



COUNSELING PROGRAM

# Student Handbook

## 2022 – 2023

All MA in School Counseling and MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling students are expected to read, follow, and stay current with the policies and procedures of the Graduate School and Adult Learning (GSAL) which are included in the Graduate Catalog, as well as the information included in this handbook, and any other Counseling Program manuals 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.

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## Mission, Identity, Vision for Learning, and Vision for Diversity

### Northwestern College's Mission Statement

Northwestern College is a Christian academic community engaging students in courageous and faithful learning and living that empowers them to follow Christ and pursue God's redeeming work in the world.

### Northwestern College's Identity

Northwestern College is a Christian college in the Reformed tradition, founded in 1882 and affiliated with the Reformed Church in America. We are committed to providing Christian higher education in the context of community among learners on campus and online. We offer bachelor's degrees in traditional and professional programs, as well as graduate degrees and certificate programs.

### Northwestern College's Vision for Learning

Northwestern College is a community rooted in Scripture and the confessions of Reformed theology and thus shaped by a robust integrative and transformative vision of the Triune God who creates, redeems and sustains. This theological background supports a framework within which students, staff, and faculty of various Christian traditions take up the task of loving, understanding, and serving the world whose Savior and Lord is Jesus Christ. We see the pursuit of liberal arts education as worship experienced in community and offered to the glory of God. Embracing this calling with a freedom that arises from confidence in God's saving grace and sovereignty, we are committed to cultivating virtues of heart and mind that will enable us to live out our shared vocation as participants in God's redemptive work. We respond to God's call to proclaim the message of the gospel, be stewards of creation, serve Christ in all persons, and bring all things under his lordship.

In keeping with this commitment, we intend Northwestern graduates to be persons who

#### Trust, Love, and Worship God

- Understanding that God is the center of life, learning about God through careful and rigorous study, and aspiring to trust, love, and worship God as the sovereign Lord of the universe.
- Recognizing that to love God is also to live joyfully as participants in a variety of communities, valuing the diversity of the human family and seeking opportunities for learning, growth, and transformation through intercultural relationships.

#### Engage Ideas

- Demonstrating competence in navigating and contributing to the world of ideas and information, having learned to listen, read, question, evaluate, speak, write, create, and perform with a disciplined imagination.
- Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical foundations, methods, and products of the humanities, the social and natural sciences, and the fine arts.
- Pursuing truth faithfully in all aspects of life; developing, articulating, and supporting their own beliefs; and seeking meaningful dialog with those holding different convictions.
- Desiring to continue a life of learning and contemplation.

**Connect Knowledge and Experience**

- Completing academic majors that enable acquisition of the narrower but deeper knowledge and skills that serve as the basis for mastery of a particular discipline and as preparation for meaningful life and work.
- Exhibiting a broad understanding of the current and historical interplay of different realms of knowledge and experience.
- Seeking opportunities for growth and reflection that integrate faith, learning, and living in community.
- Seeing beauty and finding joy in all pursuits.

**Respond to God's Call**

- Discerning and developing their unique gifts in service to Christ, the church, and the world Christ loves and redeems.
- Regarding all persons as made in the image of God and thus deserving of understanding, love, and justice.
- Living a balanced and whole life in obedience to God.

**Northwestern College's Vision for Diversity**

Guided by the biblical narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration, Northwestern College strives to pursue God's redeeming work in the world by courageously and faithfully engaging the fullness of our similarities and differences in our learning and living together.

We embrace diversity in God's creation,

- Valuing each person as created in the image of the triune God and thus intended for community
- Respecting the complexity of human identities
- Recognizing human difference as central to an education that fosters critical thinking, empathy, and dialogue

We lament human brokenness,

- Grieving our thoughts, words, and actions that diminish, caricature, or isolate one another
- Confessing our failure to hear and respond to marginalized voices on campus and in the world
- Recognizing our past and current participation in unjust social systems
- Repenting from any form of dehumanization that distorts God's creation

We reconcile with one another,

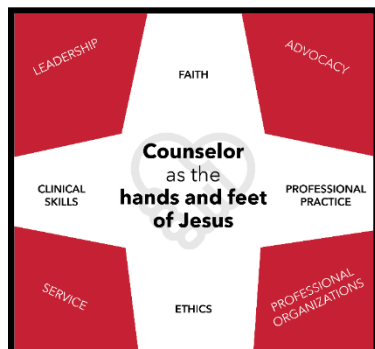
- Bridging divisions that separate people from one another and from God
- Partaking in courageous conversations where varied perspectives are welcome
- Challenging unjust systems of power, privilege, and oppression
- Building and sustaining social structures that foster the common good

We embody shalom,

- Anticipating restored creation, where people from every nation, tribe, and language worship God and live in harmony
- Pursuing human flourishing in our relationships, curriculum, staffing, resource allocation, and corporate actions
- Affirming that all things hold together in Christ, to the glory of God.

## Counseling Program Mission Statement and Student Learning Outcomes

### Counseling Program Mission Statement



#### The Model: Counselor as the Hands and Feet of Jesus

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 society in diverse settings. 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.

### School Counseling Program Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will demonstrate preparedness to enter the counseling field as school counselors.
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to apply ethical and legal considerations, behavior, and judgments in counseling situations.
3. Students will recognize the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual's view of others.
4. Students will demonstrate an understanding of biological, neurological, and physiological factors that affect human development, functioning, and behavior.
5. Students will demonstrate the ability to conceptualize the interrelationships among and between work, mental well-being, relationships, and other life roles and factors.
6. Students will demonstrate the essential interviewing counseling, and case conceptualization skills necessary to be competent and ethical school counselors.
7. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the characteristics and functions of effective group leaders.
8. Students will demonstrate knowledge of, and an ability to use assessments relevant to academic/educational, career, personal, and social development.
9. Students will demonstrate knowledge of evaluation procedures for counseling interventions and programs.
10. Students will demonstrate competence in assuming school counselor roles as leaders, advocates, and systems change agents in P-12 schools.
11. Students will demonstrate the knowledge skills, and dispositions needed to serve and influence their communities, workplaces, and families.
12. Students will demonstrate multicultural self-awareness and clinical competence.
13. Students will demonstrate an ability to articulate a biblical world view, and identify how their self-identified most important spiritual and religious values and beliefs impact their counseling practice.

### Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will demonstrate preparedness to enter the counseling field as clinical mental health counselors.
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to apply ethical and legal considerations, behavior, and judgments in counseling situations.

3. Students will recognize the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual's view of others.
4. Students will demonstrate an understanding of biological, neurological, and physiological factors that affect human development, functioning, and behavior.
5. Students will demonstrate the ability to conceptualize the interrelationships among and between work, mental well-being, relationships, and other life roles and factors.
6. Students will demonstrate the essential interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization skills necessary to be competent and ethical clinical mental health counselors.
7. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the characteristics and functions of effective group leaders.
8. Students will demonstrate knowledge of, and an ability to use assessments relevant to academic/educational, career, personal, and social development.
9. Students will demonstrate knowledge of evaluation procedures for counseling interventions and programs.
10. Students will demonstrate competence in utilizing an intake interview, mental status evaluation, biopsychosocial history, mental health history, and psychological assessment for treatment planning and caseload management as appropriate.
11. Students will demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to serve and influence their communities, workplaces, and families.
12. Students will demonstrate multicultural self-awareness and clinical competence.
13. Students will demonstrate an ability to articulate a biblical world view, and identify how their self-identified most important spiritual and religious values and beliefs impact their counseling practice.

## Student Recruitment

Northwestern College's Counseling Program is committed to recruiting students from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and cultural influences that reflect the multicultural society in which we live. The program is committed to preparing students to successfully work with multicultural and pluralistic characteristics within and among diverse groups both nationally and internationally. The Counseling Program provides a rich, diverse cultural experience through course offerings, workshops, and events. In interactions with students, from admission through graduation, the faculty does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

## Accreditation and Licensure

Northwestern College is regionally accredited by the [Higher Learning Commission](#). The School Counseling program has been approved by the Iowa Department of Education and the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners. Teachers who are licensed in Iowa complete the degree to receive endorsements in elementary (K – 8) or secondary (5 – 12) school counseling. Students who do not hold a teaching license can receive the degree with three additional credit hours of coursework. It is possible for students in the School Counseling program to receive both endorsements – discuss this with your enrollment counselor. It is each student's responsibility to identify the specific regulatory and legal requirements that currently exist in their state, province, or country where they intend to pursue licensure. Students are encouraged to be aware of any potential personal barriers to licensure. *The Praxis Exam* section in this handbook provides more information on licensure requirements for School Counselors in specific states.



Graduates of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program are academically prepared for licensure in the state of Iowa and many other 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.

While neither the School Counseling program nor the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program are accredited by the [Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs](#) (CACREP) at this time, Northwestern College will apply for CACREP accreditation at such time as the first students graduate from each individual program (tentatively, summer 2024 for the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program, and summer 2025 for the School Counseling program). Should applications for accreditation be successful in the months following application, the accreditation would retroactively cover the students who were in the programs during the years leading up to official accreditation.

## Professional Standards

The School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs are designed to prepare Northwestern students to be outstanding counselors in the practice settings of their choice. The programs have been designed in alignment with CACREP accreditation standards toward the end goal of applying for CACREP accreditation as soon as application is allowed (once the programs have produced their first graduates). The programs are crafted around student learning outcomes which include students being able to apply ethical and legal considerations, behavior, and judgments in counseling situations, being able to display multicultural awareness and sensitivity, being able to articulate a biblical world view and how their most important spiritual and religious values impact their counseling practice, and being able to display the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to serve and influence their communities, workplaces, and families, among others.

As a Christian academic community, Northwestern recognizes that professional counselors who are followers of Christ – whether they be School Counselors or Clinical Mental Health Counselors – value both Biblical truth and ethical professional practice. While students are not required to endorse any particular faith (or any faith at all) in order to be accepted into Northwestern’s Counseling programs, students in Northwestern’s Counseling programs are required to interact with the Christian Bible, with faith-based texts, and to engage with spiritual formation and faith integration elements of assignments in many of the Counseling Program’s courses. Simultaneously, students are expected to learn, know, and follow the [Code of Ethics of the American Counseling Association](#) and the laws, rules, and statutes applicable to counselors in the state in which they reside.

The integration of personal faith and ethical counseling practice is a journey which students will take together and with their professors over the course of their selected program at Northwestern. Throughout this journey, students are encouraged to embody the compassion and grace of Jesus Christ and to reach out with patience, sensitivity, love, and respect to persons of diverse backgrounds and values, representing diversity in race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, age, faith, and abilities. ACA ethical code A.4.b in particular, 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 Northwestern’s Counseling programs 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

In alignment with Northwestern College's Vision for Diversity and the Counseling programs' expectations regarding Professional Practice, students in the School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs are expected to manifest high ethical and professional standards and to embody the character and compassion of Jesus Christ.

As such, students in the School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs engage in non-discriminatory counseling practices. Non-discriminatory counseling practices are defined by the ACA code of ethics in section C.5. Students also practice in accordance with section 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.

### Academic Procedures and Support

#### Academic Advising and Enrollment Counselors (ECs)

Northwestern's enrollment counselors (ECs) 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.

#### Academic Policies and Appeal Procedures

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*").

#### Transfer Credit

Please review the *Transfer and Alternate Credit* section of the Graduate Catalog carefully. Students may not transfer in 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.

## 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 School and Adult Learning's 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 Graduate School and Adult Learning, the decision of the Dean of the Graduate School and Adult Learning 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.

## New Student Orientation

The Counseling Program hosts an online New Student Orientation on a yearly basis for all students beginning the School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs. New Student Orientation is the programs' formal opportunity to provide new students this Student Handbook, to discuss the handbook with students, to establish the programs' expectations regarding students' ethical and professional obligations, and to establish the programs' expectations regarding students' personal growth as counselors-in-training. New Student Orientation is also an opportunity to discuss student eligibility for licensure and how the programs will prepare students for licensure and endorsement requirements. New Student Orientation is also an opportunity for students to meet other new students with whom they will be taking classes, meet and hear from program faculty, and gain information about the programs' course progression and upcoming events.

Attendance at and participation in New Student Orientation should be considered mandatory for new students. Excused absences may be granted with prior authorization of the Counseling Program Director. Failure to attend New Student Orientation without an excused absence may result in the student being delayed in starting their program.

## Disability Services

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act, NWC will provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have a documented disability that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with learning disabilities are encouraged to contact both their instructor and the college's learning disability service provider, Marie Jeppesen in Academic Support, [marie.jeppesen@nwc-iowa.edu](mailto:marie.jeppesen@nwc-iowa.edu), to discuss their individual needs and accommodations. Disability accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

## Counseling Services

In-person counseling services are available to graduate students enrolled in the School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs 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.nwc-iowa.edu/wellness>.

The Northwestern Wellness Center is also able to offer limited telehealth appointments to students who are residents of the state of Iowa. Information on telehealth appointments is available on the Wellness Center website at <https://www.nwc-iowa.edu/wellness>.

Because the Northwestern Wellness Center staff are only licensed in the state of Iowa, students in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling programs who are residents of states other than Iowa can explore counseling services through other providers. Psychology Today is one of the foremost referral providers for mental health professionals. You can utilize the Psychology Today *Find a Therapist* search engine at <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. You can utilize the Open Path Collective *Find a Therapist* search engine at <https://openpathcollective.org/find-a-clinician/>.

Note that both the Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling programs include a personal counseling requirement as part of every student's professional practice experience. You can read more about this requirement in the *Individual Counseling Sessions* section under the *Professional Practice Experience* section in this handbook.

## Academic Requirements

### Attendance Policy

There are two different types of courses in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling programs; synchronous courses and asynchronous courses. Synchronous courses are live online courses that are conducted in real time via the Zoom platform. These courses include 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 Zoom. Students are expected to attend all class sessions of each synchronous course, for the entirety of the scheduled course time, with their full attention devoted to class and with their cameras on. Students should also ensure they are logging into class from a confidential setting to protect the confidentiality of group supervision conversations. This means students should not log into class from work, coffee shops, or other settings where confidentiality of class discussions cannot be ensured. Because Practicum (CMHC/SCO 610), Internship I (CMHC/SCO 615), Internship II (CMHC/SCO 620), and Internship III (CMHC/SCO 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.

Asynchronous courses are courses where students can view instructional materials each week within a more flexible timeframe. Asynchronous courses do not include mandatory live online meeting times on a weekly basis. However, instructors of each asynchronous course in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling programs are expected to offer optional live online discussion options via Zoom as one option for completing discussion assignments. Students are encouraged to take advantage of the live online discussions whenever possible to better engage with their instructors and classmates. If students cannot take advantage of the optional live online discussions, there will be a threaded discussion option in the Blackboard learning platform which students can also use to complete the discussion assignments. Some of the asynchronous courses also have assignments which require students to meet individually via Zoom with their instructors and/or to meet with an assigned student partner to record practice counseling videos or with a group of students to complete a group project. In these circumstances, students can make arrangements with their student partner(s) or with the instructor 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 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 School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs 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 chosen program, students must also achieve certain grade thresholds in specific courses.

Students in the Counseling programs must achieve a grade of B- (2.7 grade points) or better in their core counseling courses. 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 605 – Skills II
- COUN 510 – Assessment & Appraisal
- COUN 530 – Group Counseling & Group Work
- COUN 580 – Career Development
- COUN 585 – Research & Program Evaluation

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

- CMHC/SCO 610 – Practicum
- CMHC/SCO 615 – Internship I
- CMHC/SCO 620 – Internship II
- CMHC/SCO 625 – Internship III (when needed)

Students in the Counseling programs must achieve a grade of C- (1.7 grade points) or better in elective/non-core/non-professional practice courses.

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 Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling programs utilize the American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual (current edition) and expect students in both programs to write at a graduate level standard. Students are encouraged to acquire 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. Whenever possible, students are encouraged to cite and reference peer-reviewed journal articles to support their writing. At different times and in different courses throughout the programs, students will be asked to utilize professional, clinical, and informal/reflective writing styles, depending on the setting and assignment. However, regardless of the assignment and setting, developing outstanding written communication skills are essential for the development of clinical mental health and school counselors.

## ACA/State Branch Membership

Students in the School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs are expected to join either a national or state-level professional association as part of the development of their counselor professional identities. Options for students include the American Counseling Association (ACA), the



American School Counselor Association (ASCA), the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA), or the state-level branches of these organizations (for example, the American Counseling Association of Iowa (ACA of Iowa), the Iowa Mental Health Counselors Association (IMHCA), the Iowa School Counselor Association (ISCA), etc.). Students submit initial proof of membership in COUN 505 – Professional Orientation. Students must maintain membership status while enrolled in the School Counseling or Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs. For more information on professional organizations, please see the *Professional Associations* section of this handbook.

## Gatekeeping and Student Evaluation

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.”

Students in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling programs at Northwestern are consistently assessed over the course of their program for appropriate development in knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Ongoing assessment includes students’ academic work in courses, review of practice sessions, clinical supervision, and live supervision, as well as students’ interpersonal interactions with faculty, instructors, peers, clients, site supervisors, and staff. Formal assessment of students occurs in COUN 505 – Professional Orientation, COUN 605 – Skills II, and COUN 635 – Capstone, which represent natural milestones in a student’s progression; the program’s first course, the last course before Practicum, and the final course of the program. Students must pass each official review in order to continue in their degree plan. Students are also formally assessed throughout their Professional Practice Experience.

Program faculty, staff, and site supervisors have a professional and ethical gatekeeping responsibility to:

- 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;
- 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;
- Address and attempt to correct competency concerns related to (but not limited to):

- 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.

## Student Retention and Remediation

A student's acceptance into one of Northwestern's Counseling programs 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 or school counselor. Assessment of these skills and dispositions necessarily involves subjective academic judgment by faculty members, site supervisors, and others placed in an evaluatory role for students in the Counseling programs.

Based on ongoing evaluation and assessment of students in the Counseling programs, 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 evaluatory role for students in the Counseling programs 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 Counseling Program regarding changes the student must make in order to remain in their program, to document student progress toward remediation, and, when necessary, to effect 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 or School 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 evaluatory 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 standards of practice of the American School Counseling Association (ASCA), 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:** Students will receive notification of remediation or dismissal via email from the Counseling Program Director. A student may appeal a remediation or dismissal decision by filing a written appeal with the Dean of the Graduate School and Adult Learning within three days of the date of the remediation/dismissal email. If a student wishes to appeal the decision of the Dean of the Graduate School and Adult Learning, 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.

## Program Progressions

### School Counseling Program Progression

The Northwestern College School Counseling Program offers endorsements in Elementary Professional School Counseling and Secondary Professional School Counseling. In order to receive these endorsements, students must meet a series of general requirements established by the Iowa Administrative Code. Students who do not come to the program already holding an Iowa teaching license must take an additional course in the School Counseling program (SCO 510) to ensure they meet these educational requirements, making their total program requirement 63 credit hours. Students who come to the program already holding an Iowa teaching license do not need to take SCO 510, making their total program requirement 60 credit hours.

#### First Semester

##### Summer Session 1:

COUN 505 – Professional Orientation (3 credit hours)

SCO 510 – School Counseling Knowledge, Skills, & Dispositions (non-teachers only) (3 credit hours)

**Summer Session 2:**

COUN 515 – Ethics (3 credit hours)

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

**Second Semester**

**Fall Session 1:**

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

**Fall Session 2:**

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

**Third Semester**

**Spring Session 1:**

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

**Spring Session 2:**

SCO 515 – Foundations of School Counseling (3 credit hours)

**Fourth Semester**

**Summer Session 1:**

SCO 520 – Child & Adolescent Diagnosis & Treatment (3 credit hours)

COUN 510 – Assessment & Appraisal (3 credit hours)

**Summer Session 2:**

SCO 550 – School Counseling Contextual Dimensions (3 credit hours)

**Fifth Semester**

**Fall Session 1:**

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

**Fall Session 2:**

COUN 605 – Skills II (3 credit hours)

**Sixth Semester**

**Spring Session 1:**

SCO 610 – Practicum (3 credit hours)

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

**Spring Session 2:**

SCO 610 – Practicum (Continued)

**Seventh Semester**

**Summer Session 1:**

SCO 540 – School Counseling Practice & Programs (3 credit hours)

**Summer Session 2:**

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

**Eighth Semester**

**Fall Session 1:**

SCO 615 – Internship I (3 credit hours)

**Fall Session 2:**

COUN 580 – Career Development (3 credit hours)

SCO 615 – Internship I (continued)

### **Ninth Semester**

#### **Spring Session 1:**

SCO 620 – Internship II (3 credit hours)

#### **Spring Session 2:**

SCO 620 – Internship II (continued)

COUN 635 – Capstone (3 credit hours)

## **Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program Progression**

The Clinical Mental Health Counseling program is designed in a cohort model and is based on students usually taking two classes per session for a total of four classes per semester. This allows students to complete the full graduate degree program in six 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**

#### **Summer Session 1:**

COUN 505 – Professional Orientation (3 credit hours)

COUN 515 – Ethics (3 credit hours)

#### **Summer Session 2:**

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

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

### **Second Semester**

#### **Fall Session 1:**

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

COUN 510 – Assessment & Appraisal (3 credit hours)

#### **Fall Session 2:**

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

CMHC 515 – Marriage & Family (3 credit hours)

### **Third Semester**

#### **Spring Session 1:**

CMHC 520 – Diagnosis & Psychopathology (3 credit hours)

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

#### **Spring Session 2:**

CMHC 520 – Diagnosis & Psychopathology (continued)

COUN 605 – Skills II (3 credit hours)

### **Fourth Semester**

#### **Summer Session 1:**

CMHC 610 – Practicum (3 credit hours)

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

#### **Summer Session 2:**

CMHC 610 – Practicum (continued)

CMHC 575 – Psychopharmacology & Neuroscience (3 credit hours)

### Fifth Semester

#### Fall Session 1:

CMHC 615 – Internship I (3 credit hours)

COUN 580 – Career Development (3 credit hours)

#### Fall Session 2:

CMHC 615 – Internship I (continued)

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

### Sixth Semester

#### Spring Session 1:

CMHC 620 – Internship II (3 credit hours)

Elective (Electives include CMHC 540 – Advanced Group Counseling, CMHC 545 – Attachment Theory in Practice, and CMHC 570 – Foundations of Addictions Counseling)

#### Spring Session 2:

CMHC 620 – Internship II (continued)

COUN 635 – Capstone (3 credit hours)

### Dual Track Students

It is possible for a student to complete both the School Counseling and the Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs concurrently as there is substantial overlap in the required courses. To accomplish this, students must complete all of the required courses for both tracks, and must complete separate Internship experiences for each track. As an example, for a student who comes to the programs already holding an Iowa teaching license, this would mean the full 60 hours of the School Counseling track, plus CMHC 515, CMHC 520, CMHC 575, and the CMHC elective, and COUN 615 and COUN 620 for the Clinical Mental Health Counseling track, for a total of 78 graduate credit hours. Completing both graduate degrees would potentially prepare a student for licensure as both a Licensed Professional Counselor and a Licensed School Counselor in their state.

### Changes to Degree Plan

Students who wish to make changes to their degree plan should consult with their enrollment counselor for assistance. Because the programs are designed in a cohort model, classes are not offered every semester and at times, courses are only offered one time per year. The standard course progression for both programs 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 & Skills of Counseling I
- COUN 551 – Theories & Skills of Counseling II
- COUN 555 – Crisis, Trauma, & Suicide
- COUN 605 – Skills II
- SCO/CMHC 610 – Practicum
- COUN 530 – Group Counseling & Group Work
- SCO/CMHC 615 – Internship I
- SCO/CMHC 620 – Internship II

- SCO/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.

## Classroom Guests and Observations

Given the clinical nature of course content and class discussions, the personal nature of many class discussions, and the ethical necessity to maintain confidentiality of client identities and session content, classroom guests and observations are not allowed in any instructional setting.

## Professional Practice Experience

The 2016 Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) Standards define *professional practice* as "Professional practice, which includes practicum and internship, provides for 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." Additional information, policies, and procedures regarding the Northwestern College Counseling Programs professional practice experience can be found in the Professional Practice Handbook.

## Individual Counseling Sessions

Students in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling programs are required to complete five (5) individual counseling sessions prior to the start of Practicum. This requirement is based in the belief that 1) in order to be an effective counselor, a person must have explored the life experiences and family history that have helped to shape the person's core beliefs and perspectives, and 2) experiencing counseling as a client can be one effective step in preparing for the program's Professional Practice Experience. Additional information, policies, and procedures regarding the Northwestern College Counseling Programs professional practice experience can be found in the Professional Practice Handbook.

- The sessions should be completed in the semester prior to when the student plans to enroll in CMHC/SCO 610 – Practicum.
- The content of the sessions is confidential. However, verification of attendance by the counselor is required (see the Individual Counseling Verification Form in the Counseling Program Blackboard Learning Community).
- The provider of the sessions must be a licensed mental health professional in the state in which the student lives and be in good standing with their licensure board.
- If a student has engaged in counseling in the past, the student may be able to obtain new sessions with the counselor they have used in the past, but they must obtain five (5) new sessions within the timeframe of this program requirement and have the counselor sign the Individual Counseling Verification Form.
- All five sessions should be completed with the same counselor. If after the first meeting the student determines that the counselor is not a good match, the student is encouraged to change counselors and obtain five sessions with a counselor who is a better fit.

- There are no exceptions for having completed this requirement before entering the Professional Practice Experience.

### CMHC/SCO 610 – Practicum

The purpose of the Practicum course is for students to continue building on the skills they have developed in COUN 550 – Theories & Skills of Counseling I, COUN 551 – Theories & Skills of Counseling II, and COUN 605 – Skills II where they worked with fellow students in practice sessions. Practicum students provide services to actual clients at their approved Practicum sites in a closely supervised setting that helps facilitate their initial development as counselors. Students are required to complete a minimum of 100 Practicum hours of which 40 hours must be direct client services. Students are also required (CACREP 3.E) to gain experience with leading or co-leading groups. This requirement can either be met at the students' Practicum/Internship sites or through class assignments in the synchronous Practicum/Internship class meetings. Students will receive weekly supervision from their assigned site supervisor and will also participate in weekly group supervision through the synchronous meetings of the SCO/CMHC 610 – Practicum course (via Zoom). Failure to meet either the experience and/or the supervision hours requirement will result in a failing grade for the course. Students are required to secure professional liability insurance prior to the start of Practicum and provide verification of this insurance to the Counseling Programs Clinical Coordinator. This insurance must be maintained until the student completes their full Internship experience.

In addition to working with actual clients, Practicum students will develop skills and knowledge related to working in their chosen counseling setting, including timeliness, documentation, and site policies and procedures. Students will video record counseling sessions so the sessions can be reviewed and feedback provided by their Practicum instructor. Additional review and/or live observation may be conducted by the student's site supervisor. Students will also develop case conceptualizations to help them incorporate, apply, and integrate diagnosis and treatment planning skills with the relational skills they have been learning and practicing to this point in their program.

The following courses are prerequisites for CMHC/SCO 610 – Practicum:

- 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 555 – Crisis, Trauma, & Suicide
- COUN 605 – Skills II

Students must attend the mandatory Professional Practice Orientation session which is held two semesters prior to the start of Practicum. Information on the orientation will be disseminated to students via email. The Professional Practice Orientation will provide students with critical information on the Professional Practice Experience, requirements that must be met related to the Professional Practice Experience, deadlines, and tips/best practices for searching for a Practicum/Internship site. If for any reason a student cannot attend the mandatory Professional Practice Orientation, the student must communicate their conflict in advance to the Counseling Program Clinical Coordinator and proactively make other arrangements with the Clinical Coordinator for an alternate method of orientation.

Students must secure their own Practicum/Internship sites, but all sites must be approved by the Counseling Program Clinical Coordinator in advance. Additional information, policies, and procedures regarding the Northwestern College Counseling Programs Professional Practice Experience can be found in the Professional Practice Handbook.

### CMHC/SCO 615, CMHC/SCO 620, CMHC/SCO 625 – Internship

Following successful completion of CMHC/SCO 610 – Practicum with a B (3.0 grade points) or better, School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling students move into their Internship experience. The Internship experience is comprised of CMHC/SCO 615 – Internship I, and CMHC/SCO 620 – Internship II. When needed, students can spread their Internship experience over additional semesters and take CMHC/SCO 625 – Internship III to complete the Internship experience. The Internship experience is designed to continue students' development as clinical mental health counselors or as school counselors through closely supervised experiences at approved Internship sites. Students must continue to provide verification of coverage of professional liability insurance throughout their Internship experience.

The Internship experience is a 600-hour experience of which 240 hours must be direct services to clients. Students are also required to gain experience with leading or co-leading groups (CACREP 3.E). This requirement can either be met at the students' Practicum/Internship sites or through class assignments in the synchronous Practicum/Internship class meetings. Students receive weekly site supervision from their assigned site supervisor and weekly group supervision through their participation in the synchronous Internship class meetings (via Zoom). Failure to meet either the experience and/or the supervision hours requirement will result in a failing grade. Students are required to complete a minimum of two semesters of the Counseling Internship Experience, totaling six (6) credit hours. If students do not complete the 600 hours within two semesters, they may take an additional semester of Internship III to complete the 600-hour requirement. Students should consult with their EC regarding this option.

Students must secure their own Practicum/Internship sites, but all sites must be approved by the Counseling Program Clinical Coordinator in advance. Additional information, policies, and procedures regarding the Northwestern College Counseling Program Professional Practice Experience can be found in the Professional Practice Handbook.

### 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 of Northwestern Counseling students to benefit subsequent cohorts of Northwestern Counseling students. Tevera also 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.



## The Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE)

The Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE) assesses students who have completed graduate-level courses in a counseling curriculum. It parallels CACREP's standards for preparing students in the eight core content areas (see below). The CPCE serves as the comprehensive exam for both the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program and the School Counselor program. Students in both programs 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 until a passing score is earned in order to meet the programs' graduation requirements.

The CPCE covers the eight CACREP core content areas:

- Professional counseling orientation and ethical practice
- Social and cultural diversity
- Human growth and development
- Career development
- Counseling and helping relationships
- Group counseling and group work
- Assessment and testing
- Research and program evaluation

These topics are comprehensively covered in dedicated courses as well as having information integrated into additional courses throughout both programs. Additionally, students are required to purchase *Mastering the National Counselor Examination and the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), by Erford, Hays, & Crockett (2019) in their first semester. Students are encouraged to utilize this resource throughout their program in preparing to take the CPCE.

### CPCE Eligibility

Northwestern students in the School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs are eligible to take the CPCE in the last two semesters of their program. For Clinical Mental Health Counseling students following the standard course progression, this could mean taking the CPCE as early as in the Fall, concurrent with COUN 585 – Research & Program Evaluation. For School Counseling students this could mean taking the CPCE as early as in the Fall, concurrent with COUN 580 – Career Development. However, because the CPCE assesses knowledge in the eight CACREP core areas, students will benefit from waiting until they are fully engaged in COUN 585 or COUN 580 before taking the CPCE as those subjects are assessed by the CPCE.

Because the CPCE must be passed in order to successfully complete either program, it is recommended that students take the exam well in advance of when they intend to graduate. This 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](mailto:cce@cce-global.org)

## The National Counselor Exam (NCE) and Praxis Exam

The National Counselor Exam (NCE) serves as the licensure exam for Licensed Professional Counselors in many states. The Praxis Exam serves as the licensure exam for Licensed School Counselors in many states. Northwestern students in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling programs ***are not required to take or to pass the NCE or the Praxis Exam as a condition of completing their programs.***

## The National Counselor Exam (NCE)

Passing the NCE (or sometimes the National Clinical Mental Health Counselor Examination – the NCMHCE) is part of the licensure process in many states. Passing either the NCE or the NCMHCE is required for licensure in the state of Iowa. Starting 1/1/2024 (per NBCC internal policies), only students and alumni from CACREP-accredited programs will be eligible for the NCC certification. The NCC certification allows students in CACREP-accredited programs to take the NCE while they are still students. Because Northwestern's programs cannot apply for CACREP-accreditation until the first cohorts graduate, students will initially have to wait until they have graduated with their Master's degree to take the NCE (or NCMHCE). Once Northwestern's programs achieve CACREP-accreditation, graduates will be able to apply for the National Certified Counselor (NCC) credential if they so choose.

The NCE covers the eight CACREP core content areas:

- Professional counseling orientation and ethical practice
- Social and cultural diversity
- Human growth and development
- Career development
- Counseling and helping relationships
- Group counseling and group work
- Assessment and testing
- Research and program evaluation

Additionally, the NCE assesses six practice domains based on a national job analysis of more than 16,000 credentialed counselors. These practice domains are:

- Professional practice and ethics
- Intake, assessment, and diagnosis
- Areas of clinical focus
- Treatment planning
- Counseling skills and interventions
- Core counseling attributes

## NCE Eligibility

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* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), by Erford, Hays, & Crockett (2019), which students purchase in the

first semester of their program and utilize throughout their program, 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](mailto:nbcc@nbcc.org)

### The Praxis Exam

The State of Iowa does not require taking and passing the Praxis Exam as part of the licensure process for School Counselors. However, other states do require passing the Praxis 5421, the Praxis II, other specific Praxis tests, or other specified tests. Each student should be aware of the licensure requirements in the state in which they reside. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) does a good job of keeping track of state licensure requirements on their website:

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/State-Requirements-Programs/State-Licensure-Requirements>

### Praxis Eligibility

Because of the diversity of School Counseling testing requirements across states, including having no testing requirements for School Counselors in many states, eligibility for taking these exams varies. Students who desire to take a School Counseling exam like the Praxis should reach out to ETS – who administers the Praxis exam – for more information.

### ETS

ETS is a private educational testing and measurement organization. They develop, administer, and score more than 50 million tests per year, including the GRE, the TOEFL, and the Praxis tests. For additional information about the Praxis exams, visit the ETS website at <http://www.ets.org/praxis/>

ETS - Praxis  
P.O. Box 6051  
Princeton, NJ 08541-6051  
(609) 771-7395  
[praxis@ets.org](mailto:praxis@ets.org)

### Licensure Requirements

Licensure requirements vary for professional counselors (LPCs) and school counselors (LSCs) and they vary by the 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.

### 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  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
321 E. 12<sup>th</sup> St.  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
(515) 281-0254  
[PLPublic@idph.iowa.gov](mailto:PLPublic@idph.iowa.gov)

### Licensure of School Counselors (LSCs)

Students in the School Counseling program may choose to pursue licensure as a school counselor in their state. Because licensure of school counselors is handled at the state level, the exact title of this licensure can vary by the state. The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) 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 ASCA's information at: <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/State-Requirements-Programs/State-Licensure-Requirements>

### Licensure of School Counselors (LSCs) in Iowa

Northwestern's School Counseling program prepares students to receive a School Counseling endorsement. This endorsement is granted by the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners. The contact at the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners for the School Counseling Endorsement is Mike Cavin.

Iowa Board of Educational Examiners  
701 E. Court Ave. Suite A  
Des Moines, IA 50309  
(515) 281-3437 (Mike Cavin)  
[mike.cavin@iowa.gov](mailto:mike.cavin@iowa.gov)

## 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 final degree conferrals.

Issues with transcripts can be directed to the Registrar's office at [registrar@nwciowa.edu](mailto: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>.

There is no way to expedite diploma conferrals.

Issues with diplomas can be directed to the Registrar's office at [registrar@nwciowa.edu](mailto:registrar@nwciowa.edu).

## Letters of Recommendation/Licensure Verification

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 School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs 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.

## Professional Associations

Students in the School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs are expected to develop their professional identity in their chosen counseling specialty area by joining a professional association and by providing verification of their membership in their first semester of their program. Membership in a professional association provides students professional development opportunities, opportunities for engagement and leadership within the profession, and connections to receiving important information on issues important to the counseling profession at the state and national levels.

Most professional organizations offer reduced membership rates to students and many offer some of the following benefits: free student liability insurance, professional publications (journals and newsletters), reduced registration fees for professional meetings and conferences sponsored by the organization, eligibility for member services, opportunities to engage in advocacy including legislative advocacy, certifications, training programs, and interaction with other professionals with similar interests. Refer to each organization's materials for more information on the benefits of membership. The list below provides some suggestions to explore, but there are many others.

**Websites for Professional Organizations**

- American Counseling Association (ACA): <http://www.counseling.org>
- American School Counselors Association (ASCA): <http://schoolcounselor.org>
- American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA): <http://amhca.org>
- Iowa Mental Health Counselors Association: <https://imhca.net/>
- Iowa School Counselor Association: <http://www.iowaschoolcounselors.org/>

**Technology Requirements and Competencies**

The Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling programs are both online programs and coursework will be completed online whether the individual class is an asynchronous or a synchronous class. However, the programs include both asynchronous and synchronous courses and all students must meet the minimum technology requirements discussed here to be successful in these online programs.

Students' ability to be successful in these programs 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. See the Software Requirements section below for more information. 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.

The Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling programs are both fully online graduate degree programs and, as such, 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.

# Acknowledgement of Handbook

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This Student Handbook for the MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and the MA in School Counseling programs is an addendum to the policies included in the Graduate Catalog and is provided to both applicants and to students in the programs. 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 School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs are expected to read and follow all policies and procedures outlined in the Graduate Catalog, this Student Handbook, and the ACA Code of Ethics. This handbook has been prepared to answer questions that are not addressed in other Northwestern College documents. Students are responsible for the information provided in the Graduate Catalog as well as this handbook.

[Graduate Catalog](#)

[ACA Code of Ethics](#)

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (print name), have read this document (the Counseling 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 \_\_\_\_\_