Individual Counseling Practicum (HCE 690 / HCE 691)

Welcome to the Counselor Education program's web site for obtaining information on the practicum course. We believe that this course is among the most important experiences in our graduate program. Every effort will be made to enable students to have a range of experiences that will enhance their personal and career development.

The practicum, required of all Counselor Education students, provides opportunities for students to demonstrate their counseling skills under close supervision in a laboratory setting. Clients should come from the environment in which the students are preparing to work. The primary goal of the practicum course is to develop the expertise of counselor trainees to do individual counseling in a professional setting. This is accomplished by helping a student combine her/his counseling skills and personality into an effective therapeutic style, while enhancing the student's growth as a person and as a professional counselor.

Practicum offers students the opportunity to develop, sharpen, and demonstrate individual counseling skills. It is important for students to become aware of their biases and how these may affect the counseling process. The Counselor Education Program promotes personal growth in students by encouraging them to develop attitudes, values, and beliefs which will enhance and facilitate the helping process: HCE 690/691 provides this opportunity in a realistic setting.

During the individual counseling practicum class, students will have a regular 2½ hour class and a one hour individual supervision session each week. Starting the second week of class students will be seeing 3-4 clients a week and taping sessions, writing up extensive notes on these sessions, reviewing all tapes, and doing a verbatim for some of those weeks.

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Click here to download all of the above practicum materials. (PDF)
Step-by-Step Directions for Starting Practicum

**Step 1:** Complete the Application for Practicum. Students are required to complete an application by specific deadline dates*:

- November 15 - to enroll for the following fall semester
- September 1 - to enroll for the following spring semester

Specific courses are required prior to the practicum and are listed on the application form for practicum. Applications may be submitted subsequent to these dates, but will be accepted only on a space available basis. All applicants will be notified prior to the advance registration period as to their status. Those accepted will be given a section assignment. This will allow the student adequate time to plan for additional courses prior to the open of either advance or regular registration.

**Step 2:** Meet with Faculty Advisor. The next step is meeting with your advisor to discuss your ideas and to ask questions about a possible practicum site. You should schedule an appointment with your faculty advisor by the following deadlines:

- February 15 - to enroll for the following fall semester
- September 15 - to enroll for the following spring semester

**Step 3:** Attend introductory meeting. Students are expected to attend the introductory meeting prior to practicum (scheduled by March for the fall semester and October for the spring semester). At this meeting, students are informed about the selection process for practicum sites, mandatory insurance, course requirements, and course materials (handouts). Personal disclosure statements and the need for background checks/fingerprinting (required for schools and some sites) will also be discussed.

**Step 4:** Contact the field placement coordinator. Following the introductory meeting, students need to immediately start thinking about selecting a site. Select a site with the advice of your advisor and the consent of your instructor and the University site coordinator. This process will be explained at the introductory meeting. Do not contact any site without checking with the field coordinator first. You should contact the field placement coordinator by the following deadlines:

- April 1 - to arrange a site for the following fall semester.
- November 1 - to arrange a site for the following spring semester

**Step 5:** Course registration. The application for practicum is an in-house application. Students must still register as you do for other courses during the university’s advance registration. Advance registration for the fall semester occurs in April and in November for the spring semester.

**Step 6:** Meet with site liaison. Once a practicum site is approved by the field coordinator, students should plan to meet with the site and receive agreement concerning the start date and hours at the site.

**Step 7:** Submit the Site Selection Form. When the practicum negotiations have been completed between you and site liaison, contact the field Placement Coordinator immediately, then complete the Practicum Site Selection Form and return to the program office (400 Bailey Hall) within one week in order to secure your site.

**IMPORTANT** - The site cannot be formally approved until all paperwork is complete.

**Step 8:** Liability insurance. All students in practicum (also required for HCE 627 Group Counseling and HCE 686 Internship in Counselor Education) are required to obtain professional liability insurance prior to the start of the course. Student may not begin to see clients until proof of insurance has been submitted to the program office. Students also must provide the program with a copy of the insurance binder (proof
of insurance) by the first class meeting. Several sources of insurance are listed at http://www.usm.maine.edu/cehd/Counselor-Education/Liability.htm

**Step 9: Fingerprinting and background checks.** Schools and some clinical sites may require background checks/fingerprinting. This will be discussed at the introductory meeting. If required by the site, students must have their fingerprints taken through a process approved by the Maine Department of Education. For more information, go to Maine’s website at: https://www10.informe.org/cgi-bin/dps/fingerprint/select_type.pl

**Step 10: Personal disclosure statement.** Before you begin seeing clients, develop a personal disclosure statement that is in line with the site and is approved by the University instructor. The Disclosure Statement shall contain the following information.

- Name, title, address, and phone number;
- A listing of degrees, credentials, and licenses;
- A statement of areas of competence;
- A general statement of counseling philosophy and a general proposed course of treatment;
- Confidentiality;
- Supervision
- Fees and insurance;
- Appointments; and
- Dissatisfaction/complaints

Students may use their own creativity and academic license to formulate a Disclosure Statement that changes the order or integrates the categories. The only requirement is that all of the above information be included in their statement.

**Client load**

Students will have clients to see on a weekly basis starting week 2 and should plan on seeing 3 clients minimum per week starting the second week of class. Clients are to be adults, over 18, unless students have taken HCE622-Counseling Children and Adolescents.

**Rehabilitation students** – Students must work with clients with disabilities.

**Mental Health students** – plan on a minimum of 3 adult clients a week. Students must have taken the HCE 622-Counseling Children and Adolescent course to see clients under the age of 18.

**School counseling students** – Plan on also seeing 2-3 children or adolescents (3 often works best as children are frequently absent or on field trips). At least one client should be elementary age (K-5); one client should be middle school age (grades 6-8); and one client should be of high school age (grades 9-12; or freshman in college).

Students will counsel clients weekly ending the week prior to the last class. This is important for students to gain in skills over time with supervision.

**Important Note:** The practicum site liaison is to assist the student in finding appropriate clients to work with; will oversee clients in the case of emergencies, possible dangers, or needed referrals; and will assist students in this. The liaison is not the student’s supervisor but will still want to be briefed in some agencies or schools.

**Responsibilities of student in supervision (with their USM supervisor)**

1. Do an intake on all clients and give a copy of this to the USM supervisor who will place it in the special file in the program office (400 Bailey).
2. See at least 3 clients weekly starting the second week of class.

3. Prepare notes on all sessions following the format of USM supervisor. These must be done weekly and on the day of the meeting.

4. Record all client sessions either with audio or video tapes.

5. Come to supervision prepared to discuss each client, with each of tapes cued up to a point for feedback and exploration.

6. Contact the USM supervisor immediately in the case of suicidal ideology or actions, suspicion of abuse, or suspicion of other situations of possible danger or harm.

7. Prepare 3 verbatims and pass them to the USM supervisor.

8. Participate in mid-term and final evaluation.

9. Communicate to the university supervisor expectations of the site liaison.

Responsibilities of USM clinical supervisor

1. Meet with each supervisee for 1 hour per week starting the second week of class and ending the last week of class or when student has completed all client sessions.

2. Review all clients each week. Have students come prepared with tapes keyed up to places the student wishes to discuss.

3. Keep track of student’s intakes and client sessions

4. Have a copy of intakes of all clients filed in the program office (400 Bailey) in the practicum file.

5. Periodically take student tapes to review more fully.

6. Review all notes and analysis notes and give feedback.

7. Communicate issues that arise to the supervisor and site liaison as they affect clients.

8. Evaluate supervisees at mid-term and at the end of semester. A copy of the evaluation will be handed to both the instructor and the student. If desired by site, consult with site liaison during mid-term evaluation.

9. Discuss any concerns with practicum instructor on a regular basis.

10. Collect and file all one-page summaries and signed forms.

11. Complete final form documenting total client contacts.

Responsibilities of site liaison/supervisor

1. Site liaison/supervisor will select and screen clients that are appropriate for the practicum student.

2. Site liaison/supervisor will be responsible for managing the referral process, if necessary, and other transitions following the completion of practicum.
3. Site liaison/supervisor will serve to assist in overseeing clients in the case of emergencies, possible dangers, needed referrals, and as needed by the site.

4. Site liaison/supervisor will communicate issues that arise to the university supervisor.

5. If desired, consult with USM supervisor around mid-term evaluation.

**Responsibilities of University site coordinator**

1. Contact site liaison prior to each semester.

2. Meet with instructors and students in April and November.

3. Collect, review, and synthesis of site evaluations.

**Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is a crucial aspect of the professional counselor's role. Every counselor trainee has the obligation to abide by the ethical standards established by the profession. The following is taken from the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics:

Counselors respect clients’ rights to privacy. Counselors solicit private information from clients only when it is beneficial to the counseling process. (Ethical Standards, American Counseling Association, 2005, Sec. B.1.b). www.counseling.org

(Also, see the entire section of Section B on "Confidentiality, Privileged Communication, and Privacy" of the ACA Code of Ethics)

The standards of the American Psychological Association with regard to confidentiality (4.01 Maintaining Confidentiality) are:

Psychologists have a primary obligation and take reasonable precautions to protect confidential information obtained through or stored in any medium, recognizing that the extent and limits of confidentiality may be regulated by law or established by institutional rules or professional or scientific relationship. www.apa.org/ethic.

These statements should guide the professional and ethical conduct of every student in use of audio and video tape recordings. In viewing or listening to recorded counseling or therapy sessions, counseling students are bound by the same legal and ethical considerations as if the client talked directly with a counselor or psychologist. Any questions that may arise regarding confidentiality should be directed to your instructor.

**Disposition of Records Statement**

In the practicum course, normal case records are kept throughout the semester until the conclusion of the course. These records may include any of the following: intake notes, assessments, case notes, goal statements, release of information forms, a copy of the disclosure statement, video and/or audio tapes (these are to be taped over following supervision for each session), transcriptions, tape evaluations and critiques, and/or all other records. The aforementioned case records are held throughout the length of the course; upon completion of the semester, they will be destroyed or erased. The following notes will be permanent records and are exceptions to the above: the summary statement, a signed disclosure statement, all release of information forms and any other materials deemed necessary by the supervising professor. These documents will be kept as a permanent record for ten years at which time they will be destroyed.
Professional Affiliation

It is strongly recommended that Counselor Education students join the American Counseling Association (ACA), nationally recognized professional organization for those in counseling and human resource development. ACA offers students a special membership rate, as well as half-rate for any of its 13 national divisions. The divisions represent counselors in a variety of settings. Most importantly, ACA members are eligible to purchase ACA liability insurance at a low rate.

Purpose and Expectations of Practicum

The Practicum provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate their counseling skills under close supervision in a realistic setting. Clients or groups should come from the environment in which the students are preparing to work. The primary goal of the Practicum is to help students combine their counseling skills and personality into an effective therapeutic style.

Expectations

1. There are certain fundamental skills and knowledge which students should possess prior to enrolling in the course. These are:
   a. knowledge of self
   b. listening skills
   c. responding skills
   d. willingness to learn and to change

2. In addition, students should be willing:
   a. to experiment with a variety of counseling techniques
   b. to examine their styles of interpersonal interaction.

3. As part of the practicum, students will be expected to:
   a. practice skills learned in previous courses;
   b. learn how effective they are in a helping relationship, under close supervision;
   c. discuss their experiences with others in a supportive setting;
   d. learn what problems others are encountering and what solutions could be considered;
   e. discuss techniques that are successful;
   f. work with a variety of clients in a variety of settings, when possible;
   g. experience those forces that are unique to different settings, i.e., schools and agencies;
   h. evaluate their professional growth;
   i. relate theory to practice; and
   j. research areas of individual interest.

4. Students should have a general knowledge of the acquisition and modification of human behavior advanced in the prominent approaches to counseling. Also, they should have an understanding of the techniques used by various practitioners. The following is a list of theoretical approaches with which students should be familiar.
   a. Psychodynamic
   b. cognitive/behavioral
   c. humanistic/existential
   d. developmental
   e. systematic
You may wish to use the following in your review of these approaches:


In working with young children, you may wish to review:


Performance Criteria

The following list of performance objectives, along with other course requirements as designated by the instructor and/or supervisor, is the basis for determination of the course grade. After completing the practicum the student should be able to:

1. Develop procedures for meetings with clients. establish an assignment at an institutional setting
   a. contact institutional supervisor
   b. obtain client referrals
   c. arrange counseling sessions, time duration, and place, with clients
   d. have face-to-face meetings with clients
2. Establish a safe and accepting environment for the client.
   a. recognize the extent of inhibitions of client in interaction with the counselor
   b. assist the client in overcoming inhibitions
   c. if needed, discuss strengths/weaknesses and limitations with client
3. Elicit information from the client when appropriate, obtain basic biographical data
   a. communicate the client's reason for being there
   b. ascertain the attitudes and feelings of the client
   c. establish what the client expects from the counselor and the counseling process
4. Recognize and understand the content presented by the client
   a. listen to the details (who, what, when, where, why?) of what the client is saying
   b. develop the ability to integrate facets of the counseling process
5. Recognize and understand the affect of the client
   a. recognize and understand change in the client's affect
   b. recognize and understand extremes in the client's affect
6. Distinguish the differences in the cognitive and affective messages of the client
   a. recognize the discrepancies between the extremes of affect and content
   b. recognize the inconsistencies and cognitive messages
7. Transmit understanding of the affective and cognitive message to the client.
   a. paraphrase/restate, when appropriate, what has been communicated
   b. verbally demonstrate understanding of client content and feeling
8. Distinguish the client's needs from one's own needs. know one's own inhibitions
   a. know oneself, including one's limitations and strengths/weaknesses
   b. recognize similarities and differences between oneself and the client
   c. avoid bringing one's own problems into the counseling session
   d. make the client's problems priorities of sessions.

9. Articulate the client's problems.
   a. identify the client's problem areas
   b. identify the personality dimensions related to the client's problems
   c. specify problems in order of priority of client's needs
   d. determine what the client has done up to now to solve the problem
   e. determine the external and internal resources available to the client
   f. determine if the problem is within the range of the counselor's training and experiences
      and, if not, define referral procedures

**Procedures for Addressing Unsatisfactory Practicum/Internship Performance**

Students deemed by virtue of their mid-term assessments to not be making satisfactory progress in their internship are required to take the following steps:

1. jointly meet with both your university and site supervisors to discuss the student difficulties and develop a plan of remediation.

2. collaboratively decide on corrective action that includes:
   a. specifying the specific area(s) of weakness;
   b. delineating concrete steps to remedy the problem(s);
   c. identifying how each step will be evaluated;
   d. agreeing on specific timelines for achieving satisfactory performance for each step.

3. at the end of the agreed upon timetable, the parties will re-convene and assess student progress, repeating the above steps if the supervisors determine that student performance remains unsatisfactory and recommend further remediation.

**Academic Support**

Students encountering difficulty with a course, believing that they should be performing at a higher level, or requiring adaptations, or accommodations, should consult with the instructor as soon as possible. Assistance with these and other matters is available at the following USM offices: The Learning Center, 253 Luther Bonney Hall, 780-4228; the Office for Academic Support for Students with Disabilities, 242 Luther Bonney Hall, 780-4706; University Counseling Services, 105 Payson-Smith Hall (Portland) and 110 Upton Hall (Gorham), 780-4050.

***Please refer to the web site to review/photocopy the various forms.***