



Penn GSE
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY *of* PENNSYLVANIA

**UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**

**EXECUTIVE PROGRAM IN
SCHOOL AND MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING**

**Program Manual
Fall 2021**

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Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in the Penn GSE School and Mental Health Counseling program (SMHC). The faculty and staff take great pride in offering students the opportunity to study and train for a dynamic career providing essential mental health supports to those in need. As a practitioner training program housed within a graduate school of education at one of the nation's premier research universities, the SMHC program at Penn GSE offers its students a unique combination of classroom instruction, field experience, direct training, and broad exposure to experts in theory, research, practice, and policy. The experience available to our students is a genuinely integrative experience, one that can be personalized to meet a particular student's needs and interests because of the array of opportunities.

This manual provides you with important information about and a step-by-step guide to the program experience. It is meant serve as an overview for students who have accepted entry into the program, as well as an invitation to prospective students to apply to become a part of our extraordinary professional community.

Counseling Program Mission and Objectives

The Executive Program in School and Mental Health Counseling (M.S.Ed.) shares a similar mission to that of its host School, the Graduate School of Education, and the wider University of Pennsylvania: to provide the most effective education and training possible to address society's most challenging concerns, both here in the U.S. and around the world. Such education and training must be rooted in tenets of social justice, authentic valuing of human diversity, and the promotion of human well-being. At a more focal level, our program's mission emphasizes advocacy in social justice, diversity awareness and promotion, and a person- or student-centered counseling orientation. We work from a person-centered orientation out of a core belief that optimal support for people of all walks of life requires meeting them where they are and valuing who they are. In our counseling program, students of diverse backgrounds come together and share in our aim of providing effective counseling to those populations who need it most: those in under-resourced environments here in Philadelphia, across the U.S., and around the world. Such services are provided in educational institutions, hospitals and health organizations, and state and federal criminal justice systems, among other settings.

One of the things that makes our program unique is its executive cohort model. The curriculum is delivered on a schedule that is manageable for working professionals, and for the numerous students who commute to Philadelphia from around the country to complete their training at Penn GSE. The program is designed to allow graduates to pursue both the Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) credential and Certification in School Counseling. We

offer the option of pursuing the LPC and school counseling certification together based on our abiding belief that school counselors are professional counselors, and as such need training that includes a focus on essential mental health counseling skills. In many cases, school counselors are the only providers vulnerable students and their families will encounter. In that role, they are positioned to provide important short-term interventions and to make appropriate referrals for more intensive treatment. Similarly, professional counselors who work with youth and their families in community agencies or in private practice benefit immensely from understanding the challenges faced by students at their schools. As such, all students are required to understand aspects of school life and school counseling, even if they do their field placements in non-school settings and pursue the LPC only. This integration of school and mental health counseling is a hallmark of our counseling programs and serves not only to better prepare our students professionally, but also creates career flexibility within the counseling field. This latter point is critical to us, given the investment our students make in their education and training, and given the importance of their contributions to a broad range of clients.

Program Objectives

- To provide a high-quality counseling training program and supervised experiences in an innovative structure designed for master's students who are working professionals from around the country.
- To develop ethical and skilled counselors who, through supervised collaborations with schools and agencies, hone their clinical skills while providing quality mental health services to under-resourced communities.
- To teach counselors to exceed proficiency on the National Counselor Examination and National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination through innovative classroom instruction of a rich, evidence-based curriculum.
- To prepare counselors with theoretical orientations and robust skill sets that are evidence-based, culturally responsive, and ethically sound.
- To train counselors to manage the complexities of providing culturally responsive counseling services in urban schools and agencies, and, to equip them with the advocacy skills required for advancing a social justice agenda in those settings.
- To provide counselors with a strong scholar-practitioner foundation that enables them to gain employment in a wide array of school and mental health settings, domestically and internationally.
- To inspire counselors to be innovators and agents of change by serving diverse communities on the global stage and working to diminish the stigma surrounding mental health treatment around the world.

Program Orientation and Core Curriculum

The hallmark of the Executive Program in School and Mental Health Counseling at Penn GSE is an emphasis on social justice and culturally responsive counseling interventions, in addition to growing opportunities for clinical training in under-resourced Philadelphia communities. Our goal is to prepare our graduates to effectively serve a diverse range of clients by understanding complex mental health issues and the way they affect individuals, schools, and entire communities.

Using an executive learning format, our program is structured to meet the academic and training needs of working professionals embarking on their careers as school and/or mental health counselors. Students take 20 three-credit classes across their two years in the program, delivered in once-a-month weekend sessions and an intensive summer week each year. Students enroll in 10 courses each year that are structured to ensure their preparation meets the requirements for licensure in Pennsylvania. They meet those standards through the combination of classroom training and practicum and internship experience. Sixty total credits are required for degree completion.

The program offers two tracks for specialization:

- **Single Track: Mental Health | preparation for LPC credential**
Prepares students to work exclusively in mental health settings
- **Dual Track: Mental Health and School Counseling | preparation for LPC credential and PA School Counselor Certification***
Prepares students to work in schools or mental health settings. Those pursuing school counseling certification must complete internship hours at the elementary, middle, and high school levels to meet the certification requirements.

Across tracks, all students are trained to work with clients across the entire life span. Upon graduation, students become eligible to pursue the Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) credential if they take, and pass, the National Counseling Examination (NCE)[†] or the National Clinical Mental Health Counselor Examination (NCMHCE).

This program is distinct from Penn GSE's Professional Counseling program because of its executive format, meeting one weekend a month plus two intensive summer weeks. Additionally, it is a full two-year commitment, with no option to earn a degree after one year.

* There is reciprocity for school counselor certification in the majority of states, but applicants should ensure that this is true for the state where they intend to practice.

[†] Licensure in states other than PA may require a different exam, such as the National Clinical Mental Health Counselor Examination (NCMHCE). See www.nbcc.org/search/stateboarddirectory to check specific state requirements, and to ensure this program meets licensure requirements in the state(s) in which you hope to work.

Program Requirements

Total 60 credits/20 Course Units

Year 1 (30 credits/10 Course Units)

- **Entry Term:** Summer
- **Course Requirements:** 10 courses (30 credits)
- **Required Course Load:**
 - Summer (3 courses)
 - Fall (3 courses)
 - Spring (4 courses)
- **Practical Experience Component:** Practicum (100 hours/5 hours per week)
- **Culminating Experience:** None
- **Certificate/Licensure Offered:** None offered after Year 1
- **Degree Conferred:** None

Year 2 (30 credits/10 course units)

- **Entry Term:** Summer
- **Course Requirements:** 10 courses (30 credits)
- **Required Course Load:**
 - Summer (3 courses)
 - Fall (3 courses)
 - Spring (4 courses)
- **Practical Experience Component:** Field Internship (600 hours/~20 hours per week)
- **Culminating Experience:** Comprehensive Portfolio Capstone
- **Degree Conferred:** M.S. Ed.
- **Licensure/certification:**
 - Graduates are LPC-eligible after successful completion of the NCE or NCMHCE and completing all internship hours
 - School Counseling Certification-eligible after passing the PRAXIS II Professional Counselor exam and successful completion of 600-hour internship in school setting(s)

Year 1 Overview: Introductory Coursework & Practicum Experience

The first-year program sequence is designed to introduce students to foundational theories and basic skills of the counseling profession. This is done through introductory coursework in counseling theory and practice, human development and sociocultural perspectives, and ethics, along with practicum placements. Students begin their training component by participating in 15 hours of pre-practicum exploration/training prior to the formal start of their practicum field placement. After this, they complete a full practicum totaling 100 hours (5 hours per week). The practicum experience gives students the opportunity to not only see counselors in various professional settings, but to begin implementing strategies and techniques with the support and supervision of skilled professionals. Students select placements from GSE's pool of high-quality training sites including mental health centers, schools, hospitals, and college counseling centers. They receive supervision both on-site and in a small monthly seminar group format. This combination of field placement and classroom discourse enables students to learn and practice counseling skills with deep, ongoing professional support.

Year 2 Overview: Advanced Coursework & Internship

The second year of the program entails advanced study in the mastery of school and mental health counseling, clinical assessment, and consultation services. This is done through a deeper exploration of and experimentation with theoretical orientations both in the classroom—through presentations and more advanced research opportunities—and through the intense clinical training experience of the 600-hour counseling internship. Internship hours are supervised by an appropriately credentialed mental health professional and/or certified school counselor on site, as well as by the program's internship coordinators through monthly 90-minute seminar classes, ongoing communication with sites and supervisors, and site visits. Students earn the M.S.Ed. upon completion of Year 2, which is the degree that entitles them to eligibility for the Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) credential.

The overall program emphasizes supervised counseling and clinical skills development for addressing the emotional and behavioral health challenges facing individuals and groups in a wide range of settings, including schools, hospitals, and community mental health centers. The program trains counselors who are strong practitioners and focuses on preparing students for multiple pathways post-graduation, via a number of features:

Programmatic Flexibility Because the program is built to meet the needs of working professionals, there is limited curricular flexibility. Yet students have many options and a great deal of flexibility in choosing where to do their field placements. Students can choose a site that best fits with their other professional commitments, with many sites offering

evening and weekend hours. To further accommodate student schedules and enhance flexibility, the program can vet a student's place of employment to determine if it meets the required standards for supervision and experience to function as their field placement. This is most common for students already working in schools. With faculty guidance, students have also been able to establish new training sites that fit with specific types of clinical experience they wanted to pursue. This is particularly beneficial for students who do not live in Philadelphia and want to complete their fieldwork in their city of residence.

Preparation for Employment The program is certified by the National Board of Certified Counselors, and as a result, students are prepared to take the National Counseling Examination (NCE) or the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE) near the end of the second year in the program. In preparation for this, and also as a means of evaluating and ensuring that each student has met core academic standards, students complete a master's Capstone at the end of the second year of the program. This capstone project consists of a comprehensive portfolio that is a compilation of didactic and practical experiences the students have completed over the course of their studies. This portfolio is presented to and reviewed by faculty and should demonstrate the student's level of preparedness to function autonomously as a school or mental health counselor. Many students go on to use this portfolio during job interviews.

Research & Inquiry Approach The practitioner-scholar model is woven throughout both years of the training program. Students are taught to how to leverage data in decision making, something the field of counseling has come to require. Some students also seek out opportunities as research assistants on faculty projects both in GSE and in other departments throughout the University. We will note that the typical executive program student finds that they do not have the time or capacity to engage in research experiences beyond their coursework, due to their work schedules and/or family responsibilities. As a result, the curriculum is structured to emphasize an inquiry approach to one's counseling practice, so that practitioner research becomes embedded in their work.

Future Professional and Academic Pursuits The curriculum and training model prepare graduates for direct counseling/clinical services, assessment, and consultation positions in education and mental health fields in public and private institutions, hospitals and health organizations, and state and federal criminal justice systems, among other settings. Students who matriculate into the School and Mental Health Counseling program typically do so to launch their careers as Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs), either with or without school counselor certification. Most graduates use this degree to clinical or school-based positions. Some also go on to pursue other degrees or doctoral training.

Prospective and current students can access detailed information on our program from the [School and Mental Health Counseling Program page](#) of the GSE website, where important components of the catalogue are displayed. You will find:

- detail on the program structure
- information on field placements
- links to the program of study
- course descriptions
- the schedule for a typical weekend in the executive learning format

On these sites, students are also able to get a general introduction to our faculty and the various roles they play in the functioning of our program.

Program Faculty and Staff

SMHC is housed within the Division of Human Development and Quantitative Methods, chaired by [Dr. Michael Nakkula](#), Ed.D. As one of the largest executive education programs at Penn GSE, SMHC partially supports 8 full-time faculty members. In addition, the program enlists the expertise of 15 part-time or adjunct instructors, all of whom are full-time practitioners in the fields of counseling, human development, and related fields.

Core Faculty and Staff of the School and Mental Health Counseling Program:

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Application and Admissions Processes

When applying to our counseling programs, prospective students are able to find our planned programs of study, admissions guidelines, and application instructions on the Penn GSE website:

- general application requirements and information, and the application: gse.upenn.edu/admissions_financial/howtoapply
- General information and planned program of study: <https://smhc.gse.upenn.edu>
- Applicants can also see jobs held by current graduates in the Our Graduates section of the [SMHC](#) webpage.

Prior to submitting applications online, applicants can attend workshops and information sessions held by Penn GSE's [Office of Admissions and Financial Aid](#) (OAFA). This office is the main point of contact for applicants, serving as a liaison between applicants and the faculty and staff of the counseling program. Applicants are also welcome to contact the program regarding course content and program structure. Those applying for the counseling program submit their applications online with all their materials through the Graduate School of Education website. Applications submitted prior to March 15 of a given academic year have no application fee. This provides an equal opportunity for students to apply for the program.

The SMHC program receives over 60 applications each year and admits about 75%. About 15% of accepted students choose to defer their enrollment. A typical cohort has 32 students.

When considering applications, qualified students of color, those from underrepresented demographics, and those who present with relevant and valuable professional experience are given significant consideration. This is a priority particularly because the program targets its service and resources towards the underserved and marginalized populations in the Philadelphia metropolitan area. This is also a priority because as an executive format program, professional experience in other fields and life experience that can inform counseling intervention are highly sought-after qualifications.

Program Admission

All applicants must submit:

- a personal statement
- official transcript
- three letters of recommendation

Note: GRE scores are not required, as many of the students who apply to this program are mid-career professionals who have been away from the academic environment for quite some time. As such, the GRE would not necessarily be an accurate reflection of their potential for success in the program. TOEFL scores are only required if relevant; however, this program tends to attract fewer international students for whom this would be required, due to the executive format.

Each applicant is evaluated holistically and interviewed by the Director and Co-Director of the program. Satisfactory grades in introductory psychology and related courses are desirable accomplishments for matriculation into the program; however, faculty reviews and regularly accepts applicants from all academic and professional backgrounds, particularly if they have relevant experience in a counseling-related field. The diversity of academic and professional experience that students bring to the SMHC program is undoubtedly one of its highlights. Students in previous cohorts have had backgrounds as diverse as business, design, theology, law, the arts, and medicine; their passion to integrate these talents with counseling knowledge and skills is one of the many extraordinary aspects of the SMHC program. In their personal statement, applicants are prompted to describe their interest in the field of professional counseling and future professional goals.

Once the online application has been submitted, applicants communicate with the Oafa for updates on their application and assistance in gathering required materials.

Application Process

Committee Review The Review Committee is comprised of the program's director, Dr. Marsha Richardson, and co-director, Linda Leibowitz. All components of the application process included in the decision-making process, with particular attention given to the reasons for joining the program. If the Review Committee decides the applicant is better suited for a different program within the division, the application is passed to the appropriate program in GSE for review. The review process is typically completed in four weeks or less. Once the application has been reviewed, the applicant will be informed of their rejection or invitation for an interview.

Applicant Interviews Interviews can take place on campus, or via video conference/telephone if necessary. In nearly every case, the program directors conduct interviews together; if scheduling will not permit this, one member may do it alone. For in-person interviews, up to three applicants may be interviewed together. For video conference interviews, typically two to four applicants are interviewed at a time. A demonstration of good interpersonal skills during interviews is viewed as a solid indicator of an applicant's potential for success at establishing strong, healthy therapeutic relationships and rapport with clients. Following the interview, the directors determine the fit of the applicants within our program. If they do well with this assessment, the directors accept them into the program.

Applicants are notified within one week of their interview whether they have been admitted or rejected from the program. A decision is communicated to applicants via an email from the program and a formal letter sent by the Oafa. Communication on fees, housing, orientation, matriculation, and assigned advisors are subsequently sent once accepted applicants have accepted their spot in the program.

During their interview, prospective students are given the class weekend dates for the next three years. They are also given connections, if needed, to alumni from states where they live or plan to practice, since this information may impact their decision to accept our offer of admission. Once we offer an acceptance, students must confirm their decision by June 1.

Financial Aid

The faculty are deeply conscious of and sensitive to the financial investment students make to come to the School and Mental Health Counseling program at Penn GSE. There are several different types of financial assistance that are available to help student defray the cost of their training: merit scholarships, need-based aid, Federal Work Study, Graduate Residential Advisor positions, Penn employee benefits, and on-campus job opportunities. Some details regarding available scholarships and financial aid can be found below and also at [Penn GSE Funding Opportunities](#).

Merit scholarships Counseling students may be eligible for merit aid awards that are applied to their tuition. Financial awards are based on a combination of academic credentials and work experience. The school seeks to provide assistance to as many eligible candidates as possible, currently awarding scholarships to 75% of incoming master's students. There is no application for these scholarships. The awards are made at the time of application review and are based on the academic merit of the application. Awards are communicated in the acceptance letter. Scholarships are not taxable and require no additional service.

Other Financial Assistance Options All students are eligible to apply for *Federal Work Study*, which affects federal loan amounts. Students are also able to become a *Graduate Resident Advisor*, coordinating activities and meetings with graduate students living in on-campus housing. They receive free room and board at one of the on-campus residences.

As a faculty, we continue to grapple with managing the cost of tuition and working to recruit and maintain exceptional scholars of color. Penn GSE recently created a new scholarship—the Dean’s Fellowship: Power of Possibility—that gives special consideration to students from diverse backgrounds and from communities that are underrepresented or under-served. Students will be automatically considered for these prestigious half-tuition awards at the time of application review; there is no additional application process.

Experience in the SMHC Program

Year 1

Upon acceptance of their offer of admission, incoming students are sent Gerald Corey’s *Creating Your Professional Path* as a welcome gift, along with a faculty-suggested optional reading list. Students also receive comprehensive information of all administrative requirements. Because the program of study is the same for all students, the program’s Associate Director enrolls all students in their courses.

After the new cohort is finalized, students receive a Practicum Questionnaire via the survey platform Qualtrics. This questionnaire gives the Site Placement Coordinator information about each student’s interests and professional plans, which will inform their first one-on-one placement meeting. At that meeting, we begin our individualized process of helping students choose their site placement(s). These choices are dependent on where the students live and want to practice professionally, what their degree track will be (dual or LPC-only), what works best for their work schedule, and transportation accessibility. Together we will review the Site Placement Database, which is designed to filter according to the needs and goals of each student. Students select their three top choices, and once approved by the program they will receive the contact information for each site. Students are responsible for reaching out to their sites of interest; some will be asked to come in for an informal interview. Once a student is offered a placement, they will notify the placement coordinator. We aim to complete this process by August, so that students are prepared and ready to begin during the fall semester; for school placements, it is also best if students begin their placements when the school year begins.

While we are in the placement process, we are also preparing for the summer session: an eight-day intensive week of classes that kicks off the program, typically held the last week in

July. In advance of this session—and all subsequent semesters—the program sends the needed books directly to students. We also provide information on where out-of-town students can stay during class sessions and parking information. During the summer session, students complete two courses, Ethics and Counseling Interventions, which have been prioritized as the best prerequisite courses for beginning field placements in the Fall. A third course, Practicum I, is begun in the summer and continues through Fall and Spring.

Begun as a component of our pandemic-necessitated virtual semesters, all our incoming students now create a “Getting to Know You” Padlet. These personalized Padlets are used by the students for introductions during orientation and posted for further relationship building. During the summer week, we also match all our incoming Year 1 students with a Year 2 “buddy,” who mentors and supports them through their first year.

In the Fall semester, students take three courses, along with their on-going Practicum I course. Students engage in foundational coursework in Human Development and Assessment, and explore their views and experiences in the Sociocultural Foundations of Counseling course. By building their didactic knowledge in these areas, our students become ready for the more practice-focused coursework that follows in the spring semester. In the Spring semester, students work to integrate this knowledge in their field work experiences. Coursework in the Spring semester includes Group Counseling, Career Counseling, Applied Quantitative Methods, and Practicum II. Students end Year 1 with an excellent foundation of counseling knowledge and skills to move on to their more intensive internship placements in Year 2.

During the Spring semester, students also engage in an intensive internship-placement process, in preparation for the second-year field placement. Through discussion with the Site Placement Coordinator, they can confirm that their choice of sites will cover the requirements for school counselor certification and/or licensure in the state where they plan to practice. Many students begin their placement on July 1, in advance of Summer Week, to allow them more time to accrue their hours in time for their graduation the following May.

Year 1 Planned Program of Study

(AY 2021-2022)

REQUIREMENTS: 10 C.U.s		
Summer Session	3 C.U.s	Fulfills
EDSC 501 – Ethics & Professional Principles in School and Mental Health Counseling	1	Professional Orientation to Counseling 1
EDSC 502 – Counseling Interventions: Theory & Practice	1	Helping Relationships 1
EDSC 503 – Practicum I	1	Practice 1
Fall Semester	3 C.U.s	Fulfills
EDSC 503 – Practicum I (continued)	0	Practice 1
EDSC 504 – Assessment for Counselors in School & Mental Health Counseling	1	Assessment Techniques 1
EDSC 505 – Sociocultural Foundations in Counseling	1	Social & Cultural Foundations
EDSC 507 – Human Development	1	Human Growth and Development 1
Spring Semester	4 C.U.s	Fulfills
EDSC 508 – Applied Quantitative Methods	1	Research and Program Evaluation 1
EDSC 509 – Career Counseling and Development	1	Career and Lifestyle Development 1
EDSC 510 – Group Counseling	1	Group Work 1
EDSC 511 – Practicum II	1	Practice 1

Year 2

The intensive summer week schedule for Year 2 students is like that of the first year: they complete two courses and begin their Internship course, which continues through the Fall and Spring semesters. The Fall and Spring semesters each have three courses. Two additional courses, Advanced Professional Development and Research and Evaluation—are run over both the Fall and Spring semesters, alternating meetings every other month. The Year 2 intensive internship, totaling 600 field hours, is described further below. All students complete a Professional Portfolio at the end of the year.

Those seeking school counseling certification take the Praxis II Professional Counselor exam at some point in the Spring, something they arrange independently. Most students choose to take the National Counselor Exam (NCE)—for which there is a two-week window, with options to take the exam at a Pearson Vue testing site or monitored at home—or the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NMHCE) exam, offered only at testing sites. The program provides study guides for the Praxis and NCE.

REQUIREMENTS: 10 C.U.s		
Summer Session	3 C.U.s	Fulfills
EDSC 601 – Internship I	1	Practice 2
EDSC 602 – Advanced Group and Family Systems Counseling	1	Group Work 2
EDSC 606 – Advanced Counseling Skills & Human Sexuality	1	Helping Relationships 2
Fall Semester	4 C.U.s	Fulfills
EDSC 601 – Internship I (continued)	0	Practice 2
EDSC 603 – Advanced Professional Development	1	Professional Orientation to Counseling 2
EDSC 604 – Foundations in Education for Diverse Learners	1	Assessment Techniques 2
EDSC 607 – Healthy Development & Psychopathology	1	Human Growth and Development 2
EDSC 608 – Research and Evaluation Seminar in Counseling and Education	1	Research and Program Evaluation 2
Spring Semester	3 C.U.s	Fulfills
EDSC 603 – Advanced Professional Development (continued)	0	Professional Orientation to Counseling 2
EDSC 608 – Research and Evaluation Seminar in Counseling and Education (continued)	0	Research and Program Evaluation 2
EDSC 610 – Internship II	1	Practice 2
EDSC 611 – Wellness & Addiction Counseling	1	Career and Lifestyle Development 2
EDSC 612 – Trauma in School and Mental Health Counseling	1	Helping Relationships 3

Experiential Training: Practicum and Internship

All students complete a practicum experience in Year 1 and an intensive internship in Year 2. Year 2 interns may begin their placements as early as July 1; most interns, and all practicum students, usually begin after Labor Day, which coincides with when schools open. Students are guided in how to obtain the required security clearances, and all complete a Site Agreement and Internship Contract.

Students meet in Seminar Groups of 5–7 people each class weekend, led by a Seminar Leader with mental health credentials and school and/or mental health counseling expertise. The Seminar Leader provides University-based supervision, through which students can discuss their placement experiences and problems of practice, learn about the experiences of their group members, and support each other. Year 1 students communicate with their Year 2 buddies, and Year 2 students often communicate with their now-alumni buddies, for additional support at their placements.

Year 1 practicum students must accrue a total of 115 hours at their site placement, which includes the 15 hours of pre-practicum preparation at their sites. The requirement also states that 40 of the 100 hours must be in direct service (face-to-face) with clients; the remaining 60 hours can include observation, meetings, case planning, and paperwork.

Year 2 internship students must complete a total of 600 internship hours, with 240 hours in direct service. For school-based interns completing the dual track, 420 of the total 600 hours must be completed in a school setting; the remaining 180 hours can be completed at their school site, or in a separate mental health placement. Students are responsible for tracking their hours, which they submit monthly with a signature from their site supervisor.

Both practicum and internship students have the option to extend their field placements beyond May, if they are unable to accrue the required hours due to their job schedule or other approved issue. This extension comes at no cost to students; however, it may delay graduation until August or December.

Student Advising

Year 1 students' advisor is their practicum instructor, who meets with their sections during each class weekend and the summer session. Informal advising is included in class and arranged individually, as needed and based on students' schedules. In Year 2, students' advisor is their internship instructor. In both years, Seminar Group Leaders provide an additional layer of advising support. The Co-Director serves in an advisory role to all Y1 and Y2 students. The Co-Director also serves as an advisor to all students and works closely with the instructors, Seminar Leaders, and site Placement Coordinator to monitor students from both an academic and wellness perspective. She is available on all teaching weekends and connects with students as needed—often in the evenings, since most students are working professionals.

Program Policies and Standards

It is required that all students familiarize themselves with the policies and rules contained in the [GSE Student Handbook](#). These policies are in addition to the program procedures and policies described in this manual.

Academic Policies

Satisfactory Academic Performance

All students in the Graduate School of Education are expected to maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 for all courses applied toward degree requirements. Students who fail to maintain this minimum standard of satisfactory performance will be

placed on academic probation for the following semester. Failure to raise the cumulative GPA to a 3.0 at the end of the semester on probation will result in termination from the degree program. In addition to the grade point average requirement, continuation in all degree programs of the Graduate School of Education is dependent upon maintenance of satisfactory performance through all phases of the program as judged by the student's advisor, and/or program. A student who has been determined to not have satisfactory performance will be withdrawn from the program. If a student wishes to appeal a decision of unsatisfactory performance, the student may appeal and petition the Committee on Degrees for a final determination.

Incompletes

Students are expected to complete all coursework during the semester in which a course is taken. However, faculty members may give a grade of Incomplete to a student who is unable to finish course assignments by the end of the term. No GSE instructor is required to give grades of Incomplete. It is up to each faculty member to decide if and when Incompletes will be given. When an Incomplete is assigned, both the faculty member and the student must comply with school regulations governing the timely completion of coursework. SMHC adheres to Penn GSE's [Grading Policies](#) related to Incompletes.

Students cannot start their Year 2 internship until all Year 1 course requirements have been completed, including the resolution of any Incompletes.

GSE Student Academic Grievance Policy

A GSE student who wishes to register a grievance regarding the evaluation of their academic work or a matter related to the program or a course should discuss the matter with the faculty member and then, if not satisfied, the Program Director and then, if not satisfied, with the Division Chair. If the grievance is not addressed, the student should then discuss this issue with the GSE Assistant Dean for Student Services, who may choose to include the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

Remediation, Extension, & Retention

As an executive program, the SMHC program is geared for working professionals with typically 3+ years of professional work experience. We often observe and deal with a unique set of issues for our older, more experienced students. Some have been out of college for many years and feel insecure about their organization and writing skills, lacking recent experience with APA writing style. Time management and studying with a job and/or family can also be challenging. The demands of the program and the busyness of life can lead to academic concerns, incomplete assignments, and stress-related symptoms and anxiety. The program makes every effort to support students when such challenges arise. This support

can come in many forms: discussions with their advisor, visits to the University's writing center, connection with a peer mentor and/or alumnus willing to help, or assignments extensions.

If these initial steps in a remediation plan do not bring success, the program may refer the student to meet with the Co-Directors or the Dean of Student Affairs, or to the University's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) center. A student who has exhibited significant deficiencies in ethics or professionalism, or whose academic performance has resulted in a low GPA, may be placed on academic probation and other individualized remediation efforts may be designed for them. These matters are discussed monthly in faculty meetings and the goal is not to be punitive; rather, it is to support students and assist them in successfully completing their training, if appropriate.

Typically, 27–28 out of every 30 students graduate within two years. However, when remediations are insufficient, we may discuss the possibility of extending a student's time in the program beyond two years, to allow for additional time to complete their practicum/internship hours and coursework. We have been successful in gaining the approval of the registrar to make these extensions, without additional cost to students. Such extensions have had very positive results, helping to alleviate stressful schedules. For some students, we may suggest a Leave of Absence, giving a student time to complete their work and return with a fresh start. We work with each student individually to determine the best plan. Our data show that our remediation plans and individualized support have led to the successful graduation of nearly every student who has exercised these options. We will work with a student for 6 years, if needed, to complete the program.

The faculty also take very seriously our role as gatekeepers for the profession, ensuring that all graduates demonstrate clinical and interpersonal competence. If, after remediation efforts have been exhausted, there are issues of ethics or character that faculty believe would put potential clients at risk, in very rare instances this has resulted in program leadership preventing a student from completing their degree.

Professional Conduct

The standard of students' behavior on campus and at their professional training sites is extremely important. While clinical skills develop throughout a student's involvement in the program, all students are expected to be professional in their conduct at their sites. The program may be notified of departures from standards of professional conduct in the following ways:

- An incident or pattern of behavior may lead site supervisors to submit a negative evaluation in the interpersonal domain.

- Student behavior outside of the program may be relevant to their capacity to obtain licensure. Behaviors that lead to conviction for a felony or a misdemeanor may prevent the student from being permitted to sit for the licensing examination.
- Ethical violations may also be interpreted by the State Board as evidence of poor moral character. The State Board in Pennsylvania may refuse to issue a license if the candidate is “unable to practice ...with reasonable skill and safety by reason of illness, drunkenness, excessive use of drugs, narcotics, chemicals, or any other type of material, or as a result of any mental or physical condition.” Students should be familiar with the material in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Title 49, Chapter 49, Professional and Vocational Standards. A University-level Student Code of Conduct appears in the Graduate Student Handbook.

Unsatisfactory Performance

Students should be aware that satisfactory performance at the professional training site is a necessary component of the practicum and internship courses and the counseling program in general. If a student’s clinical site performance or their academic work in the practice-based courses is deemed by the faculty to be unsatisfactory, the faculty has the right to withdraw the student from the program. Being able to demonstrate the ability to apply counseling theory to clinical practice settings in accordance with nationally recognized professional counseling standards is foundational. Students who are judged unable to meet these standards, for whatever reason, may be withdrawn from the program. In summary, faculty will evaluate each student’s capacity to continue their training as a professional mental health counselor based on both the academic work completed in the required practicum / internship course, as well as their performance at the clinical or school site. Students who are deemed unable to satisfactorily complete their practicum/internship course and clinical or school site duties will not be able to complete the program.

Criteria for Competence Assessment

Behavioral Characteristics

- Fully use their intellectual ability, exercise good judgment and promptly and accurately complete all responsibilities attendant to implementing an appropriate plan of care for students/clients across the life span.
- Develop a compassionate, effective, professional and therapeutic relationship with students/clients.
- Work constructively in stressful and changing environments with the ability to modify behavior in response to evolving events.
- Demonstrate ethical behavior, including adherence to the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics and the University Code of Academic Integrity.

- Demonstrate emotional and interpersonal skills sufficient to:
 - adapt to changing environments.
 - function efficiently and effectively in conditions of uncertainty inherent in the clinical problems exhibited by students/clients.
 - remain calm in an emergency situation.
 - function effectively and efficiently in times of physical and mental stress for short and/or for extended periods.
 - be aware of one's emotional responses and biases.

Communication Characteristics

- Interact with colleagues, faculty, staff, students/clients and other professionals with honesty, sensitivity, integrity, respect and without bias.
- Communicate effectively with students/clients and families of diverse religious, cultural and/or social backgrounds.
- Express own ideas and feelings clearly and demonstrate a willingness and ability to give and receive feedback.
- Communicate effectively in oral and written forms in person and/or when using telephonic devices.
- Perceive and interpret non-verbal communication and verbal cues.
- Recognize and appropriately respond to emotions.
- Demonstrate the following communication abilities: speech, hearing, reading, writing, and electronic modality literacy.
- Demonstrate skills/ability sufficient to:
 - Elicit and record relevant information about
 - health history, current health status or
 - responses to treatment from students/clients, family members, or others.
 - Convey information to students/clients, members of the school/clinical team and others as necessary to teach, direct, and counsel individuals and groups.
 - Process and communicate information of the student/client's status with accuracy in a timely manner to members of the school/clinical team.

Cognitive Characteristics

- Demonstrate good judgment in student/client assessment, and the abilities to utilize prior knowledge and incorporate additional information in the decision-making process.
- Possess the ability to comprehend three-dimensional relationships and the relationships of structures as they pertain to practice decisions.
- Demonstrate the ability to integrate and assimilate information from multiple sources and multiple educational experiences in a timely fashion and can apply that information to problem solving and decision-making.

Mental Health & Wellness Concerns

As a graduate program dedicated to training mental health counseling professionals, it is of utmost importance to the faculty to demonstrate ethical and responsible behavior as mental health professionals. This commitment extends to the mental health and wellness care of our students. To ensure they are well and fit to provide essential services to clients in schools and communities, we work to be faculty resources for their wellness needs and to connect students with broader university and community-based resources as needed. When students present with mental health and wellness concerns, we strive to model responsive and accommodating leadership and pedagogy. Students are encouraged to discuss concerns openly with GSE's Office of Student Services to determine what type of adjustments can be made to support their success in the program. When more significant interventions are called for, students are referred to the University's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). Through CAPS, students may be able to gain further clarity, establish additional supportive relationships, or be connected to important community resources that can assist them. In addition, our program maintains a continuously updated database of clinicians of all types in Philadelphia and surrounding areas who are available to work therapeutically with our students.

We also conceptualize supports more comprehensively than just traditional academic accommodations and mental health interventions. The program faculty realizes that students may confront a variety of developmental and social challenges while attending the program. As such, we encourage students to connect with the on-campus cultural houses like the Greenfield Intercultural Center, PAACH, Makuu: The Black Cultural Center, the LGBT Center, Penn Women's Center, and La Casa Latina. These campus cultural houses serve as safe spaces and centers of comfort, fellowship, and advocacy for students.

We make every effort to ensure the program is supporting students through their own personal and professional development. Should a student need more extensive support or intervention due to mental health concerns, we will work with them to develop a plan. See the *Remediation, Extension, & Retention* section above for more information on the available programmatic supports.

Student Substance Use Policy

The Graduate School of Education recognizes the importance of educating its students about the problems of substance use because this constitutes a significant health risk, and in many cases, a criminal matter. Aside from its impact upon the personal and psychological integrity of the users, substance use may significantly affect the ability of mental health providers to administer safe, competent student/client care. Recognizing that substance use is both a disease and a professional hazard, the Graduate School of Education has incorporated

substance use topical content areas into its curriculum. The Penn GSE counseling programs have likewise established this substance use policy.

This policy is designed to augment the student's ability to maintain personal and professional integrity and facilitate the student's success both clinically and didactically. It promotes a healthy learning environment for the student. In the clinical setting, this policy enhances student/client safety. It also fosters the development of Professional Counselors who are well educated about the prevalence and adverse outcomes of substance use. This policy applies to all students who have matriculated in the Graduate School of Education.

Any unlawful possession, use, manufacture, distribution, diversion, or improper use of any substances by any student in the Penn GSE counseling programs may constitute removal from clinical and/or cause for termination from the program. In addition, no student may consume or be under the influence of, or be in the possession of alcohol at any time the student is in the classroom and/or performing clinical duties. Improper use of alcohol may also constitute removal from clinical and/or cause for termination from the program. Students must also comply with all local, state, or federal laws and regulations controlling the possession, manufacture, use, or distribution of controlled or illegal substances and alcohol. Students must also adhere to all University of Pennsylvania Alcohol and Drug Policy. The policy can be found at: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/alcohol/policy2.php>

In addition, there are circumstances in which students may need to take over the counter or prescribed medications that have the potential to impair their performance or personal behavior. As such, all students are responsible for being aware of the effect these medications may have on performance and must notify the Program Director or Course Director within 72 hours prior to clinical attendance or drug testing about the use of any medication that could impair performance or has the potential to influence a drug screen. Failure or refusal to comply with the substance use policy may be grounds for disciplinary action, including dismissal from the program. Any attempt to delay, hinder, or tamper with any testing or to alter the results of testing will be considered a refusal to comply with this policy. In addition, failure or refusal to comply with any aspect of the substance use policy may be reported to the University's Office of Student Conduct for possible disciplinary action in accordance with the University's Student Conduct Policy.

Voluntary Self-Disclosure Students who voluntarily self-disclose a substance or alcohol use or mental health problem to a faculty member, academic advisor, Office of Student Services staff member or the Associate Dean for Academic Programs, prior to a positive drug/alcohol test result, and who are willing to enter in and complete an appropriate program of treatment may be granted a medical leave of absence while they undergo treatment. In consultation with their health care provider and providers from the University (Counseling and Psychological

Services and/or the Student Health Service), a treatment program will be identified, and the student will be assisted in entering it. The student must sign appropriate University forms providing designated University providers (Counseling and Psychological Services and Student Health Services) to communicate with the student's private providers about their recovery status and with the Graduate School of Education.

Re-entry into the Academic and Clinical Environment Return from medical leave of absence will be considered by the Assistant Dean for Academic & Student Affairs, the Associate Dean for Academic Programs and approval of the Academic Standards and Progressions Committee following successful treatment and sustained progress in addition to other conditions that may be stipulated in the leave of absence letter. All relevant University and School required documents must be completed, including a plan for successful return to course and clinical work that is approved by the student's health care provider, relevant University experts (such as Counseling and Psychological Services and Student Health Services) and the Counseling faculty. Factors that have been identified as helpful for re-entry into practice include 12-step program participation, random drug screening, and sponsorship in a support group, or other mental health treatment. The student must also provide medical clearance from the appropriate individual coordinating therapeutic intervention and evidence of current adherence to treatment.

Re-entry to the Penn GSE counseling programs will be determined in consultation with the Counseling and Psychological Services and Student Health Services offices. Depending upon the length of absence from the program, the student may be required to restart the clinical and didactic components of their plan of study. Alternatively, the student may only be required to repeat specific semesters of clinical and didactic study, based on the decision of the Academic Standards and Progressions Committee in consultation with relevant Program Director or Division Chair. Before re-entry into the program, conditions will be established between University of Pennsylvania's counseling programs and the recovering student. The conditions will be appropriately individualized to the particular situation and needs of the student. A student recovering from substance abuse will be monitored closely, particularly in clinical practice, and frequent monitoring to ensure the student remains substance free will be required.

Re-entry can be difficult for students, especially those who have just started their educational program and have limited time invested in the program. Re-entry after relapse into substance use is definitely not advised for any student. Re-entry into the program's curriculum after a period of absence, no matter what the reason, can be a stressful time of readjustment. A student who has been in rehabilitation for substance use requires the same period of adjustment as a person who has been away from clinical and didactic arena for any other reason. A student in recovery who is reentering the program will be encouraged not to resume

their course of study too hastily, but instead allow themselves time to develop appropriate support systems to facilitate the re-entry. A student in recovery who is permitted to re-enter the counseling programs must comply with the conditions of return delineated as part of the program re-entry.

Evaluation Processes

The faculty of the School and Mental Health Counseling program is deeply committed to the continued improvement of the curriculum and training we provide. To that end, we have increased and sharpened our approach to evaluating our efficacy and acquiring input from our various stakeholders. This feedback, in addition to ongoing discussion, reflection, and collaboration, enables us to continually improve and to remain responsive to the students and communities we serve.

Faculty & Supervisor Evaluations of Students

Throughout their time in the program, students' clinical and academic growth and competence are measured through annual performance evaluations completed by their instructors, both in the core faculty and adjunct, which are then discussed with each student by their advisors. In addition, they receive both a formative and summative evaluation from practicum and internship field supervisors. Students are given direct and clear feedback on areas of difficulty, so that advisors are able to work with students on remediation plans as necessary. In addition, they understand that they have the right to appeal directly to the chair. The student performance evaluation form is included in the Resources section below.

Students also receive formative and summative evaluations of their performance in their field placements. Supervisors review these evaluations with students at the end of each semester. They reflect the supervisors' assessment of the students' clinical acumen and skills, their ability to engage in effective counseling relationships with clients, and their overall ability to function as a counselor in training in that particular clinical setting. These evaluations help instructors to gauge student progress. They have helped us to determine levels of proficiency with regard to students' academic and clinical skills, and they are clearly and deliberately aligned with standards of the Masters in Psychology and Counseling Accreditation Council (MPCAC) as well as Pennsylvania State standards for Licensed Professional Counselors and School Counselor Certification.

Additionally, many students take the National Counselor Examination (NCE) during the Spring of Year 2. While students' scores are not factored into their course or programmatic assessments in any way, we view their performance as an indicator of their competence after completing the program. Our students' passing rate on the NCE is quite

high and has increased dramatically over the last 5 years. Furthermore, our average scores are very competitive as compared to national averages and to those of students in other programs, a point of pride.

Student Evaluations of the Program

We solicit the feedback of our students through class/faculty evaluations at the end of each semester, which informs changes and adjustments to the program. Each student is invited to offer candid feedback on both the deficits and strengths of each course and instructor. Subsequently, every instructor is able, and expected, to review those evaluations, and to respond appropriately. Furthermore, as part of ongoing professional consultation and quality management, our Division Chair reviews all of these evaluations and consults with faculty about necessary changes in curriculum content or instructional practices.

In addition to these course evaluations, which are implemented school-wide, we have initiated a targeted survey process within our program to get feedback from students after each course weekend, and at the end of the Summer, Fall, and Spring semesters. These surveys gauge students' levels of satisfaction with various aspects of the program. We use students' feedback and suggestions to continue to improve the program's quality.

Alumni Programmatic Feedback

Another important source of feedback for our program comes from our alumni. Through an annual survey, we gather information about alumni employment, satisfaction, and recommendations about our program. Faculty relationships are consistently noted as one of the program's greatest strengths. Faculty also maintain strong relationships with many of our alumni, which garner ongoing informal program feedback. Over time faculty continues to offer professional recommendations, informal mentorship, and professional guidance, and some faculty engage alumni on their research teams.

Our alumni have also offered valuable suggestions of ways we can improve students' experience. Suggestions have included offering increased support in finding employment, fostering better connections with alumni and hosting panels, providing more training on the DSM and human sexuality, incorporating more case work and studies of trauma-informed care, and sharing information on starting a private practice. These suggestions have been incorporated into the second-year internship course and training curriculum.

Of note, post-graduation the program sends all alumni job postings and PD opportunities, as well as requests support opportunities like speaking on panels for current students.

Resources

- [State-by-state school certification information](#)
- [State-by-state mental health licensure information](#)
- Student Performance Evaluation [below]

**UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
Human Development and Quantitative Methods Division
STUDENT PERFORMANCE EVALUATION**

Name of Student _____ DATE: _____

Evaluator/Reason for Evaluation _____

Place a check in the box which most closely matches the student’s performance. Comments should include observations that are both positive and constructively critical.

N/A Not Applicable

1 unsatisfactory—failure to meet minimal expectations on a consistent basis

2 further development needed—minimal expectations met **some** of the time; however, not on a consistent basis

3 satisfactory—performance meets general expectations; but does not exceed them

4 above average—**often** exceeds requirements and completes tasks in an outstanding way

5 exceptional—**consistently** and **substantially** exceeds expectations on a regular basis

PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Assignment Completion Student completes assignments in a timely manner; performs high quality work that is accurate and thorough. Comments:						
Writing Skills Ability to communicate effectively in writing, demonstrating knowledge of basic grammar and writing skills and APA guidelines when required. Comments:						
Oral Communication Skills Ability to communicate effectively verbally; easily understood. Comments:						
Response to Feedback Responds maturely, positively, and promptly to suggestions and feedback; is open-minded. Comments:						

<p>Reflection and Integration of Course Material and Prior Learning Frequently shows evidence of thinking deeply or reflecting in order to link previous learning experiences (from class and/or placement) with current course material. Comments:</p>						
<p>Attitude/Class Participation/Professionalism Student is enthusiastic, interested, diligent, courteous, and willing to engage in class; attends each class and is punctual; and is not distracted by use of technology. Comments:</p>						
<p>Interpersonal Interaction Skills Student expresses thoughts clearly and professionally when interacting with faculty, staff, and/or peers. Comments:</p>						

GENERAL COMMENTS:

ACADEMIC STANDING:

Student maintains a 3.0 or better in all courses and has no incompletes: YES _____ NO _____.

If no, please comment:

REMEDICATION PLAN: (if warranted and based on any “2’s” identified; also include and areas of need identified in site evaluations).

 Signature

 Date