



Department of Counseling
MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health
Counseling Specialization Program
Student Handbook



Academic Year 2024-2025

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Welcome

The Counseling Department at Saybrook University welcomes you to our community of learners. The journey to becoming a professional counselor is important, and we're delighted you've chosen to take your journey with us. At Saybrook, you'll experience a supportive environment where our unique humanistic tradition is met by engaged and vibrant faculty and students who have committed to transforming themselves and their communities for the better. You are entering a program that is accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). CACREP accreditation assures that the content and quality of our program have been evaluated and meet standards set by the professions. We are currently accredited through October 2026.

You are about to embark on an educational experience that will both provide you with the knowledge of how to be a counselor and challenge you to stretch from your comfort zone, know yourself more fully, and engage with others more authentically.

To ensure that you know who we are and what our program entails from the beginning, we strive to be transparent and invite your fullest participation in the years ahead. The *Saybrook University MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization Program Student Handbook* was developed to inform students of the policies and procedures pertaining to both the Counseling Department at Saybrook University and the counseling profession. In addition, it serves as a detailed guide for counseling students throughout their course of study. We will ask all students to sign a [form](#) that verifies that they have read the handbook.

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Mission, Philosophy, and Values

Saybrook University Mission Statement

Saybrook University relentlessly pursues a socially just, sustainable world by educating humanistic leaders who transform their fields and communities.

MA Counseling Program Mission Statement

Counseling faculty are committed to preparing competent mental health professionals who inspire transformational change in individuals, families, and communities toward a just, humane, and sustainable world.

MA Counseling Program Philosophy

Saybrook's counseling program focuses on the knowledge, experience, and practical skills needed to enter professional practice. Our program is committed to a developmental approach to understanding individuals, groups, couples, and families within their broader social and cultural context and with a full appreciation of the inseparable nature of spirit, body, and mind.

Department Core Values and Related Program Learning Outcomes

The Counseling Department has adopted a set of professional and personal qualities to be demonstrated by all students and faculty. These qualities are directly linked to the mission and core values of Saybrook University and inform the related program objectives. HUMANITI is a representation of our core values. The program learning outcomes were born directly from the department's core values. All counseling community members are expected to embody these qualities inside and outside of courses to the greatest extent possible. Upon completing the counseling programs, students will demonstrate the associated learning outcomes.

HUMANITI Program Learning Outcomes

The professional and personal qualities to be demonstrated by all students and all faculty are:

*H*olistic

We approach what we do from a holistic and systemic perspective based on a belief in the inherent interconnectedness of all things.

Program Learning Outcome #1: Upon completing the program, students will demonstrate an ability to assess, integrate, and respond to individual and relational dynamics within a systemic framework.

*U*nconditional *P*ositive Regard

We create relationships and communities built on compassion, respect, authentic voice, deep listening, reflective awareness, support, and challenge, leading to responsible presence and action.

Program Learning Outcome #2: Upon completing the program, students will be able to discern the elements of an effective therapeutic alliance and demonstrate the ability to co-construct and maintain a counseling relationship.

*M*ultiple *P*erspectives

We seek to honor difference because we recognize that there are many ways of knowing and that there are inherent strengths in diverse perspectives.

Program Learning Outcome #3: Upon completing the program, students will be able to examine and demonstrate an understanding of diverse experiences and the role of privilege, marginalization, and how aspects of power impact individual, familial, group, and community experiences.

*A*cademic *R*igor

We are committed to rigor in our academic and clinical experiences, with the desire to best serve others.

Program Learning Outcome #4: Upon completing the program, students will have demonstrated the ability to critique and synthesize theory as they integrate this knowledge into their counseling practice.

*N*ew *P*ossibilities

We are creative, imaginative, and courageous leaders who challenge assumptions and imagine and embody new possibilities.

Program Learning Outcome #5: Upon completing the program, students will illustrate their role in advocating for individual and social change by demonstrating effective communication skills across dialogues with peers, clients, supervisors, and faculty.

*I*ntegrity

We live and conduct our work and relationships with integrity.

Program Learning Outcome #6: Upon completing the program, students will be able to apply relevant professional ethical codes to guide their work and ethical decision-making.

*T*ransformation

We are scholar-practitioners who seek and apply knowledge to solve problems and foster personal, relational, and social transformation.

Program Learning Outcome #7: Upon completing the program, students will use professional literature, research, and best practices to support individual, familial, group, and community change.

*I*nclusive

We value life and embrace our responsibility to support the potential of those we serve to thrive in a just, inclusive, healthy, and sustainable world.

Program Learning Outcome #8: Upon completing the program, students will be able to describe the relationship between their "self" as a therapist, their professional identity as a counselor, and their responsibility to serve clients and the community.

Academic Unit and Program Overview

Academic Unit Overview

Our academic unit consists of primary core faculty with doctoral degrees in Counselor Education and Supervision, who work alongside well-qualified adjunct faculty with strong identities as counselors and counselor educators. We work together as an education team to support our counseling program's mission, goals, and curriculum. All faculty are committed to supporting future counselors as they develop their professional identities. Faculty are actively involved in organizations, present at conferences, and are available to mentor and partner with students interested in getting involved in professional organizations.

Primary Faculty

Jennifer Preston, Ph.D., NCC, LPC; Department Chair
Dominique Avery, Ph.D., NCC, LMHC; Associate Department Chair
Kimberly Jayne, Ph.D., LPC (OR), LPCC (NM), NCC, RPT-S; Ph.D. Program Coordinator
Aja Burks, Ph.D., LMSW; MA Program Coordinator
Alfonso Ferguson, Ph.D., LPC, LMHC, ACS, NCC; Clinical Experience Coordinator
Hridaya L. Sivalingam, Ph.D., NCC, LCMHC; Program Faculty
Amanuel Asfaw, Ph.D., NCC; Program Faculty
Aparna Ramaswamy, Ed.D., Ph.D., LCPC; Program Faculty
Seth Rian, Ph.D., LPC, LSC, PPS, NCC, RYT; Program Faculty
LaTisha Brown, Ph.D., LCMHC (NC), NCC; Program Faculty

Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program Overview

Mental health counseling is a helping profession with national and state-level standards of education, examination, and clinical practice required for licensure. Graduate education and clinical training prepare counselors to provide a full range of services for individuals, couples, families, adolescents, and children. Our mental health program prepares counselors to practice in a variety of settings, such as independent practice, community agencies, integrated delivery systems, hospitals, and addiction treatment settings. Mental health counselors are uniquely skilled professionals who provide a full range of services. Our MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization program offers a career-focused, clinical program with practicum and internship training, which is intended to prepare students for licensure and to empower them to shape and craft their professional development and practice orientation. The program focuses on career opportunities while remaining true to core humanistic principles and helping others. Our CACREP-accredited program is designed to lead to professional counselor licensure for clinical mental health counselors (such as the LPC or LMHC) in most states.

To get started in the program, each student submits an application to the Admissions department, who then forwards it to the program faculty for review. The program faculty interviews applicants who demonstrate high levels of potential for success, and successful applicants are admitted. Once admitted, students complete a [program of study](#) with their advisor and move through the program in three calendar years (Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters).

The Program and Program Requirements

The three-year program provides a low-residency, online, blended distance learning model. The program uses a cohort model and enrolls students for fall, spring, or summer start. The

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program can be completed in eight to nine semesters. Once students begin the program, they take courses every semester (fall, spring, and summer). Students take three courses each fall and spring and one course in the summer to fulfill full-time enrollment requirements. Students may also opt to complete the program part-time.

The faculty and students come together each fall and spring semester for intensive face-to-face learning at Residential Learning Experiences (RLE). Students attend three required RLEs throughout their program. These typically coincide with a student's first fall or spring semester, the semester before starting Practicum, and the final semester of Internship. Successful completion of all RLEs is required to fulfill degree requirements. After the RLE, student cohorts continue to learn online in asynchronous and synchronous activities.

A portion of the **60-credit program** includes a supervised clinical experience, one semester of Practicum, and a two-semester, full-time or three-semester, part-time internship sequence. The Saybrook University MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization program is CACREP accredited to help support graduates in licensing eligibility and to ensure that training meets current national standards. The CACREP standards require that graduates demonstrate knowledge and skill across the curriculum and personal and professional competencies. The MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization program graduates are prepared for careers in mental health, human services, education, private practice, government, military, business, and industry. The eight common core areas represent the foundational knowledge required of all entry-level counselor education graduates. The common core areas are:

1. Professional Orientation and Ethical Practice
2. Social and Cultural Diversity
3. Human Growth and Development
4. Lifestyle and Career Development
5. Helping Relationships
6. Group Work
7. Assessment
8. Research and Program Evaluation

Required Courses

The following table lists the required online courses.

Required Courses	Credits
COUN 2031 Assessment & Testing	3
COUN 2500 Basic Counseling Skills	3
COUN 2532 Career Development & Counseling	3
COUN 2555 Advanced Child & Adolescent Therapy	3
COUN 2025 Counseling Theories	3
COUN 2562 Crisis & Trauma Intervention	3
COUN 2060 Human Sexuality	3
COUN 2531 Group Counseling & Psychotherapy	3
COUN 6020 Lifespan Development	3
COUN 2560 Cultural Humility and Responsiveness	3
COUN 2650 Professional Orientation & Ethical Practice	3
COUN 2050 Psychopathology & Diagnosis	3

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COUN 2505 Psychopharmacology	3
COUN 2510 Relationship & Family Intervention	3
COUN 2010 Structure & Dynamics of the Family	3
COUN 2561 Substance Abuse & Behavioral Addictions	3
COUN 1023 Understanding Research & Evaluation	3
COUN 8152 Practicum	3
COUN 8153 Internship 1	3
COUN 8154 Internship 2	3
Total Semester Credits	60

The internship is taken as continuous internship enrollment via Full-Time or Part-Time track: Full-Time, three-credit courses COUN 8153 & COUN 8154 or Part-Time, two-credit courses COUN 8160, COUN 8161, and COUN 8162.

For more information about course order, see the [Program of Study](#) for a Fall and Spring start.

Key Performance Indicators

The MA Counseling program uses Key Performance Indicators (KPI) to assess student progression and program quality. The following 2024 CACREP Standards have been established as KPI for the MA Counseling program:

- KPI 1: 3.A.10. ethical standards of professional counseling organizations and credentialing bodies, and applications of ethical and legal considerations in professional counseling across service delivery modalities and specialized practice areas.
- KPI 2: 3.B.5. The effects of stereotypes, overt and covert discrimination, racism, power, oppression, privilege, marginalization, microaggressions, and violence on counselors and clients.
- KPI 3: 3.C.11. systemic, cultural, and environmental factors that affect lifespan development, functioning, behavior, resilience, and overall wellness
- KPI 4: 3.D.2. approaches for conceptualizing the interrelationships among and between work, socioeconomic standing, wellness, disability, trauma, relationships, and other life roles and factors
- KPI 5: 3.E.9. interviewing, attending, and listening skills in the counseling process
- KPI 6: 3.F.3. therapeutic factors of group work and how they contribute to group effectiveness
- KPI 7: 3.G.13. procedures for assessing and responding to risk of aggression or danger to others, self-inflicted harm, and suicide
- KPI 8: 3.H.2. identification and evaluation of the evidence base for counseling theories, interventions, and practices
- KPI 9: 5.C.5. techniques and interventions for prevention and treatment of a broad range of mental health issues

CA BBS Approved Program

The California Board of Behavioral Sciences evaluated the MA Counseling program and found it meets the LPCC licensure requirements for California. The following required additional content is included in the standard curriculum.

CA BBS Additional Required Content
Socio-Economic Status Impact
Cultural Competency (California specific)
Spousal or Partner Abuse Assessment, Intervention, and Dynamics
Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting CA
Aging and Long-term Care, Including Elder Abuse and Neglect
Human Sexuality
Students have the opportunity to meet with consumers of mental health services and their families.

Transferring Credits

Students may transfer in up to 9 credits from another graduate program. Additional transfer credits may be granted with special permission. Students must submit a written transfer request and provide a transcript and copy of the syllabus of the desired transfer course. Requests for transfer course review should be submitted before starting the MA Counseling program.

Faculty review potential transfer courses to evaluate whether they match our curriculum and the CACREP standards. Transferred courses must meet a minimum of 3 semester credits (5 quarter credits) to be considered equivalent. Most courses are eligible for consideration except for COUN 2500 Basic Counseling Skills or clinical experience courses (i.e., practicum and internship). See the *University Catalog* for the complete transfer policy. No transfer credit will be accepted for courses more than five years old.

Clinical Training/Supervision Requirements

Clinical Training

Supervised clinical training is a key component to becoming a competent professional counselor. Clinical training begins mid-way through the program, is integrative, and includes multiple levels of instruction, supervision, and synchronous peer and faculty interaction. Our training focuses on developing core clinical skills over technical interventions or selecting a theory too quickly. By the end of the clinical training sequence, students are expected to be able to use core counseling skills and a theoretical framework to develop the counseling relationship and support positive client outcomes.

Throughout the clinical experience sequence, professional and ethical practice, receptivity to supervision, developmentally on-target site supervisor evaluations, and adherence to other responsibilities delineated in the *Clinical Experience Affiliation and Supervision Agreement* are required to receive approval to continue clinical work. See the *Saybrook University MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization Program Practicum, and Internship Handbook* for more information.

Pre-requisites for Beginning Clinical Experience

Students typically begin their clinical experience with the Practicum course when entering the latter half of the program. Any students who are transferring courses, attending part-time, repeating courses due to no credit, or otherwise have changes to their program of study should consult with their faculty advisor about their anticipated semester to start Practicum.

Students must receive approval from their Faculty Advisor and the Clinical Experience Coordinator to begin their clinical experience. To be approved, students must demonstrate satisfactory academic progress, completion of required core coursework, and satisfactory evaluation of personal and professional competencies. Students must complete their self-assessment for the practice benchmark of the personal and professional competencies and receive approval from faculty on their development before registering for Practicum.

The following courses are sequenced to be taken before starting Practicum:

Courses Sequenced Before Practicum	Credits
COUN 2500 Basic Counseling Skills	3
COUN 2532 Career Development & Counseling	3
COUN 2025 Counseling Theories	3
COUN 6020 Lifespan Development	3
COUN 2560 Cultural Humility and Responsiveness	3
COUN 2650 Professional Orientation & Ethical Practice	3
COUN 2010 Structure & Dynamics of the Family	3
COUN 1023 Understanding Research & Evaluation	3

The clinical site search process

During the RLEs, advising, and pre-practicum meetings, the faculty provides students with support and information to guide site selection and preparation for clinical work. Students are encouraged to approach the search for a clinical site placement similarly to a job search. The search process begins early in the program, usually in a student's second or third semester. Students are supported by their faculty advisors and the clinical coordination team to assist in the search process. However, students are responsible for securing a position as the program does not place students at specific sites.

The program has a structured process for supporting students, including:

- Practicum and Internship Handbook, which outlines the requirements and process
- Advising and search support from the student's faculty advisor and the clinical coordination team
- Site search office hours
- Example documents of cover letters and resumes
- List of previously approved sites in Tevera, along with student site evaluations
- Tevera course housing all required forms and due dates

To be successful in securing a site, students are expected to:

- Read the Practicum and Internship Handbook
- Attend site search orientation meetings
- Check their Saybrook email regularly and respond to their advisor or the clinical coordination team promptly (within 24-48 hours)
- Begin early (second or third semester of the program)

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- Conduct a wide search in their geographic area
- Apply to and interview at multiple sites
- Plan early when requesting letters of recommendation (2-4 week lead time)
- Submit all required forms by the due dates
- Attend site search office hours
- Schedule meetings with their faculty advisor and clinical coordination team as needed for additional support
- Demonstrate personal and professional competencies in interactions with potential clinical sites

Supervision

All counseling students receive on-site clinical supervision from a site supervisor and educational supervision from MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization program faculty. Clinical sites will provide individual supervision and, in many cases, group supervision to assure client safety and support the development of clinical treatment in alignment with ethical guidelines and state requirements. Saybrook MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization faculty will provide adjunctive educational supervision focused on integrating course material and supporting counselor-in-training development. Educational supervision will include mandatory weekly synchronous video meetings. Clinical work includes at least three semesters of clinical practice: Practicum, Internship I, and Internship II (a part-time internship sequence is available as an equivalent alternative upon request). The clinical experience totals 700 hours, including 280 direct client contact hours. For more information, please see the Saybrook University MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization Program Practicum and Internship Handbook.

Tevera

The Counseling Department uses an online management system called Tevera to track student paperwork and clinical experience progress. All students entering the counseling program will be charged a \$195 one-time fee (price may increase based on Tevera costs) through Saybrook University to access the system. This cost includes full access during your time in the MA Counseling program and after graduation. After graduation, students will keep all their clinical experience records and be able to continue to use Tevera to document clinical hours and supervision as they work towards independent licensure.

While in the MA Counseling program, we will use Tevera to collaborate with students, faculty, and clinical supervisors to track and sign the following documentation:

- Counseling program orientation documents
- Clinical site placement approvals
- Hours toward pre-degree clinical experience hours
- Site and supervision evaluations
- Additional program assignments and assessments

Skillsetter

Students in COUN 2500 Basic Counseling Skills are required to register for Skillsetter. Skillsetter is an interactive online skill-building platform developed specifically for developing

counselors and psychotherapists. It is based on the science of deliberate practice and will include modules across the semester. Students will be provided access by their instructor. The cost (paid to Skillsetter when students access their account) will be \$59 for the semester.

Legal and Professional Ethical Standards

Any training relationship in which students take on counselor roles is considered a client/counselor relationship and, therefore, subject to all ethical and legal regulations governing such relationships. Students must obtain a copy and become familiar with the Ethical Standards of the American Counseling Association (ACA) and any other associations the student would like to work under, such as the California Ethical Code, during their first semester of enrollment in the counseling program. Additionally, students must abide by all laws relevant to professional practice and behaviors. Violating these professional ethics or laws can result in litigation, suspension, or expulsion from the counseling program.

A background check may be required for some clinical site locations and licensure in many states. The program does not conduct background checks. However, students are responsible for ensuring they can pass any background check required for their placements or licensure.

Orientation

All new MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization program students begin their studies with a one-time, university, and program-specific orientation. The orientations are held at the start of each semester. Students will be provided with information on access to the orientation material through Canvas and scheduled orientation sessions at the beginning of their first semester. Additional orientation and advising sessions are offered throughout the first semester to help students adjust to graduate school. Students will complete a series of required orientation paperwork throughout their first semester in the program.

Residential Learning Experiences

Our Residential Learning Experience (RLE) is designed to foster the growth and development of students into strong, confident, and socially just counselors. Our purpose is to equip students with robust counseling skills, ensuring they are well-prepared to meet the diverse needs of their future clients. Activities during the required RLE are designed to expand further on the knowledge from coursework, practice clinical skills, and participate in professional development. Students participate in skills labs, workshops, courses, seminars, formal and informal meetings, and discussions with faculty, advisors, and peers. Although students complete most of their courses through online learning, attendance at all residential conferences is an integral part of the program.

Students are required to attend three RLEs throughout their program. Students may participate in additional RLEs if desired. Students enrolled part-time should consult with their faculty advisor regarding the timing of RLE attendance. **Full attendance at all RLEs is an academic requirement. To receive credit for an RLE, students must attend all scheduled sessions and department meetings and complete any requirements in the Canvas course shell.**

Throughout this program, students will engage in various learning experiences to hone their counseling abilities. These experiences will be tailored to cultivate clinical skill proficiency and a

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deep understanding of ethical and social justice principles. Our curriculum emphasizes practical application, reflective practice, and continuous personal and professional growth.

Students will practice these skills during the following milestones:

Year 1: Reflecting, empathic listening, summarizing. Comfort sitting with others, sitting in silence, and being with others in the counseling setting.

Year 2: Open questions, reflecting feelings & meaning, using silence effectively, probing, confrontation, summarizing, immediacy, content to process, intentional self-disclosure, and demonstrating readiness for practicum.

Year 3: Case conceptualization, treatment planning, intervention, integrating guiding theory of counseling, therapeutic intentionality, and demonstrating readiness for pre-licensure post-graduation.

We employ a comprehensive assessment approach to evaluate progress toward skill development, including formative and summative evaluations. Students will receive ongoing feedback from faculty and peers through various methods, including direct observation, direct feedback, supervision, and reflective journals. Engagement in supervisory feedback is a critical component of our program. Students will participate in regular supervisory sessions, receiving constructive feedback to enhance their counseling skills and professional demeanor. These sessions are designed to encourage self-reflection, identify areas for improvement, and celebrate achievements, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and professional excellence. By the end of the program, our goal is for students to emerge as competent, confident, and socially aware counselors, ready to make a positive impact in their communities.

Note: If students need disability/medical accommodations for an RLE, they may discuss this with their academic advisor.

Online Instruction

Online courses' learning goals and objectives are met through Canvas-based discussions, web conferences, application-based assignments, and skills practice. Students must prepare weekly by engaging in assigned readings, videos, and/or additional resources. Discussion modules may include asynchronous online discussions and/or synchronous web conference sessions with faculty and peers.

Clinical training begins with the Basic Counseling Skills course, is embedded throughout the course work, and culminates in the practicum and internship clinical experience. Courses that are focused on developing clinical skills include required synchronous web conference meetings.

Using Canvas

The Saybrook program involves a combination of face-to-face residential meetings and online work that promotes strong communication between faculty and students. We use the Canvas learning management system to host classroom discussions of the assigned material, share community information, course syllabi, and more. Training in Canvas is ongoing and offered at the RLE meetings and by faculty.

Synchronous Class Sessions

Most courses in the MA Counseling curriculum require synchronous class time over Zoom. The schedule of class meetings is included in the syllabus under the class schedule so students can plan at the beginning of the semester. Synchronous classes for academic courses are typically held on Wednesdays from 8-10 am or 3-5 pm Pacific Time. Some courses, such as supervision sessions for practicum/internship, are held on Mondays from 8-10 am or 3-5 pm Pacific Time. All listed synchronous sessions are required unless otherwise noted in the syllabus.

Video Recording Policy

Students may be required to record videos, such as role plays, for classwork and assignments. Students should use their Saybrook Zoom accounts to record and store videos via cloud-based storage. Additionally, instructors may record synchronous class sessions and make the recording available within Canvas. All recordings should be treated as confidential material and are only to be used for educational purposes related to the course. Recordings may not be shared or viewed by anyone not enrolled or instructing the related course.

Classes or counseling supervision sessions may also be recorded if a doctoral student teaches a course or supervises. The doctoral student may use the recorded session for their review in receiving faculty supervision on their teaching and supervision skills. Regular observation, supervision feedback, and skills development are part of the PhD Counselor Education and Supervision training and professional development.

Being Successful in the Program

Student Advising

Upon admission, students are assigned a faculty advisor. While students work closely with all of the faculty, the advisor has a unique role with each student. The role of the faculty advisor is to work with the student on a plan of study, address concerns related to school or professional development, and help the student achieve their educational goals. The advisor consults with the student regarding University policies, registration procedures, course selection, licensure, and career options, or needs to talk confidentially with someone about educational situations. Developing a good faculty advisor-to-student relationship involves connecting at the RLE, by email, and in web conference meetings. Students must meet with their advisor at least once during their first semester. Thereafter, students are encouraged to email or meet with their advisor at least once per semester and more regularly as necessary.

Available Support

Students can access several supportive resources within the department and through the university. The following is a list of roles to consider when deciding who to contact.

Support within the department:

Faculty Advisor: A student's faculty advisor will be their primary point of contact for ongoing support contact throughout the program, as described above. Additionally, advisors can help students contact other resources as needed.

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Course Instructor: Any questions or concerns specifically related to a course should be directed to the instructor for your course section.

MA Program Coordinator: The program coordinator will provide ongoing orientation throughout the first semester and is available to review and approve changes to your program of study and prepare for graduation.

Clinical Experience Coordinators: The clinical experience coordinator will assist students in the final stages of practicum/internship site selection and approval. The faculty advisor is a helpful contact for starting students in the first stages of finding a site, developing a resume and cover letter, and getting ready to begin practicum.

Associate Department Chair: The associate department chair oversees student success and progression through the program and is responsible for reviewing and approving transfer credits and monitoring student remediation plans.

Department Chair: The department chair oversees all faculty and students. Any questions or concerns that cannot be addressed by the course instructor, faculty advisor, or program coordinator may be directed to the department chair.

University Support Offices:

Student Affairs: Saybrook hosts a Student Affairs Office to support students during their tenure. The office hosts a variety of services, including a new student success guide, ADA services, Title IX services, a virtual student wellness center, and personal support services. Information about student life and student interest groups and organizations can be found through the [Student Affairs Office](#).

Timely Care: Saybrook University students have FREE, 24/7 access to virtual care services with TimelyCare — the virtual health and well-being platform from TimelyCare, designed for college students. Students do not need insurance to access TimelyCare services. As part of Saybrook University's partnership with TimelyCare, students have access 365 days a year to services in TimelyCare, including on-demand and scheduled medical care, on-demand and scheduled counseling, and additional support resources.

University Resources: Some questions and concerns are outside the department's scope. For example, questions about IT problems, course registration difficulties, payment and finances, and ADA services should be directed to the relevant office. All resources can be accessed online through the student gateway.

Technology Resources: Students are provided with the technology needed to complete their degree, including the Microsoft 365 apps (Outlook, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc), Zoom, Canvas, and IT Support. Students can access their technology resources through [the Community Solution Help Desk](#).

What We Expect of Students

- Students will assess and ensure alignment between personal goals and the MA

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Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization program's emphasis on developing a strong professional identity as a counselor.

- Students will evidence multicultural humility and nondiscriminatory practices and work to develop cultural responsiveness within classes, clinical experience, and beyond.
- Students will actively engage with state licensure information sessions and advising and will take responsibility for assuring that their coursework and clinical experience meet local requirements.
- Students will evidence consistent academic engagement, including clear and regular communication throughout their academic programs, such as checking and responding to Saybrook email and Canvas announcements
- Students' engagement and practice will evidence ethical behavior consistent with the American Counseling Association's code of ethics.
- Students will evidence knowledge and skills related to the CACREP standards consistent with that expected of graduate-level students.
- Students will engage in ongoing personal reflection and counseling as needed to support their preparation to engage fully and compassionately with clients of all backgrounds and presenting issues.
- Students will take advantage of practicum and internship preparation and site-seeking guidance sessions and initiate seeking sites early and proactively.
- Students will join and become involved in relevant state and national professional associations, such as the American Counseling Association (ACA) or the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA), and their state counseling association. Many divisions in ACA focus on specific areas. Visit www.counseling.org to find out more about the ACA divisions. ACA and AMHCA offer discounted student membership, which includes student liability insurance.
- Students are highly encouraged to become members of national, regional, and/or local counseling professional organizations.

Attendance Policy

General Policy

Students must attend all class activities, including Residential Learning Experiences and online engagement. Attendance and participation according to personal and professional competencies are required to achieve a passing grade in all counseling courses. The minimum expectation is that all students arrive on time and demonstrate professional behaviors outlined in the department policies and personal and professional competency rubric.

Online Courses

Attendance in the online courses is measured through engagement in the course activities as outlined in each module. Students are expected to participate in all module activities to demonstrate the integration of the course material. Students absent from the course for two or more weeks are at risk of failing the course regardless of their final grade. Students are expected to communicate with their course instructors regarding planned or emergency absences as soon as possible. Full details on expectations are available in each course syllabus and module instructions.

Residential Learning Experience

Residential Learning Experiences are a program requirement for graduation. Sometimes, missing a portion of an RLE course may be unavoidable, such as for illness, personal emergency, etc. Students may miss (with approval from faculty) up to 10% without penalization. Students who miss more than 10% of any RLE should consult their faculty advisor regarding makeup work.

Practicum and Internship

Students in Practicum and Internship are required to attend a specific number of group supervision hours for successful completion of the program and to be eligible for licensure. Students will fulfill this requirement through weekly synchronous supervision sessions throughout the semester. Students are expected to consult the Practicum and Internship Handbook, the course syllabus, and their state licensing board for relevant policies and to ensure they complete the required supervision hours.

Academic Policies

Late Work

Students are expected to complete all assignments by the due date. **Papers and other assignments will not be accepted after the due date without prior permission from the instructor.** In cases of an emergency, the student can work with the instructor after the due date on a timeline to submit the missed. All assignment extensions must be submitted by the date agreed upon by the student and instructor. This date may be no later than one week before the end of the semester.

Plagiarism

Students in the Counseling Department are expected to submit original work using APA style. Various resources are available within each course: Canvas shell and through the [Academic Commons](#) to help students develop proficiency with APA style. Any work not the student's original idea must be appropriately attributed to the author(s) through APA citation. Representation of others' work as one's own (including AI-generated writing) is considered plagiarism and is a violation of academic integrity. Additionally, students who repeat courses after withdrawing or receiving no credit may not resubmit prior work verbatim. All discussion responses and assignments must be original.

Students are encouraged to utilize Turnitin and other similarity index reviews to evaluate their work for originality. All student assignments are run through Turnitin upon submission within Canvas. Any student caught plagiarizing may be subject to remediation or dismissal from the program.

Academic Freedom

At Saybrook, academic freedom is protected for all students and faculty. [Academic freedom](#) is the ability to engage in intellectual debate, study, and research without fear of censorship or retaliation. In 2024, Saybrook faculty adopted the following statement: Affirming Freedom of Speech & Peaceful Protest on University Campuses:

"A unique and historical role of universities is to create spaces that foster open dialogue and activism around important issues of contemporary concern--including questions of war and peace, human rights, and social justice. In accord with Saybrook University's mission to relentlessly pursue 'a socially just, sustainable world,' Saybrook University faculty stand firmly in support of the rights of university

students and faculty across the country to freedom of speech and to assemble in peaceful protest to voice their grievances and advocate for a better world."

The Counseling Department is dedicated to fostering an educational environment that upholds the principles of academic freedom. Faculty strive to cultivate student's deep, critical thinking about counseling and related sociocultural topics. Class discussions, assignments, and activities are intended to be thought-provoking, offer opportunities for diverse perspectives, and prompt a depth of personal and professional self-reflection. This freedom is vital in developing competent, reflective, and socially just counselors who can navigate the complexities of mental health practice.

We encourage students to examine established theories critically, challenge prevailing assumptions, and contribute new insights to the field of mental health counseling. Open and respectful dialogue is essential for personal and professional growth, and we expect all members of our community to engage in discussions with integrity and respect for differing opinions. While exercising academic freedom, students are also expected to adhere to the highest academic integrity and ethical conduct standards. Respect for the rights and dignity of clients, peers, and faculty is paramount in all academic and clinical interactions. Within the context of academic freedom, dialogue and written work in classes are expected to stay on topic for the learning outcomes and prompts for discussions and assignments. Disrespectful interactions (including harassment, threats, and ridicule), creating descent, or failing to abide by department and university policies are not protected under academic freedom and may result in remediation processes.

MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization Student Review Student Code of Conduct

In the Counseling Department, the faculty is committed to supporting our students to become competent mental health professionals who inspire transformational change in individuals, families, and communities toward a just, humane, and sustainable world. Success in the MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization program includes following a code of conduct outlined in the department's academic policies, personal and professional competency rubric, ACA Code of Ethics, and state rules and laws governing counseling licensure. The MA Counseling Department's personal and professional competencies reflect the values of the counseling profession, the ACA Code of Ethics, and the CACREP Accreditation Standards. Failure to adhere to the Counseling Department code of conduct may result in remediation or dismissal from the program. Students are also expected to abide by the Saybrook University code of conduct found in the [University Academic Catalog and Student Handbook](#). Failure to comply with the university code of conduct may result in university disciplinary actions and department remediation.

Students with concerns about another student's ethical, interpersonal, and/or professional behaviors are encouraged to resolve any interpersonal concerns directly with their peers when possible. Students may consult faculty or the Student Affairs Office to resolve any problems. It is the department and university's commitment that all students are ensured a safe and supportive learning environment. Students submitting reports of Title IX harassment or discrimination can find the relevant information on the Saybrook University homepage and the Student Affairs Office. Further details of the entire policy and process can be found in the [University Academic Catalog and Student Handbook](#).

Clinical Experience Expectations

Students in the Practicum and Internship are expected to abide by the policies in their site affiliation agreement, clinical site policies, state regulations, and ethical codes. Regular communication and feedback between clinical experience site supervisors and program faculty is essential for completing practicum and internship. Students disciplined or dismissed by their sites may fail the corresponding clinical course and be required to engage in remediation processes by the department. Gross negligence, legal or ethical violations, or significant personal and professional competence concerns will likely result in immediate dismissal from the MA Counseling Program.

Student Review Process

Per the American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics and the standards set forth by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), department faculty are responsible for reviewing students' academic performance and suitability for the counseling profession. Students are assessed according to their academic performance and benchmarks for Key Performance Indicators (KPI), Program Learning Outcomes (PLO), and Personal and Professional Competencies (PPC). Student personal and professional dispositions related to successful programmatic and professional engagement are described in the [Personal and Professional Competency Rubric](#). The academic policies, KPIs, PLOs, and PPCs are designed to help students develop the skills necessary for success. Failure to develop competencies in these areas may interfere with students' ability to perform in an ethical and professionally competent manner. Thus, all MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization students are continuously reviewed while enrolled in program courses and clinical experiences.

Ongoing review of students is done at faculty meetings in consultation with faculty advisors, course instructors, and site supervisors. As part of the ongoing review of students' academic performance and professional development, faculty members will observe and note personal and professional issues that indicate successful development or might significantly affect students' ability to function adequately as graduate students and as professional counselors. Faculty advisors or course instructors will email students about their concerns or schedule meetings for further discussion as they arise.

Students also engage in a formal assessment process. Students complete a self-assessment of their PPC and are assessed by faculty at benchmarks corresponding to three developmental periods: the first semester in the program, the semester before starting practicum, and their final internship semester. Following the assessment, students receive faculty feedback. Faculty feedback will include a review of the student's self-assessment, faculty assessment of the student's PPC, outcomes for KPI and PLO benchmarks, and academic performance. All students are encouraged to have an assessment follow-up meeting with their faculty advisor for further discussion. Still, some may be required to engage in a follow-up process for additional support or remediation.

Academic Review

Students receive regular formative and summative feedback through course discussions and assignments. Students are encouraged to review and integrate instructor feedback to ensure

academic success. The MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization faculty review students' grade point averages on a semester basis. Students must retake courses for which they do not receive credit (80% or better). Two or more course failures may result in dismissal from the program per program and university policies. Additionally, withdrawal from a course because of academic challenges may result in the student being placed on an academic remediation plan. Students are encouraged to review the current program handbook and Saybrook catalog for additional information about maintaining successful academic progress.

Personal and Professional Competency Review

To ensure proper training and professional competency, students in the MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization program must be familiar with and abide by relevant ethical codes. Students must also demonstrate professional knowledge, technical and interpersonal skills, professional attitudes, and professional character. These factors are evaluated based on, but not limited to, academic performance, behaviors at the Residential Learning Experiences, and the personal and professional competencies that measure dispositions related to the commitments, characteristics, values, beliefs, interpersonal functioning, and behaviors that influence the counselor's professional growth and interactions with clients and colleagues. Examples include conveying warmth, genuineness, respect, and empathy in interactions with classmates, staff, faculty, clients, site supervisors, and co-workers. Students should be cognizant of their impact on others. They should be able to demonstrate the ability to self-reflect and integrate feedback, accept personal responsibility and emotional regulation, and exercise professional judgment in decision-making relative to issues and situations encountered in the program. Students must thoroughly review the [Personal and Professional Competency Rubric](#) to familiarize themselves with the expectations. The PPC and academic policies are essential to the Counseling Department's code of conduct.

Student PPC is assessed on the following developmental benchmark progression:

Foundational Benchmark: The foundational benchmark is measured at the end of the student's first semester in the program. This benchmark measures initial awareness of the values and skills to assess a student's personal and professional compatibility with the counseling profession.

Practice Benchmark: The practice benchmark is measured in the semester before beginning practicum, typically in the student's fourth semester, and part of assessing readiness to begin clinical experience. This benchmark measures a student's more nuanced conceptualization of the counseling profession and ability to put personal and professional competencies into practice through coursework and role-play counseling practice.

Culminating Benchmark: The completion benchmark is measured in the student's final internship semester. This benchmark measures a student's ability to put all personal and professional competencies into practice through clinical work and application to clinical experiences during coursework.

Each personal and professional competency criterion for a benchmark measurement is assessed on the following continuum:

- Demonstrates personal and professional competencies necessary to MEET benchmark

criteria. Students who meet the benchmark criteria are determined to be on track developmentally.

- Demonstrates personal and professional competencies necessary for APPROACHING benchmark criteria. Students who are approaching the benchmark criteria are typically those who need extra support but show potential for developing the required skills and knowledge without significant intervention. These students may receive additional support from an instructor and/or faculty advisor to aid their development.
- Demonstrates LIMITED evidence of personal and professional competencies for the benchmark criteria. Students who receive an assessment of limited evidence of personal and professional competencies for the benchmark criteria demonstrate more significant challenges or deficits in the necessary skills and may be referred for remediation planning.

Student Remediation and Due Process

It is the commitment of the Counseling Department to provide students with regular and proactive feedback on their development as a counselor in training. Faculty will informally review student concerns as they arise at weekly faculty meetings and initiate a formal review when warranted. Any student who demonstrates academic or personal and professional competency challenges is provided with a formal letter outlining the challenges and suggested steps when the concerns arise. Academic and/or personal and professional competency challenges that persist may result in remediation or dismissal from the program. Remediation planning may occur at any point throughout the program.

The remediation process intends to provide students with clear documentation of the areas in need of development for success in the program and the counseling profession. Students placed on a remediation plan are notified by email, and a meeting is scheduled between the student and the program coordinator, the student's faculty advisor, or other relevant representatives. Students are provided with a written remediation plan ahead of the meeting. During the meeting, the faculty will describe the outlined concerns and action steps for remediation. Students may ask questions, check for understanding, and collaborate on strategies to meet the plan requirements. Additionally, students are encouraged to meet with their advisor or relevant university support services further to collaborate on strategies for success.

Students placed on remediation plans receive a formal review and feedback on their progress at least once per semester. Students are encouraged to meet with their advisor to review their progress regularly. Remediation plans will be updated on a semester basis until the required action steps have been met or the student is dismissed from the program. Depending upon the nature and severity of the concerns, appropriate action steps range from (a) collaborative strategies for academic, personal, and professional improvement to (b) alterations to the program of study, including delaying the start of clinical experience, to (c) required leave of absence to (d) dismissal from their program. Gross violations of the Counseling Department code of conduct may result in immediate dismissal from the program. Failure to engage in the remediation process violates the remediation plan and may result in immediate dismissal from the department.

Appeal Process

In cases of Academic Dismissal from the department or university, students who wish to appeal the decision may consult the process according to current university policies. For more

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information about the university appeal processes, visit the *Academic and School Policies* section of [Saybrook University's Academic Catalog and Student Handbook](#).

Department remediation plans are not eligible for appeal. Students may request a review from the department chair if they believe they have not been provided due process through faculty bias, inclusion of false information, or other concerns. Students should give the department chair a written statement documenting any violations of due process, presence of bias, or other problems. The department chair will review the concerns and determine appropriate next steps, including but not limited to meeting with the student, revisions of the remediation plan to correct information or conclusion of the review without further action.

Personal and Professional Competencies Rubric

The following rubric is used by MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization faculty as a guide to monitor students' personal and professional competencies (as described above). Unacceptable personal or professional performance on the part of students leads to a meeting with instructors, advisors, or the Department Chair.

<i>Openness to growth and learning</i>		
<i>Foundational Benchmark</i>	<i>Practice Benchmark</i>	<i>Culminating Benchmark</i>
Demonstrates interest and openness to diverse perspectives, learning new ideas, and approaches curriculum with a beginner's mind.	Demonstrates openness to diverse perspectives and engages in productive and critical reflection when encountering new ideas.	Demonstrates a continued value of lifelong learning and the ability to seek out new information and perspectives to support clinical work and personal/professional growth.
<i>Reflexivity and integration of feedback</i>		
<i>Foundational Benchmark</i>	<i>Practice Benchmark</i>	<i>Culminating Benchmark</i>
Demonstrates willingness to reflect on self as a counselor and frequently utilizes feedback for academic improvement and personal/professional growth.	Demonstrates frequent reflective practice on self as a counselor, consistent integration of feedback for academic improvement and personal/ professional growth, and interest in supervisory relationships for clinical practice.	Demonstrates consistent reflective practice on self as a counselor and engagement in productive supervisory and advisory relationships for ongoing growth and learning.
<i>Cognitive flexibility and acceptance of ambiguity</i>		
<i>Foundational Benchmark</i>	<i>Practice Benchmark</i>	<i>Culminating Benchmark</i>
Demonstrates willingness to engage in cognitive flexibility and ambiguity.	Demonstrates frequent cognitive flexibility and willingness to adapt ideas, materials, plans, or counseling practice based on nuance and contextual information.	Demonstrates consistent cognitive flexibility and skills at adapting ideas, materials, plans, or clinical work based on nuance and contextual information.
<i>Emotional regulation and self-expression</i>		
<i>Foundational Benchmark</i>	<i>Practice Benchmark</i>	<i>Culminating Benchmark</i>
Demonstrates ability to articulate the foundational range of emotional experience and frequently self-regulates to manage emotions and behaviors that interfere with interpersonal interactions.	Demonstrates ability to articulate the full range of emotional experience, consistently self-regulates to manage emotions and behaviors that interfere with interpersonal interactions, and willingness to expand awareness of countertransference.	Demonstrates the ability to regulate emotional experience, manage countertransference, and skillfully self-disclose when appropriate in clinical work.
<i>Collaborative relationships</i>		
<i>Foundational Benchmark</i>	<i>Practice Benchmark</i>	<i>Culminating Benchmark</i>
Demonstrates willingness to engage in cooperative activities, contribute proportionally,	Demonstrates seeking opportunities to collaborate with peers, faculty, and clinical site	Demonstrates mutual respect in all interactions, contributes to productive outcomes in

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practice mutual respect and accountability for managing conflict, and engage in repair work when necessary.	personnel, can navigate conflict with mutual respect, and initiates repair work when necessary.	collaborative activities, and is accountable for initiating repair work when necessary.
<i>Awareness of own impact on others</i>		
<i>Foundational Benchmark</i>	<i>Practice Benchmark</i>	<i>Culminating Benchmark</i>
Demonstrates an effort to determine how their words and actions impact or influence others.	Demonstrates frequent recognition of how their words and actions impact or influence others.	Demonstrates consistent and accurate recognition of how their words and actions impact or influence others and regular self-reflection of this influence on the counseling relationship.
<i>Cultural humility and responsiveness</i>		
<i>Foundational Benchmark</i>	<i>Practice Benchmark</i>	<i>Culminating Benchmark</i>
Demonstrates respect for the fundamental rights, dignity, and worth of all people and is open to learning about one's personal cultural identity and that of others.	Demonstrates an ability to engage in cultural humility through self-awareness of personal cultural identity and its impact on interpersonal interactions, critically analyzing counseling through a systemic sociopolitical lens, and the willingness to broach racial, ethnic, and cultural concerns.	Demonstrates the practice of cultural humility in self-reflection and all interactions, applies a systemic sociopolitical lens to case conceptualization and counseling relationships, and applies skills in broaching racial, ethnic, and cultural concerns in clinical settings.
<i>Attention to professional, ethical, and legal considerations</i>		
<i>Foundational Benchmark</i>	<i>Practice Benchmark</i>	<i>Culminating Benchmark</i>
Demonstrates an awareness of counseling as a legally regulated profession, the importance of professional identity, and ethical practice.	Demonstrates understanding of laws and rules regulating the counseling profession, ability to behave ethically and legally, and conduct ethical decision-making with supervision.	Demonstrates counseling professional identity through clinical behaviors and practice consistent with state rules and laws, the ability to behave ethically, and conducts ethical decision-making independently and with consultation.
<i>Counseling skills</i>		
<i>Foundational Benchmark</i>	<i>Practice Benchmark</i>	<i>Culminating Benchmark</i>
Demonstrates awareness of counseling as a discipline with distinct skills and professional behaviors.	Demonstrate foundational counseling skills to respond in practice sessions effectively and role plays with frequent accuracy.	Demonstrate consistent use of foundational counseling skills to support client progression through a theoretical lens in counseling sessions.
<i>Personal responsibility</i>		
<i>Foundational Benchmark</i>	<i>Practice Benchmark</i>	<i>Culminating Benchmark</i>
Demonstrates time management to complete coursework by due dates, regular engagement and accountability in the learning environment, and proactive communication with course	Demonstrates consistent engagement and accountability in the learning environment, motivation, and responsibility for seeking learning opportunities in coursework and upcoming clinical experience.	Demonstrates consistent engagement and accountability in the learning environment and the ability to manage multiple coursework responsibilities and clinical experience and take

instructors and program advisors.		responsibility for lifelong learning.
Academic Performance		
<i>Foundational Benchmark</i>	<i>Practice Benchmark</i>	<i>Completion Benchmark</i>
Demonstrates developing effective written and oral communication skills using APA-Style and ethical use of professional literature.	Demonstrates frequent ability to summarize and synthesize information for effective communication using APA-style or clinical documentation and ethical use of professional literature to support coursework and clinical experiences.	Demonstrates consistent ability to summarize and synthesize information for effective communication using APA-style or clinical documentation and ethical use of professional literature to support coursework and clinical experiences.

Saybrook University Policies

Saybrook University's Academic Progress Policies

For more information about Saybrook University's Academic Progress Policies, visit the [Academic and School Policies](#) section of *Saybrook University's Academic Catalog and Student Handbook*.

Saybrook University's Diversity Policies

For more information about Saybrook University's non-discrimination and non-retaliation policies, visit the [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) section of *Saybrook University's Academic Catalog and Student Handbook*.

Saybrook University Disability Accommodation Policy

For more information about Saybrook University's Disability Accommodation Policy, visit the [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) section of *Saybrook University's Academic Catalog and Student Handbook*.

Student Retention and Dismissal Policy

For more information about Saybrook University's retention and dismissal policies, visit the [Academic and School Policies](#) section of *Saybrook University's Academic Catalog and Student Handbook*.

Reaching Out

To support student growth and success, Saybrook University offers assistance. For more information about assistance resources, visit [Student Affairs](#).

Counseling Association and Resources

Site	URL
Saybrook University's progressive approach	www.saybrook.edu/about/essentials
Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)	cacrep.org
Counseling Associations	
American Counseling Association (ACA)	counseling.org

American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA)	amhca.org
National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC)	nbcc.org
Ethical Codes	
ACA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice	https://www.counseling.org/resources/ethics
AMHCA Code of Ethics	https://www.amhca.org/events/publications/ethics
NBCC Code of Ethics	nbcc.org/ethics
Examination and Licensing	
American Association of State Counseling Boards	Aascborg.wildapricot.org
NBCC State Licensure Overview	https://www.nbcc.org/licensure
NBCC Examination for Licensure and Certification	www.nbcc.org/Exams
American Counseling Association	counseling.org

Graduation, Licensure, and Employment

Getting Ready to Graduate

In the final semester of the MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization program, students prepare to graduate and collect the documentation they will need for licensure. As students get ready to complete the program, they should ensure they have downloaded all course syllabi and kept records of all clinical work experience documents. Students should pay close attention to their university emails to ensure they do not miss critical tasks and deadlines.

Before starting their final semester, Academic Affairs will send emails regarding the requirements and process for graduation and degree conferral. Students are responsible for completing the Petition to Graduate form and submitting it to the university.

Official transcripts are needed for proof of the educational requirement for licensure. Students requesting official transcripts for licensure should request transcripts to be sent after the degree conferral date. Degrees are conferred several weeks after the end of the semester. Consult the academic calendar for dates.

As part of a CACREP-accredited program and an Approved University through NBCC, some students are eligible to take the National Counselor Examination or the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination in the final semester of their program. Many states allow students to take the required examinations before graduation. Students in eligible states, entering their final semester, will be provided with dates and details on registration.

Professional Licensure

Graduates of the MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization program will have completed the educational requirements and pre-degree clinical training necessary for a professional counselor supervised practice license (or equivalent) in most states. Entrance to the MA Counseling program does not guarantee state licensure. The MA Counseling program is CACREP accredited and provides students with educational and pre-degree clinical experience, however, some states may require additional requirements such as examinations or background checks before a license is granted. Students will sign an [informed consent](#) upon entering the program attesting to their understanding and agreement for their responsibility to inform themselves of their state's requirements as well as personal and professional dispositions.

Because all states have different licensing requirements, faculty work with students from the very beginning of the program to help them understand the license requirements in the state where they want to practice. Students research requirements in the states for which they intend to seek licensure and work with their advisor to develop a program of study designed to meet any requirements in addition to the standard curriculum. While it is not typical that students need to make adjustments, examples may include, additional coursework outside the counseling department or additional hours of clinical experience. Students who may need to take additional coursework for licensure in a particular state are encouraged to discuss this requirement with the Financial Aid Office. After graduating, students will be prepared to take the National Counselor Exam (NCE), or other exam(s) required in the state in which they intend to practice.

National Counseling Examination

The National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) develops examinations that are used for purposes of licensure in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, as well as for national certification. The [National Counselor Examination \(NCE\) for Licensure and Certification](#) is the most portable in counseling. It is required for NBCC's flagship board certification, the [National Certified Counselor \(NCC\)](#), and for state licensure in many states. The NCE is a 200-item, multiple-choice examination designed to assess knowledge, skills, and abilities determined to be important for providing effective counseling services. The NCE was first used in 1983 as part of the NCC application process and continues to undergo regular review, revision, and development to ensure that it represents the current reality of practice and research in the counseling profession. NBCC has also developed a study guide to prepare applicants for the exams.

Career Opportunities

Licensed practitioners in Professional Mental Health Counseling have many career opportunities. In addition to independent practice, our graduates work in nonprofit service centers, substance recovery centers, community mental health centers, schools, university campuses, domestic violence centers, hospice outreach, adoption and foster transitional care, hospitals and ambulatory care, private practice, and anywhere and everywhere that reaches the populations they are passionate about supporting.

While job prospects will vary with location and specialization, opportunities are generally positive because the number of job openings often exceeds the number of counseling program graduates. The number of available positions for counselors is expected to grow throughout the next decade. *See the Occupational Outlook Handbook, www.bls.gov/ooh/.*

Endorsing Students

Saybrook faculty are responsible for student competencies in the counseling training program. When students begin the clinical experience and when they pursue licensure, faculty will not support students who do not demonstrate a good fit for the profession, in terms of skills competence, and evidence of ethical behavior. Instead, faculty will advise such students to consider alternate non-clinical degrees. Students and alumni who are in good standing may request letters of recommendation from faculty. The faculty will consider student requests for letters of recommendation for other academic and employment pursuits. For sufficient time to evaluate and negotiate such requests, please allow faculty at least 4 weeks to respond.

Saybrook University Master's Program of Study
Fall Start MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization Program

Student Name	Type student name	Student ID	Type student ID number
Year 1 Counseling Core Courses (Academic Year -)			
Fall		Spring	
COUN 2500 Basic Counseling Skills (3 credits) COUN 6020 Lifespan Development (3) COUN 2025 Counseling Theories (3)		COUN 2010 Structure & Dynamics of the Family (3) COUN 1023 Understanding Research & Evaluation (3) COUN 2650 Professional Orientation & Ethical Practice (3)	
		Summer	
		COUN 2532 Career Development & Counseling (3) (8 week session)	
Year 2 Counseling Core Courses (Academic Year -)			
Fall		Spring	
COUN 2562 Crisis & Trauma Intervention (3) COUN 2561 Substance Abuse & Behavioral Addictions (3) COUN 2560 Cultural Humility and Responsiveness (3)		COUN 2555 Advanced Child & Adolescent Coun. (3) COUN 2050 Psychopathology & Diagnosis (3) COUN 8152 Practicum (3)	
		Summer	
		COUN 2031 Assessment & Testing (3) (8 week session) Option to take COUN 8152 or COUN 8153 (12 week session)	
Year 3 Counseling Core Courses (Academic Year -)			
Fall		Spring	
COUN 2531 Group Counseling & Psychotherapy (3) COUN 2505 Psychopharmacology (3) COUN 8153 Internship I (3)		COUN 2510 Relationship & Family Intervention (3) COUN 2060 Human Sexuality (3) COUN 8154 Internship II (3)	
		Summer	
		Option to take COUN 8154 (12 week session)	

Total Program Credits – 60

Approved Transfer Credits (graduate level within last 5 years)			
Course Prefix and Title	Credits	Institution	Equivalent Saybrook Course
Transfer Credit Total			

Residential Conference Workshops (not credit bearing) Required for California Licensing		Contact Hours
COUN 2539	Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting	7

*Note: Option to take COUN 8152, COUN 8153, or COUN 8154 indicates students may choose to start Practicum in summer instead of Spring and will enroll in the next course each semester to complete the clinical series in sequence

Saybrook University Master's Program of Study
Spring Start MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization Program

Student Name	Type student name	Student ID	Type student ID number
Year 1 Counseling Core Courses (Academic Year)			
Spring		Summer	
COUN 2010 Structure & Dynamics of the Family (3) COUN 1023 Understanding Research & Evaluation (3) COUN 2650 Professional Orientation & Ethical Practice (3)		COUN 2532 Career Development & Counseling (3) (8 week session)	
		COUN 2500 Basic Counseling Skills (3 credits) COUN 6020 Lifespan Development (3) COUN 2025 Counseling Theories (3)	
Year 2 Counseling Core Courses (Academic Year)			
Spring		Summer	
COUN 2555 Advanced Child & Adolescent Coun. (3) COUN 2050 Psychopathology & Diagnosis (3) COUN 2560 Cultural Humility and Responsiveness (3)		COUN 2031 Assessment & Testing (3) (8 week session)	
		COUN 2562 Crisis & Trauma Intervention (3) COUN 2561 Substance Abuse & Behavioral Addictions (3) COUN 8152 Practicum (3)	
Year 3 Counseling Core Courses (Academic Year)			
Spring		Summer	
COUN 2510 Relationship & Family Intervention (3) COUN 2060 Human Sexuality (3) COUN 8153 Internship I (3)		Option to take COUN 8153 or COUN 8154 (12 week session)	
		COUN 2531 Group Counseling & Psychotherapy (3) COUN 2505 Psychopharmacology (3) COUN 8154 Internship II (3)	
Total Program Credits – 60			
Approved Transfer Credits (graduate level within last 5 years)			
Course Prefix and Title	Credits	Institution	Equivalent Saybrook Course
Transfer Credit Total			
Residential Conference Workshops (not credit bearing) Required for California Licensing			
COUN 2539	Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting		7

*Note: Option to take COUN 8152, COUN 8153, or COUN 8154 indicates students may choose to start Practicum later and will enroll in the next course each semester to complete the clinical series in sequence

MA Counseling Personal and Professional Competencies Student Self-Assessment Rubric – Foundational Benchmark

Please assess your personal and professional competencies according to the following rubric. You will complete your self-assessment, and faculty will provide feedback in each area at three points in the program.

This first assessment is the **foundational benchmark** that coincides with your first semester. This benchmark measures your initial awareness of the values and skills related to your personal and professional compatibility with the counseling profession. No prior coursework is necessary for any rubric areas in this benchmark. Please see the program handbook for the full rubric and benchmark descriptions.

For each area on the rubric, you will assess yourself on the following continuum. Please read the descriptions below to reflect on your most accurate developmental level.

- Demonstrates personal and professional competencies necessary to **MEET** benchmark criteria. *Select this assessment level if you believe you are on track developmentally and can demonstrate initial awareness of the values and skills compatible with the counseling profession without additional support or intervention.*
- Demonstrates personal and professional competencies necessary for **APPROACHING** benchmark criteria. *Select this assessment level if you would benefit from additional support from your instructors and advisor to develop the necessary awareness of the values and skills compatible with the counseling profession but do not need significant intervention to meet the developmental expectation.*
- Demonstrates **LIMITED** evidence of personal and professional competencies for the benchmark criteria. *Select this assessment level if the area of the rubric is a more significant challenge. This option indicates to your instructors and advisor that you could use more significant intervention to support your development.*

Personal and Professional Competency Rubric

<i>Openness to growth and learning:</i> Demonstrates interest and openness to diverse perspectives, learning new ideas, and approaches curriculum with a beginner's mind.	Meets	Approaching	Limited
<i>Reflexivity and integration of feedback:</i> Demonstrates willingness to reflect on self as a counselor and frequently utilizes feedback for academic improvement and personal/professional growth.	Meets	Approaching	Limited
<i>Cognitive flexibility and acceptance of ambiguity:</i> Demonstrates willingness to engage in cognitive flexibility and ambiguity.	Meets	Approaching	Limited
<i>Emotional regulation and self-expression:</i> Demonstrates ability to articulate the foundational range of emotional experience and frequently self-regulates to manage emotions and behaviors that interfere with interpersonal interactions.	Meets	Approaching	Limited
<i>Collaborative relationships:</i> Demonstrates willingness to engage in cooperative activities, contribute proportionally, practice mutual respect and accountability for managing conflict, and engage in repair work when necessary.	Meets	Approaching	Limited

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<i>Awareness of own impact on others:</i> Demonstrates an effort to determine how their words and actions impact or influence others.	Meets	Approaching	Limited
<i>Cultural humility and responsiveness:</i> Demonstrates respect for the fundamental rights, dignity, and worth of all people and is open to learning about one's personal cultural identity and that of others.	Meets	Approaching	Limited
<i>Attention to professional, ethical, and legal considerations:</i> Demonstrates an awareness of counseling as a legally regulated profession, the importance of professional identity, and ethical practice.	Meets	Approaching	Limited
<i>Counseling skills:</i> Demonstrates awareness of counseling as a discipline with distinct skills and professional behaviors.	Meets	Approaching	Limited
<i>Personal responsibility:</i> Demonstrates time management to complete coursework by due dates, regular engagement and accountability in the learning environment, and proactive communication with course instructors and program advisors.	Meets	Approaching	Limited
<i>Academic Performance:</i> Demonstrates developing effective written and oral communication skills using APA-style and ethical use of professional literature.	Meets	Approaching	Limited

Identify 3 personal and professional development goals for the next year. What will you do to reach each goal? How can we support you in reaching the goal?

Sample Remediation Plan

Saybrook University
Department of Counseling
MA Counseling Program

STUDENT NAME
Remediation Plan
DATE

Dear,

In the Counseling Department, the faculty is committed to supporting our students to become competent mental health professionals who inspire transformational change in individuals, families, and communities toward a just, humane, and sustainable world. Success in the MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization program includes a combination of academic requirements and personal and professional competencies. The Counseling Department's requirements reflect the values of the counseling profession, the ACA Code of Ethics, and the CACREP Accreditation Standards. The expectations and requirements for successful completion of the program are outlined in the MA Counseling Handbook and course syllabi.

The faculty in the MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization program is aware that you have not passed XXXXXX coursework. In addition to a No Credit grade XXXXXX, you have passed XXX of the XXX courses taken to date.

Under Saybrook University's academic policies, you must maintain a pass rate above 67% to stay in good academic standing. You may receive a warning from Saybrook University's registrar's office, letting you know that you will have one more semester to raise your completion percentage to the required 67%. If you do not raise this percentage, Saybrook University will require significant steps to stay enrolled. Additionally, counseling department policies dictate you may be at risk of dismissal from the program if you fail 2 or more courses.

As a way to help support you and assist you in being successful in the counseling program, the counseling program faculty are placing you on a remediation plan. We hope that this plan will work to support you in achieving the professional standards required to complete the program. A remediation plan outlines both specific items that must be completed and ongoing patterns that need to be addressed to demonstrate academic as well as personal and professional alignment with program and professional standards.

The plan will include the following:

Academic

1. The following criteria must be met each semester for all courses:
 - a. Timely and full participation in all discussions.
 - b. Completion of all coursework (discussions, assignments, etc.) on time as outlined in the course syllabus.
 - c. Passing all courses. Receiving a grade of "NC/NP" in any course moving forward, may result in program dismissal.

2. Specific academic requirements:
 - a. Area of challenge:
 - b. Required outcome:
 - c. Completion date:

Personal and Professional Competencies

1. Productive engagement in remediation plan processes. Refusal to participate in the remediation process may result in dismissal from the program.
2. Specific PPC requirements:
 - a. Area of challenge:
 - b. Required outcome:
 - c. Completion date:

The faculty highly encourages you to utilize university and outside support to address any personal stress or challenges related to school (personal counseling, community/social support, virtual student wellness center, etc.). Please visit the [Student Affairs Homepage](#) for information about connecting with resources. You can find additional academic support through the [Academic Commons](#).

Please know that we appreciate your involvement with our program. Let us or your faculty advisor know if you have any questions or concerns.

Student Handbook Responsibility Statement

I understand that I am responsible for, and will be held accountable for, all information presented in the *Saybrook University MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization Program Student Handbook*, and in particular, those related to the:

- mission statement
- academic unit and program objectives
- information about professional counseling organizations, opportunities for professional involvement, and activities appropriate for students
- matriculation requirements
- expectations of students
- academic appeal policy
- written endorsement policy explaining the procedures for recommending students for credentialing and employment
- policy for student retention, remediation, and dismissal from the program, student performance, and other ethical and professional standards

I understand that violating the policies and procedures outlined in the *Saybrook University MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization Program Student Handbook* puts at risk my privilege to remain a member of this training program. I will review these materials carefully, and, if I have questions concerning them, will ask for clarification from my advisor or other faculty in this program.

Student Name _____ **Date signed** _____

Student Informed Consent MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization Program

In the Counseling Department, the faculty is committed to preparing competent mental health professionals who inspire transformational change in individuals, families, and communities toward a just, humane, and sustainable world. Saybrook's counseling program is specifically focused on the knowledge, experience, and practical skills needed to enter professional practice. The MA Counseling Program is committed to a developmental approach to understanding individuals, groups, couples, and families within their broader social and cultural context, and with a full appreciation of the inseparable nature of spirit, body, and mind.

By signing this form, I understand that admission to the MA Counseling Program does not guarantee graduation or future licensure. I will ensure that I am informed of my state's requirements for obtaining a counseling license post-graduation including, but not limited to: [additional education requirements](#) beyond those included in the MA Counseling Program of Study, requirements of pre-degree supervised practice, examination requirements, and disposition or legal requirements such as background checks or character references.

Within the counseling program, I understand that success is not only based on academic performance but also on dispositions suitable to the counseling profession as outlined in the HUMANITI core values and Personal and Professional Competencies Rubric included in the MA Counseling Handbook. Additionally, during my time in the counseling program, I agree to the following:

- I will review state licensure requirements and track any changes while I am in the MA Counseling program
- I will assess and ensure alignment between personal goals and the MA Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization program's emphasis on developing a strong professional identity as a counselor.
- I will evidence multicultural humility, and nondiscriminatory practices, and work to develop cultural responsiveness within classes, clinical experience, and beyond.
- I will engage in ongoing personal reflection, counseling, and supervision as needed to support my preparation to engage fully and compassionately with clients of all identities and presenting issues.
- I will demonstrate engagement and practice that evidences ethical behavior consistent with the American Counseling Association's code of ethics.
- I will follow all state regulations governing the profession of counseling and laws relevant to professional behaviors.
- I will demonstrate knowledge and skills related to the current CACREP standards consistent with what is expected of graduate-level students.

Student Name _____ **Date signed** _____