

Western Carolina University
Counseling Programs
COUN 686 Practicum in Counseling

Practicum Information for Students and Site Supervisors

COUN 686 - Practicum is a required supervised field experience in school and clinical mental health counseling. Counselors-in-training are placed in school or mental health settings compatible with the students' professional goals and serve as counselors to selected clientele as applicable to policies of the institution or agency. Students are under the direct supervision of a university supervisor and a counselor at the site (i.e., site supervisor). The practicum experience focuses on the initial development of counseling skills. The counselor-in-training, site supervisor, and university supervisor jointly agree to a practicum contract describing the practicum responsibilities/duties which will enable the counselor-in-training to achieve required competencies.

Practica are performed on-site and counselors-in-training are expected to take advantage of opportunities to work with clients representing diverse population groups. They should seek to apply concepts learned in the multicultural foci of courses and experiences throughout the curriculum in adapting their counseling styles and strategies to meet the needs of diverse individuals and are evaluated on the effectiveness of their efforts.

Recording of all client interviews is expected, and recordings are played only for supervision with strict confidentiality being maintained. Professional expectations regarding the rights of clients (e.g., privacy) are strictly maintained utilizing school or agency procedures and the ethical guidelines of the American Counseling Association. Depending on agency or school procedures, parental consent for recording of counseling sessions with minors may or may not be required. Primary supervision is provided by a faculty member from the counseling program. Counselors-in-training are expected to inform their supervisors of current developments in all cases.

Practicum Roles and Responsibilities of the University Supervisor:

The Counseling program faculty will conduct site visits at the opening and closing of one-semester contract periods, provide direct supervision of practicum students for a minimum of 1-hour of weekly individual supervision, and an average of 1.5- hours per week of group supervision (or 3-hours, bi-weekly). The faculty supervisor will monitor completion of contract tasks, review students' counseling recordings, session review narratives, case presentations, weekly logs, final logs, and will provide written and oral formative and summative feedback on student performance and skill development. After conferring with the student's site supervisor, faculty supervisor will assign a final grade of satisfactorily (S) or unsatisfactorily (U).

Practicum Roles and Responsibilities of the Site Supervisor:

The site supervisor must meet the qualifications of holding a master's degree in counseling or closely related field (e.g., psychology, social work), and a minimum of 2

years' post-graduate practice. The site supervisor must obtain and document supervisor training, such as holding supervision licensure or certification (e.g., LCMHC-S, LPC-S, CCS), graduate level coursework in supervision, attend the WCU counseling program's supervision symposium, workshop or conference training on supervision, review of supervision materials provided online by the WCU counseling program, one-on-one training with WCU faculty, or other forms of supervision training not listed. The site supervisor will provide an orientation to work-site duties, hours and expectations, monitor and assist contract tasks, provide ongoing supervision to the counselor-in-training, provide formative and summative feedback, serve as liaison between the site and the university for the purpose of counselor training, and pose concerns and/or questions to the university supervisor about supervision procedures or the counselor-in-training's performance.

Practicum Roles and Responsibilities of the Student Counselor-in-Training:

Counselors-in-training are required to meet all practicum contract requirements. Before the start of practicum, and internship if applicable, students must complete (and keep updated annually) the university approved criminal background check, and obtain and provide documentation of professional liability insurance to both university and site supervisors. Students also must abide by all site policies and procedures, including maintaining confidentiality, maintaining regular and prompt attendance on site and in supervision, and serving as liaison between the university and site. Students must obtain and document 100 - 150 hours, of which 40 hours must be direct client contact. Students must provide a minimum of 8 satisfactory recordings of direct services to clients for purpose of supervision. These recordings may be audio and/or video, and must be destroyed/deleted after receiving supervision and feedback. Students must complete all assignments and submit work to the appropriate supervisor within time-specified guidelines; as such, students are expected to come to supervision sessions prepared with materials (previewed recordings, narratives, tapescripts, requests for specific feedback, etc.).

Competencies

The goals of the counseling practicum are to learn how to initiate counseling contacts, how to encourage counsees to disclose their concerns and establish goals, how to assist counsees in the achievement of their goals, and how to assess goal attainment and effect termination. To achieve these goals, the students are expected to:

1. Demonstrate the ability to establish and maintain effective individual and group helping relationships, in accordance with ethical standards.
2. Demonstrate the skill to discern when individual, group, or referral procedures are most helpful to the client.
3. Demonstrate the ability to utilize feedback from supervised counseling to facilitate growth in professional competence.

4. Demonstrate the ability to function effectively in the assigned professional environment.
5. Demonstrate the ability to give and receive feedback during group supervision to facilitate professional and personal growth of oneself and of others in the group.

Practicum Requirements

The counselor-in-training will:

1. Secure 100 - 150 contact hours during the term of the practicum, of which 40 hours must consist of direct services to clients. Individual and group supervision may be counted toward the total hours. Complete the requirements of the practicum contract.
2. Submit to the university supervisor weekly logs of all practicum hours along with session review narratives of all counseling sessions.
3. Recording of all counseling sessions (audio or video) is expected. Eight satisfactory counseling recordings are required. All recordings will be destroyed or erased after supervision by the student.
4. Submit satisfactory case presentations with verbatim tapescripts of individual counseling sessions with appropriate critique.
5. Meet with the university Supervisor for a 3-hour group supervision session every other week, and for one hour of individual supervision every week of the semester.
6. Complete assigned readings assigned by the supervisor.
7. Complete and submit evaluations at the end of the term.

Grading Criteria

Practicum is graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis. Evaluations by both site and university supervisors are considered in the assignment of grades by university supervisors. The grade of S (Satisfactory) represents the expected level of performance and reflects professional behavior on the part of the counselor-in-training as documented through the completion of the practicum contract. The grade of U (Unsatisfactory) represents ineffectiveness or even harmful effects on clients and reflects unwillingness on the part of the Counseling faculty to endorse the individual for the internship course.

Ethical Statement

It is the Counselor-in-training's ethical obligation to safeguard the welfare of clients. It is the purpose of supervision to provide a learning opportunity for the student while at the same time recognizing the limitations of the student. The dilemma of how to provide

freedom for the student to experiment with his/her own behavior while protecting the client is resolved in supervision by asking the student to interpret his/her ethical obligation in the following ways:

1. To raise a question about anything she/he is unsure about.
2. To regularly inform university and site supervisors of the current status of all cases and of the procedures he/she is using.
3. To express feelings about anything pertinent to her/his own or the client's welfare.
4. To notify university and site supervisors immediately of any situation about which he/she has some question of his/her competency to handle.

The counselor-in-training's university supervisor may be contacted at 828.654.6550, WCU Counseling Program, 28 Schenck Parkway, Office 102, Asheville, NC 28803. Additional contact information can be found at: <https://www.wcu.edu/learn/departments-schools-colleges/ceap/humanserv/coun/index.aspx>