



COUNSELING PROGRAM

**Clinical Mental
Health Counseling (CMHC)
Student Handbook**

2025 – 2026

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Welcome from your faculty!

We are delighted you have chosen NWC CMHC program. Please know we are here for you and desire to help you grow as a counselor-in-training.

We ask that you take the time to read this handbook as it contains a plethora of information that will help you be successful in this program. Even though we are an online program, we want to get to know you personally. Please reach out to us with any questions or worries.

We look forward to getting to know you,

The CMHC Faculty

All CMHC students are expected to read, follow, and stay current with the policies and procedures of the Graduate and Professional Studies Program (GPSP) which are included in the Graduate Catalog, as well as the information included in this handbook, and any other Counseling Program handbooks and publications.

Northwestern College reserves the right to change any policies, procedures, and provisions at any time without prior or other notice to any person or entity. Changes will be shared through the College's communication channels.

New Student Orientation (NSO) (CACREP 1.K)

CMHC students are required to participate in the New Student Orientation (NSO).

This is the program's formal opportunity to

- discuss the Student Handbook
- discuss student's ethical and professional obligations
- discuss personal growth as counselors-in-training
- review eligibility and requirements for licensure

The NSO is emailed to you two weeks prior to classes beginning. You will watch the recording then sign the Attestation Form that you completed viewing the NSO. **The form is due seven days prior to class beginning. Failure to watch the NSO and/or return the Attestation Form may result in you being delayed in starting your classes.**

Academic Advising and Enrollment Counselors (CACREP 1.P)

Northwestern's enrollment counselors first serve as prospective students' guides in the application process and then continue serving as students' academic advisors as they progress through their programs. Enrollment counselors serve as a contact point and advocate as students complete their program of study and act as a liaison between the student and offices on campus. They can assist students with planning their degree programs, completing various forms, and understanding academic and program policies and procedures. Enrollment counselors are available to meet with students throughout students' degree programs.

While enrollment counselors are available to assist students with their degree planning, it is ultimately each student's responsibility to understand and to meet the requirements for their chosen degree according to the catalog of the year they enrolled, and for meeting the licensure requirements of the state in which they live.

CMHC assigned enrollment counselor: Rachel Van Roekel - rachel.vanroekel@nwciova.edu

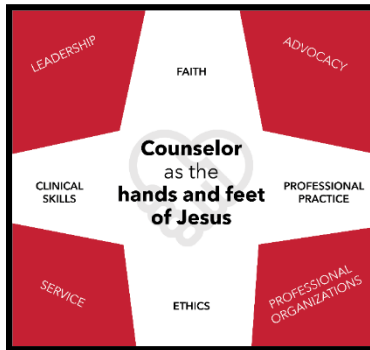
Formal Plan for Evaluation of Academic Advising (CACREP 1.Q)

Students have the opportunity to provide feedback regarding their experiences with academic advisors when they complete the graduate survey. This survey is sent to all graduating students six months after graduation. This survey allows students to share feedback regarding both their experience with and their ability to access academic advisors.

Questions:

1. Please rate your experience with your academic advisor.
 - a. Likert Scale 1-5
2. Please rate your ability to access your academic advisor.
 - a. Likert Scale 1-5
3. Please share any improvements you think would be helpful in academic advising.

Counseling Program Mission Statement (CACREP 1.M.1)



The Model: Counselor as the Hands and Feet of Jesus

Counseling Program Mission Statement: The Counseling Program at Northwestern College is a Christ-centered community dedicated to the development of outstanding counselors who are called to serve both Christ and in diverse, multicultural, and global society with marginalized populations. Students integrate a biblical perspective with culturally sensitive and ethical clinical skills so they can courageously and faithfully provide compassionate care in pursuing God's work of restoration and healing in the world.

Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program Learning Objectives (CACREP 1.M.1)

- PLO 1.** Professional Counseling Students acquire proficient knowledge, skills, and dispositions in Clinical Mental Health Counseling demonstrating preparedness to enter the field.
- a) CACREP 3.A.10.: *Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice*: Professional Counseling Students understand ethical standards of professional counseling organizations and credentialing bodies, and applications of ethical and legal considerations in professional counseling across service delivery modalities and specialized practice areas.
 - b) CACREP 3.B.2.: *Social and Cultural Identities and Experiences*: Professional Counseling Students appraise the influence of heritage, cultural identities, attitudes, values, beliefs, understandings, within-group differences, and acculturative experiences on individuals' worldviews.
 - c) CACREP 3.C.10.: *Lifespan Development*: Professional Counseling Students integrate an understanding of biological, neurological, and physiological factors that affect lifespan development, functioning, behavior, resilience, and overall wellness.
 - d) CACREP 3.D.2.: *Career Development*: Professional Counseling Students determine approaches for conceptualizing the interrelationships among and between work, socioeconomic standing, wellness, disability, trauma, relationships, and other life roles and factors.
 - e) CACREP 3.E.9.: *Counseling Practice and Relationships*: Professional Counseling Students employ interviewing, attending, and listening skills in the counseling process.
 - f) CACREP 3.F.4.: *Group Counseling and Group Work*: Professional Counseling Students demonstrate characteristics and functions of effective group leaders.
 - g) CACREP 3.G.8.: *Assessment and Diagnostic Processes*: Professional Counseling Students utilize assessments relevant to academic/educational, career, personal, and social development.
 - h) CACREP 3.H.7.: *Research and Program Evaluation*: Professional Counseling Students assess research methods and procedures to evaluate counseling interventions.

- i) CACREP 5.C.4.: *Clinical Mental Health Counseling*: Professional Counseling Students evaluate etiology, nomenclature, diagnosis, treatment, referral, and prevention of mental, behavioral, and neurodevelopmental disorders.
- SLO 2.** CACREP 2.C.1.a.-e., 2.a.-c., 3. Professional Counseling Students are able to proficiently practice the required professional dispositions to become effective counselors.
- SLO 3.** CACREP 3.B.11.: Professional Counseling Students acquire the ability to understand the role of religion and spirituality in client's' and counselors' psychological functioning.
- SLO 4.** CACREP 2.F.1., 2., 3. 4.: The CMHC Program engages with community partners to solicit and utilize feedback to continually improve the program.

Table 1. How and When Data Will Be Collected (CACREP 2.C)

Data Collected	When Data is Collected	Procedure for Collecting Data	Where Data is Kept
KPI Assignments	During specified course	Rubrics in BB, Program Director and GPS Curriculum Instructor “mine” data	Data stored in BB and in Departmental One Drive
CPCE Scores (Content Score; All students)	Each semester CPCE taken	CPCE website via secure login, Program Director collects	Program Director; CPCE database
Formal Assessment: Competency Review utilizing the PCPE	<i>(Professional Skills & Dispositions Section)</i> COUN 505 Professional Orientation <i>(All Sections)</i> COUN 605 Pre-Practicum CMHC 610 Practicum CMHC 615 Internship I	Completed at faculty meetings	Confidential Student Files
Supervisor Evaluation of Students	Midterm and end of all practicum and internships	CCS-R sent to Supervisor via Tevera; available to supervisor, faculty, and Clinical Coordinator; Clinical Coordinator creates report	In Tevera
Student Evaluations of Supervisors	Midterm and end of all practicum and internships	Eval available to students in Tevera, available to supervisor, faculty, and Clinical Coordinator; Clinical Coordinator creates report	In Tevera

Survey of Graduates	6 months after graduation then annually	Survey emailed, completed via Qualtrics	In Qualtrics, and with Program Director
Survey of Employers	Annually	Survey emailed, completed via Qualtrics	In Qualtrics, and with Program Director

Table 2. Standard: Introduced (I), Reinforced (R), Assessed (A)

Course	PLO 1									PLO 2	PLO 3	PLO 4
	a.	b.	c.	d.	e.	f.	g.	h.	i.			
COUN 505 – Prof. Orientation												
COUN 550 – Classic Theories of Counseling											I	
COUN 515 – Ethics	I											
COUN 551 – Contemporary Theories of Counseling				I								
CMHC 520 – Diagnosis & Psychopathology		I										
COUN 525 – Counseling Across the Lifespan			I									
COUN 520 – Social & Cultural		R										
COUN 585 – Research & Program Eval								I				
COUN 605 – Pre-Practicum					I					I		
COUN 530 – Group Counseling & Group Work						I					R	
CMHC 570 – Foundation of Addictions Counseling	R											
COUN 555 – Crisis, Trauma, & Suicide												
COUN 610 – Practicum									I			I
COUN 510 – Assessment & Appraisal							I	R				
CMHC 575 – Psychopharm & Neuroscience			R									
COUN 580 – Career Development and Counseling				R			R				A	
COUN 615 – Internship I					R				R			R
COUN 635 - Capstone												
COUN 620 – Internship II	A				A				A	R		
CMHC 515 – Intro to Family												
Post-Grad (NCE, CPCE, Survey)		A	A	A		A	A	A		A		A

Table 3. Key Performance Indicator Assignments

PLO	Course	CACREP Standard	Introduced Reinforced Assessed	KPI
1.a	COUN 515 Ethics	3.A.10	I	Values & Ethics When Dealing with Difficult Situations Research Paper (I)
1.a	CMHC 570 Addictions	3.A.10	R	Addiction Podcast Series Episode #3 Group Project (R)
1.a	CMHC 620 Internship II	3.A.10	A	End of semester paperwork – CCS-R (Site Supervisor) (A)

1.b	CMHC 520 Diagnostic Processes	3.B.3	I	Diversity in Mental Illness Group Presentation (I)
1.b	COUN 520 Social & Cultural Experiences	3.B.3	R	Culture Immersion Experience Paper (R)
1.b	CPCE	3.B.3	A	CPCE Social & Cultural Diversity subscale (A)
1.c	COUN 525 Counseling Across the Lifespan	3.C.10	I	Theory Meets Therapy Project (I)
1.c	CMHC 575 Psychopharmacology & Neuroscience	3.C.10	R	Case Study # 3 Theresa & Paper (R)
1.c	CPCE	3.C.10	A	CPCE Human Growth & Development Subscale (A)
1.d	COUN 551 Contemporary Theories of Counseling	3.D.2	I	Group Project: Determine Approaches Presentation (I)
1.d	COUN 580 Career Development & Counseling	3.D.2	R	Career Development Program Presentation (R)
1.d	CPCE	3.D.2	A	CPCE Career Development Subscale
1.e	COUN 605 Pre- Practicum	3.E.9	I	Recording 6: Session 6 + paperwork (I)
1.e	CMHC 615 Internship I: Midterm Paperwork – CCS-R (Site Supervisor) (R)	3.E.9	R	CMHC 615 Internship I: Midterm Paperwork – CCS-R (Site Supervisor) (R)
1.e	CMHC 620 Internship II: End of Semester Paperwork – CCS-R (Site Supervisor) (A)	3.E.9	A	CMHC 620 Internship II: End of Semester Paperwork – CCS-R (Site Supervisor) (A)
1.f	COUN 530 Group Counseling and Group Work	3.F.4	I	Buechner Process Group Reflection Paper #1 (I)
1.f	CMHC 615 Internship I	3.F.4	R	Case Conceptualization (R)
1.f	CPCE	3.F.4	A	CPCE Group Work subscale (A)

1.g	COUN 510 Assessment and Diagnostic Processes:	3.G.8	I	Case Study Report (I)
1.g	COUN 580 Career Development & Counseling	3.G.8	R	Career Assessment Paper (A)
1.g	CPCE	3.G.8	A	CPCE Assessment and Diagnostic Processes Subscale (A)
1.h	COUN 585 Research & Program Evaluation	3.H.7	I	Program Evaluation Paper (I)
1.h	COUN 510 Assessment & Appraisal	3.H.7	R	Assessments Project Presentation (R)
1.h	CPCE	3.H.7	A	Research & Program Evaluation Subscale (A)
1.i	CMHC 610 Practicum	5.C.4	I	Case Conceptualization Presentation (I)
1.i	CMHC 615 Internship I	5.C.4	R	Case Conceptualization Presentation (R)
1.i	CMHC 620 Internship II	5.C.4	A	Case Conceptualization Presentation (A)
2	COUN 605 Pre- Practicum	2.C	I	Recording 5: Session 5 + paperwork- CCS-R (I)
2	CMHC 620 Internship II	2.C	R	End of Semester Paperwork – CCS-R (Site Supervisor) (R)
2	NA	2.C	A	Post-graduation survey/advisory board data (A)
3	COUN 550 Classic Theories of Counseling	3.B.11	I	Personal Model of Counseling Paper and Video (I)
3	COUN 530 Group Counseling and Group Work	3.B.11	R	Group Process & Spiritual Integration Paper (R)
3	COUN 580 Career Development & Counseling	3.B.11	A	Career Counseling & Spiritual Integration Paper (A)
4	CMHC 610 Practicum	2.F.1., 2., 3., 4.	I	Consultation between Faculty Supervisor and Site Supervisor (I)

4	CMHC COUN 615 Internship I		R	Consultation between Faculty Supervisor and Site Supervisor (R)
4			A	Alumni & Employer Survey (A)

Table 5. Counseling Dispositions

Disposition	When Assessed	How	Benchmark
Professional Ethics	Group Work, Professional Practice Courses	CCS-R	80% of students score 44/55 on Part 2. Counseling Dispositions & Behaviors of the CCS-R
Professional Behavior	Group Work, Professional Practice Courses	CCS-R	80% of students score 44/55 on Part 2. Counseling Dispositions & Behaviors of the CCS-R
Professional & Personal Boundaries	Group Work, Professional Practice Courses	CCS-R	80% of students score 44/55 on Part 2. Counseling Dispositions & Behaviors of the CCS-R
Adherence to Site & Course Policies	Group Work, Professional Practice Courses	CCS-R	80% of students score 44/55 on Part 2. Counseling Dispositions & Behaviors of the CCS-R
Record Keeping & Task Completion	Group Work, Professional Practice Courses	CCS-R	80% of students score 44/55 on Part 2. Counseling Dispositions & Behaviors of the CCS-R
Multicultural Competence	Group Work, Professional Practice Courses	CCS-R	80% of students score 44/55 on Part 2. Counseling Dispositions & Behaviors of the CCS-R
Emotional Stability & Self-Control	Group Work, Professional Practice Courses	CCS-R	80% of students score 44/55 on Part 2. Counseling Dispositions & Behaviors of the CCS-R

Motivated to Learn & Grow	Group Work, Professional Practice Courses	CCS-R	80% of students score 44/55 on Part 2. Counseling Dispositions & Behaviors of the CCS-R
Openness to Feedback	Group Work, Professional Practice Courses	CCS-R	80% of students score 44/55 on Part 2. Counseling Dispositions & Behaviors of the CCS-R
Flexibility & Adaptability	Group Work, Professional Practice Courses	CCS-R	80% of students score 44/55 on Part 2. Counseling Dispositions & Behaviors of the CCS-R
Congruence & Genuineness	Group Work, Professional Practice Courses	CCS-R	80% of students score 44/55 on Part 2. Counseling Dispositions & Behaviors of the CCS-R

Please see sections:

Student Assessment Procedures (CACREP 1.M.5) and **Student Retention and Remediation** (CACREP 1.M.7) to understand how KPI's and dispositions tie in

Degree Requirements (CACREP 1.M.2)

The Clinical Mental Health Counseling program is designed in a cohort model and is based on students taking one or two classes per session. This allows students to complete the full graduate degree program in seven semesters, but it is a fast pace. Students who need a slower pace should work with their enrollment counselor on their options. Because the program is designed in a cohort model, classes are not offered every semester and at times, courses are only offered one time per year.

First Semester

Session 1:

COUN 505 – Professional Orientation (3 credit hours)

Session 2:

COUN 515 – Ethics (3 credit hours)

COUN 525 – Human Growth & Development (3 credit hours)

Second Semester

Session 1:

COUN 550 – Theories & Skills of Counseling I (3 credit hours)

Session 2:

COUN 520 – Social & Cultural Foundations (3 credit hours)

COUN 530 – Group Counseling & Group Work (3 credit hours)

Third Semester

Session 1:

COUN 551 – Theories & Skills of Counseling II (3 credit hours)

CMHC 520 – Diagnosis & Psychopathology (3 credit hours)

Session 2:

COUN 510 – Assessment & Appraisal (3 credit hours)

CMHC 520 – Diagnosis & Psychopathology (continued)

Fourth Semester

Session 1:

COUN 555 – Crisis, Trauma, & Suicide (3 credit hours)

Session 2:

COUN 580 – Career Development (3 credit hours)

COUN 605 – Skills II (3 credit hours)

Fifth Semester

Session 1:

CMHC 515 – Marriage & Family (3 credit hours)

CMHC 610 – Practicum (3 credit hours)

Session 2:

COUN 585 – Research & Program Evaluation (3 credit hours)

CMHC 610 – Practicum (continued)

Sixth Semester

Session 1:

CMHC 575 – Psychopharmacology & Neuroscience (3 credit hours)

CMHC 615 – Internship I (3 credit hours)

Session 2:

CMHC 570 – Foundations of Addictions Counseling (3 credit hours)

CMHC 615 – Internship I (continued)

Seventh Semester

Session 1:

COUN 635 – Capstone (3 credit hours)

CMHC 620 – Internship II (3 credit hours)

Session 2:

CMHC 620 – Internship II (continued)

*****Note: Course Rotation being revised during the writing of the CACREP Self-Study*****

Program Cost and Financial Aid Information (CACREP 1.B.7; 1.B.8)

Program Cost

Detailed program cost can be found here: [Program Cost](#)

Financial Aid

Continuing your education is more than a time investment. Below are a few resources that may help you finance your master's degree with Northwestern College.

FAFSA

Students may be eligible for federal and/or state financial aid. To determine your eligibility, you must:

- Complete the [FAFSA](#). with Northwestern's institutional code: 001883.
- After acceptance into your program, Northwestern's financial aid office will assist you with processing student loan documents.

Alumni Grant - Counseling Program

The Alumni Grant is available to Northwestern College alumni who completed either their undergraduate or a graduate degree through Northwestern. Alumni wishing to pursue their Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling degree online at NWC can apply a tuition discount of 50% for their first course.

Military benefits

If you're a veteran or active in the military, you're welcome at Northwestern and we're grateful for your service. Northwestern College participates in the Yellow Ribbon Program. Contact the [registrar's office](#) to learn more about your GI Bill ® benefits.

Payment plans

You can sign up for our convenient monthly payment plan that spreads payments over the academic year. If you are using the payment plan to pay your bill for the fall and spring semesters, the totals will be divided into five payments. The summer semester total will be divided into two payments.

The monthly payment plan is an automatic withdrawal and includes a \$25/semester administration fee. No interest is charged unless a payment is late. You may cancel your payment plan schedule at any time simply by paying the balance on your account.

If payment is not made on the date it's due, the entire balance becomes due and interest of 1% per month (12% per year) will be charged to the student's account. Students who fail to make payment may be denied access to classes (face-to-face and online), Blackboard, computer usage and campus facilities. Diplomas, transcripts and credentials will be withheld until all accounts are settled.

More information and the application for the monthly payment plan is available through [MyNWC](#).

Expectations of Students (CACREP 1.M.3)

Professional Counselor Identity (CACREP 1.L)

CMHC students are expected to develop their professional counselor identity by joining a professional counselor organization and by providing verification of their membership in their first semester of the program. Beyond joining a professional counseling association, it is required for students to be actively engaged with the organization and profession. This means students will:

- work with professors to submit proposals to present,

- volunteer to help with conferences,
- serve on leadership boards, and
- seek out ways to engage.

Professional Organizations (CACREP 1.M.11)

Many professional organizations offer reduced membership rates to students and benefits such as:

- free student liability insurance
- professional publications
- reduced registration fees for conferences
- eligibility for member services
- legislative advocacy
- interaction with other professionals
- [American Counseling Association \(ACA\)](#)
- [American Mental Health Counselors Association \(AMHCA\)](#)
- [American Association of Christian Counselors \(AACC\)](#)
- State level branches

Professional Growth Expectations (CACREP 1.K.3)

As a new student entering a CACREP-aligned counselor training program, your personal growth expectations should focus on developing a strong foundation in ethical practice, comprehensive understanding of human development across diverse populations, proficient counseling skills, and a commitment to self-reflection and continuous learning, all while adhering to the high standards set by CACREP.

Key areas of personal growth:

Professional Identity Development:

- Deepening your understanding of the counseling profession's ethical principles and codes.
- Cultivating a professional demeanor and appropriate boundaries with clients.
- Reflecting on your personal values and how they may impact your counseling practice.

Theoretical Knowledge:

- Gaining a comprehensive understanding of major counseling theories and their applications to various client populations.
- Learning to integrate different theoretical perspectives to create a tailored approach for each client.

Counseling Skills Development:

- Mastering core counseling skills such as active listening, empathy, reflection, confrontation, and summarization.
- Practicing case conceptualization and treatment planning for diverse client concerns.
- Developing proficiency in conducting intake interviews, assessments, and termination sessions.

Diversity and Social Justice Awareness:

- Examining your own biases and cultural identity to provide culturally sensitive counseling.
- Understanding the unique challenges faced by clients from diverse backgrounds, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and ability.
- Integrating social justice principles into your counseling practice.

Clinical Experience and Supervision:

- Gaining supervised practical experience in a variety of counseling settings, working with diverse clients.
- Developing your ability to effectively utilize clinical supervision to enhance your counseling skills and address challenges.

Self-Awareness and Personal Growth:

- Engaging in regular self-reflection to identify personal strengths and areas for improvement as a counselor.
- Utilizing personal therapy or other self-care practices to maintain emotional well-being and professional effectiveness.

Important Considerations:

Active Engagement:

- Actively participate in class discussions, role-plays, and group activities to maximize learning.

Feedback Seeking:

- Be open to receiving constructive feedback from instructors, peers, and supervisors to identify areas for growth.

Ethical Decision Making:

- Always prioritize ethical practice and seek guidance when faced with complex ethical dilemmas.

Professional Standards (CACREP 1.K.2)

ACA ethical code A.4.b requires counselors to be aware of and to avoid imposing their own personal values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors on their clients, especially when the counselor’s values are inconsistent with the client’s goals or are discriminatory in nature. The goal of the CMHC program is to produce counselors who manifest the love and compassion of Jesus Christ and who serve as His hands and feet in ministering to the hurting and those in need of healing.

All persons participating in courses that utilize live or recorded role plays or practice sessions with students, live or recorded counseling sessions with clients, online individual or group supervision, and live or threaded discussions, are required to maintain confidentiality and to protect the identities of all parties involved. Code F.5.a of the ACA Code of Ethics establishes that both students and supervisees have the same obligation to follow the code of ethics as do professional counselors.

Non-Discriminatory Counseling Practices

Students engage in non-discriminatory counseling practices. Non-discriminatory counseling practices are defined by the ACA and code of ethics in sections C.5 and A.1. Students also

practice in accordance with sections ACA: A.2.c, A.4.a, A.4.b, B.1.a; and other sections pertaining to treating all clients in their diverse presentations with sensitivity and respect.

Individual Counseling Sessions

You are required to complete a minimum of five (5) individual counseling sessions which begin in COUN 550 Theories of Counseling and need to be completed no later than your second semester in the program.

- To be an effective counselor, you must explore life experiences and family history that have shaped you
- Experiencing counseling as a client helps you empathize with future clients
- Do not tell the counselor you're a student, this is a requirement because telling them this will spoil the impact of the counseling experience
- The content of the sessions is confidential
- You are required to submit the Individual Counseling Verification Form (found in the Appendices of this document) via Tevera during the second semester in the program
- The provider of the sessions must be a licensed mental health professional

Tevera

The Northwestern Counseling Program utilizes Tevera for tracking of Practicum and Internship site hours, approvals, reporting, documentation related to professional practice site placements, utilization of the Counselor Competencies Scale – Revised (CCS-R), and posting and review of recorded client and practice videos. The Tevera program simplifies the Practicum/Internship site placement process and allows the sites generated by one cohort to benefit subsequent cohorts. Tevera allows students to maintain access to the site for life, giving students (and alumni) access to important documentation from their graduate program which may be needed for licensure, and to utilize the site for tracking of post-graduate supervised experience which must be reported in most states for licensure requirements.

Students pay a one-time fee for lifetime access to Tevera which includes the hours and documentation tracking services, the CCS-R licensing fee, and the video uploading capabilities.

Professional Practice Experience

The 2024 CACREP Standards define *Professional Practice* as "...the application of theory and the development of counseling skills under supervision. These experiences will provide opportunities for students to counsel clients who represent the ethnic and demographic diversity of their community." You will receive complete information on Professional Practice during the Professional Practice Orientation that will occur in a few semesters.

It is best to begin looking for a site for professional practice once you begin your program. It may take a bit to find a placement. So, allow plenty of time. Your faculty are here to help you. Please contact them.

Policy on Environment for Synchronous Class Meetings

Much of what occurs in a counseling class is highly confidential. When you're attending class, you need to make sure the following conditions are met:

- **Your camera must be on at all times during class**
- Be in a quiet area
- Make sure no family or friends can hear or see the class
- Make sure you're in a confidential area, not a public place
- Know what to do if any materials trigger you
- It is highly recommended for you to use a headset
- You are responsible for knowing the profession's code of ethics

Maintaining Privacy and Confidentiality of All Protected Health Information of Clients (CACREP 1.X)

Students must carefully follow the guidelines of their site placement, NWC CMHC Program, state, federal and international privacy requirements regarding protected health information of clients. The program has built policies pertaining based on:

- NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology) Guidelines: Utilizing NIST cybersecurity frameworks to implement appropriate technical safeguards for data storage and transmission.
- Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA): Complying with regulations regarding interception of electronic communications when recording client interactions.

Our program adheres to Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations by implementing strict access controls to client records, using HIPAA-compliant data storage systems, and only disclosing client information with appropriate authorization.

Students are responsible for knowing State Privacy Laws: Adhering to specific state regulations regarding client confidentiality, particularly in areas like mental health practice.

Students are responsible for knowing the state's Professional Licensing Standards: Following ethical guidelines set by relevant professional associations regarding supervision practices, recording client sessions, and data retention.

To assure our program stays current with regulations the following procedures are followed:
Regular Review: Regularly update policies and procedures to reflect changes in relevant laws and best practices.

Training: Ensure all staff involved in data handling are adequately trained on privacy and security protocols.

Incident Response Plan: [NWC Incident Management Policy](#)

If you have questions or concerns about this policy, please contact your faculty supervisor

Technology Requirements and Competencies (CACREP 1.M.4)

The Clinical Mental Health Counseling program is online and coursework includes both semi-asynchronous and synchronous courses with all assignments completed online. All students must meet the minimum technology requirements discussed here to be successful in the program.

Students' ability to be successful in the program is heavily dependent on students having access to a high-quality laptop or desktop computer. If students choose to use a tablet or mobile device

for course assignments, the appropriate Microsoft Office applications must be installed. Please check the following information to ensure that you have met the minimum system requirements:

- Operating system: Windows 10 (Windows PC); MacOS 10.13 or later for Mac operating systems (Apple products).
 - Windows operating systems from Vista, and Mac OS 10.12 or older will not fully support Blackboard.
- Chrome or Firefox (internet browsers); Internet Explorer, Edge, and Safari are not supported and may cause issues in Blackboard.
- Internet connection: A high-speed Internet connection (Cable or DSL) is highly recommended. Some courses require download and upload of videos and other media. Download speed higher than 10 Mbps and upload speed 2 Mbps or higher is recommended.
- Webcam: Either one that is built into your computer, tablet, mobile device; or an external one will do.
- Microphone: Most laptops and webcams have microphones built in. For the clearest sound, it is best to have an external microphone. Note: work and public use computers (i.e. public library) may not allow permission to install programs.
- Processor: 2.4 GHz minimum for PCs, or Mac equivalent
- RAM: 4 GB DDR3 RAM
 - Note: ChromeBooks are not supported at NWC.
- Blackboard App: Should you choose to use a smart phone or tablet to view your courses, the Blackboard app is highly recommended. The Blackboard app should only be used to view course content and grades – it is not recommended for submitting assignments or engaging in weekly discussions.

Students must demonstrate competency in utilizing a variety of programs associated with the hardware specified above, and additional programs, including but not limited to:

- Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
- Ability to proficiently navigate the Blackboard Learning Management System
- Ability to proficiently navigate the Tevera system
- Ability to record and load videos to various systems such as the Tevera and Blackboard systems
- Email, text messaging, Blackboard communications, and other forms of online communication
- Ability to use a microphone and camera associated with the Zoom application/program
- Ability to proficiently utilize websites/services such as YouTube, search engines, online access to the Northwestern College DeWitt Library services, and other programs as needed.

Student Assessment Procedures (CACREP 1.M.5)

The Code of Ethics of the American Counseling Association (2014) defines *gatekeeping* as “the initial and ongoing academic, skill, and dispositional assessment of students’ competency for professional practice, including remediation and termination as appropriate” (p. 20). Code F.9.b states that “counselor educators, through ongoing evaluation, are aware of and address the

inability of some students to achieve counseling competencies. Counselor educators do the following:

1. Assist students in securing remedial assistance when needed,
2. Seek professional consultation and document their decision to dismiss or refer students for assistance, and
3. Ensure that students have recourse in a timely manner to address decisions requiring them to seek assistance or to dismiss them and provide students with due process according to institutional policies and procedures.”

CMHC students are consistently assessed over the course of their program for appropriate development in knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Ongoing formative and summative assessment include:

- students’ academic work in courses,
- review of practice sessions,
- clinical supervision,
- live supervision,
- students’ interpersonal interactions with faculty, instructors, peers, clients, site supervisors, and staff.

Formal assessment of students occurs in

- COUN 505 – Professional Orientation
- COUN 605 – Pre-Practicum
- CMHC 610 - Practicum
- CMHC 615 – Internship I
- CMHC 620 – Internship II

These points in the program are natural milestones in a student’s progression;

- the program’s first course
- the Professional Practice courses
- the final course of the program

Students must pass each official review in order to continue in their degree plan. In COUN 505 Professional Orientation faculty utilize the Basic Dispositions Rubric Formal Assessment and meet with the students to go over the results. In the Professional Practice courses faculty utilize the CCS-R for this review and meet with the students to go over results.

Finally, students receive formative and summative assessment throughout their Professional Practice Experience. (CACREP 4.F)

- Appraise the interpersonal and intrapersonal competence of students who provide services to clients;
- Assess the wellbeing of students and the potential impact of a student’s wellbeing on current and future clients;

- Evaluate students' ethical decision-making models and their current and future ability to adhere to the ACA Code of Ethics and state laws;
- Evaluate students' competency in managing relationships (e.g., client, collegial, professional, supervisory, teaching, etc.) in a professional and appropriate manner;
- Faculty take seriously the gatekeeping responsibility, even when it potentially means recommending a student not continue moving through the program when that student displays cognitive, emotional, psychological, dispositional, interpersonal, or ethical deficiencies that may interfere with the student's ability to professionally and ethically interact with peers, clients, employers, or the public at large;

Students are assessed on these Professional Dispositions:

- Interpersonal and intrapersonal competence;
- Self-awareness, self-reflection, and self-evaluation;
- Openness to supervision and dispositional evaluation;
- Resolution of problems or issues that interfere with professional development or functioning in a satisfactory manner;
- Ability to avoid harming clients and imposing one's values on clients;
- Ability to manage and maintain appropriate professional boundaries;
- Adherence to the ACA Code of Ethics and state laws;
- Adherence to Northwestern policies, the Graduate Catalog, and program policies and procedures.

In-Person Assessment

Beginning fall of 2026, students will come together with faculty in person to be assessed on counseling skills and dispositions. Students will meet with faculty each summer for this assessment. Faculty will utilize the CCS-R for this assessment.

Academic Policies and Appeal Procedures (CACREP 1.M.6)

For all policies related to academics and appeal procedures, students should refer to the Graduate Catalog from the year in which their enrollment originally took place (assuming the student has been in continuous enrollment throughout their program). For additional information on the Graduate Catalog governing a student's graduation, consult the Graduate Catalog ("*Catalog Governing Graduation*").

Student Retention and Remediation (CACREP 1.M.7)

A student's acceptance into the CMHC program does not ensure a right to remain in the program. Students must show consistent scholastic, professional, and personal progress and continue to demonstrate growth toward the clinical skills and dispositions identified in the *Gatekeeping and Student Evaluation* section above and elsewhere. Academic progress involves not only coursework, but also development of professional and interpersonal dispositions and skills that will impact a student's performance as a clinical mental health counselor. Assessment of these skills and dispositions necessarily involves subjective academic judgment by faculty members, site supervisors, and others placed in an evaluator role for students in the program.

Based on ongoing evaluation and assessment of students in the program, it may be determined that a student needs additional support in order to continue successfully in their program, or that the remediation process is warranted. The purpose of the remediation process is to support student growth and professional development.

If a faculty member, site supervisor, or other professional placed in an evaluator role for students in the program has a concern about a student's progress and/or behavior, they may request that a faculty member take steps with the student toward remediation. These steps may include: talking one on one with the student to discuss the concerns, offering written and/or verbal feedback on a student's video sessions, documenting the concerns on a Professional Concern Form (PCF), or other appropriate steps. Documentation of concerns on a PCF is a more formal means of documenting concerns about a student and PCFs are the foundation of the Formal Remediation Process, outlined below.

The **Formal Remediation Process** is designed to document and track information on concerns regarding a student, to document agreements made between the student and the program regarding changes the student must make in order to remain in their program, to document student progress toward remediation, and, when necessary, to affect a student's dismissal from the Counseling Program. The Formal Remediation Process is overseen by the Student Support and Remediation Committee (SSRC; see below). The remediation process may include (but is not limited to):

- Report of a concern on a Professional Concern Form (PCF)
- Documentation of the concern on a Remediation Growth Plan
- Evaluation and academic counseling of the student by faculty members and/or supervisors
- Requiring a student to repeat courses associated with specific clinical competencies
- Recommending that the student seek professional counseling to address any personal concerns that may be affecting the student's performance and competencies
- Requiring the student to take a leave of absence from the program until the problem area(s) is/are appropriately and sufficiently addressed
- Dismissal from the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program

In circumstances where a student falls into one of more of the categories described above and requires intervention and remediation:

- The program will make every effort to protect the student's confidentiality and records as described in the Graduate Catalog and in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)
- No student will be discriminated against on the basis of disability, and reasonable accommodation will be made in accordance with Northwestern policy as described in the Graduate Catalog.

A **Professional Concern Form (PCF)** should be completed any time a faculty member, site supervisor, exempt staff member, or other professional or staff member in an evaluator role over a student wants or needs to document student behavior that is clearly outside the generally accepted standards of the counseling profession. Whenever possible, documentation of concerning behaviors should be tied to a standard from the ACA Code of Ethics, the

Northwestern Graduate Catalog, this Student Handbook, a course syllabus, the Counselor Competencies Scale – Revised (CCS-R), or another applicable standard.

There are a wide range of **behaviors that might warrant a PCF**. These behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to uphold federal, state, and local laws related to the practice of counseling
- Behaviors that can reasonably be predictive of unsatisfactory future professional functioning, such as a consistent pattern of lateness and tardiness
- Inability to be accountable when tasks, assignments, appointments, etc. are not completed in a timely manner
- Lack of insight into the negative consequences of the student's own behavior
- Failure to maintain confidentiality of clients, practice clients, and/or role play clients
- Inability to exercise sound clinical judgment
- Inaccuracy in client recordkeeping
- Noncompliance with supervisory requirements
- Consistent inability to exercise adequate interpersonal skills
- Inability or unwillingness to acquire or manifest professional skills at an acceptable level of competency based on the student's current level of development and progress in the Counseling program in which they are enrolled
- Inability to receive and apply constructive feedback or supervision
- Inability to tolerate different and/or diverse points of view
- Frequent blaming of others for failures
- Pervasive interpersonal problems which impact the student's performance, or others' performance in the Counseling programs
- Dishonest academic practices, including but not limited to plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, aiding and abetting deception or dishonesty, and the falsification of records or official documents
- Threatening behavior
- Violations of professional standards of ethical conduct

Based on the specific behavior in question, or if a student refuses to comply with a Remediation Growth Plan, the Student Support and Remediation Committee (SSRC; see below) may recommend to the appropriate Northwestern College administrative offices that a student be immediately sanctioned. Immediate sanctions may include probation, suspension, dismissal, or expulsion.

PCFs are received and reviewed by the **Student Support and Remediation Committee (SSRC)**. The SSRC:

- Makes determinations as to if a formal remediation agreement (Remediation Growth Plan) is necessary for a particular student and situation
- Monitors information on all students discussed in the SSRC regardless of whether or not the student progresses to a formal remediation agreement
- Assigns a faculty member to work directly with a student regarding the remediation agreement

- Receives regular updates from the assigned faculty member regarding the student's progress or lack of progress toward meeting the requirements of the remediation agreement
- Makes determinations as to if the student is making satisfactory progress toward the identified behavioral changes specified in the Remediation Growth Plan within the timelines specified in the Remediation Growth Plan
- When necessary, makes recommendations for dismissal from the student's Counseling program on the basis of the student failing to meet the obligations set forth in the Remediation Growth Plan

Remediation and Dismissal Appeal Policies: The SSRC makes decisions on remediation plans up to actions involving suspending students from courses and dismissing students from the Counseling Program. The SSRC committee makes recommendations on student suspensions and dismissals to the Dean of the Graduate School and Adult Learning. The Dean of the Graduate and Professional Studies Programs (GPSP) makes decisions regarding suspensions and dismissals.

Students will receive notification of remediation or dismissal via email from the Counseling Program Director. A student may appeal a remediation decision by filing a written appeal with the Dean of the GPSP within three days of the date of the remediation email. If a student wishes to appeal the decision of the Dean of the GPSP, the student may appeal the Dean's decision to the Vice President of Academic Affairs within three days of the date of the Dean's decision. The ruling of the Vice President of Academic Affairs is final. A student appealing a dismissal decision may remain in classes until all appeals have been exhausted except in the case of experiential coursework (Practicum, Internship I, Internship II, Internship III), and except in the case of immediate sanction as discussed above.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Policies (CACREP 1.H, 1.I, 1.M.8) **Systematic Diversity Plan**

To assure that the counseling program plans sustained and systematic efforts to support and enhance the diversity of the program the following Diversity Plan is adopted to aid in:

- A. Recruiting Students
- B. Enrolling Students
- C. Retention of Students

Intentional and sustained efforts to actively recruit, enroll, and retain students in a way that enhances and supports the diversity of the program" means taking deliberate and ongoing actions to attract, admit, and keep students from a wide range of backgrounds, actively working to create an inclusive environment where diverse perspectives are valued and supported throughout their academic journey.

- Targeted outreach:
 - Reaching out to diverse communities through partnerships with minority-serving institutions, community organizations, and targeted recruitment events to identify potential students from underrepresented groups.
- Holistic admissions process:

- Evaluating applicants based on a broad range of factors beyond just test scores, considering potential and experiences from diverse backgrounds.
- Financial aid strategies:
 - Providing scholarships and financial assistance specifically designed to support students from underrepresented communities.
- Culturally competent curriculum:
 - Integrating diverse perspectives and experiences into course materials and teaching methods to ensure all students feel represented and valued.
 - Reviewing curriculum to address potential biases and ensure relevance to diverse experiences.
 - Adapting program structure to accommodate different learning styles and needs.
- Mentorship programs:
 - Pairing students from diverse backgrounds with faculty or peer mentors who can provide guidance and support throughout their academic journey.
- Inclusive environment:
 - Fostering a welcoming and supportive atmosphere through student organizations, cultural events, and training for faculty and staff on diversity and inclusion issues.
 - Data analysis and evaluation:
 - Regularly monitoring student demographics and program outcomes to identify areas for improvement and adjust recruitment and retention strategies accordingly.
- Targeted recruitment strategies:
 - Partnering with organizations focused on underrepresented communities.
 - Attending conferences and events specifically geared towards diverse populations.
 - Tailoring outreach materials to resonate with specific groups.

Important considerations:

- Authentic engagement:
 - Ensure outreach efforts are culturally sensitive and genuinely connect with underrepresented communities.
- Addressing systemic barriers:
 - Identify and actively work to dismantle systemic barriers that may hinder participation from diverse groups.
- Continuous improvement:
 - Regularly review and adapt diversity strategies based on data and feedback to achieve ongoing progress.

Program's Process for Identifying Underrepresented Populations

When assessing diversity, it's crucial to identify which populations are considered underrepresented within the program's participants or workforce, and then outline specific goals and strategies designed to actively recruit and support individuals from those underrepresented groups, thereby enhancing the program's overall diversity.

Identifying underrepresented groups:

- Demographic factors: Analyze data based on race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, geographic location, disability status, etc.
- Data tracking and evaluation:

- Regularly monitor participation data to assess progress towards diversity goals.
- Implement feedback mechanisms to identify areas for improvement.

Counseling Program Culture of Inclusiveness, Equity, and Respect Plan (CACREP 1.I)

The NWC Counseling Program is committed to fostering a learning environment where all students feel welcomed, valued, and treated fairly, regardless of their background, identity, or individual differences; the program emphasizes actively promoting inclusivity, equity, and respect for diversity within the program culture itself.

Key aspects:

- **Curriculum integration:**
 - Incorporating diverse perspectives and experiences into course materials and teaching methods to ensure all students see themselves reflected in the curriculum.
- **Faculty training:**
 - Providing ongoing professional development for faculty to enhance their cultural competence and ability to create an inclusive learning environment.
- **Recruitment and admissions practices:**
 - Intentionally seeking out a diverse student body through outreach and recruitment strategies.
- **Student support services:**
 - Offering tailored support systems and resources to address the unique needs of students from marginalized communities.
- **Policy and practice review:**
 - Regularly evaluating policies and practices to identify and address potential biases or barriers to inclusion.
- **Open dialogue:**
 - Creating a safe space for students to discuss issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion without fear of judgment.

Accessibility and Accommodations (CACREP 1.M.9)

Northwestern College provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities based on an individualized review process. If you have been approved for accommodations through Accessibility Services, please share your letter of accommodations with me and contact me to discuss implementing your accommodations. If you think you need accommodations and have not connected with Accessibility Services, please contact Samantha Winn (samantha.winn@nwcsiowa.edu, (712) 707-7249, DeWitt Learning Commons #112). For more information visit <https://www.nwcsiowa.edu/academic-support/accessibility>.

Counseling Services (CACREP 1.M.10)

In-person counseling services are available to graduate students enrolled in the program through the Northwestern College Wellness Center. Information on available services and on making an appointment with the Wellness Center staff is available at <https://www.nwcsiowa.edu/wellness>.

Students in the program who are residents of other can explore counseling services through other providers. Psychology Today is one of the foremost referral providers for mental health

professionals. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists>.

Open Path Collective is a non-profit nationwide network of mental health professionals dedicated to providing in-office and online mental health care at a steeply reduced rate to individuals, couples, children, and families in need. <https://openpathcollective.org/find-a-clinician/>.

Licensure Requirements (CACREP 1.K.4, M.12)

Licensure requirements vary for Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs) state by state. Students are responsible for being aware of the licensure requirements for their specialty area and for the state in which they intend to practice. Students should make their enrollment counselor and their program's administration aware of any complexities related to licensure in their state of which they become aware. All students are strongly encouraged to keep a copy of all of their course syllabi and all of their Professional Practice forms as this documentation may be needed as part of the licensure process in their state.

Students are responsible for the rules and regulations of the state to be licensed with. In this, if a student has legal history that could impact licensure, they are responsible for contacting the state board to learn the state's rules and regulations around such a legal history.

Licensure of Professional Counselors (LPCs)

Students in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program may choose to pursue licensure as a professional counselor in their state. Because licensure of counselors is handled at the state level, the exact title of this licensure can also vary by the state. The American Counseling Association (ACA) attempts to track licensure requirements by state and to maintain the accuracy of this information. However, the ultimate guide to licensure requirements will be the licensing body in the state in which a student intends to practice. You can find the ACA's information at: <https://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/licensure-requirements>

The National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) provides information on each state's licensure board, where students can also obtain specific information on the licensure requirements in their state. You can find the NBCC's website at: <http://www.nbcc.org/directory>

Licensure of Mental Health Counselors (LMHCs) in Iowa

Licensure of Counselors in the state of Iowa is handled by the Board of Behavioral Science: <http://idph.iowa.gov/Licensure/Iowa-Board-of-Behavioral-Science>. Licensed counselors in the state of Iowa are referred to as Licensed Mental Health Counselors (LMHCs).

Bureau of Professional Licensure
Lucas State Office Building
5th Floor
321 E. 12th St.
Des Moines, IA 50319
(515) 281-0254
PLPublic@idph.iowa.gov

Endorsement Policy for Credentialing and Employment (CACREP 1.M.13)

The Counseling Program faculty and staff will only provide letters of recommendation for credentialing and employment for professional roles and functions for which students have been trained. Designated administrators or faculty members representing the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program recommend students for licensure for the two specialty programs as needed and as appropriate. Letters of recommendation for student employment are at the discretion of the faculty and program staff.

Program Accreditation and Licensure (CACREP 1.K)

Northwestern College is regionally accredited by the [Higher Learning Commission](#). While the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program is not accredited by the [Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs](#) (CACREP) at this time, Northwestern College is actively preparing the self-study. Should application successful, the accreditation would retroactively cover the students who were in the programs for the prior 18 months.

Graduates of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program are academically prepared for licensure in many states. Students must be aware of the specific regulatory and legal requirements for licensure in their state, province or country where they intend to pursue licensure and to be aware of any personal barriers to licensure. See the *Licensure of Professional Counselors (LPCs)* section in this handbook for more information on licensure requirements for professional counselors in specific states.

The CMHC program adheres to all federal requirements pertaining to licensure.

Academic Procedures and Support

Transfer Credit

Please review the *Transfer and Alternate Credit* section of the Graduate Catalog carefully. Students may not transfer credit for Professional Practice courses or for courses with gatekeeping implications. See the *GPA Requirements* section and the *Changes to Degree Plan* section of this Handbook for information on the Professional Practice courses and the courses with gatekeeping implications. Students are not able to transfer in credit from non-CACREP accredited programs.

Grade Appeal Policy

If a student disagrees with a grade or other academic determination, the student must first discuss their concerns with the instructor or supervisor who assigned the grade. Per the ACA Code of Ethics (I.2.a), professionals are expected to attempt to resolve issues informally when they have disagreements or concerns prior to pursuing a formal resolution process. If a student is not satisfied with the resolution from the informal conversation, the formal appeals procedure delineated below must be followed. The formal appeal must follow these steps:

1. After the grade is posted: If a student disagrees with a grade or other academic determination, the student, within three (3) business days of the grade being posted, shall make a written request to the instructor formally appealing the grade or other academic determination. The student should include any relevant supporting documentation. The

instructor will respond to the student in writing (via the student's NWC email account) detailing the reasons for accepting or denying the appeal within 3 days of receipt of the appeal.

If the instructor is unavailable, the appeal must go directly to the Counseling Program Director. If the instructor of record for the course for which the grade is being appealed is the Counseling Program Director, the appeal should go directly to the Dean of the Graduate and Professional Studies Program (GPS) office.

2. The student may appeal the decision of the instructor by filing a written appeal to the Counseling Program Director within three (3) business days of receiving the instructor's response, detailing the basis for the appeal and the specific remedy sought by the student. The Counseling Program Director will respond to the student in writing (via the student's NWC email address) detailing the reasons for accepting or denying the appeal within three (3) business days. The Counseling Program Director's decision is final. In cases where the Counseling Program Director was the instructor of record and the student has appealed directly to the Dean of the GPS, the decision of the Dean is final.

Potential outcomes of grade appeals could include (but are not limited to) supporting the faculty member's original grade for the assignment, having the assignment re-graded by another faculty member with the second faculty member's grade being final, or having the grade adjusted if the original grade did not adhere to the assignment's attached grading rubric.

Academic Requirements

Attendance Policy

There are two different types of courses in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program; synchronous courses and semi-asynchronous courses. Synchronous courses are live online courses that are conducted in real time via the Teams platform. These courses include Pre-Practicum, Practicum, Internship I, Internship II, and Internship III (when needed). Synchronous courses include defined class periods which meet on a specific day and time on a weekly basis via Teams. Students are expected to attend all class sessions of each synchronous course, for the entirety of the scheduled course time following Policy on Environment for Synchronous Class Meetings on page 12. Because (COUN 605) Pre-Practicum, Practicum (CMHC 610), Internship I (CMHC 615), Internship II (CMHC 620), and Internship III (CMHC 625) are all professional practice courses, CACREP maintains specific requirements related to the number of hours students must attend these courses. If students fall short of those thresholds due to lack of attendance, students may have to re-take the courses. See the Professional Practice Manual for additional information. Additional policies regarding attendance are included in the Graduate Catalog.

Semi-Asynchronous courses are courses where students can view instructional materials each week within a more flexible timeframe. However, Semi-Asynchronous courses include mandatory live online meeting times throughout the term. There will be several mandatory class meetings in each class. Further, many of the semi-asynchronous courses have assignments which require students to meet individually via Teams with assigned student partner to record practice counseling videos or with a group of students to complete a group project. In these

circumstances, students can plan with their student partner(s) to meet at a mutually agreed upon time during the week to complete the assignment prior to the assignment deadline.

Asynchronous attendance is demonstrated by continual active participation in discussions and by completing assignments by the assigned due dates. Failure to actively participate in discussions and to complete assignments by the assigned due dates without proactively communicating with your course instructor may result in students being dropped from a course. Establishing attendance is particularly important at the beginning of semesters because of US Department of Education regulations. See the Graduate Catalog for more policies regarding attendance.

Students are expected to maintain a high degree of professionalism in both synchronous and semi-asynchronous courses. This professionalism includes interactions with course instructors and other students, and for synchronous courses and live online meetings also includes student appearance, behavior, and the students' environments as well.

GPA Requirements

Students in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 (see also the *Academic Probation and Suspension* policies in the Graduate Catalog). In addition to maintaining a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better in the student's program, students must also achieve certain grade thresholds in specific courses.

Students in the program must achieve a grade of B- (2.7 grade points) or better in their core counseling courses and electives. The core counseling courses are:

- COUN 505 – Professional Orientation
- COUN 515 – Ethics
- COUN 520 – Social & Cultural Foundations
- COUN 525 – Human Growth & Development
- COUN 550 – Theories & Skills of Counseling I
- COUN 551 – Theories & Skills of Counseling II
- COUN 510 – Assessment & Appraisal
- COUN 530 – Group Counseling & Group Work
- COUN 580 – Career Development
- COUN 585 – Research & Program Evaluation

Students in the program must achieve a grade of B (3.0 grade points) or better in their professional practice courses. The professional practice courses are:

- COUN 605 – Pre-Practicum
- CMHC 610 – Practicum
- CMHC 615 – Internship I
- CMHC 620 – Internship II
- CMHC 625 – Internship III (when needed)

Students who fall below these thresholds are required to repeat that course regardless of her or his cumulative GPA. Students who fall below the cumulative GPA threshold may be subject to

academic probation and/or suspension per the Academic Probation and Suspension policies included in the Graduate Catalog.

Academic Writing

The program utilizes the American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual (current edition) and expects students to write at a graduate level standard. Students are required to buy a copy of the APA Publication Manual, utilize it throughout the program, and to continually work on improving their writing skills, to incorporate instructor feedback, and to demonstrate higher levels of critical and analytical thinking in their writing. However, developing outstanding written communication skills are essential for the development of clinical mental health counselors.

Changes to Degree Plan

Students who wish to make changes to their degree plan should consult with their enrollment counselor for assistance. Because the program is designed in a cohort model, classes are not offered every semester and at times, courses are only offered once or twice per year. The standard course progression is designed with gatekeeping efforts for students in mind. Changes to a degree plan may require students to repeat courses that have gatekeeping implications.

Courses with gatekeeping implications include:

- COUN 505 – Professional Orientation
- COUN 520 – Social & Cultural Foundations
- COUN 550 – Theories of Counseling I
- COUN 551 – Theories of Counseling II
- COUN 555 – Crisis, Trauma, & Suicide
- COUN 605 – Pre-Practicum
- CMHC 610 – Practicum
- COUN 530 – Group Counseling & Group Work
- CMHC 615 – Internship I
- CMHC 620 – Internship II
- CMHC 625 – Internship III
- COUN 635 – Capstone

Course Management

The Counseling Programs administration reserves the right to distribute enrollment in course sections and/or cancel course sections before the course start date. The Counseling programs administration also reserves the right to change faculty/instructor assignments at any time. As such, students may not always be able to register for a specific instructor's section.

The Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE)

The CPCE serves as the comprehensive exam for the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program. Students are required to successfully pass the CPCE in order to graduate. Students who fail to earn a passing score are allowed to re-take the CPCE three times.

The CPCE covers the eight CACREP core content areas:

- Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice

- Social and cultural Identities and Experiences
- Lifespan Development
- Career Development
- Counseling Practice and Relationships
- Group Counseling and Group Work
- Assessment and Diagnostic Processes
- Research and Program Evaluation

These topics are comprehensively covered in dedicated courses as well as having information integrated into additional courses throughout both programs. Students are required to purchase *Mastering the National Counselor Examination and the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination* (3rd ed.), by Erford, Hays, & Crockett (2019) during Pre-Practicum. Students are encouraged to utilize this resource in study groups throughout their Professional Course work.

CPCE Eligibility

CMHC program students are eligible to take the CPCE during Internship I. The CPCE must be passed in order to successfully complete the program. This timeframe allows time for students to re-take the CPCE if it is not passed in the first attempt.

Center for Credentialing & Education (CCE)

The Center for Credentialing & Education (CCE) is a not-for-profit organization that provides practitioners and organizations with assessments, business support services, and credentialing. Created in 1995 as an affiliate of the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC), CCE credentials nearly 25,000 practitioners globally in a variety of fields. For additional information, visit the CCE website: <https://www.cce-global.org/>

3 Terrace Way
Greensboro, NC 27403
(336) 482-2856
cce@cce-global.org

The National Counselor Exam (NCE)

The National Counselor Exam (NCE) serves as the licensure exam for Licensed Professional Counselors in many states.

Studying for and passing the CPCE serves as strong preparation for taking and passing the NCE. Additionally, *Mastering the National Counselor Examination and the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination* (3rd ed.), by Erford, Hays, & Crockett (2019) helps students prepare for both exams.

The National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC)

The National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) advances counseling as the premier certification body of the counseling profession and runs the NCE and the NCMHCE exams. The NBCC also administers the National Certified Counselor (NCC) credential. For additional information, visit their website at <http://www.nbcc.org/>

3 Terrace Way

Greensboro, NC 27403
(336) 547-0607
nbcc@nbcc.org

Graduation

There is a module in COUN 635 Capstone detailing the procedure to register for graduation.

Timeline of Degree Conferral

Final transcripts with completed internship and practicum hours and degree conferral dates are ready between 4 - 6 weeks after the semester's graduation date. Students may request their final transcripts be submitted to any agency using Northwestern's transcript request website here - <https://www.nwciowa.edu/registrar/transcript-request>.

If students are ordering transcripts before the 4 – 6-week processing window after the semester graduation date, they must check the box marked “Hold for Degree.” Otherwise, incomplete transcripts will be sent to the requested agency. There is no way to expedite diploma conferrals.

Issues with transcripts can be directed to the Registrar's office at registrar@nwciowa.edu. Students will receive their diplomas via mail 6 - 8 weeks after the semester's graduation date. Replacement diplomas can be ordered on the documents/diploma request page - <https://www.nwciowa.edu/registrar/billpay>.

Appendices

Appendix 1
Acknowledgement of Handbook
 (CACREP 1.K.1; 1.K.2; 1.K.3; 1.K.4)

This Student Handbook for the MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling program is an addendum to the policies included in the Graduate Catalog and is provided to applicants and to students in the program. It does not constitute a contract, either expressed or implied, and it is subject to change at the discretion of Northwestern College.

Students in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program are expected to read and follow all policies and procedures outlined in the Graduate Catalog, the CMHC Program Student Handbook, the CMHC Program Professional Practice Handbook, and the ACA Code of Ethics.

By signing this Acknowledgement, the student is attesting to the fact that they have had the opportunity to review and discuss:

- the student handbook,
- ethical and professional obligations,
- personal growth expectations as counselors-in-training, and
- eligibility and requirements for licensure/certification

[Graduate Catalog](#)
[ACA Code of Ethics](#)

I, _____ (print name), have read this document (the CMHC Program Student Handbook), the Northwestern College Graduate Catalog, and the ACA Code of Ethics. I understand that I will be expected to follow and to adhere to the policies, procedures, graduation requirements, and ethical standards outlined therein.

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix 2
New Student Orientation Attestation Form
(CACREP 1.K.1; 1.K.2; 1.K.3; 1.K.4)

Students in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program are expected to read and follow all policies and procedures outlined in the Graduate Catalog, the CMHC Program Student Handbook, the CMHC Program Professional Practice Handbook, and the ACA Code of Ethics.

By signing this Attestation Form, the student is attesting to the fact that they have completed the New Student Orientation where they reviewed:

- the student handbook,
- ethical and professional obligations,
- personal growth expectations as counselors-in-training, and
- eligibility and requirements for licensure/certification.

[Graduate Catalog](#)
[ACA Code of Ethics](#)

I, _____ (print name), have completed the New Student Orientation. I have a copy of the CMHC Program Student Handbook, the Northwestern College Graduate Catalog, and the ACA Code of Ethics. I understand that I am expected to follow and to adhere to the policies, procedures, graduation requirements, and ethical standards outlined therein.

Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix 3
Individual Counseling Verification Form

[Individual Counseling Verification Form](#)