

Student Professional Expectations and Competency to Practice Policy

Master of Arts in Counseling; Eastern Mennonite University

Student Professional Expectations

The Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) Master of Arts in Counseling (MAC) program prepares individuals for professional success as counselors. Students are expected to demonstrate professionalism throughout their training by abiding by standards required by the profession. To that end, it is expected that students treat the academic milieu as they would a professional setting—including their presentation and participation in the classroom. Program policy will abide by the following in all classes.

Attendance Policies

1. Show up on time for all classes.
2. Attend all class periods and provide a suitable explanation and/or medical waiver for absence in special circumstances that preclude class attendance.

MAC Attendance Policy for Practicum/Internship Courses

Please note the following department policy for all counseling courses with respect to attendance:

1. Every student is provided **one** free absence. That means you can miss a class during the semester without penalty to your grade. Please use it with discretion. You are responsible for contacting a peer in the class to receive handouts and/or other information provided in your absence. [See Addendum.]
2. If a second class is missed the student must: submit 1 CE for every hour missed. One class = 1.5 (practicum) or 2 CE's (internship). CE's include clinical professional development trainings.
3. A **third** missed class results in **failing** the class.
4. It is the student's responsibility to come to class on time and to leave class at the designated time; being late and/or leaving early is disruptive to the class.
5. Excessive lateness will significantly impact your participation and attendance grade. It can be disruptive to the culture of learning. It is also a behavior we monitor in the program, as it will not be tolerated in most working environments. If a student is repeatedly late, walking into class after the start time (more than once), this will be the equivalent of one absence. If you have a concern about being late for class, please contact the instructor.
6. Leaving early is equivalent to an absence. Please don't ask faculty members to make judgment calls for leaving early.
7. *If a student is experiencing what they believe to be an extenuating circumstance that would justify receiving an exception to the above policies, that student should compose a one-page document explaining those circumstances. The situation will be reviewed by the entire faculty and a decision rendered as to whether there will be a grade policy exception.*

MAC Attendance Policy for Courses other than Practicum and Internship

1. Every student is provided **one** free absence. That means you can miss a class during the semester without penalty to your grade. Please use it with discretion. You are responsible for contacting a peer in the class to receive handouts and/or other information provided in your absence.
2. If a second class is missed the student must:
 - a. make arrangements with classmates to get notes, links to information, and/or an overview of any class process and,
 - b. write a 2-3 page summary of the class session content and/or process for submission to the course instructor.
3. Missing **three** classes or more will result in a **failing** grade.
4. It is the student's responsibility to come to class on time and to leave class at the designated time; being late and/or leaving early is disruptive to the class. Excessive lateness will significantly impact your participation and attendance grade. It can be disruptive to the culture of learning. It is also a behavior we monitor in the program as it will not be tolerated in most working environments. If a student is repeatedly late, walking into class after the start time (more than once), this will be the equivalent of one absence. If you have a concern about being late for class, please contact the instructor.
5. Leaving early is equivalent to an absence. Please don't ask faculty members to make judgment calls for leaving early.
6. *If a student is experiencing what they believe to be an extenuating circumstance that would justify receiving an exception to the above policies, that student should compose a one-page document explaining those circumstances. The situation will be reviewed by the entire faculty and a decision rendered as to whether there will be a grade policy exception.*

Class Participation Etiquette

1. Prepare for class by buying books, reading, doing the work and engaging
2. Dress and groom in professionally acceptable attire. Students may dress professional casual, but must appear neat and well groomed for class.
3. Turn in all assignments on time [by the start time of class]. Any late assignments will receive a full letter grade deduction on the assignment. Consistent submission of late assignments will result in a full letter grade deduction on the overall course grade. *If a student is experiencing what they believe to be an extenuating circumstance that would justify receiving an exception to the above policies, that student should compose a one-page document explaining those circumstances. The situation will be reviewed by the entire faculty and a decision rendered as to whether there will be a grade policy exception.*

Requesting an Incomplete Grade

Requests for an incomplete grade for a course must be discussed with the course instructor and officially requested at least two weeks prior to the end of the semester. Incomplete grades are only offered when extenuating circumstances prevent the student from completing the requisite coursework for a class. Incomplete grades provide up to 4 months of additional time to complete the course, then the student is awarded a grade commensurate with the grade they would have earned had they not required an incomplete grade. In consultation with the MAC program director, the course instructor and student must agree upon a time frame (< 4 months) for completion of the course if an incomplete grade is granted.

Professional Etiquette

1. MAC students write professionally acceptable correspondence including appropriately addressing faculty/supervisors and clearly presenting the request.
2. Students represent themselves as professional trainees in the community and at professional development events and trainings.
3. Students should be mindful of their public and personal representations on social media.

Diverse teaching and supervision styles

Faculty have been trained in a variety of different theoretical and pedagogical approaches. While expectations related to professional engagement, classroom etiquette, attendance and timeliness with assignments are consistent across the program, teaching styles vary. Students will experience a variety of teaching styles, including Socratic, feminist, experiential, person-centered and more. Each faculty member will be explicit in their teaching approaches and expectations for engagement at the outset of the class.

Similarly, students will experience a variety of supervision styles in the field. It is important that if the supervisor is not explicit about their style, that the student asks about expectations and how supervision will proceed. Faculty can offer guidance on how to do this.

Meeting with Faculty: What kind of meeting do you need?

When meeting with faculty, please consider the following, adapted from *Inclusive Teaching: Strategies for Promoting Equity in the College Classroom* (Hogan & Sathy, 2022):

- We *greet*: About 5 minutes; checking in, quick chat, relationship building; able to “drop in”.
- We *meet*: traditional (15-60 minutes, depending on need); help with course material, academic and professional planning, addressing issues, advising; schedule the meeting in advance.
- We *work*: Time frame varies; group work time on course material or addressing issues; schedule the meeting in advance.

Faculty Correspondence Protocol

Students may email professors regarding class assignments, clarification regarding class content, and to set up advising appointments and schedule meetings. Students are advised to treat correspondence with faculty members as professional correspondence. This includes, but is not limited to, a clear subject line, appropriate salutation, clear body structure, professional language, and appropriate signature.

Addressing Concerns

1. Peer concern: Students are encouraged to address peer concerns directly with each other. If directly addressing the concern is not possible or proves ineffective, then the student can ask a faculty member for assistance.
2. Faculty concern: Students are encouraged to address a concern about a faculty member with the specific faculty member. If a student feels the need to more formally address a concern, the student should refer to the formal university grievance policy: <https://emu.edu/policies/>.
3. Student concern: Faculty members are also encouraged to address concerns they have about a student directly with that student. Faculty also address student issues as they arise in consultation with one another and the full faculty during weekly faculty meetings. The following procedures outline response to student concerns related to program participation and clinical practice (See next section, Student Competency to Practice).

Student Competency to Practice

Program ethical responsibilities

Counselor education programs have an ethical and legal obligation to assess student competency to practice and to remediate or sanction impaired student counselors. The ACA Code of Ethics mandates that counselor educators and supervisors monitor student progress in the areas of both professional and personal development. CACREP standards state that it is the responsibility of faculty to counsel out (dismissal from the program) students who are inappropriate for the profession.

Students are informed of expectations

Applicants and new students are informed of the Master of Arts in Counseling expectations and standards through information published in the counseling student handbook. Additionally, general university policies and disciplinary procedures are published in the Graduate Catalog. The counseling student handbook addresses the importance of counselor formation, noting that the performance of the student through this counselor formation process forms the basis on which the faculty assesses the student as professional (eg. counselor presence, emotional maturity and capacity to cultivate collaboration, solidarity, openness, and positive cohort and faculty relationships) and clinical competencies required for admission to internship and graduation. These expectations are specified in the comprehensive student objectives given in the handbook, and in the assessment section of the handbook, which addresses coursework, writing standards, and the Counselor Assessment Scale (CAS).

Students receive ongoing evaluation

The counseling student handbook also describes the various ongoing screening and evaluation procedures faculty and supervisors use to assess student counselor competence. The faculty meets regularly (weekly department/faculty meetings) to review the performance of all students, especially those in practicum or internship placements. At the end of practicum, and before internship work is started, each student must be admitted to internship, a process relying heavily on practicum site supervisor feedback and utilizing the CAS assessment instrument. During practicum and internship, students meet weekly with individual site supervisors and faculty group supervisors to review their work.

Admission to Internship

The admission to internship process and decision are the responsibility of the faculty. Students are informed of the admission to internship requirement and process by the Professional Practice Coordinator during the Admission to Internship meeting and in the student handbook, which is introduced during orientation to the program and carefully reviewed in the advising session during the student's first semester. Each student will have participated in the evaluation process through individual site supervision, the written evaluation of the site supervisor and consultation

between the faculty group supervisor and the individual site supervisor, through discussions with faculty regarding class performance, through advising conferences, and through the invitation to submit a self-review as part of the admission to internship process. Such processes are deemed sufficient for the faculty to make a final decision. However, the faculty can, as it chooses, solicit additional input from the student, or any other consultant. The admission to internship decision process preempts the further stages of the process as detailed in the remainder of this document.

Student difficulties are reviewed by faculty

The faculty considers the student as a whole person and realizes that a student may have difficulty developing in the areas stated above. Insofar as such difficulties reflect a lack of a student's qualifications or potential to become a competent and ethical professional, those difficulties are reviewed by the faculty. Concerns about a student may come from the student, staff, faculty, field training supervisors and/or other students and may be reported through grades, clinical and practice demonstrations, and/or written or verbal evaluations. A student's personal characteristics, interpersonal manner, social skills, and emotional makeup which may interfere with his or her ability to function professionally will be addressed in both academic and practice settings.

Definition of Academic/Problematic Behavior

Regarding graduate student impairment, Wolf, Green, Nochajski, and Kost (2014) identify a definition of impairment first articulated by Lamb, Presser, Pfost, Baum, Jackson, and Jarvis (1987) and amended by Bemak et al. (1999) to include students. The definition includes the following:

1. An inability and/or unwillingness to acquire and integrate professional standards into one's repertoire of professional behavior
2. An inability to acquire professional skills in order to reach an acceptable level of competency
3. An inability to control personal stress, psychological dysfunction, and/or excessive emotional reactions that interfere with professional functioning (Lamb et al., 1987).
4. An inability to insightfully understand and resolve their own issues so that these issues do not interfere with their clinical role (Bemak et al., 1999).

Difficulties are addressed informally

If at any time the counseling faculty identify that a student is having educational or professionally related difficulties, the preferred action would be:

1. For the student and the involved faculty member to meet informally to discuss a **remediation plan**.
2. The student and faculty member will discuss the problem and try to outline ways to correct or rectify the problem, including a clear description of the issue(s), target

measures of accomplishment to address the issue(s), evaluators, and a time frame to address the issue(s).

3. This interaction process should allow the student ample opportunity to react to the information presented regarding a problem area.
4. The student should be made aware of the consequences of failure to remedy the problem.
5. The faculty (all core faculty) will be advised of the situation.

Remediation (adapted from *Progressive Remediation, Retention, and Dismissal Policy* – The Ohio State University Counselor Education Program).

Remediation plans may involve any or all of the following:

A. For **Academic** Remediation:

- a. Retaking courses [eg. not succeeding academically, repeated tardiness, ‘C’ in skills courses]
- b. Engaging in tutoring
- c. Study skills training
- d. Test-taking training
- e. Writing lab assistance
- f. Spoken and/or written language skills remediation
- g. Other academic interventions, as deemed necessary and appropriate by the program faculty.

B. For **Professional** Skill Remediation

- a. Retaking courses (eg., skills courses, ethics, content courses)
- b. Removal from placement site
- c. Reassignment of placement site
- d. Specific assigned activities in placement site
- e. Writing reflection papers
- f. Additional supervision meetings
- g. Other professional skills interventions, as deemed necessary and appropriate by faculty

C. For **Personal** Remediation

- a. Personal Counseling
- b. Writing reflection papers
- c. Writing apology letters
- d. Additional supervision meetings

- e. Other personal remediation interventions, as deemed necessary and appropriate by the program faculty

The **remediation plan** will include, at a minimum:

1. Specific activities to be completed
2. Target measures of accomplishment, which will be documented;
3. A schedule of regular meetings between the student and the faculty member responsible for monitoring and documenting the remediation plan (if this person is different from the student's advisor);
4. A timeframe for accomplishment; and
5. Contact information for the faculty member for monitoring the student's progress.

Copies of the plan will be retained by the student's advisor, the monitoring faculty member, the program director, and the student. The monitoring faculty member will also retain notes documenting all meetings with the student during the course of the remediation process.

Client safety issues

Occasionally there are field placement situations that require immediate action because the safety of one or more persons is in question or because the interests of one or more persons are in jeopardy. In this case, any of the involved parties may request that the student counselor not be allowed any client contact until the issues are satisfactorily resolved. The procedures described below should then be scheduled as expeditiously as possible so that there will be minimal disruption of the student's experience and, crucially, to protect client welfare.

Formal probation or withdrawal processes

In circumstances where informal attempts for rectifying the situation have been proven unsuccessful, it may be necessary to initiate a formal process for consideration of probation and/or enforced withdrawal (dismissal) from the program. The student's rights to a thorough, objective review, including representation of his/her own perspective, will be maintained. Documentation of the process will be kept in the program director's files, with copies of communications with the student kept in the student's files as well.

The following process is described in detail to provide clear guidance. However, these process guidelines will in most cases be applied with some variance in procedure, following the spirit and intent of the guidelines as interpreted by the faculty, and the student involved is fully informed.

Step 1.

- A. The faculty member will again discuss the problem with the student, and notify the student's advisor of the situation.

- B. After the student has had the opportunity to discuss the problem with their advisor, a meeting will be held with the student's advisor, the program director, and the student, or the faculty and the student. (If the student's advisor is the program director, the faculty may elect another faculty member to participate in the meeting).
- C. The meeting date will be set so that the student will have the opportunity to provide additional evidence to the group for consideration at the meeting. Following any student input, the faculty present (which may be the full faculty) will determine to either give the student additional informal time (specified in writing) to remediate difficulties (described in writing), or refer the matter to the full faculty for formal probation or withdrawal processes.
- D. If, in the determination of this group, the problem persists after the specified remediation period, the process will proceed immediately to step 2.

Step 2.

If formal probation or withdrawal processes need to be undertaken, a meeting of the faculty will be called. The student will be informed of the time of this meeting in advance and will have an opportunity to provide additional information or evidence to the faculty for consideration at the meeting, either in writing or in person.

The assessment of the situation may include but is not necessarily limited to:

- A. the opinions of experts on the faculty, field supervisors, and/or consultants to the faculty;
- B. the student's willingness to accept responsibility for the concerns in question, including the student's willingness to meaningfully engage in a remediation process;
- C. the extent to which continued enrollment of the student will place unreasonable or excessive demands upon other students or faculty of the program;
- D. the student's ability to function with clients as a trainee; and
- E. an evaluation submitted to the faculty by the student's own consultant and/or outside consultant, as requested by the faculty.

The faculty will come to consensus on whether the student should be placed on probation or dismissed from the program. The advisor and/or other designated persons will inform the student of the decision both orally and in writing. The student will be given the opportunity to respond orally and/or in writing to the recommendation.

Step 3.

If the assessment in step two determines that the student should be placed on probation, a remediation plan will be developed and implemented for the student, which may include, in extreme cases, disciplinary action. Remedial interventions may include a recommendation of individual and/or group counseling and/or other appropriate educational, clinical, or field experience that may assist the student, as noted above.

Whenever a student is assigned a remediation plan, the student's advisor will meet with the student and provide in writing the following:

- A. A behavioral description of the problem;
 - B. Possible courses of remediation;
 - C. Criteria stated in behavioral terms for ending the probation status;
 - D. A time frame for meeting these criteria;
 - E. A summary of the options available to the student (e.g., appeals, dropping out, methods of remediation); and
 - F. A detailed description of the consequences of not meeting criteria within the time frame.
- An attempt will be made to clarify all of these points with the student so there is an understanding on the student's part of the problem, the remediation options, the criteria for removal of the probationary status, and the time limits for completing the criteria.

If a student refuses the program faculty's attempt at remediation, the student may appeal to the Dean of the School of Social Sciences and Professions.

In the event that a student refuses to accept a remediation recommended by faculty and supported by the Dean, or fails to make adequate progress in addressing their impairment, the program may initiate formal disciplinary action either in conjunction with or independent of further attempts at remediation. While every attempt will be made to present the faculty's actions as educational rather than punitive, the faculty must take actions consistent with its professional responsibilities. Examples of such actions may include, but are not limited to:

- A. counseling the student to withdraw from his or her program of study;
- B. placing the student on probation with academic continuation contingent on progress in remediation;
- C. placing the student on a required leave of absence from his or her program; and/or
- D. dismissing the student from his or her program of studies.

Step 4.

At the end of the remediation period, the program faculty will meet to review the student's progress toward meeting the criteria for removal of the probationary status. The student will be informed of the meeting at least two weeks in advance and will have the opportunity to provide additional information or evidence to the committee either in person or in writing. A decision will be made to:

- A. Return the student to full graduate status;

- B. Continue the probation (which would necessitate preparation of another set of recommendations as specified above); or
- C. Initiate the student's enforced withdrawal. The program director and the student's advisor will inform the student, in a joint meeting, of the decision both verbally and in writing. The student will be given the opportunity to respond orally and/or in writing to this recommendation. Should the student file no response to the action, the action taken in this step will be considered as final. Appeals may be made to the Dean of the School of Social Sciences and Professions.

Enforced withdrawal procedure

If a student is recommended for enforced withdrawal, the advisor will meet with the student and provide both orally and in writing the following information:

- A. Specifications of the student behaviors that resulted in the recommendation for termination of his or her program of studies;
- B. A summary of the appeal options available to the student. An attempt will be made to clarify all of these points with the student so that there is an understanding on the student's part of the reasons for the termination decision and the options available to him or her for appeal. The termination decision will be forwarded by the program director to the Dean. Alternative career paths and options will be discussed with students who are asked to leave the program.

Documentation of this process will be kept in the program director's and advisor's files, with appropriate documentation in the student's file.

Master of Arts in Counseling
Eastern Mennonite University

Student Professional Expectations and Competency to Practice Policy

Questions about this policy are welcome and may be directed toward your advisor or the program director.

I understand the terms of this policy and agree to abide by the terms outlined herein. I understand that I can obtain a copy of this policy from the Counselor Education website.

Student Signature

Date

Student Name – Printed

*Please sign and return this page to the Administrative Assistant, keep the policy for your records