

STUDENT HANDBOOK



PURPOSE OF MANUAL

Welcome to the Counselor Education Program in the Department of Human Studies at the University of Alabama at Birmingham! It is hoped that this program will be personally and professionally rewarding for you.

This online manual is designed to provide you with information about the counseling concentrations and offer guidance during your period of study. Students in the Counselor Education Program should become familiar with the information in both this publication and the catalog available from the Graduate School. If you have further questions regarding the material presented in this handbook, it may be helpful to meet with your faculty advisor for further clarification.

FACULTY BELIEF STATEMENTS

Faculty in the Counselor Education Program believe effective counseling programs:

- take place within a learning community in which the stakeholders collaborate to evaluate and improve programs.
- guide candidates through a developmental process extending across pre-service and in-service contexts
- promote and value diversity within the faculty, candidates, and curricula

- **guide candidates to continually evaluate and improve their practices through a process of critical self-reflection**
- **provide candidates with instruction consistent with sound theory and research about learning**
- **prepare candidates through guided practice within applied contexts**
- **demonstrate to candidates the inter-relatedness of research, theory, and practice**
- **have explicit outcomes based on professional standards**
- **use multiple means of assessing candidate's achievement**

GOAL OF THE COUNSELOR EDUCATION PROGRAM

The overall goal of the Counselor Education Program is the enhancement of the worth, dignity, respect, and positive development of individuals in a diverse society.

The graduate program in counseling is designed to train students to make appropriate ethical decisions as counseling professionals. The most important of these decisions is the selection of strategies that empower clients to make personal decisions leading to the resolution of problems and resulting in an improved quality of life. Clients represent the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-values character of a diverse American society. Thus, counselors must understand human behavior in terms of its psychological, physiological, and sociological influences and make professional decisions within the legal and ethical constraints that are applicable.

Students in the counselor education program are encouraged, aided, and expected to perceive themselves as professionals who work closely and cooperatively with other professionals, such as those in public and private school systems, colleges and universities, community and private programs and agencies, and government service agencies. Professionalism in this context means that students are aware of their own knowledge and skill levels, abilities, characteristics, and perspectives, and the respective limits thereof, and that they behave in accordance with the highest ethical and professional standards. Students are expected to demonstrate acquired knowledge and skills throughout the program. Through feedback and self-exploration students will gain a better understanding of their responsibilities as counselors.

All counseling concentrations (community, rehabilitation, and school) are designed to meet the academic course work and field experience requirements for professional licensure established by the Alabama Board of Examiners in Counseling. In addition, the rehabilitation counseling concentration is accredited by the Council on Rehabilitation Education (C.O.R.E.) and meets the academic requirements for the CRC credential.

The school counseling program meets the course work and field experiences required by the Alabama State Department of Education for certification. As a program strength, the faculty who teach the counseling theory and skills courses are professional counselors who participate in limited practice in their specialty areas.

ADMISSIONS

Admission to graduate study in counseling *must* be initiated through the Graduate School and all required materials are to be submitted per specified instructions delineated by the Graduate School. Only after the Graduate School has received and reviewed the veracity of all required materials, is the application portfolio forwarded to the Counselor Education Program for review, evaluation, and processing.

To request and submit an application for admission to the Graduate School, please call or write the Graduate School using the address or telephone numbers listed below.

*The Graduate School
University of Alabama at Birmingham
511 University Center
Birmingham, AL 35294-1150
Telephone: (205) 934-8227
Fax: (205) 934-8413*

Again, it is important to note that only after the Graduate School has deemed the applicant's materials to be sufficient, is the student's application packet forwarded to the Counselor Education Program.

It is important to note that the Counseling Program has application deadlines separate from the Graduate School and students should submit materials in a timely manner so they are received and reviewed by the Graduate School at least one month in advance of the Counseling Program's deadline.

Each applicant seeking admission to a counseling program specialty must include with the other required materials a typewritten statement of professional purpose that reflects the applicant's background development, pertinent work-related experience, professional career objectives and specified ways that completion of this program will contribute to his/her goal for becoming a professional counselor.

Examinations/Grade Point Average

The application portfolio is reviewed by Counseling faculty and candidates with a) acceptable scores on either the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or Miller's Analogy Test (MAT) and b) acceptable Undergraduate

Grade Point Average (GPA) are contacted for an onsite interview. Applicants or potential applicants are encouraged to hold themselves to professional standards and refrain from inquiries about acceptance of their scores prior to official faculty review of applications. Following the review, each applicant will receive a formal letter from Counseling Program faculty. Applicants will receive either a letter of acceptance for an admissions interview or letter of denial of admission. Applicants should not infer they have been admitted into the program if granted an admissions interview.

Interviews

Applicants deemed to have acceptable scores, strong references, appropriate statement of purpose, and grades are required to participate in an admission interview with the program faculty. Candidates participating in the interview may be given one of three decisions: a) admit, b) admit with contingencies, or c) denied. Students are notified of their admission status by mail following the interview.

Admitted Students

When Counseling Faculty conclude a student is to be admitted to the program, an official letter will be mailed informing the student of the faculty decision along with the name of their assigned Faculty Advisor and other instructions. Students who are admitted in "Contingency Status" are required to meet regularly with their faculty advisors during the first 12 hours of coursework to keep them apprised of progress. Failure to do this could jeopardize the student's continuation in the program. Students admitted on Contingency must maintain a 3.0 GPA to continue in the program and meet all contingency requirements the first semester.

Admission Denial

When Counseling Faculty concludes a student is not to be admitted to the program, an official letter will be mailed informing the student of the faculty decision.

Enrollment Prior to Admission

Potential students may take classes prior to admission to the Counselor Education Program as "non-degree seeking" students. However, non-degree seeking students are limited to enroll in 12 hours of coursework. Non-degree seeking students may enroll in elective courses only. It would be important for non-degree seeking students to make an advising appointment with a faculty member prior to enrolling in elective courses as choices made could impact on future clinical placements. Non-degree seeking students are not permitted to take "core" counseling courses prior to admission. **There are no exceptions.** It is also important to note that students take coursework as a non-degree seeking student at their own

risk. Enrolling and passing non-degree seeking coursework does not guarantee the student admission into the program as admission criteria (e.g., test scores, undergraduate GPA, and interview) are the primary factors considered when reviewing student suitability for the program.

ADVISING AND REGISTRATION

Students admitted to the program will be assigned an Advisor according to the Concentration area (Community/Agency, School, or Rehabilitation). The student should make an appointment with the assigned advisor as soon as possible to draft a program outline. All counselors-in-training should have a program plan in place before taking courses.

Advising

At the time of admission, the applicant should obtain an outline (available on-line) of the courses pertinent to the concentration area. The new student is urged to meet with the assigned advisor at the earliest opportunity to discuss program requirements and expectations and to prepare a program plan that puts the courses in the required sequence.

The faculty advisor serves as a mentor as well as an advisor and should be consulted about registering for classes, about career plans and opportunities, about possible practicum and internship experiences that would be consistent with the student's goals, about courses that might enhance the graduate training program, and about matters relating to transfer of credits from other universities or colleges. The faculty advisor will review, with the student, the student's performance on the comprehensive examination and any other performance issues that might have a bearing on the student's progress through the program.

Faculty advisors should have office hours posted.

Registration Procedures

Students should follow registration procedures outlined in the UAB Class Schedule. Information about registration is also available through the UAB Home Page and Blazernet.

Registration may be done in person, by telephone or through the Internet. Please refer to the Class Schedule for specific information to access each option. **PLEASE NOTE PRE-REQUISITES FOR EACH COURSE. STUDENTS WILL BE ADMINISTRATIVELY DROPPED FROM COURSES WHEN PRE-REQUISITES HAVE NOT BEEN MET. COURSES WITH PRE-REQUISITE REQUIREMENTS MAY NOT BE TAKEN CONCURRENTLY.**

Adding and Dropping Courses

Please refer to the UAB class schedule for deadlines for each term and for the process. When dropping a course, the instructor should be notified as a matter of professional courtesy.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Students must enroll for the required pre-candidacy courses in Area I upon being admitted to graduate study in the program. Students may choose to enroll in the Area II pre-candidacy courses at their own discretion after consulting with their advisor. To be entitled to continue with the post-candidacy course work leading to the degree, the student must be formally "Admitted to Candidacy" for the master's degree. This occurs when the student successfully passes the Comprehensive Examination and is recommended by the faculty to proceed in the program.

In addition to the course of study requirements, students must also meet the following program requirements:

- **Personal Counseling**
 - Eight sessions are required.
 - Documentation of participation in personal counseling will be provided to the advisor. This documentation must be in the file prior to admission to candidacy.
- **Presentation at a Conference**
 - Students are expected to present at a professional conference.
 - This may be done in the form of a poster session or content session. It may be done individually or with a group.
 - Documentation must be provided to the advisor prior to application for degree.
- **Professional Development**
 - Student must provide documentation to his/her advisor that he/she has attended 15 hours of CSI-sponsored professional development seminars (or other program-approved professional development) in order to be admitted to candidacy.
- **"Cleared" Background Check**
 - A "cleared" status on a background check must be on file with the Clinical Coordinator prior to admission to candidacy.
 - No one may begin a clinical experience before a "cleared" status has been documented.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

Comprehensive exams must be taken upon completion of core courses. Students may, at their own risk, choose to take the comprehensive examination during a semester in which they are concurrently enrolled final core courses. However, faculty **do not endorse** this practice and encourage students to complete all core courses prior to taking the comprehensives. The test is administered the eighth Wednesday of each semester and requires a fee of \$35. Students are informed of their score on the examination via a formal letter from the Department Chair of Human Studies. Students must attain a passing score on this exam prior to placement for practicum. Students, who do not pass the CPCE, are allowed to retake the examination for a maximum of two (2) times. Students who do not pass the examination are strongly encouraged to schedule meetings with their advisor to review and discuss examination scores. *Students who do not pass the exam after three attempts are not admitted to candidacy and are not allowed to enroll for practicum and will be terminated from the program.*

Core knowledge (content of core courses) covered in the examination includes

CACREP Areas	Corresponding Core Course
1. Human Growth and Development	EPR 614
2. Social and Cultural Foundations	ECG 628
3. Helping Relationships	ECG 621 & 638
4. Group Work	ECG 626
5. Career and Lifestyle Development	ECG 630
6. Appraisal	ECG 624
7. Research and Program Evaluation	
• Rehabilitation Counseling	EPR 607/608
• Community Counseling & School	EPR 590
8. Professional Identity	ECG 612

CLINICALS: PRACTICUM AND INTERNSHIP

Students should make an appointment to see the Clinical Coordinator one semester prior to the Practicum and Internship to discuss possible clinical placements and obtain requisite paperwork (checklist). When discussing potential sites, students should be aware all sites do not necessarily provide opportunities to complete the required number of direct service hours. In addition, students are urged to determine if a qualified onsite supervisor is provided by the site. Many counseling sites do not have qualified supervisors as defined by CACREP. Sites that do not provide opportunities for accruing direct service hours or lack a qualified supervisor are not suitable for either student practicum or internship. Placements are concentration specific. Students are placed on sites consistent with training in their area of concentration (School, Community/Agency, Rehabilitation. Students trained in one area are not allowed to have a clinical placement in another area (e.g., students in the community agency concentration are not allowed to do rehabilitation counseling, nor school counseling placements. Community sites which serve children may require play therapy training, or drug treatment centers may require coursework in substance abuse. It is important to discuss areas of interest with your advisor early in the program so that you will be sure to have the background and training consistent with your interest as you choose electives.

Practicum and Intern students do not begin on-site until after the first class meeting. Please refer to the [clinical information](#) on the program web site for more information.

To meet the “High Stakes” Assessment in the clinical area, the student must achieve the stated Proficiency in all three areas: COUNSELING TAPES, CASE PRESENTATION, and ON-SITE EVALUATION. It is NOT an average of the three areas. For example, a person could achieve the required Proficiency on counseling tapes, from the site evaluation, and not meet the Proficiency level for the case presentation---in this scenario, the student would not receive a PASS for the course because all three areas must meet the Stated Outcome in order to pass the course. THESE ARE “HIGH STAKES” ASSESSMENTS.

The on-site supervisors and instructors attempt to identify as soon as possible, potential problematic dispositions (behaviors and attitudes). If student dispositions are deemed to be unfitting of a counselor- in- training, faculty will notify the student by telephone and/or mail and set a scheduled time to discuss the behaviors in question. During the meeting, faculty will

devise and within a one week period provide a written plan for remediation of the student problem. Should the student be unable or unwilling to meet the terms of the remediation plan, the student will not pass the practicum or internship and subsequently will not be allowed to complete the counseling degree.

Students who commit ethical breaches or illegal acts are subject to immediate removal from the site. If a site should request that a counselor-in-training be removed from the site for failure to meet the standards of the organization, or expectations of the site (e.g., interpersonal skills, work ethic, clinical skills or ethical behaviors), the student will receive a NO PASS and will be terminated from the program. The student would not have the option of starting over at another site.

Should a student fail to pass any part of the practicum or internship, he/she will not be allowed to re-take the course and will be terminated from the counseling program. If a student disagrees with the observations and decisions of on-site supervisors and/or faculty, he or she should follow the Grievance Procedure outline elsewhere in this manual.

APPLICATION FOR DEGREE

Students are expected to signify their intention to graduate by submitting a completed "Application for Degree" form to the Graduate School. This form is employed to make sure that program requirements have been met, to order the degree, and to enter the student in the commencement program. The Graduate School mandates deadlines for making a degree application. **Students who fail to meet the deadline are not allowed to graduate and are required to apply for graduation the following semester.**

An "Application for Degree" form may be picked up at the Graduate School, Hill University Center room 511 or in the Office of Records and Certification, room 100 Education Building. *The student should enter the information asked for, sign the form, and return it to room 100 one semester prior to graduation. PLEASE CHECK THE GRADUATE SCHOOL DEAD LINES FOR THIS INFORMATION.* The student will be notified that the application has been processed and that all is in order or if any discrepancies must be corrected.

STUDENT PROGRAM EVALUATION

Upon the completion of the program, students are given the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Students are also encouraged to join and participate in the activities of professional organizations, including but not limited to

- **American Counseling Association and Divisions (ACA)**
 - **American School Counselor Association (ASCA)**
 - **American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA)**
 - **American Rehabilitation Counseling Association**
 - **Other Divisions of Interest**
- **Alabama Counseling Association (ALCA)**
 - **School Counselor Association (ALSCA)**
 - **Alabama Mental Health Counselors Association (ALMHCA)**
 - **Alabama Rehabilitation Association (ALRCA)**
 - **Other Divisions of Interest**
- **Chi Sigma Iota**

Students who have a GPA of 3.5 or higher are initiated into the Zeta chapter of CHI SIGMA IOTA, a counseling honorary society. Chi Sigma Iota is an international society of professionals and professionals-in-training dedicated to excellence in scholarship, research, and clinical practice.

PROGRAM POLICIES

Severe Weather

In the event of inclement weather, tune to WBHM 90.3 FM for announcement regarding university closings. In the event of a tornado warning, students should go to an inner hallway in the center of the building. Warning procedures are posted in the classrooms.

First Class Attendance Policy

An instructor has the prerogative to ADMINISTRATIVELY drop a student from a course if the student is absent from the first class of a term. A student who misses the first night of class is responsible for determining his/her status in the class.

Administrative Withdrawal

An instructor has the prerogative to withdraw students who are not eligible to take core courses.

Change of Graduate Concentration

Each student is admitted to a specific concentration in the counselor education program. The student who wishes to change the graduate concentration (e.g. from community counseling to rehabilitation counseling) must make a formal request to change the graduate major and not begin taking courses in the new major until the request to change has been approved. Requests to change the graduate major are reviewed as carefully as a new admission, and not all change requests are approved. The students should meet with his/her advisor to discuss the rationale for the request to change areas. Forms for requesting to change the graduate major are available in room 100 Education Building.

Student Retention

Students should be aware that while they are enrolled in the Program of Counselor Education at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, faculty members conduct an ongoing evaluation of the student's cognitive, dispositions, and psychological capacity to perform the minimal competencies of a professional counselor. It is important to note that even though the student may be evidencing satisfactory performance in academic course work, student behaviors may be deemed inappropriate for practice in the profession of counseling. Faculty members have adopted the following policy in order to fulfill their professional responsibility to protect the rights of the community, other candidates enrolled in the program, as well as those of the student.

Faculty will conduct an ongoing assessment of students' dispositions:

- Class behaviors
- Interactions with other students
- Ability to listen and hear others
- Acceptance of feedback
- Trust Level
- Appropriateness of remarks
- Ability to contribute to class discussions
- Communication of ideas
- Ethical behaviors
- Ability to handle stress
- Attendance

(This list serves as an example, and is not all-inclusive)

Students are expected to demonstrate satisfactory progress in the program.

If in the professional judgment of a department faculty member, a student's behavior is deemed inappropriate, unethical, and/or potentially harmful to themselves or others, the following steps will be taken:

- **The faculty member who has become aware of a problem will meet with the student and offer suggestions for remediation.**
- **If the problem is not resolved, the faculty member must bring the issue to the Program Coordinator who may deem it necessary to bring before the Counselor Education faculty for discussion and action. The student may be asked to meet with his/her advisor to develop a formal remediation plan and/or the student may be asked to appear before the faculty. A copy of this action will be sent to the student and to the Department Chair.**
- **If in the event the student fails to adhere to the remediation contract, he/she will not be allowed to continue in the program. A copy of this decision will be forwarded to the student and to the Department Chair.**

FACULTY, AS A GROUP, REVIEW INDIVIDUAL STUDENT PROGRESS IN THE PROGRAM AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH SEMESTER.

Student Grievance Policy/Procedure

Students should expect to be treated fairly by the university and, if fairness is disputed, to have an avenue of appeal. Individuals with expertise in the particular academic discipline can most appropriately make judgments on academic matters which are in dispute. For this reason, disagreements on academic matters should follow the steps:

1. **The student should first contact the **instructor** of record directly in an effort to resolve the dispute. Most disputes can and should be resolved at this level. In rare situations where this does not occur, the student would move to step 2 in the process.**
2. **The student should contact the **Counselor Education Program Coordinator**. If the situation cannot be resolved within the graduate program, the student would go to step 3.**

3. The student may request a decision by the **Chair of the Department of Human Studies**. If the dispute cannot be resolved, the student would go to step 4.
4. The student may request a decision from the **Dean of Education**. Where appropriate, the Dean will consult with the Graduate Council. The decision of the Dean is final.

IT WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE FOR STUDENTS TO BY-PASS ANY OF THE STEPS IN THE GRIEVANCE PROCESS.

Plagiarism

The department faculty members define plagiarism as the presentation as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source. Common examples of plagiarism are as follows: including all or a portion of the written work of another in a response to a current requirement without giving appropriately cited credit to the source; purchasing a paper from another individual and presenting it as one's own work; developing an idea presented by another into a written document or presentation without giving appropriate credit to the person, or presenting (essentially) the same written work for fulfillment of two (concurrent) academic requirements.

The department faculty believes that plagiarism by a student is a serious violation of professional ethics and standards. Therefore, if a student is found to have engaged in plagiarism, the following steps will be taken:

- The faculty member who has become aware of the student engaging in plagiarism will request, in writing, that the department Chairperson constitute a retention committee to evaluate the student's suitability for continuation in a program in the department.
- If the plagiarism by the student occurred in the context of work submitted as course requirement, the student will be assigned a grade of Failure ("F") for the course.
- If the plagiarism by the student occurred in a professional context (e.g., during submission of a manuscript for publication in a professional journal or for presentation at a professional meeting), the faculty member who has become aware of it will take whatever action is appropriate under the Ethical Standards and/or Codes of Conduct pertinent to the student's intended profession.

- If the student is not in agreement with the action taken, the student can subsequently follow the appeals procedures of the Graduate School of University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Student Recommendation and Endorsement Policy

Upon completion of the counselor education program, students are eligible for faculty endorsement appropriate to the students' areas of concentration. Recommendations for employment, further graduate study, state licensure, and state and national certification will be given only for the concentration which the graduate has satisfactorily completed.

Sexual Harassment

UAB has a formal policy forbidding sexual harassment, and students are covered by its protection. A synopsis of this policy as it affects students follows.

- **UAB Policy Summary**

UAB is committed to providing an environment free of discrimination, including sexual harassment. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when (1) submission to such conduct is made (explicitly or implicitly) a condition of employment or academic evaluation, (2) submission to, or rejection of, such conduct is used as the basis for employment or academic decisions, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or educational environment. UAB prohibits all forms of sexual harassment and will investigate complaints thoroughly and with the utmost seriousness. UAB prohibits sexual harassment of students by any member of the teaching staff or other employees of UAB.

A student who believes that he or she has been sexually harassed should report the incident promptly to the head of the appropriate department or the dean of the appropriate school if the offender is a part of the teaching staff. Incidents may also be reported to the coordinator of Title IX compliance (the Vice President for Student Affairs). These individuals shall ensure that an appropriate investigation is undertaken.

Full and prompt reporting is necessary for effective implementation of this policy, and UAB encourages such reporting. However, supervisors are also directed to take all appropriate steps to prevent sexual harassment in their areas of responsibility and to take corrective action when deemed necessary, even in the absence of a complaint.

All complaints made under this policy shall be treated as confidential information and shall be disclosed only to those with a need to know as part of the investigative and resolution process. Any act of interference, retaliation, or coercion by a university employee against a student or employee for using this policy interferes with such free expression and is itself a violation of this policy.

- **Program Policy**

The program is strongly committed to the upholding of the University policy on sexual harassment as well as the Ethical Standards of the American Counseling Association.

Any sexual harassment complaint will be processed according to the UAB policy on Conduct and Grievances outlined in the statement on Student Rights and Responsibilities" in the UAB Student Handbook.

Students are reminded that, at all times, they are expected to adhere to the Ethical Standards of the American Counseling Association.

FINANCIAL AID AND ASSISTANCE

The Graduate School realizes that pursuit of an advanced degree involves some financial strain. There are several sources of financial aid available to students attending UAB. A graduate student admitted as a "Regular" student who demonstrates financial need is eligible to participate in these Federal programs:

- Perkins Loan
- Stafford Loan (GSL)
- College Work Study (Contact the Department of Human Studies Room 227)
- A graduate student admitted as "Regular" student who fails to demonstrate financial need is eligible to participate in these programs:
 - Supplemental Loan for Students (SLS)
 - The Education Resource Institute (TERI)
 - Professional Educational Plan (PEP)
 - EXCEL
 - CONCERN
 - Other private support programs

Veteran's Benefits-Any veteran who plans to enter UAB, and who wishes to apply for financial assistance through the Veterans Administration, should file an application with the UAB Office of Veterans Affairs (in the Student Development Center, 5th floor, University Center, 1400 University Boulevard).

For a complete description of these programs contact:

**Office of Student Financial Aid
University of Alabama at Birmingham
University Center, Suite 250
Birmingham, Alabama 35294
Phone (205) 934-8223**

