAK)** CPAK is a state division of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA). CPAK concerns itself with the professionals in the varied areas of student affairs, student services, campus life, academic support, and higher education administration throughout the state of Kentucky.

**Association of College Administration Professionals (ACAP)** The Association of College Administration Professionals was started in 1995 to provide services to all college and university administrators, regardless of their positions. Ours is an association composed of members from virtually every area of administration; presidents, vice presidents of academics, business and student services, plus many directors of the various departments.

**Association of College and University Housing Officials International (ACUHOI)** The leading organization of choice for campus housing and residence life professionals and home to more than 17,000 professionals representing 3.2 million on-campus students from around the globe.

**College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPAHR)** CUPA-HR is higher ed HR serving higher education by providing the knowledge, resources, advocacy and connections to achieve organizational and workforce excellence.

**National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA)** NASPA is the leading voice for student affairs administration, policy, and practice, and affirms the commitment of the student affairs profession to educating the whole student and integrating student life and learning. NASPA members are committed to serving college students by embracing the core values of diversity, learning, integrity, collaboration, access, service, fellowship, and the spirit of inquiry. NASPA promotes quality and high expectations; advocates for students; encourages diversity; and excels in research and publication.

**Southern Association for College Student Affairs (SACSA)** The Southern Association for College Student Affairs (SACSA) is an independent, regional, and generalist association designed for the professional development of practitioners, educators, and students engaged in the student affairs profession. It is committed to being the preeminent generalist organization for practitioners, educators, and students engaged in the student affairs profession.

## **COUNSELING LICENSURE AND CREDENTIALING**

Licensure and professional certification are hallmarks of demonstrating completion of minimal professional standards required of the counseling profession. Graduates of the Department's counseling programs are eligible for the National Certified Counselor credential, as well as licensure in Kentucky. (They should work with the Clinical Coordinator if planning on becoming licensed in another state.)

## National Certified Counselor

The [National Board for Certified Counselors](#), Inc. and Affiliates (NBCC), an independent, not-for-profit credentialing body for counselors, was incorporated in 1982 to establish and monitor a national certification system, to identify those counselors who have voluntarily sought and obtained certification, and to maintain a register of those counselors. Its certification program recognizes counselors who have met predetermined standards in their training, experience, and performance on the National Counselor Examination (NCE), the most portable credentialing examination in counseling. National counselor certification from NBCC indicates to the public and employers that the counselor has met the national standards set by the counseling profession. While the credential is not a license to practice, it may serve as a requirement for state licensure.

As previously mentioned, the National Counselor Examination (NCE) is used for two purposes: national counselor certification and state counselor licensure. Students can apply through the department to take the exam during their last semester or apply to take it through NBCC after they graduate. See [NBCC](#) for additional information about the exam (including format, questions).

## Kentucky Professional Counselor Licensure

A state license in counseling is permission from a particular state for a person to practice counseling and /or use the title licensed counselor. Some states have a single license and some have a two-tiered system. In a two-tier system there is an entry level and an advanced level that signifies the state has endorsed the license holder for independent practice.

The [Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor \(LPCC\)](#) is required by the state of Kentucky in order to function as an independent clinical counselor. The minimum requirements for this credential include a master's degree in counseling or a closely related field that includes nine specified curricular areas. See the [Kentucky Board of Licensed Professional Counselors](#) for licensure requirements. Students should work with the Clinical Coordinator and internship instructors to begin the application for licensure.

CACREP-accredited programs prepare students to meet licensure across state lines. Students who are interested in becoming licensed in other states should consult with that respective state's licensure board regarding requirements and then work with the Clinical Coordinator to meet them and to apply for licensure.

## Credentialing and Certifications

Students and licensed professionals have multiple opportunities to specialize and obtain certifications in those specific areas (i.e., addictions, Brainspotting, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing [EMDR]; Gottman Couples Therapy, Somatic Experiencing, yoga). Trainings in these areas are offered through external agencies throughout the year and may have reduced fees for graduate students. Students interested in pursuing specializations should do so in consultation with their advisors and faculty.