

**WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY**  
**Program Information for Counseling Program Interviewees**  
**CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING (M.S.) and**  
**SCHOOL COUNSELING (M.A.Ed.)**

Both Master's degrees in Counseling are CACREP-Accredited  
The Counseling Program is part of the Department of Human Services,  
College of Education and Allied Professions, WCU  
Housed at WCU-Biltmore Park (in Asheville)

**PROGRAM FACULTY**

The counseling program has 6 faculty:

- Dr. Russ Curtis
- Dr. Melodie Frick, Counseling Program Director
- Dr. Loidaly González-Rosario
- Dr. Elizabeth Likis-Werle
- Dr. Lisen Roberts, Human Services Department Head
- Dr. Heather Thompson

**PROGRAM CURRICULUM OVERVIEW**

The WCU counseling program specialty areas of clinical mental health counseling and professional school counseling are accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Each specialty area is sixty (60) credit-hours. CACREP establishes a core curriculum for all students and sets standards for field placement requirements.

**SCHOOL/CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING REQUIRED CORE COURSES:**

- COUN 602: Professional Orientation and Ethics
- COUN 605: The Helping Relationship
- COUN 610: Family Counseling
- COUN 615: Cross Cultural Counseling
- COUN 617: Addictions Counseling
- COUN 625: Developmental Perspectives in Counseling
- COUN 630: Theories and Techniques of Counseling
- COUN 633: Crisis Intervention and Trauma Therapy
- COUN 635: Group Methods in Counseling
- COUN 640: Assessment in Counseling
- COUN 650: Career Development
- COUN 667: The DSM and Effective Treatment Planning in Counseling
- EDRS 602: Methods of Research

**CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING ALSO REQUIRES:**

- COUN 623: Introduction to Clinical Mental Health Counseling
- Three counseling electives

- COUN 686: Practicum in Counseling, a one-semester 150-hour field placement
- COUN 687: Internship in Counseling, a one-semester 600-hour field placement.

#### SCHOOL COUNSELING ALSO REQUIRES:

- COUN 620: Counseling Children and Adolescents
- COUN 645: Consultation and Collaboration
- COUN 660: School Counseling Program Development
- One counseling elective
- COUN 686: Practicum in Counseling, a one-semester 150-hour field placement
- COUN 687: Internship in counseling, a one-semester 600-hour field placement
- The Professional School Counseling subtest of the PRAXIS II exam is also required by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction for NC state licensure as a school counselor.

Graduating students in either specialty area qualify to pursue the post-Master's Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor (LCMHC) credential. The National Counselor Exam (NCE) is required for NC state licensure as LCMHC-Associate (initial level) and LCMHC (full licensure), and may be taken during students' final semester.

All WCU counseling courses (and program events) are at the WCU Biltmore Park instructional site in Asheville, except for graduation which is held on the main campus in Cullowhee.

A limit of 6-hours of graduate credit can be transferred into the counseling program with the approval of program faculty. It is not recommended to transfer coursework within the counseling core as all students are required to complete comprehensive exams based on WCU's core counseling curriculum.

#### FIELD PLACEMENTS

**Practicum** requires a minimum of 8-10 hours weekly at a mental health or school site for one semester. Practicum requires 1-hour of individual supervision per week and 3-hours of group supervision every other week, both at Biltmore Park. Practicum is a 3-hour credit course. Students apply for practicum the semester prior to enrollment. Approval for admission into practicum and for the practicum placement is made by the faculty. Professional liability insurance is required for all students enrolled in practicum.

**Internship** requires 40 hours weekly (full-time placement) at a mental health or school site for one semester. One hour of weekly individual supervision is provided by the site. Three hours of group supervision is conducted weekly at Biltmore Park. Internship is a 6-hour credit course. Students apply for internship the semester prior to enrollment. Approval for admission into internship and for the internship placement is made by the faculty. Typically, internship is an unpaid experience. Professional liability insurance is required for all students enrolled in internship. It is possible for students to complete a split internship at 20 hours weekly for two semesters.

## **LOCATION AND TIMING OF CLASSES**

Counseling classes are taught in 3-hour blocks typically in the evening 5:30-8:20pm at WCU's Biltmore Park instructional site. When a second section of a specific course is offered, it takes a day slot (most often 1:00 - 3:50 p.m., or sometimes 9:30 - 12:20 p.m.). In these cases, individual students choose which section, day or evening, they prefer. All students are required to complete Summer courses as part of the 60-hour counseling program. Students must have access to computer technology and reliable internet access.

## **ORIENTATION, PLANS OF STUDY, AND ADVISEMENT**

A counseling program orientation is required by all new students and will be scheduled on a Friday in late August (the first Friday of fall classes). There also will be a Biltmore Park sponsored student orientation that new students are encouraged to attend.

Each student will be assigned an academic advisor at the time of admission into the program. Students must initiate a meeting with their advisors to formulate a plan of study no later than the end of the fall semester of their first year of enrollment.

Newly admitted students will begin coursework in the Fall (August). If possible, however, it is highly recommended to a class in the Summer term (June and/or July). New students wishing to begin in the Summer may do so after consultation with their advisor and then updating their application/admission term with the Graduate School to Summer. A limited number of courses will be appropriate for new students in the Summer term: COUN 650, COUN 640, and one elective: COUN 612. Students who take COUN 650 must register for the correct section; clinical students select CMHC, professional school counseling students select School Coun.

**FULL-TIME STUDENTS** in both specialty areas complete the required 60 hours in their choice of 2, 2½, or 3 years, including Summer courses. **PART-TIME STUDENTS** (those enrolled in 3 or 6 hours per semester) typically complete the program in 4 years. Part-time students are strongly encouraged to enroll in 6-hours per academic semester. At a minimum in the first Fall semester, students must take the two primary introductory courses: COUN 602 for all students, and COUN 623 for Clinical Mental Health or COUN 660 for School. Per NC state guidelines, all students have a maximum of 6 years to complete the counseling program from the time of initial enrollment.

**A course sequence outline for full- and part-time students will be provided separately for candidates invited to interview.**

## **PROGRAM REVIEW OF STUDENTS**

Following CACREP standards, students are systematically reviewed and evaluated with regard to student learning outcomes, academic performance, clinical skill development, and professional and personal development throughout the program. Typical points of review for students are during the admission process, near the end of each Fall and Spring semesters, and at the point of application to practicum and internship.

A comprehensive exam that covers designated core counseling courses is required. Students take the comprehensive exam as they have completed, or are completing, core courses, and typically with internship. Most students take the National Counselor Exam (NCE) the same semester of the comprehensive exam.

## **FINANCIAL AID**

Financial aid is available in the form of graduate assistantships, Chancellor's Fellowships, Graduate School grants, scholarships, and student loans. Applicants interested in financial aid assume responsibility for applying for financial assistance, and may find more information here:

<https://www.wcu.edu/apply/graduate-school/tuition-and-funding/index.aspx>

## **Graduate Assistantships in Counseling**

A limited number of graduate assistantships (GAs) are available through the Department of Human Services for full-time counseling students, who maintain a 3.0 GPA. **Graduate assistantships may require at least one day per week on WCU's main campus in Cullowhee.**

**Graduate assistantships are awarded for Fall and Spring annually; assistantships are not available during the semester in which a student is enrolled in internship.** There are three general types of graduate assistantships: Teaching-focused; Office-focused; and Faculty-focused.

Graduate Teaching Assistantships. The counseling program is responsible for COUN 140: Skills for College, a 1-credit course for first-year WCU undergraduates. Graduate teaching assistants in counseling are independent instructors for these courses. COUN 140 meets one hour, 1-2 days per week in the Fall semester on the WCU main campus in Cullowhee.

First priority for funds available for Graduate Assistantships will be for the COUN 140 teaching positions. Other non-teaching assistantships will be available as additional assistantship funds are allocated to the program. Assistantship contracts must be completed by late April.

## **Technology Requirements**

Students must have access to a computer to complete typed assignments and reliable internet services to access student emails, course materials via Canvas (WCU's Learning Management System), and online systems such as Zoom when virtual meetings are required. In some courses such as COUN 605, 630, 635, 686, and 687, a digital recording device will be required for practice skill sessions with classmates and for actual counseling sessions with clients.

## **ADMISSION DECISIONS AND NOTIFICATION PROCESS**

Counseling faculty will review all applications and interviews. Official notification informing applicants of final admission decisions are sent via email from the Graduate School. Final

admission decisions for applicants will begin in early March and be completed by late April. Because the WCU counseling program has more qualified applicants than can be admitted into the program, some applicants will be placed on a wait list for admission for the Fall semester of the same year of application. Persons who receive notice of being placed on the wait list may later receive notice of acceptance as late as mid-August. Applicants on the wait list who cannot be admitted due to lack of space in the program, may re-apply for admission in the next year.

Written confirmation of intent to enter the program is required of all persons granted admission to the program. Persons admitted will be notified of their assigned advisor in the admission letter from the Graduate School. If a person accepts admission to the program and plans change prior to beginning coursework, please notify the Counseling program director as soon as possible.

**To learn more about the WCU Counseling Program, please visit the counseling program website at <http://counseling.wcu.edu>.**

For more detailed information about our program, please see our [current student handbook](#) about the history of our program, faculty members, program expectations (including training, goals, and objectives), our mission statement, courses and subject matter, academic evaluation and dismissal policies, field placement requirements, informed consent about self-exploration and disclosure, and more.

For more information on the values and Codes of Ethics of the Counseling profession, please visit the webpages of the American Counseling Association (<https://www.counseling.org/>) and the American School Counseling Association (<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/>).

For more information on the occupational outlook in the Counseling field, please see the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>

For all other Counseling program questions:

**Contact the WCU Counseling Program Director**

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