

**University of Connecticut
Educational Psychology Department**

School Counseling Program

Policy Handbook for Students and Advisors

**GRADUATE PROGRAM
IN COUNSELING**

Revised 2012

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the University of Connecticut's Counseling Program at the Master of Arts level is to educate the next generation of culturally competent counselor educators and professional school counselors to research, design, and implement culturally relevant school counseling programs in K-12 schools and function as educational leaders; advocates for all students, with a special emphasis on students from oppressed groups such as those whose families are economically poor and students of Color; system change agents with critical thinking and data usage skills; effective counselors who provide individual counseling, group counseling, and classroom guidance services; and collaborators with faculty, parents, and community stakeholders. Our mission is set within the American School Counselor Association's National Model for School Counseling, American Counseling Association, and incorporates the domains of academic, career, and personal/social development.

Masters graduates will have the necessary skills for: assessing and evaluating their school counseling programs; actively advocating for educational equity; working to close the achievement gap for students from oppressed groups such as those whose families are economically poor and students of Color; and closing the college opportunity gaps through equity-based college readiness counseling for all students.

STUDENT RETENTION POLICY

Students are evaluated throughout the program using a variety of both formal and informal methods. A faculty review of each student's progress with respect to the student's professional knowledge, skills, and disposition in both course assignments and clinical/school settings is conducted annually and recommendations pertinent to that student's continuation are placed in the student's file. Criteria for retention in the program are delineated below. Implied in these criteria is the notion that some individuals may not possess the attributes or characteristics necessary for successful functioning as a professional school counselor.

Continuation in the School Counseling Program is based on on-going acceptable performance in meeting all the following criteria:

1. Earn grades of B or better in counseling courses and seminars: maintain a GPA of 3:00 or higher in their counseling and related program coursework;
2. Maintain a cumulative GPA of 3:00 or higher;
3. Complete all work with regard to grades of Incomplete prior to start of the subsequent semester, and prior to the grade being converted to a failing grade (F);
4. Follow the University of Connecticut Student Code of Conduct;
5. Adhere to ACA ethical guidelines;
6. Demonstrate ability to work successfully with k-12 students in field placement settings throughout the program. Site supervisors evaluate students by using a program designed evaluation instrument aligned with program standards. Students must receive consistently positive evaluations from site supervisors to continue in the program.

Procedures:

Informal checks regarding each student's performance will be conducted on an annual basis. Advisors are required to provide brief end-of-year progress reports to the program coordinator on each of their advisees. Likewise, advisors are expected to notify the coordinator of identified concerns for any of their students at any time during the program. Letters of warning will be sent to any student failing to meet all the criteria for acceptable performance.

A Student Review Committee chaired by the program coordinator has been created to meet with any student still failing to meet the criteria for acceptable performance even after receiving a letter of warning. Members of this Committee include the Assistant Dean of the Neag School of Education and all full-time program faculty members.

When issues of concern are raised regarding a student's performance in the Program, the following progressive steps will be followed to address these issues or concerns. These are consistent with established University of Connecticut due process policy and ACA Ethical Standards. The steps are:

1. Upon a concern being raised, the appropriate faculty, advisor, site supervisor or staff member is required to discuss the situation with the student. Prior to the discussion the appropriate person reviews relevant documentation and other courses and, depending on the circumstances and consistent with confidentiality guidelines in the ACA Ethical Standards, may also meet with various faculty and others if needed. This meeting will be documented and written recommendations will be given to the student. This record will be placed in the student's permanent file. If either a site or faculty supervisor raises a concern during any of the field placements that person, in consultation with other counseling faculty will have the option of immediately withdrawing the student from the placement.
2. If the nature of the concern warrants further intervention, the identified student will be required to attend a Student Review Committee Meeting to be called by the coordinator of the Counseling Program. The purpose of the meeting will be to share concerns, gather additional information, if necessary and develop an assistance plan, if appropriate. The meeting and plan will be documented and signed by the chair of the Counseling Student Review Committee, advisor, and student.
3. If the issue or concern regarding the student's performance is not resolved, the student will be encouraged to seek another major/program and will be offered the opportunity to voluntarily participate in at least one counseling session with one of the counseling faculty members for the purpose of identifying, if possible, a more appropriate area of study. Ultimately, the Student Review Committee may dismiss the counseling student from the Program. Adherence to the American Counseling Association's (ACA) Code of Professional Ethics will be employed in informing, explaining and advising those students who are not recommended for retention in the program due to unsatisfactory performance in regard to academic and/or non-academic criteria.

Assistance Plans:

Students who do not meet the criteria for acceptable performance may or may not be eligible for a Counseling Student Assistance Plan, based on their individual circumstances. The purpose of the assistance plan is to address the concerns identified as relating to the student's difficulty in the Program. Assistance plans may draw upon services offered either in or outside the university to address areas of concern and will include specific objectives and timeframes within which the objectives must be met. Successful completion of conditions outlined in the assistance plan will be required for continuation in the Program.

Student assistance plans, site supervisor evaluation forms, recommendations, and academic warning letters are treated as part of the student's permanent file.

SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Master's Degree Program in School Counseling are intended to prepare students that will:

1. Possess the ability and demonstrate the skills, characteristics and attributes to meet state and national standards for certification as a school counselor by successfully completing a core curriculum that includes 8 content areas, i.e., Human Growth and Development, Social and Cultural Diversity, Helping Relationships, Group Work, Career Development, Assessment, Research and Program Evaluation, and Professional Orientation & Ethical Practices; a progression of supervised experiences in counseling and guidance; and a course of study in special education thereby enabling them to practice as a school counselor for grades pre-K through 12.
2. Demonstrate knowledge about the history, philosophy, and current trends in school counseling and educational systems.
3. Apply both developmental and intervention models to the total development of students as unique individuals within educational settings.
4. Use school-based data to design comprehensive programs to meet specific school counseling program goals, including action plans for implementation and evaluation.
5. Develop mechanisms for referral, collaboration, and public relations.
6. Become leaders in the school and advocates for educational equity for all students.
7. Be aware of current ethical and legal issues, laws, and both federal and state regulations relevant to school counseling.

8. Apply current and emerging technological resources to: 1) enhance counseling and guidance planning, and 2) promote informed academic, career, and personal/social choices.

9. Demonstrate accountability by using outcome-based data to effect systemic change.

ENDORSEMENT POLICY

Each student's major advisor monitors student progress within the program on a semester-by-semester basis to insure that the student is successfully completing the scheduled array of required coursework and field experiences,. The successful completion of all work is a fundamental prerequisite for the conferring of the degree. In addition to completing the requisite credit hours of course work with a minimum 3.0 GPA, each student must successfully complete and pass a comprehensive examination, administered in the spring semester of each year or complete a Master's research project.

Upon completion of all degree and program requirements and the conferring of the degree, graduates of the school-counseling program receive an endorsement both from the program and from the Neag School of Education to the State of Connecticut for certification as a school counselor.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

All program students are encouraged to join the American Counseling Association (ACA), the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), which relate to their professional training and aspirations. Program students are encouraged to be involved in state, regional and national conference programs and presentations as well as local and regional workshops and professional development seminars.

ACADEMIC APPEAL POLICY

Each student, upon formal admission to the program, is assigned an advisor who assists the student in developing his/her plan of study. During the second semester in the program, students select an advisory committee consisting of two associate advisors and the major advisor, to advise and direct their course of study. Students are at liberty to change their advisory committee, if the committee as constituted is not viable for the student to achieve his/her goals.

Students that receive a final grade with which they disagree may appeal the matter with the course instructor. If, as a result of that meeting, the student is still not satisfied with his/her final grade s/he may then take the matter to a second, and final level of appeal. This would be the Student Review Committee, as described above in the section on the student retention policy with the exception that the course instructor will not serve as a committee member on any matters in which s/he is one of the involved parties. On matters of academic appeal the committee, which is normally chaired by the program coordinator, will instead be chaired by the

Assistant Dean of the Neag School of Education since the program coordinator is also a professor in the program and could be an instructor in a situation in which a student is appealing a final grade. In addition, a student representative, selected by majority vote of all registered students, will also be invited to join the committee and be a voting member when the Student Review Committee convenes specifically for matters of academic appeal. Both the student and the instructor of the course in question will be given the opportunity to make presentations before the Student Review Committee. The Committee's decision in such matters is final.