

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
Program Information for Counseling Program Interviewees
CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING (M.S.) and
SCHOOL COUNSELING (M.A.Ed.)

Both Master's degrees in Counseling are CACREP-Accredited
The Counseling Program is part of the Department of Human Services,
College of Education and Allied Professions, WCU
Housed at WCU-Biltmore Park (in Asheville)

PROGRAM FACULTY

The counseling program has 8 faculty:

- Dr. Russ Curtis
- Dr. Merry Leigh Dameron
- Dr. Melodie Frick, Counseling Program Director
- Dr. Elizabeth Graves
- Dr. Elizabeth Likis-Werle
- Dr. Lisen Roberts, Human Services Department Head
- Dr. Phyllis Robertson
- Dr. Heather Thompson

PROGRAM CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

The WCU counseling program specialty areas of clinical mental health counseling and professional school counseling are accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Each specialty area is sixty (60) credit-hours. CACREP establishes a core curriculum for all students and sets standards for field placement requirements.

SCHOOL/CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING REQUIRED CORE COURSES:

- COUN 602: Professional Orientation and Ethics
- COUN 605: The Helping Relationship
- COUN 610: Family Counseling
- COUN 615: Cross Cultural Counseling
- COUN 617: Addictions Counseling
- COUN 625: Developmental Perspectives in Counseling
- COUN 630: Theories and Techniques of Counseling
- COUN 633: Crisis Intervention and Trauma Therapy
- COUN 635: Group Methods in Counseling
- COUN 640: Assessment in Counseling
- COUN 650: Career Development
- COUN 667: The DSM and Effective Treatment Planning in Counseling
- COUN 670: Research in Counseling or EDRS 602: Methods of Research

CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING ALSO REQUIRES:

- COUN 623: Introduction to Clinical Mental Health Counseling
- Three counseling electives
- COUN 686: Practicum in Counseling, a one-semester 150-hour field placement
- COUN 687: Internship in Counseling, a one-semester 600-hour field placement.

SCHOOL COUNSELING ALSO REQUIRES:

- COUN 620: Counseling Children and Adolescents
- COUN 645: Consultation and Collaboration
- COUN 660: School Counseling Program Development
- One counseling elective
- COUN 686: Practicum in Counseling, a one-semester 150-hour field placement
- COUN 687: Internship in counseling, a one-semester 600-hour field placement
- The Professional School Counseling subtest of the PRAXIS II exam is also required by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction for NC state licensure as a school counselor.

Graduating students in either specialty area qualify to pursue the post-Master's Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor (LCMHC) credential (previously LPC). The National Counselor Exam (NCE) is required for NC state licensure as LCMHC-Associate (initial level) and LCMHC (full licensure), and may be taken during students' final semester.

All WCU counseling courses (and program events) are at the WCU Biltmore Park instructional site in Asheville, except for graduation which is held on the main campus in Cullowhee.

A limit of six hours of graduate credit can be transferred into the counseling program with the approval of program faculty. It is not recommended to transfer coursework within the counseling core as all students are required to complete comprehensive exams based on WCU's core counseling curriculum.

FIELD PLACEMENTS

Practicum requires a minimum of 8-10 hours weekly at a mental health or school site for one semester. Practicum requires one hour of individual supervision per week and three hours of group supervision every other week, both at Biltmore Park. Practicum is a 3-hour credit course. Students apply for practicum the semester prior to enrollment. Approval for admission into practicum and for the practicum placement is made by the faculty. Professional liability insurance is required for all students enrolled in practicum.

Internship requires 40 hours weekly (full-time placement) at a mental health or school site for one semester. One hour of weekly individual supervision is provided by the site. Three hours of group supervision is conducted weekly at Biltmore Park. Internship is a 6-hour credit course. Students apply for internship the semester prior to enrollment. Approval for admission into internship and for the internship placement is made by the faculty. Typically, internship is an unpaid experience. Professional liability insurance is required for all students enrolled in

internship. It is possible for students to complete a split internship at 20 hours weekly for two semesters.

LOCATION AND TIMING OF CLASSES

Counseling classes are taught in 3-hour blocks typically in the evening 5:30-8:20pm at WCU's Biltmore Park instructional site. When a second section of a specific course is offered, it takes a day slot (most often 1:00-3:50pm, or sometimes 9:30am-12:20pm). In these cases, individual students choose which section, day or evening, they prefer. All students are required to complete summer courses as part of the 60-hour counseling program.

ORIENTATION, PLANS OF STUDY, AND ADVISEMENT

A counseling program orientation is required by all new students and will be scheduled on a Friday in late August (the first Friday of fall classes). There will also be a Biltmore Park sponsored student orientation that new students are encouraged to attend.

Each student will be assigned an academic advisor at the time of admission into the program. Students must initiate a meeting with their advisors to formulate a plan of study no later than the end of the fall semester of their first year of enrollment.

Newly admitted students will begin coursework in the Fall (August). If possible, it is highly recommended to begin classes in the Summer terms (June and/or July). New students wishing to begin in the Summer may do so after consultation with their advisor and then updating their application/admission term with the Graduate School to Summer. A limited number of courses will be appropriate for new students in the Summer term: COUN 650, COUN 640, and two electives: COUN 612 and COUN 672. Students who take COUN 650 must register for the correct section; clinical students select CMHC, professional school counseling students select School Coun.

FULL-TIME STUDENTS in both specialty areas complete the required 60 hours in their choice of 2, 2½, or 3 years, including summer courses. **PART-TIME STUDENTS** (those enrolled in 3 or 6 hours per semester) typically complete the program in 4 years. Part-time students are strongly encouraged to enroll in 6 hours per academic semester. At a minimum in the first Fall semester, students should take the two primary introductory courses: COUN 602 for all students, and COUN 623 for Clinical Mental Health or COUN 660 for School. Per NC state guidelines, all students have a maximum of six years to complete the counseling program from the time of initial enrollment.

An outline of course sequence for full-time students will be distributed at the group interview.

PROGRAM REVIEW OF STUDENTS

Following CACREP standards, students are systematically reviewed and evaluated with regard

to student learning outcomes, academic performance, clinical skill development, and professional and personal development throughout the program. Typical points of review for students are during the admission process, near the end of each fall and spring semester, and at the point of application to practicum and internship.

A comprehensive exam that covers designated core counseling courses is required. Students take the comprehensive exam as they have completed, or are completing, core courses, typically with internship. Most students take the National Counselor Exam (NCE) the same semester.

FINANCIAL AID

Financial aid is available in the form of graduate assistantships, Chancellor's Fellowships, Graduate School grants, scholarships, and student loans. Applicants interested in financial aid assume responsibility for applying for financial assistance, and may find more information here: <https://www.wcu.edu/apply/financial-aid/index.aspx>

Graduate Assistantships in Counseling

A limited number of graduate assistantships (GAs) are available for full-time counseling students, who maintain a 3.0 GPA, through the Department of Human Services. **Graduate assistantships typically require at least one day per week on WCU's main campus in Cullowhee.**

Graduate assistantships are awarded for Fall and Spring annually; assistantships are not available during the semester in which a student is enrolled in internship. There are three general types of graduate assistantships: Teaching-focused; Faculty-focused; and Office-focused.

Graduate Teaching Assistantships. The counseling program is responsible for COUN 140: Skills for College, a one-credit course for first-year WCU undergraduates, and assists with LC 101: Learning Contract, a one-credit course for undergraduates on academic probation. Graduate teaching assistants in counseling are independent instructors for these courses. COUN 140 meets one hour, 1-2 days per week in the Fall semester on the WCU main campus in Cullowhee. LC 101 meets for 1-2 days per week in the Spring semester on the WCU main campus in Cullowhee.

First priority for funds available for Graduate Assistantships will be for the COUN 140/LC 101 teaching positions. Other non-teaching assistantships will be available as additional assistantship funds are allocated to the program. Assistantship contracts must be completed by late April.

ADMISSION DECISIONS AND NOTIFICATION PROCESS

Counseling faculty will review all applications and interviews. Official notification informing applicants of final admission decisions are sent via email from the Graduate School. Final admission decisions for applicants will begin in early March and be completed by late April. Because the WCU counseling program has more qualified applicants than can be admitted into

the program, some applicants will be placed on a wait list for admission for the Fall semester of the same year of application. Persons who receive notice of being placed on the wait list may later receive notice of acceptance. Applicants on the wait list who cannot be admitted due to lack of space in the program, may re-apply for admission in the next year.

Written confirmation of intent to enter the program is required of all persons granted admission to the program. Persons admitted will be notified of their assigned advisor in the admission letter from the Graduate School. If a person accepts admission to the program and plans change prior to beginning coursework, please notify the counseling program director as soon as possible.

To learn more about the WCU Counseling Program, please visit the counseling program website at <http://counseling.wcu.edu>

Contact Information

WCU Counseling Program Director

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