



MASTER OF ARTS IN COUNSELING Annual Assessment (2020)

Mission

The Master of Arts in Counseling (MAC) program strives to create a Christ-centered community where students can excel as professional counselors. To achieve this, we infuse the following core values (aka program objectives) throughout the program:

- *Spiritual integration*: Integrate Christian theology and practice on conceptual, clinical, and personal levels throughout the coursework.
- *Healing presence*: Emphasize the development of strong clinical skills, building from a Rogerian foundation and integrating additional models as skill develops.
- *Advocacy & diversity*: Promote the understanding and awareness of diversity issues on theoretical, professional, and personal levels such that students can work in a culturally inclusive way.
- *Professional identity*: Cultivate student dispositions such that they can interact ethically, professionally, competently, and comfortably in the counseling field.
- *Educational excellence*: Foster student learning around essential knowledge in the field, ranging from counseling theories to evidence-based practices to assessment tools.

Program Accreditation

[Multnomah University](#) is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities ([NWCCU](#)). The MAC program also meets all educational requirements for licensure as a licensed professional counselor (LPC) via the [Oregon Board of Licensed Professional Counselors and Therapists](#) or a mental health counselor via the [Washington State Department of Health](#). The program is further in the process of working towards additional accreditation with the Counsel for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs ([CACREP](#)) via the clinical mental health counseling track; additional information regarding anticipated timelines for CACREP accreditation is available upon request.

Evaluation Overview

In order to ensure excellence in all the above stated areas, the program conducts regular evaluations and reviews this data annually. This data is primarily collected via key assignments in select courses, a mid-program evaluation of all students, a final case presentation done by all students (i.e., Oral Exam), the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Exam (CPCE), and site evaluations during practicum and internship. Supplementary data is also collected from graduating students, alumni, and site supervisors (who often employ graduates).

All student data is included from the time evaluations are completed. This includes both undergraduate students in the accelerated MAC track and students who may not complete the program. Since the inception of the program, data from the Registrar's Office estimates the

completion rate as averaging about 80% per year. While this rate is lower than we'd like, there were a few years when the rate dropped due to the lack of a program director. In addition, the program tends to cater to working adults who often have life crises (e.g., health issues, job/financial changes) during the program and may not be able to finish as a result. Many are proving to come back later, when life circumstances again allow; none, to the current director's knowledge, are leaving to transfer to other programs due to dissatisfaction with our degree program. Actually, it seems to be quite the opposite, as one finishing student recently reported, "I am here [passing his oral exams] because of you [faculty] in this room; I would have given up and dropped out of any other program, but your authentic support allowed me to get this point."

This particular report discusses data from the 2020 calendar year, along with corresponding program adjustments. It may be helpful to note that 10 students entered the program in 2020 (an unusually low number due to COVID), and 11 students graduated from the program. Even in the midst of a worldwide pandemic, 67% of these students reported that they had lined up full-time work as a professional counselor before graduating; the other 33% were working, but not necessarily in a full-time, counseling-related role prior to graduation.

According to our 2018 alumni survey results, 77% of graduates are working full-time as licensed, professional counselors; this group had unanimously (100%) passed appropriate national credentialing exams. Those who were not practicing as licensed professional counselors were often choosing work in related settings, such as education. It should be noted that response rates for this group were low, and the MAC program is pursuing an updated alumni survey in 2021.

Specific Assessment Outcomes

- ***Spiritual Integration***
 - S1. Articulate a view of human nature and transformation that integrates counseling theory and Christian theology, while recognizing the impact of these spiritual beliefs on the counselors' worldview and engaging them in an ethical and professional manner.
 - S2. Practice spiritual assessment and clinical integration in an ethical and professional manner
 - S3. Pursue ongoing personal and spiritual development, demonstrating self-care strategies appropriate to the counselor role.
- ***Healing Presence***
 - H1. Demonstrate essential interviewing and counseling skills, building from a Person-Centered model.
 - H2. Utilize a variety of techniques and interventions for the prevention and treatment of a broad range of mental disorders, stemming from a variety of modalities.
 - H3. Demonstrate appropriate procedures for assessing risk of aggression or danger to others, self-inflicted harm, or suicide.
 - H4. Apply clinical skills to facilitating client skill development for career, educational, and life-work planning and management.

- H5. Identify and embody characteristics and functions of an effective group leader.
- **Advocacy & Diversity**
 - A1. Understand and utilize multicultural counseling competencies, such as providing culturally inclusive services with people from diverse backgrounds.
 - A2. Understand differential diagnosis with sensitivity to clients' culture and diversity factors.
 - A3. Articulate strategies for advocating for diverse clients' career and educational development and employment opportunities.
- **Professional Identity**
 - P1. Articulate and abide by ethical standards of the profession via the ACA code of ethics and applicable legal standards.
 - P2. Demonstrate professional dispositions consistent with the profession; see Appendix A for more detail.
 - P3. Articulate and make reasonable progress toward a plan for their professional career in terms of work setting(s), licensure (if desired), membership in professional organizations, ongoing training, etc.
- **Educational Excellence**
 - E1. Articulate a variety of theories related to individual and family development across the lifespan and apply them to conceptualizing clients.
 - E2. Articulate multiple theories and models of counseling to create effective treatment plans for clients.
 - E3. Utilize research to identify evidence-based counseling practices for various diagnoses and disorders, and critically evaluate their application to actual clients.
 - E4. Identify assessments for diagnostic and intervention planning purposes.
 - E5. Articulate dynamics associated with group process and development.

Evaluation Summary

Each assessment outcome is measured by at least two measures, generally administered at different points of time during the program. The program generally looks for at least 80% of students to have achieved appropriate competency for their developmental level. Actual results are discussed by core area below.

- **Spiritual Integration:** Overall, the program met its goals for all spiritual integration outcomes. This means that at least 80% of students met or exceeded developmental benchmarks across all measures in relation to conceptual (S1), clinical (S2), and personal integration (S3). In fact, actual results were significantly above 80%--e.g., 100% of students met or exceeded developmental benchmarks for both conceptual (S1) and personal integration (S3). These results seem to indicate that students are engaging a robust integration of their faith with counseling across several domains.

- ***Healing Presence:*** Overall, the program met most of its goals for the healing presence outcomes. More specifically, 100% of students met or exceeded developmental benchmarks across all measures in relation to using basic, Person-Centered counseling skills (H1); leading groups (H5); and applying clinical skills to career and educational types of interventions (H4). At least 89% of students met or exceeded developmental benchmarks across all measures in relation to assessing risk (H3). Taken together, these results seem to indicate that students are excelling at basic counseling tasks, such as embodying their professional role, building rapport, and managing risk factors across various settings and domains.

Students' ability to use more advanced clinical skills--drawn from diverse modalities (H2), were more mixed. Supervisors at practicum sites reported that 100% of students met or exceeded developmental benchmarks in this area (via practicum evaluations), but faculty indicated that only 78% of students met or exceeded expectations in this area (via the Oral Exam). While these results could be interpreted in several ways, a likely explanation is that external supervisors are satisfied with the clinical skills of MAC students, yet faculty bring a higher standard and would like to see some improvement in this area by the end of the program; this indicates both a program strength (in that student appear to be performing well in the field) and a potential growth area.

- ***Advocacy & Diversity:*** Overall, the program met most of its goals for the advocacy and diversity outcomes. More specifically, 100% of students met or exceeded developmental benchmarks for their ability to advocate for diverse clients in relation to career, education, or other needs (A3).

Results were slightly more mixed in other areas. Various measures showed between 78 and 100% of students met or exceeded benchmarks for their ability to utilize multicultural counseling competencies (A1) and engage culturally sensitive diagnosis (A2). The highest scores came from the Diversity course and practicum supervisors, while the lowest scores came again from faculty at the end of program Oral Exam. As noted above, these results may indicate that students are showing basic, developmentally expected competency in relation to diversity factors in counseling, yet faculty are hoping for a higher level of sophisticated, clinical application by the end of the program.

- ***Professional Identity:*** Overall, the program met its goals for the professional identity outcomes. This means that at least 80% of students met or exceeded developmental benchmarks across all measures in relation to professionalism (P2) and ethical practice (P1). In addition, 100% of graduating students belonged to a professional organization and had identified a desired work setting; as noted earlier, 67% had already found a full-time job in counseling prior to graduation. A higher rate of 77% of alumni were working as professional counselors, with 100% reporting that they had passed the national licensing exam (NCE) on the first try; most alumni were also attending annual trainings (84%). The sole below expectations outcome is that only 45% of alumni belonged to professional organizations; this decrease from the initial graduation rate could be due to several factors, including financial, and may

or may not be related to actual professionalism. In summary, then, professional identity within the counseling field seems to be a strength for the program.

- ***Educational Excellence:*** Overall, the program met most of its goals for the educational excellence outcomes. More specifically, over 90% of students met or exceeded benchmarks across all measures related to creating effective treatment plans (E2) and articulating group process and development (E5).

Results were more mixed for other outcomes. Data from most sources—including key assignments in select courses, a mid-program student evaluation, the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Exam (CPCE), and practicum evaluations—demonstrated that over 90% of students met or exceeded benchmarks in relation to conceptualizing clients from various theoretical lenses (E1) and utilizing research to support evidence-based counseling practices (E3). However, on the Oral Exam, faculty rated only 67 to 78% of students as meeting or exceeding benchmarks in these same areas (E1, E3). Once again it seems that students are performing well in the field or on standardized measures, but faculty identify subtle growth areas where they would like to see improvement.

The only outcome below standards was related to using assessments in clinical practice (E4). Only 73-78% of students met or exceeded benchmarks in this area. This is an identifiable program growth area.

Recommended Program Modifications

Overall, The MAC program is commended for continuing to meet or exceed standards in most areas. This is particularly striking in the midst of a worldwide pandemic and other historical events of 2020, which undoubtedly challenged student engagement and performance.

Still, the program is always in a process of continuous improvement, and the following modifications were made to the program in response to the assessment data:

- ***Spiritual Integration:*** No changes were made based upon assessment data, as this is a program strength. See section below for other improvements in this area.
- ***Healing Presence:***
 - A newly created (2019) Pre-Practicum class is now being required during the second semester. This course will hopefully allow the program to solidify basic, Rogerian skills earlier on (H1), so that students have more time during the program to develop competency in more advanced counseling skills (H2).
 - In addition, the program is looking to add additional electives related to specific counseling modalities. After adding a Motivational Interviewing elective in Fall 2020, the program added a Gottman Couples Therapy course in Spring 2021. It is looking to add EFIT and other models, as faculty and resources allow (H2).

- While group counseling scores (H5) met or exceeded standards, the data (n) was sparse; all future students will be required to lead a group during Practicum or Internship.
- **Advocacy & Diversity:**
 - Professor Peck re-vamped the Diversity course to better emphasize the academic side of the content as well as the personal development (A1).
 - Internship paper requirements were also adjusted so that students write more, short papers that go deeper into each area (rather than one long one); this allows faculty to get a better sense for each student's competency level and give more feedback around diversity and other topics (A1, A2). It is hoped that this will allow faculty to coach students in the more sophisticated, clinical application they are hoping to see by the end of the program.
- **Professional Identity:**
 - An assignment was added to the final semester, Lifestyle & Career course, where students are required to meet with their advisor to discuss their next steps for their career (P3).
 - Also, the 2021 assessment plan may change the assessment measures to capture this info in Professional Orientation and the graduate survey, in order to provide more robust better data in this area.
- **Educational Excellence:**
 - The final Human Growth assignment was updated to better align with the writing students complete during Orals in applying this to clients (E1).
 - As noted, internship paper requirements were changed to allow supervisors a new format to review, emphasize, and deepen a number of student skills—here including choosing particular modalities based on research, client factors, and supervisor competency (E3).
 - A new testing professor has been hired for Summer 2021. In addition, the Program Director and MAC team collaborated to revamp the class, including a new book and syllabus, prior to handing it off to the adjunct (E4).

Other Program Changes

The CPCE was also a challenge in 2020 for a variety of reasons. While the Program has typically worked to overcome such challenges, the NCE was re-vamped and revised during Fall 2020 and no longer appears to align as closely with the CPCE. As a result, the Program will likely move away from this measure in future years—replacing it with more robust use of tests during the program as well as more key assignments in various courses.

In addition, while spiritual integration is a strength of the program, the faculty decided to review and revamp the faith integration plan (beginning with cohort 20) to deepen student skills on both clinical and personal levels. This includes defining new, more concrete and specific integration questions for students to address during their time in the Program. In addition, each class is being reviewed as they come up in the schedule to see how they can

better support these questions. Lastly, both the Integration Overview and Spiritual Formation classes are being re-vamped to better support these specific, clinical and personal questions as well.

Summary

In conclusion, this program assessment suggests a well-rounded program with numerous strengths. Developing spiritual integration and professional identity appear to be some of the top program strengths. Across the board, however, students are learning and performing well. The program faculty are particularly encouraged to see the strong results from site supervisors and the national CPCE exam, thereby indicating that students are performing well in comparison to students from other programs. At the same time, results indicate the continued investment of faculty who want to see students excel to their full capacity. Faculty continue to model this standard by continuous improvement within their courses and clinical practice as well (see improvements noted above).