



Department of Counseling and Student Affairs

**Counseling
Professional Practice Handbook**

Professional Practice, namely, the practicum and internship experiences are key parts of counseling students' planned programs in completing their degree requirements. As such, the department values its relationships with community agencies that fulfill the need for practicum and internship placements. The purpose of practicum and internship experiences are to apply theory and develop counseling skills under supervision. Associated fieldwork experiences provide opportunities for students to counsel diverse clients (CACREP 4:A.).

The **Director of Professional Practice** serves as the liaison between the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs and all those involved in the practicum and internship experience (i.e., students, instructors of the group supervision course, site supervisors). The Director ensures that this experience meets the department's accreditation standards and curriculum expectations. Throughout the professional practice experience, students must follow and adhere to program policies and procedures outlined in the *Counseling Student Handbook* in addition to the expectations outlined in this *Counseling Professional Practice Handbook*.

A **Written Supervision Agreement** is signed by the student, Site Supervisor, and the Department's Director of Professional Practice prior to the commencement of the professional practice experience. This agreement references a mutual understanding of the contents outlined in this Handbook, as well as: (1) the definition of the roles and responsibilities of the faculty supervisor, field experience site supervisor, and student during practicum and internship; (2) emergency procedures; and (3) detailed format and frequency of consultation between the counselor education program and the site to monitor student learning (CACREP 4:H.).

Practicum

The CMHC MCFC Practicum course (CNS 591) is the first supervised counseling experience students will have in a clinical setting. Students prepare for Practicum by attending a mandatory orientation of which details are communicated by the Director of Professional Practice. Students are responsible for adhering to and completing the procedures outlined during this orientation. (There is not a make-up date for the orientation.) Other requirements are as follows:

1. Completion (a B or better earned) of the following prerequisite courses: CNS 554, 555, 559, 560; as well as consistently earning satisfactory ratings across all ten of the Department's Professional Performance Criteria. See the *Counseling Student Handbook* for a list of these criteria.
(https://www.wku.edu/csa/documents/csa_student_handbook_final.pdf)
2. Submitting documentation and meeting all communicated deadlines (i.e., applying for potential practicum sites). If students are interested in a site that is not yet approved, they should follow the guidelines for establishing a new site noted in Supervision Assist. For example, the following materials must be submitted by respective due dates.

- a. A completed contract that indicates that both the student and Site Supervisor understand and have met the academic and professional requirements and prerequisites for practicum.
- b. Copy of unofficial graduate transcript
- c. Proof of professional membership (i.e., ACA, KCA, APT, KAPT, AMHCA, IAMFC, NASAP)
- d. Copy of individual professional counseling liability (malpractice) insurance policy. This insurance must be maintained throughout the practicum and internship experience and an updated certificate must be provided if coverage expires and is renewed during the clinical experience. It can be purchased through professional organizations (i.e., CPH, HPSO). If insurance coverage lapses, students must not engage in any professional practice experiences (CACREP 4:B.).

Practicum Course Requirements

The Practicum course meets various CACREP-accreditation requirements that are incorporated through content, as well as experiential objectives and assignments. In order to matriculate into CNS 596 Internship, students must earn an A or B in CNS 591, as well as earn satisfactory ratings across all ten of the Department's Professional Performance Criteria. To earn a grade in the course, all documents associated with the requirements below must be uploaded and submitted by respective due dates. Not doing so can result in not being registered for the subsequent course or graduating on time. Additional course completion requirements include and may not be limited to:

1. A minimum of **100** total clock hours over a full academic term that is minimum of **8** weeks consistent with the institution's academic calendar (CACREP 4:Q.). Students are expected to complete an average of 8 (direct and indirect) hours on site every week during the entire semester. All indirect hours should be appropriate to the student's program of study per approval by the Site Supervisor.
2. At least **40** clock hours of direct service with actual clients that contributes to the development of counseling skills (for MCFC students, at least 30% of direct service hours must be in a relationship modality) (CACREP 4:R.). Students are responsible for assuring that direct services, including those digitally delivered, are in accordance with all current legal/ethical requirements (HIPAA, FERPA, etc.). If students need additional support understanding how their services meet legal and ethical requirements, they should contact their Site Supervisor immediately. See guidelines and expectations regarding Direct Hours later in this handbook.
3. Throughout the duration of the practicum, each student receives individual and/or triadic supervision on a regular schedule that averages one hour a week (CACREP 4:S.). Supervision of practicum and internship students includes secure audio or video recordings and/or live supervision of students' interactions

with clients that are in compliance with applicable institutional, state, federal, and international privacy requirements for all program delivery types (CACREP 4:C.).

4. Throughout the duration of the practicum, each student receives group supervision from a faculty member on a regular schedule that averages 1½ hours per week (CACREP 4:T.). Students are responsible for completing all of the course requirements including presenting case conceptualizations, videos and meeting assignment deadlines.
5. Weekly documentation and signatures of direct and non-direct clock hours are submitted through Supervision Assist.
6. Mid- and final evaluations of student's counseling performance completed by the Site Supervisor (CACREP 4:F.).
7. Student evaluations of their experience with the practicum and internship placement process (CACREP 4:L.); as well as mid- and final evaluations of their practicum and internship fieldwork sites and site supervisors (CACREP 4: M.).

Internship

The Internship course meets various CACREP-accreditation requirements that are incorporated through content, as well as experiential objectives and assignments. Students must earn an A or B in CNS 591 to matriculate into CNS 596(1); and an A or B in CNS 596(1) to matriculate into CNS 596(2); as well as earn satisfactory ratings across all ten of the Department's Professional Performance Criteria. That is, registration in two sections of CNS 596 at the same time is never permitted. (If interested in pursuing a different approved site, students should do so in consultation with the Director of Professional Practice.) To earn a grade in the course, all documents associated with the requirements below must be uploaded and submitted by respective due dates. Not doing so can result in not being registered for the subsequent course or graduating on time. Additional course completion requirements include and may not be limited to:

1. A minimum of **300** clock hours in each Internship (600 hours total over two semesters) (CACREP 4:U.). Students are expected to complete an average of 18 (direct and indirect) hours on site every week during the entire semester. All indirect hours should be appropriate to the student's program of study per approval by the Site Supervisor.
2. A minimum of At least **120** clock hours of direct service (240 hours total over two semester) with actual clients that contributes to the development of counseling skills (for MCFC students, at least 30% of direct service hours must be in a relationship modality) (CACREP 4:V.) Students are responsible for assuring those direct services, including those digitally delivered, are in accordance with all current legal/ethical requirements (HIPAA, FERPA, etc.). If students need additional support understanding how their services meet legal and ethical

requirements, they should contact their Site Supervisor immediately. See guidelines and expectations regarding Direct Hours later in this handbook.

3. Throughout the duration of the internship, each student receives individual and/or triadic supervision on a regular schedule that averages one hour a week (CACREP 4:W.). Supervision of practicum and internship students includes secure audio or video recordings and/or live supervision of students' interactions with clients that are in compliance with applicable institutional, state, federal, and international privacy requirements for all program delivery types (CACREP 4:C.).
4. Throughout the duration of the internship, each student receives group supervision from a faculty member on a regular schedule that averages 1½ hours per week (CACREO 4:X.). Students are responsible for completing all of the course requirements including presenting case conceptualizations, videos and meeting assignment deadlines.
5. Weekly documentation and signatures of direct and non-direct clock hours are submitted Supervision Assist.
6. Mid- and final evaluations of student's counseling performance completed by the Site Supervisor (CACREP 4:F.).
7. Student evaluations of their experience with the practicum and internship placement process (CACREP 4:L.); as well as mid- and final evaluations of their practicum and internship fieldwork sites and site supervisors (CACREP 4: M.).

Guidelines and Expectations for Professional Practice Experience

Direct Contact Hours

Direct contact is defined as providing counseling services to actual clients affiliated with the student's approved site in the following capacity: conducting initial intakes and assessments, individual counseling, group counseling, psycho-educational groups, and family or couples counseling. Direct contact involves a client-counselor interaction that is clearly articulated and agreed upon in a signed Informed Consent form.

Observing counseling sessions from behind a 2-way mirror, watching other students' videos, or consulting about a client does not count as direct contact/service. While co-leading counseling sessions may be appropriate in Practicum, co-leading counseling sessions during internship is considered and possibly approved on a case-by-case base by the Director of Professional Practice and Site Supervisor. In addition to the development of individual counseling skills, during either the practicum or internship, students must lead or co-lead a counseling or psychoeducational group (CACREP 4: E.); this should be clearly documented in the hour logs. Students are responsible for seeking, securing those hours and documenting hours in Supervision Assist.

Indirect Hours

Indirect hours include but are not limited to attending staff/faculty consultation, supervision and class; document and note taking, as well as other clinical-related administrative duties; observation; as well as becoming familiar with on and off-site professional activities and resources, including technology (i.e., engaging in Supervision Assist) (CACREP 4:D.). Students who have questions about what constitutes as approved indirect activities should consult with the Director of Professional Practice.

Site and Supervision

Students receive supervision as noted previously. Both individual/triadic and group supervision (provided by a faculty member) are scheduled on a weekly basis and may include the review of audio or video recordings and/or live supervision of students' interactions with clients (CACREP 4:C.).

Individual and/or Triadic Supervision Hours. Individual supervision includes time spent with faculty and/or site supervisors discussing development as a counselor and counseling interactions with clients at the site. Individual Supervision is conducted by the approved Site Supervisor and should include the viewing of videos on a regular basis; including addressing skill and professional identity development. Students are expected to plan, negotiate, and advocate at the site to receive these experiences; and should present program-appropriate video recordings throughout their supervised experience.

Group Supervision Hours. Students receive group supervision from a faculty member in a designated graduate course (CNS 591 or 596) that meets on a weekly basis. The Director of Professional Practice, along with department faculty determine the placement of students in designated course sections.

Any changes or updates at the site (i.e., policy changes) or site supervisor, must be communicated immediately to the Director of Professional Practice. Finally, it is through face-to-face observation, as well as by reviewing videos, that Site Supervisors and Faculty Supervisors are able to conduct formative and summative evaluations of the student's counseling performance and ability to integrate and apply knowledge throughout the practicum and internship experience (CACREP 4: F.).

Total Practicum or Internship Hours

Insufficient Hour Requirement. Due to various circumstances students may not fulfill the required number of hours to satisfy practicum or internship course requirements (which are also aligned with accreditation and licensure). In such cases students should contact the Director of Professional Practice immediately and/or when anticipating not being able to meet practicum or internship requirements.

Completing Hours Early. Students who meet the course and accreditation hour requirement prior to the end of the semester are, as a courtesy to their site and ethical obligation to client care, are expected to maintain both indirect and direct hours until the close of the semester.

Academic Breaks

Practicum students and Interns follow the WKU Academic Calendar. Practicum and internship students may not engage in the professional practice experience outside of the semester during which they are enrolled in CNS 591 or 596, and not during officially scheduled campus closures (i.e., holidays, fall break, spring break).

Site Supervisors, with students, are responsible for communicating to clients that students follow a university calendar and must be enrolled in a class to provide direct services. Sites are encouraged to include reference to this in the client Informed Consent document. Further, students and Site Supervisors should plan ahead for these breaks and should eventually discuss with clients what resources are available to them (i.e., other contacts/referrals at the site, wellness plans, emergency contacts). In short, sites are ultimately responsible for the care and welfare of the clients who interns provide services to.

Professional Performance Reviews

Practicum and internship students are responsible for meeting and assuring that the contents outlined in the *Counseling Student Handbook* are consistently met. For example, practicum and internship students are expected to meet expectations across all PPR criteria throughout their professional practice experience. Not doing so can result in being provided formal support or being placed on remediation (which can include removal from the site, requirement that the student withdraw from or retake a clinical course). Additionally, not meeting any of the PPR criteria as expected can result in earning a C in the course, regardless of grades on assignments, and as a consequence repeating the practicum and/or internship course.

Supervision

Faculty Supervisor

Group supervision is conducted through the CNS 591 or 596 course and provided by a counselor education program full or part-time faculty member (CACREP 4:T., X.) The faculty: student ratio in those courses will always be no more than 1:12 (CACREP 4:Z., BB). Further, practicum and internships students cannot be combined for group supervision (CACREP 4:AA.). The counselor education faculty supervisor/instructor complies with legal and ethical requirements; and has relevant certifications and/or licenses; training for in-person and/or distance counseling supervision, and training in technology utilized for supervision (CACREP 4:N.). They are expected to abide by the contents outlined in this Handbook, as well as the following:

1. Observe the development of students, as well as their fit for the profession, by, but not excluding reviewing audio or video recordings of students' interactions with clients

2. Provide regular feedback to students about their development as counselors in and outside of the class meetings.
3. Engage in consultation with the fieldwork site supervisor to monitor student learning and performance in accordance with the supervision agreement at least twice during the semester; once by mid-term in a synchronous format (i.e., phone, zoom, face-to-face) and near the end of the semester in a synchronous or asynchronous format (CACREP 4:H.,J.). Faculty Supervisors document and upload a summary of the meeting in Supervision Assist within a week of the consultation. (Students may have access to the documentation.) Concerns will be brought to the Director of Professional Practice, as well as to the student.

Site Supervisor

The Site Supervisor is the primary point of contact at the site and serves as the individual supervisor for practicum and internship students. Site Supervisors must have: (1) a minimum of a master's degree, preferably in counseling or a related profession; (2) active certifications and/or licenses in the geographic location where the student is placed, preferably in counseling or a related profession; (3) a minimum of two years post-master's professional experience relevant to the CACREP specialized practice area in which the student is enrolled; (4) relevant training for in-person and/or distance counseling supervision; (5) relevant training in the technology utilized for supervision; and (6.) knowledge of the program's expectations, requirements, and evaluation procedures for students (CACREP 4:P.). Further Site Supervisors are expected to understand the contents of the *Counseling Student Handbook*, as well as this Handbook (CACREP 4:G.,I.). Under no circumstances should the Site Supervisor relinquish what they agreed upon in the contractual arrangement (i.e., shifting supervision responsibilities to another employee). The Site Supervisor also:

1. Meet the supervision related requirements noted throughout this Handbook including providing individual and/or triadic supervision for at least an hour every week while watching and reviewing videos, conducting live supervision, or participating in co-therapy with the student. Regular feedback especially should be provided to students under supervision regarding their development as counselors during and outside of formal supervision meetings.
2. Be available on site whenever students see clients. When not on site or available, ensure that there is a fully licensed mental health professional on site and available whenever students are seeing or providing support to clients. Any changes or updates at the site (i.e., policy changes) or site supervisor, must be communicated immediately to the Director of Professional Practice. In cases of emergencies, supervisors must be accessible within 15 minutes of the intern reaching out.
3. Provide interns with formal training related to providing counseling and support to acute (i.e., severe, as well as ongoing trauma histories, severe diagnoses such as personality disorders), as well as court-ordered clientele. If formal training has not been provided and/or supervisors are not accessible during the time such

clients are being served, interns are not allowed to provide counseling to more acute and court-ordered clientele.

4. Provide an orientation for students that includes policies and procedures. The orientation should include the following:
 - o Procedures related to providing telehealth services, as well as receiving digital supervision.
 - o Ways in which students can build an appropriately balanced case load within the first few weeks of the semester and provide regular feedback to students.
 - o Resources, such as additional consultation and professional development opportunities provided, especially when the site supervisor is not available.
 - o If included in the practicum and internship experience, training related to counseling and treating clients with acute concerns (i.e., including ongoing and severe trauma histories, personality disorders), as well as court-ordered clientele.
5. Provide students an opportunity to obtain their required direct service with clients and counseling-related indirect hours as indicated above. Site Supervisors are responsible for assuring that beginning in the student's first CNS 596 Internship (fall) or sooner, they are able to provide direct services to clients (rather than shadowing or co-leading individual sessions with internship site employees). Site Supervisors are also responsible for communicating to clientele information about when students are not allowed to provide services (due to campus closure and university breaks) and providing support to clients in need during those breaks.
6. Work collaboratively with the Director of Professional Practice and Faculty Supervisor; including completing and uploading required documentation through Supervision Assist by the deadlines; will contact the Director of Professional Practice if and when any concerns/issues arise.

Practicum and Internship Sites

For information about the following, visit the Department's Professional Practice website:

- The process for seeking and establishing a new approved site
- Changing Practicum and Internship Sites and Supervisors

Accreditation and Licensure Compliance

The Department is responsible for meeting CACREP-accreditation requirements. Our adherence to accreditation standards assures licensure in states where a CACREP program is required. Therefore, at any point, the Department may require confirmation from the Site Supervisor that contractual policies are being followed. This may involve a meeting including members of the Department and student. The Department reserves the right to remove sites, as well as site supervisors from approval status when ethical

standards and/or contractual agreements have been breached. Additionally, faculty are committed to supporting the development of all students. When concerns arise as related to any of the Department's Professional Performance criteria, especially as it pertains to their professional practice, and due to the obligatory nature of being licensed gatekeepers, students may be provided with formal departmental support and/or on remediation (which can include being removed from their site). Students and Site Supervisors should review the respective content in the Counseling Student Handbook, https://www.wku.edu/csa/documents/csa_student_handbook_final.pdf.