MASTER'S IN PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELING ACCREDITATION COUNCIL (MPCAC)

ACCREDITATION MANUAL
January 1, 2024

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FOREWORD

The Master's in Psychology and Counseling Accreditation Council (MPCAC) Accreditation Manual presents the MPCAC Accreditation Standards. These 2024 standards are the basis for MPCAC accreditation decisions.

SCOPE

MPCAC accredits counseling and psychology master's degree programs, located in regionally accredited colleges and universities in the United States, that educate students in the science-based practice of counseling and psychological services.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the MPCAC is to accredit academic programs that provide science-based education and training in the practice of counseling and psychological services at the master's degree level, using both counseling and psychological principles and theories as they apply to specific populations and settings. Although programs may vary in the specific model of training and professional development utilized, commitment to science-based education is emphasized in the interest of providing services that are culturally responsive and that promote the public good.

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

All programs are evaluated according to the Accreditation Standards specified in sections A-H. These standards are addressed in their entirety by a department's faculty undergoing a self-study in preparation for a site visit. The faculty evaluate the program(s) against each standard. Detailed information on the accreditation process is available in the current *MPCAC Policies and Procedures Manual.*

A. PROGRAM MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

1. The program has a mission statement that guides the structure and content of the curriculum. The mission statement reflects a commitment to practitioners who bring scholarship and reflection to their work, and an understanding of diversity in clientele, methodology, and application.
2. Coherence with the mission statement is reflected in each program's rationale for curriculum and graduation requirements, the epistemological perspective taught, and the systems for self-evaluation and self-improvement within each program.
3. The program has measurable learning objectives that flow from its mission statement. They reflect the current knowledge from lay and professional groups concerning the present and projected psychological and developmental needs of a multicultural society. Further, the objectives reflect consideration of concerns from all persons involved in the conduct of the program including program faculty,

current and former students, and personnel in cooperating agencies. The objectives are directly related to program activities and written so that they are evaluated objectively. Finally, each program's objectives promote continuous improvement that emanates from a scientific base which culminates in the application of psychological and/or counseling practice.

Required Supporting Documentation:
- Program mission statement and program objectives

B. PROGRAM ORIENTATION AND CORE CURRICULUM

1. The program is identifiable as educating counseling and psychological service practitioners, using evidence-based counseling and psychological principles and theories as they apply to specific populations and settings. This is defined primarily through the coursework, field work, and disciplinary affiliations of those who teach in and administer the program.
2. The program is the equivalent of at least two academic years of full-time study and 60 credits (or the equivalent quarter credits), which includes the supervised field placement as described in #3 below.
3. The program includes significant supervised field placement, a *minimum* of 600 hours across at least two semesters with 240 direct client contact hours.
4. The coursework in the program emphasizes the science-based education and training model, which includes the use of current scholarly and research literature to inform practice. The aim is to produce graduates who are scientifically-minded and who remain current in their fields, translating current scholarship and multicultural/diversity knowledge and awareness into practice. The program reflects a commitment to recognizing varying degrees of applicability of such knowledge and skills to specific populations and settings.
5. The program curriculum provides adequate coverage of each of the standards described below, B.5.a. to B.5.j.:

Required Supporting Documentation:
- Curriculum map indicating where each MPCAC standard is addressed
- Methods used to assess competence in each MPCAC standard
- All course syllabi with all required readings and mode of delivery listed
- List or table of actual frequency and modality of course offerings for past two years, including instructor(s).

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a. Ethical and professional standards
  i. *Ethical/Legal Standards, Policy, and Practice*: Demonstrates knowledge and application of ethical concepts, and awareness of legal issues regarding professional activities with individuals, groups, and organizations
      1. Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of relevant ethical/professional codes, standards and guidelines, laws, statutes, rules, and regulations.
      2. Recognizes situations that challenge adherence to professional values and demonstrates the application of an ethical decision-making model by applying it to ethical dilemmas.

3. Demonstrates integration of ethical values in professional conduct.

   ii. *Professional Values and Attitudes*: Exhibits behavior and comportment that reflect the professional values and attitudes of counseling and psychology.
      1. Demonstrates understanding of counseling and psychological practice as an applied behavioral science.
      2. Demonstrates knowledge and awareness of professional identities relevant to counseling and psychology.
      3. Maintains professionally appropriate communication and conduct across different settings.
      4. Demonstrates personal accountability and accepts responsibility for own actions.

   iii. *Understanding and use of supervision during applied experiences*
      1. Demonstrates understanding of the role and practice of supervision.
      2. Demonstrates knowledge of the critical role of reflective practice.
      3. Demonstrates knowledge of the impact of self-care on professional practice.
      4. Responds appropriately to supervision.

b. Evidence-based theories and practice of counseling and psychotherapy
   i. *Knowledge:*
      1. Demonstrates knowledge of individual and group theories of counseling and psychotherapy.
      2. Demonstrates knowledge of theories regarding the impact of trauma on individuals, groups and communities.

   ii. *Skills*
      1. *Relationships*: Relates effectively with individuals, groups, and communities.
         a. Forms and maintains productive and respectful relationships with clients, peers/colleagues, supervisors, and professionals from within and across disciplines.
         b. Negotiates differences and handles conflict satisfactorily.
         c. Provides effective feedback to others, receives feedback non-defensively, and integrates feedback appropriately.
         d. Communicates clearly using verbal, nonverbal, and written skills in a professional context; demonstrates clear understanding and use of professional language.

      2. *Conceptualization and Intervention:* Applies evidence-based intervention and prevention strategies designed to alleviate suffering and to promote health and well-being of individuals, groups, communities, and/or systems.
         a. Formulates and conceptualizes cases.
         b. Plans and implements interventions utilizing at least one

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consistent theoretical orientation.
c. Displays skills in developing the therapeutic alliance.
d. Displays skills in crisis intervention.
e. Evaluates intervention progress and modifies intervention or prevention strategies on the basis of evaluation of clients' or groups' progress and/or client feedback.

c. **Multiculturalism and diversity**

Demonstrates knowledge, self-awareness, and skills in working with individuals, groups, and communities who represent various cultural and personal backgrounds and characteristics (e.g., cultural, individual, and role differences, including those based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status) and context.

i. *Knowledge and Self-Awareness*:

1. Demonstrates knowledge and awareness of self, as shaped by individual and group diverse identities.
2. Demonstrates knowledge and awareness of others, as shaped by individual and group diverse identities.
3. Demonstrates knowledge of the intersection between self and others as shaped by individual and group diverse identities.

ii. *Skills:*

1. Applies knowledge of self as a cultural being in assessment, treatment, consultation, and all other professional interactions.
2. Applies knowledge of others as cultural beings in assessment, treatment, consultation, and all other professional interactions.
3. Applies knowledge of the intersection of self and others as cultural beings in assessment, treatment, consultation, and all other professional interactions.
4. Is able to work effectively with diverse individuals in assessment, treatment, and consultation.

d. **Theories of psychopathology and relevant classification systems**

i. *Knowledge:*

1. Demonstrates knowledge of theories of psychopathology, including but not limited to biological and sociocultural theories.
2. Demonstrates knowledge of classification systems of behavior and limitations of those systems.

ii. *Skills:* Applies concepts of normal/abnormal behavior to case formulation, diagnosis, and treatment planning in the context of stages of human development and diversity.

e. **Methods of evaluation of individuals**

i. *Knowledge:*

1. Demonstrates knowledge of content, reliability and validity, and purposes of assessment measures.

      2. Demonstrates awareness of strengths and limitations (including diversity-related limitations) of administration, scoring, and interpretation of assessment measures.

  ii. *Skills:*

      1. Selects and utilizes appropriate methods of evaluation.
      2. Engages in effective clinical interviewing.
      3. Engages in effective progress monitoring.

f. Research methods

  i. *Knowledge:*

      1. Demonstrates knowledge of scientific methods used by counselors and psychology practitioners in their clinical work.
      2. Demonstrates knowledge of use of scientific methods to add to the knowledge base of counseling and psychology.
      3. Demonstrates knowledge of application of scientific methods to evaluate practices and interventions.
      4. Demonstrates knowledge of program evaluation methods.

  ii. *Skills:* Critiques published research effectively.

g. Career development and/or the role of work in peoples' lives

  i. Demonstrates knowledge of the role of work in peoples' lives.
  ii. Demonstrates understanding of the development of work and career choices across the lifespan.

h. Biological basis of behavior
Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of the relationship between biological factors and human functioning.

i. Developmental basis of behavior
Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of human development, wellness, and learned bases of behavior across the lifespan.

j. Systems basis of behavior

  i. Demonstrates knowledge of individuals in the context of their environment and how the environment (e.g., geographical, ideological, demographic, familial, institutional) affects functioning.
  ii. Demonstrates understanding of the use of systems changes (whether prevention or intervention) to enhance the functioning of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and/or institutions.

C. COUNSELING/CLINICAL INSTRUCTION

1. Counseling/Clinical Skills Training:

Program provides significant experiential practice in skills development courses with faculty feedback. Class size and modality allow for sufficient interaction with the instructor for the level of skill training.

2. Field Placement
    a. The program includes significant supervised experiences, a *minimum* of 600 hours across at least two semesters.
        i. At least 240 of the supervised experiences are direct contact hours.
        ii. Supervisors are appropriately credentialed (commensurate with program goals and relevant state requirements).
        iii. Faculty field placement instructor to student ratio allow for sufficient oversight and therefore is generally about 1:8.
    b. Practicum and internship settings are foremost committed to training, and students' duties are learning focused to allow for development of expected competencies and clinical skills. The program:
        i. Has a process for identifying, approving, monitoring, and managing field placement sites as well as policies for managing any difficulties that occur with sites, supervisors, or students.
        ii. Has written agreements with sites which outline responsibilities and expectations of the institution, site, supervisor, and student.
        iii. Adequately orients supervisors and students to expectations and requirements.
    c. Supervision includes 1 hour minimum per 20 hours of field placement. This may include dyadic or triadic supervision but does not include group supervision.
    d. Evaluation of students completing field placement regularly includes
        i. Direct observation and/or review of audio/video recordings, with feedback
        ii. Supervisor's formal written feedback, provided to the students and the program.
    e. All clinical instruction modalities (e.g., tele-supervision and distance practicum/internship instruction) where client information is shared (i.e., case presentations and audio/video sessions) shall comply with all state and federal laws and regulations relating to confidentiality.

> Required Supporting Documentation:
> - Sample of a written agreement with field placement sites
> - Sample of tracking method of minimum of 600, 240 direct client contact, and supervision hours in field placement
> - Sample of supervisor evaluation methods and/or forms
> - Table of enrollments for field placement course sections from the past three years

D. THE INSTITUTION

1. The current institutional catalog or bulletin accurately describes the program, including the modality of delivery, admission criteria, minimum program requirements, and matriculation requirements (e.g., examinations, academic-standing policies, and financial policies).
2. The program for which accreditation is sought is clearly identified as part of the institution's

graduate program and have a minimum of four (4) graduates within the prior two years.

3. The institution provides a budget sufficient to ensure the operation of the program, including sufficient equipment, materials, etc. The institution also provides encouragement and support for program faculty to participate in professional organizations and activities (e.g., professional travel, research, and offices held).

4. Library, training, and computer facilities and their resources are appropriate for scholarly inquiry, study, and research by program faculty and students.

5. Research support, stipend levels, and departmental support are adequate for program faculty and students.

6. Evidence exists of cooperative relationships between the program and other institutional academic units and off-campus professional and community resources that contribute to the professional preparation of students in the program.

> Required Supporting Documentation:
> - An organizational chart for the institution, showing the program's position within that structure.
> - Name and title of all individuals in the organizational chart, including program director
> - Links to relevant materials, including the program website, catalog, student handbooks, etc.
> - List of cooperative relationships and collaborations such as a list of off-site supervisors

E. FACULTY AND STAFF

1. Program Core Faculty are full-time and/or have a multiyear academic appointment with significant and identifiable responsibilities devoted to program-related activities and functioning. Core faculty are individuals whose education, training and experience are consistent with the program mission.

2. In addition to the core faculty, all others involved with the program are considered contributing faculty. The program orients and provides oversight of courses taught by contributing faculty to ensure faculty effectiveness in meeting program objectives and accreditation standards.

3. The teaching loads of program faculty are consistent with the goals and objectives of the program and are an integral part of professional preparation, and incorporate allocated time for advisement, supervision of student research, professional research, and, if applicable, administrative responsibilities.

4. Programs are committed to, and demonstrate evidence of diversity, equity and inclusion in relationship to the recruitment and retention of faculty and staff.

5. All faculty are assigned to provide classroom, research, clinical instruction and supervision only in areas for which they have demonstrated competence and recognized credentials as well as in course delivery modalities for which they have been adequately prepared.

6. The program has a sufficient number of appropriately trained faculty to accommodate the labor-intensive nature of teaching the skills of applied psychology and counseling. The total number of course credits taught by other contributing faculty may not exceed the total number of course credits taught by core faculty over any two-year period.

7. One faculty member is clearly designated as the program director, is responsible for the coordination of the entire program, and is the one to whom inquiries regarding the program

are addressed. The program director is a core faculty member and has sufficient time to manage the needs of the program. There is administration of the program year-round.

8. The program has an identified field placement coordinator who is responsible for the oversight and management of all field placement experiences and inquiries.

9. During the previous three-year period, the core faculty engaged in activities for professional development/renewal (e.g., attended appropriate program area meetings, conventions, workshops, and seminars), as well as research (e.g., publications and grants), and/or service (e.g., program presentations, workshops, consultations, speeches, and direct services).

10. Each program has appropriate administrative and other support staff to address the needs and objectives of the program.

Required Supporting Documentation:
- A list of core faculty, their FTE, percentage of time contributed to the program, teaching loads, any course releases and their vitae
- A list of contributing faculty teaching in the program over the last two years, courses they regularly teach, and their vitae
- Table of course credits taught by core and contributing faculty over the past two years
- Link to the statement regarding the program's concerns for diversity among its core and contributing faculty and its staff, including a description of that diversity
- A list of administrative support staff for the program
- Descriptions of faculty development activities (with examples) over the previous three years

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F. PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

1. The program and its curriculum have a coherent organization and structure that reflects its mission statement. If the program has multiple program locations, they are identical in curriculum and syllabi/admissions and graduation requirements, have a single administrative entity or in a partnership or consortium among separate administrative entities (with a formal agreement to pool resources), and allow students to take courses at any location; as such, a program with multiple locations is considered a single program.

2. Policies and practices within the program are developed and implemented by program faculty and recognize the role of the institution in setting institutional priorities to ensuring that the program fits appropriately within the institutional structure and operating policies.

3. Entrance requirements reflect the responsibility that the program has to the public. Admitted students demonstrate a level of preparedness deemed appropriate for the program's mission and objectives.

4. The program admissions criteria and selection procedures into the program are available for prospective students. The criteria and procedures include consideration of the goals and objectives commensurate with each individual program.

5. Programs are committed to, and demonstrate evidence of, diversity, equity and inclusion in relationship to the recruitment and retention of students who are representative of the diversity among people in society.

6. Published, planned program of studies, plus appropriate supplemental materials (e.g., institutional catalogues or bulletins and student handbooks) are accurate and available for use by prospective students, students, and program faculty advisors. The planned programs identify prerequisite curricular experiences, core curriculum requirements, research studies requirements, specialized studies requirements, supervised practicum and internship

requirements (if applicable), and appropriate elective curricular experience.

7. Available information includes a formal, written student retention policy, explaining procedures for possible student remediation and/or dismissal from the program for other than academic (i.e., grade point average) reasons, personal and professional expectations held by program faculty for students enrolled in the program, information about professional organizations, involvement, activities potentially appropriate to students in the program, and written program objectives.
8. All students have an approved faculty advisor at all times. Faculty advisors hold an appointment recognized by the institution in the institutional academic unit in which the program is housed.
9. Students have the opportunity to participate in workshops, seminars, or similar professional activities that enhance program requirements and facilitate students' personal and professional development (e.g., attendance at regional meetings, webinars, outside speakers, etc.).
10. Where assistantships are provided for students in the program, the program faculty clearly define the policies for selection, assignment, and continued employment of program students who receive graduate and/or other assistantships.

Required Supporting Documentation:
- Copies of all materials which describe the program's mission and objectives, requirements for admission, for graduation, etc., and are available to prospective and/or enrolled students
- Table of admissions data, including number of applications, offers, and matriculated students for past 5 years
- Table of retention/graduation rates for the previous five (5) years (or less if fewer than 5 years of graduating classes)
- The names of bachelor's degree-granting institutions, the individual bachelor's level GPA, all requisite test scores for matriculated students over the last three years
- Link to the statement regarding the program's concern for diversity among students, including efforts to recruit students who reflect the diversity of the population, descriptions of diversity among students, and diversity statements in program materials
- List of remediation actions in the past five years with the outcomes

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G. EVALUATIONS IN THE PROGRAM

1. Outcome evaluation is conducted in reference to each individual program's learning objectives. Program learning objectives are reviewed and/or revised on a regularly scheduled basis considering empirically-based developments in the field with input from program faculty, current and former students, and personnel in cooperating agencies. Results from outcome evaluations are used to determine needed program modifications.
2. Continuing evaluation of the program and its outcome follows a formal procedure that includes regularly scheduled review by program faculty of program emphases, curricular offerings, advising, and admissions processes. Evaluation also includes feedback from current students, graduates of the program, contributing faculty, field placement supervisors, and personnel in cooperating and associated agencies regarding the assessment of the program.

3. The results of program evaluations are made available on a systematic basis to students currently enrolled in the program, core and contributing faculty, institutional administrators and personnel in cooperating and associated agencies.
4. The program has documented policies and procedures and provide evidence of annual reviews of student academic and professional performance, assessment of students' skills development, and progress in the program with clearly described procedures for written feedback to each student, and appeal processes.
5. Students will have demonstrated competence in the practice of counseling and psychology upon completion of the program. Programs clearly explain how the following competencies are measured and provide data regarding student performance from the last three years.
   - Communication and therapeutic relationship-building
   - Conceptualization and intervention
   - Diversity
   - Ethics
   - Integration of research and evidence-based practice
   - Methods of evaluation and assessment

> Required Supporting Documentation:
> - Evidence of input from relevant constituent groups about the development or changes to program's mission or objectives
> - Results of ongoing evaluations of program objectives
> - Results of data collected from all relevant stakeholders
> - Sample of form and/or feedback used for annual student evaluations
> - Table of five years of graduate outcome data, including licensure data

H. COMMUNICATION AND RECORD KEEPING

1. Programs post annual admissions, retention, graduation and program outcome data on the program website. (Forms and details available in *MPCAC Policies and Procedures Manual*).
2. Accredited programs are responsible for maintaining continued compliance with all standards and policies and procedures.
3. The program notifies the accrediting body in a timely manner of any potential or actual changes that impact the program (e.g., faculty or administration, institutional environment, resources, or operations). Change of program director is reported within 30 days of the change.
4. A statement regarding the status of MPCAC accreditation is on the program's website homepage.

> Required Supporting Documentation:
> - Links to website and program data

GLOSSARY

Contributing Faculty: Those who teach in the program but are not formally involved in the decision-making or advising aspects of the program.

Core Faculty: Defined for the purposes of MPCAC to ensure stability for the program, faculty are full time and/or have multi-year contracts who teach in the program, advise students, and participate in the decision-making aspects of the program. Core faculty are individuals whose education, training and experience are consistent with the program mission. Core faculty may or may not have defined faculty status at their institutions; they may have staff appointments.

Counseling and Psychological Services: Providing counseling and psychological services involves using science-based principles of psychology and counseling to establish effective and culturally responsive helping relationships. Providers of counseling and psychological services are skilled in the application of assessment and interventions to facilitate behavioral change and enhance functioning.

Culturally Responsive: Emphasis on the application of theories and scientific principles that are relevant and pertinent of specific populations and/or specific socio-cultural contexts, where the uniqueness of each individual is accounted for, and each person's well-being is maximized.

Direct Contact: Therapeutic interaction with actual clients, which may occur in single therapist or co-therapist contexts. Audio and video interactions are permitted and are generally expected to at least 15 minutes in length.

Evidence-Based: "The integration of the best available research with clinical expertise in the context of patient characteristics, culture, and preferences" (APA, 2005).

Faculty Supervisor to Student Ratio: This ratio is to computed based on the number of students who are under a faculty member's direct supervision in either an individual or group format. Thus, the number of faculty in the ratio will generally1 and the number of students will the number under that individual's direct supervision. It is **not** to calculated based on the total number of program faculty compared with total number of program students.

Public Good: The public good means "in the best interest of the people" and is demonstrated by the exhibition of professional ethics and a social justice perspective.

Science-Based: The systematic understanding and application of scientific theory, empirical research, and general scientific principles through observation and experiment (e.g., objective thinking, repeated assessment for progress monitoring, delivering intervention sequentially). It includes understanding the clinical applications of research; research methodology; techniques of data collection and analysis; biological and cognitive-affective bases of behavior; development across the lifespan; and respect for scientifically derived knowledge.

Science-Based Model: The use of current scholarly and research literature to inform practice, which includes the ability to objectively critique the quality of published materials, to identify valid research conclusions, and to apply such scholarship to clinical work.

Skills Training Courses: Provide direct experiences in the development of counseling skills in classroom settings with student peers or relevant others, and with direct observation and feedback provided by supervising faculty.

Social Justice: "The promotion of equity for all people and groups for the purpose of ending oppression and injustice affecting clients, students, counselors, families, communities, schools, workplaces, governments, and other social and institutional systems" (American Counseling Association, 2014).

Supervised Experience: Therapeutic-related professional work conducted under the oversight of a professional supervisor. Experience may include observation, case conferences, documentation, and other activities directly related to the provision of counseling and psychological services.