



University  
of Houston  
Clear Lake

# **University of Houston – Clear Lake**

**CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY MASTER’S PROGRAM STUDENT  
HANDBOOK**

**August 2023**

**UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON – CLEAR LAKE**  
**DEPARTMENT OF CLINICAL HEALTH AND APPLIED SCIENCES**  
**CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY MASTER’S PROGRAM**

The Clinical Psychology Master’s program will result in the acquisition of expert knowledge, clinical skills related to interviewing and assessment, therapeutic skills in empirically supported interventions, and personal development. For most students, this program is challenging and exhilarating, and students will be both responsible for learning in the classroom and continually searching for knowledge outside of the coursework.

This handbook is designed to facilitate students’ progress through the program. It is a mixture of official policies and recommendations for making a student’s life easier. The manual supplements (but does not replace) other important published material that appears in the *Graduate Catalog* and the *Policies and Procedures Manual of the Psychology Clinic*.

The policies and recommendations contained in this handbook and the *Policies and Procedures Manual of the Psychology Clinic* are modified periodically and students must abide by the current policies and procedures and not those in effect upon admission. We urge students to familiarize themselves with all current degree requirements, as well as revisions of those policies. The University, the Department, and professional organizations reserve the right to make periodic changes to policies and to clarify or improve program procedures. Please review these documents throughout your academic career to ensure compliance.

Further, the Clinical Psychology program is administered and coordinated by a program committee of Clinical Psychology faculty members. The faculty members are responsible for the admission and evaluation of students and the development of curriculum. The Clinical Psychology Program Director supervises the program on a day-to-day basis; other administrators (Department Chair of CHAS and the Dean of the College of Human Sciences and Humanities) are responsible for the program. Students in the program must meet all general requirements of HSH and the university.

**Purpose and Goals of the Program**

The purpose of the clinical psychology training program is the development of competent practitioners. There are three components to the training: 1) provision of sound theoretical and empirically derived knowledge, 2) carefully supervised clinical experience, and 3) learning which enhances and develops each student's self-awareness and personal maturity. Ideally at least some part of the student's training takes place in an interdisciplinary environment where the student is

exposed to professionals from a number of specialty areas, as well as to relevant social issues such as cultural and minority concerns.

The program emphasizes traditional scientist-practitioner skills such as practical clinical skills in assessment and treatment, and scholarly skills in understanding and analyzing research that contributes to the field of psychology. As part of training in the program, students:

***Practical Clinical Skills***

1. Learn assessment techniques using multimodal and multi-method approaches
2. Learn empirically-based diagnostic techniques and procedures
3. Write professional evaluations, treatment plans, progress notes, and other reports
4. Develop and implement treatment programs
5. Develop and deliver case presentations
6. Select treatments on the basis of empirically supported treatments of choice
7. Develop skills in implementing standardized treatments
8. Demonstrate sensitivity to issues of cultural and individual diversity
9. Demonstrate knowledge of and correct use of the APA Ethical Guidelines for clinical practice

***General Scholarly and Research Skills***

1. Develop critical analysis of assessment and treatment research literature
2. Demonstrate understanding and application of the theoretical underpinnings of psychotherapy
3. Demonstrate knowledge of research in clinical assessment and treatment
4. Demonstrate knowledge of treatment outcome research
5. Engage in optional opportunities to design, conduct, analyze, and disseminate research that contributes to the field of psychology

***Student Opportunities Essential to Meet Program Goals***

1. Practice assessment and treatment skills in a highly supervised environment through an onsite clinic
2. Work with and be supervised by faculty members, who have expertise in a variety of assessment and treatment modalities
3. Use state-of-the-art equipment and technology used in the field
4. Participate in a collegial atmosphere that is accepting of diverse opinions and prepares students to analyze the current literature critically

**Policies for All Students**

All students are subject to the policies stated in the Academic Policies of the catalog. Additional policies and procedures for students in the program are

presented in this handbook. The University uses only the UHCL e-mail account to communicate with enrolled students. Students should activate their e-mail account, use it to communicate with their department and other administrative units, and check it regularly for important information.

### ***Registration and Degree Audit***

Students are responsible for correctly registering for courses and paying all tuition and fees by the official university registration and payment deadlines. All students should verify the accuracy of their enrollment before the end of the “add period” and should check their online account to verify that they are registered for the classes that they think they are. Classes “fill-up” very quickly, so please register as soon as their registration time opens.

All students are responsible for reviewing their own transcripts and degree audits regularly to ensure that they are correct and that they are on track to meet all their requirements.

### ***Withdrawal***

Students are responsible for all courses in which they remain officially enrolled once the drop period has ended. Instructors do not have the authority to withdraw students from classes. Withdrawals are only permitted for non-academic reasons; no withdrawals can be approved for academic reasons. When submitting a withdrawal request, students must provide verifiable, third-party documentation for the reason for the withdrawal.

### ***Grade Appeals***

Grade appeals should be made to the department or program following the process specified in the catalog. If they are resolved within the department or program, that unit is the final level of appeal. The departmental decision may be appealed to the dean only on the basis of procedural irregularity. The decision of the dean is not subject to review or further appeal.

### ***Formal Complaints***

Formal complaints should be made in writing to the Associate Dean.

### ***Accommodations for Students with Disabilities***

Students with documented disabilities should contact the [Accessibility Support Center](#) to open a file and learn more about accommodations that may be available to them.

## **Academic Load**

Graduate students can enroll in up to 12 credits of course work each long semester. Petitions to enroll in more than 12 credits can be submitted to the program director, as the college of Human Sciences and Humanities requires program approval for a student to do this. Students should plan for the typical long-semester course to require approximately 9 hours per week (practicum and internship can require considerably more). Therefore, students taking four courses in fall or spring semester should budget *at least* 36 hours for coursework per week. This amount of time, focus, and rigor in training is necessary for students to prepare for a career in mental health. Students typically enroll in 2-3 classes over the course of each summer session with the understanding that each course includes the same amount of content as a long semester, but concentrated into a *much shorter* time frame (e.g., 4, 5, or 8 weeks). Students should plan for their per-day workload for a class in the summer to be 2-4 times greater than during a 16-week fall or spring semester (i.e., taking 2 courses in an 8 week format could feel like taking 4 in a long semester). Thus, students should limit outside commitments to accommodate concentrated course structures, particularly when students are taking practicum or internship.

Some students may opt to be employed while advancing through the program, but the program expects that those enrolled in 4 classes/semester will work outside of the program *approximately 10-15 hours a week*. This guideline supports students in devoting necessary time and focus towards curricular and professional program commitments (e.g., coursework, seeing clients on practicum or internship) and their own health. Students can petition the faculty to work more hours, and petitions will be considered on a case by case basis. We also encourage students to consult with their faculty advisor prior to making any significant work commitments, as resolving conflicts between curricular and employment expectations are more difficult for students to navigate once they have already arisen. To underscore, it is expected that employment obligations will not interfere with students' curricular commitments.

## **Overview of the Curriculum**

The master's program is usually a full-time program that is designed so that many can complete it in two years and a summer semester. The curriculum is designed to meet or exceed state guidelines for licensing as a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) or Licensed Psychological Associate (LPA).

Students can be enrolled part-time; however, students will be responsible for following the suggested sequencing of classes. Many of the classes are only offered once a year, and thus, students will need to be aware of when to take these courses to continue consistent enrollment in the program. Further, some students will come in with courses completed, especially if they have been a UHCL General Psychology Master's student. For these students, it is imperative and the responsibility of the student to assure proper sequencing of courses to

be consistently enrolled in the program. It should be noted that even though some students enter with credits, there is a high likelihood that it will still take two years to graduate.

All students - even those who do not enroll full-time - are expected to have completed PSYC 5731 Psychotherapy Skills & Professional Orientation, PSYC 6531 Psychopathology, PSYC 5235 Learning Principles, and PSYC 6235 Behavioral & Cognitive Therapies by the end of a student's first spring in the program to promote eligibility and readiness to start practicum with your cohort.

**State Licensing:** Academic requirements for LPA or LPC licensure differ slightly, and it will be important that within the first two long semesters you consider which license you intend to pursue, as this may influence your choice to take certain classes (e.g., Career Counseling required for LPC, but not LPA). Once you complete your plan of study in the program, you will have fulfilled all the educational requirements for LPC or LPA licensure in the state of Texas. However, if a student takes a class that is not on the approved list of courses, there is no guarantee, even if we approve a course substitution, that the course will be accepted by the board. You are encouraged to read about requirements of the respective boards (Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors for LPC; Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists for LPA), and advising from program faculty as needed. After graduating the program, students typically need to accumulate additional supervised clinical hours to become licensed. Note that licensure requirements are regulated by each state and students should review the specific requirements where they expect to practice.

Note: Being convicted of certain crimes may preclude a person from being eligible for licensure. A student who has ever been convicted of a crime is advised to consult with the appropriate licensing board to assess for eligibility prior to pursuing licensure or training toward licensure (Texas Occupations Code, Chapter 53). See licensing board web site (<https://www.bhec.texas.gov>) for additional information.

**Accreditation.** The American Psychological Association has not historically accredited Master's Programs, but is planning to begin this process in 2024. When this occurs, the program would likely seek APA accreditation. The program is not accredited by CACREP, since this organization only accredits counseling programs.

**Curriculum.** The program builds on training received in psychology Bachelor's degree programs. The program includes coursework related to specialized assessment and treatment strategies. The program will build on students' broad knowledge of the empirical, theoretical, and philosophical underpinnings of the

profession. Thus, the program includes coursework, practicum and internship. The student develops a Candidate Plan of Study with his/her advisor that will meet all requirements of the program. The requirements and suggested sequences of courses for the program are contained in the university catalog and the Professional Psychology Brochure.

Overall, the program enables students to complete board academic requirements to obtain LPA or LPC licensure in Texas, which both require at least 60 hours of course credit in specific content areas. Students planning on getting their LPC in Texas must complete a course in *Career Counseling*, a course in addictions counseling (e.g., Substance Abuse and Treatment), and a course involving therapy in family systems (e.g., Behavioral Family Systems).

Further, completing a thesis is an option in this program. If the student wants to complete a thesis, they may use the free elective as one of the two classes they need to take for thesis credit. However, as stated above, the student will need to take *Career Counseling*, if the student wants an LPC. Steps for completing a thesis are addressed later in the handbook.

### *Practicum*

Practica experiences begin in the first year of the program. Students participate in a full two-semester practicum experience, seeing clients and conducting assessments at our on-site community clinic.

Only students in the clinical psychology program may enroll in *Clinical Practicum*. The course is a two-semester sequence intended as a bridge between theoretical course work and internship. Thus, students complete both semesters of practicum prior to starting internship. The prerequisites to practicum are PSYC 5731 *Psychotherapy Skills & Professional Orientation*, and PSYC 6531 *Psychopathology*. Students need to complete these classes in order to enroll in *Clinical Practicum*. The student should also have taken, or be concurrently enrolled in, PSYC 6235 *Behavioral/Cognitive Therapies*.

Further, students do not always get to “choose” when they will take practicum. Given the limited number of slots per semester, students will report their preference; however, the faculty members will have the final decision regarding when a student begins practicum.

Practicum is held in the on-campus Psychological Services Clinic. The practicum instructor assigns clients to be seen in practicum; the instructor supervises the assessment and/or therapy (in consultation with the Director of the Psychological Services Clinic as needed). Each student will work with clients in the practicum class and will observe sessions done by others. The practicum instructor will give developmental feedback to each student, who is expected to use the

feedback. Students will complete intake assessments and progress notes as directed by their practicum supervisor. To help students gain a quality learning experience and to properly serve community clients, students must leave adequate availability in their overall schedules to offer clients a range of times when enrolled in practicum. For example, leaving part of 1 or 2 days of the week would not be sufficient. Clients have busy schedules, and our program shares clinic spaces with several professional graduate programs. Registration fees for practicum include a fee for malpractice insurance.

Students will be responsible for maintaining all documentation on clients, scheduling appointments, identifying treatment goals, securing payment, and obtaining supervision. Group supervision will be provided on a regular basis. Supervising faculty members will conduct evaluations of students' clinical work.

If a student's performance is not sufficient to pass a practicum course or if the instructor does not believe the student is prepared to go on internship, the student would typically be asked to complete an additional semester of practicum. A student may only repeat practicum once, or else he or she will be dismissed from the program.

### *Internship*

Clinical internship is open only to students admitted to clinical psychology and is designed to be completed after accumulating two semesters experience of *Clinical Practicum* and *Professional Practice, Law and Ethics* as prerequisites. In rare instances, a student may petition to begin internship after completing one semester of practicum. Such a petition would need to be reviewed by faculty, and the onus would be on the student to demonstrate exceptional readiness and competence in clinical skills, an appropriate need, and overall good standing in all aspects the program.

Overall, students are expected to view the internship in a professional manner which includes striving to achieve the best possible performance rather than simply working for a grade. In staff relations, the student must be able to extend him/herself to establish rapport and to assimilate rapidly into an ongoing clinical agency or practice. It is with this approach in mind that the student will most benefit from the internship and gain acceptance into the mental health community. In almost all cases, the student will need to schedule internship commitments around scheduled program courses they plan to take and negotiate any possible time conflict with the internship site prior to beginning the internship.

The program's Internship Coordinator (a faculty member assigned to coordinate internship placement) maintains a list of internship sites with histories of satisfying the program's standards for internships. The Coordinator will make suggestions for placement based on student background, interest, personal style,

and career goals; in addition, the Coordinator will discuss with the student any new potential internship sites of which the student may be aware. A student will not initiate discussion of internship placement with an agency without first consulting with and receiving approval from the Internship Coordinator.

The university must be concerned with the student's well-being, the interests of the agency and its clients, and the interests of the university itself. Therefore, *the university and program faculty specifically reserve the right to deny to a particular student the option of a specific internship placement, or of doing any internship.* Acceptance into the Clinical Psychology program or approval of a Candidate Plan of Studies that includes the internship does not constitute a guarantee that the university will in fact, arrange such an internship. Should the clinical psychology faculty recommend such a denial, the student may appeal the decision to university administration.

The program also reserves the right to terminate an internship placement if an intern seriously violates standards of professional practice and ethics, demonstrates other serious problems, or if requested by the internship site. In cases where an internship placement is terminated prematurely, the Internship Coordinator will consult with the student and with other clinical faculty members to determine a course of action. Such action could include placing the student at another site to meet the internship requirement, additional course work or training, and/or other stipulations appropriate to the circumstances. An intern who is removed from an internship placement, but who is dissatisfied with the decisions of the Internship Coordinator may appeal for a review by appropriate university administration.

On internship, the program expects a minimum of one hour per week of individual supervision. Internship supervisors in the clinical psychology program must ordinarily possess at least a master's-level certification/licensure in a recognized mental health field. The supervisor-supervisee relationship is critical. Supervisors need to be skilled in supervision to establish the essential quality of trust, freedom to learn, honest evaluation, appropriate modeling, and mutually effective feedback. Assignment of clinical cases needs to be meaningful and offer as much breadth as feasible and appropriate for the supervisee. Supervisors typically have direct knowledge of the student's actual work through observations or recordings.

Under ordinary circumstances, the Coordinator will correspond with the supervisor on-site each semester to lend support and monitor progress and quality. The Internship Coordinator will not usually directly supervise student cases, not being an employee of the internship site. Additionally, students meet periodically on campus with the Coordinator to facilitate the internship experience

and identify any potential problems that may be at risk of developing between the intern, the site and the supervisor.

Internship requires the student to complete 500 clock hours of on-site work ordinarily for two consecutive semesters, usually two to three days per week. One-semester internships are usually not approved. Internship can, however, encompass a full academic year. The semester requirements are intended to ensure sufficient experience and skill development; exposure to a variety of clients, tasks, and problems; time to benefit from errors and practice; time for supervisory relationships to develop and become productive; and time to become involved with and knowledgeable about the placement agency as an organization.

Because the program intends for the master's internship be a learning experience in a new situation, students may not treat current employment as an internship nor are internships usually allowed at a site in which the student is employed.

Planning for *Clinical Internship* should begin during the first semester of *Clinical Practicum* and involves conferring with the Internship Coordinator about the details of the proposed internship and the process of placement. Typically the student will interview at the internship site in the semester prior to starting the internship and must be accepted by the site before the internship placement is finalized.

The student must register for the appropriate internship course (PSYC 6636) each semester of the internship. Registration in the program includes a fee for malpractice insurance. Also, registration in a university training course is required for licensure exemption under Texas mental health licensing laws.

The site supervisor will recommend the grade for internship based on the student's development and performance, as documented in a written evaluation by the supervisor. However, the university Internship Coordinator assigns the official course grade. The Internship Coordinator will ask each intern to complete an Internship Evaluation each semester regarding the quality of experience offered the student.

Toward the end of the internship, the student will prepare an Internship Report. The Internship Coordinator will inform the intern about the contents and format of the report in their final semester of internship. The student's final draft must be submitted to the Internship Coordinator prior to the end of the final internship semester. Further editing or changes may be required at the discretion of the Coordinator.

## **The University and Program**

The University is located in Houston, Texas, but is housed in the Clear Lake area of Houston, which is a 45-minute drive to downtown Houston and Galveston. The University includes four colleges and a diverse student population of nearly 9,000 students. UHCL is Hispanic Serving Institution, as designated by the U.S. Department of Education.

The Clinical Psychology Program is part of the Clinical Health and Applied Sciences Department, which is a part of the College of Human Sciences and Humanities. There are five faculty members who serve as core faculty in this program. Further, there are approximately 12 other psychology faculty members in the Psychology Department who contribute to student experiences in the program.

The clinical program also helps maintain the Psychological Services Clinic located on campus, which serves community mental health needs. The clinic has numerous individual therapy rooms, family therapy rooms, a student office, and two conference rooms. Psychological services are provided to the Clear Lake community, as well as the greater Houston area. This Psychology Clinic provides an excellent training opportunity for beginning therapists to be supervised by licensed psychologists as well as provide low cost services for individuals with mental health needs.

## **Registration**

The program provides advising on which courses to take each semester to ensure students stay on track with their cohort. Students are expected to take the courses recommended each semester in order to graduate on time. Students going through the program part-time should review the course sequence to ensure they take needed courses when they are offered. Part-time students may meet with their program advisor to verify course selections. Most courses will be open for only a specific number of students. Students will need to register for courses each semester as early as possible to ensure entry into needed courses.

It should be noted a student may only repeat a given graduate course once. This is a program requirement, not a University requirement. Failure to pass a course in two attempts will result in dismissal from the program. Students must be continuously enrolled in at least one credit for each semester until graduation from the program. Students are also encouraged to check with the Financial Aid Office to determine any possible consequences of repeating courses.

A student may only skip registration for one semester with the requested, explicit approval of the clinical faculty and under extenuating circumstances (e.g., health leave). But, upon failing to complete at least one course for two long semesters in sequence, a student is assumed to have withdrawn and must petition the program committee to continue in the program. Students are also expected to notify their advisor and the Program Director of any interruptions in their studies. A student whose studies are interrupted for longer than one long semester will require faculty approval to continue in the program.

**Advisors:**

Each student will be assigned an advisor, and students may go to their advisor at any time for issues related to the program or plan of study. However, all faculty members serve as mentors, training and guiding the student in developing their professional competencies. Unlike doctoral programs, students are not formally matched with a faculty research mentor when they begin. However, if students are interested in research, they should find a research mentor that will help them through their research development. This research mentor would also be responsible for thesis development and completion, if the student is interested in completing a thesis.

**Transfer Credits and Waivers of Requirements**

In most cases, students may NOT transfer credits from another university. Sometimes, students are able to replace a class they have previously taken from other Master's programs. However, students still need to complete the required number of total hours in the Clinical Psychology program (63). If a student has been taking courses in the UHCL General Psychology Master's program, some of the classes are also required in the Clinical Psychology program. Those classes will count in the Clinical Program. These classes include Human Growth and Development, Biological Basis of Behavior, Learning, Career Counseling, Advanced Experimental Methods & Statistics, and Advanced Non-Experimental Methods & Statistics. There are also some therapy electives that may be similar across programs. However, the college stipulates that no more than 15 hours can be transferred in from any other degree.

**Annual Evaluation of Students**

At each year of the program, formal evaluations are conducted. Students are rated in seven domains of behavior (reviewed in Orientation). All faculty members are involved in the evaluation of students. These evaluations will be based on the student's progress and performance in the program. In these evaluations, clinical students are evaluated on personal, professional, and academic skills. Further, there is an overall rating for the year using these domains.

Once the evaluations are completed, the student will receive the formal evaluation. If the student would like to address any concerns related to the evaluation, the student may meet with the Director of Clinical Training. If a student receives an unsatisfactory rating on an annual evaluation, she/he will be required to meet with the faculty. A remediation plan will be developed that the student will need to follow. If the remediation plan is not followed or if the student receives two scores of unsatisfactory while in the program, the student will be dismissed from the program.

***Expectations of Behavior***

In general, students are expected to behave in a professional and responsible manner, which is much of the basis for the annual evaluation of each student.

Students are expected to be responsible in every manner, including attending all classes, taking notes during class, completing all assignments and turning them in “on-time,” responding to feedback, treating other students and faculty in the program with respect, engaging in ethical behavior, and being prepared (i.e. reading prior to class). For many students, the expectation of professional behavior represents an increase in responsibility and maturity, as well as changes from experiences during undergraduate education. Professional psychology graduate courses often do not include lecture slides, review guides, or extra credit. Graduate students are expected to participate in lectures/discussions and to not ask professors questions that are readily found on course syllabi. If clinical psychology graduate students raise questions or issues with professors, those students are expected to be willing to meet with the professor rather than simply sending an email. If students fail to engage in appropriate professional behaviors, there is chance that they will:

1. Fail classes (all classes have preparation and attendance policies)
2. Receive an unsatisfactory on their annual evaluations
3. Be asked to voluntarily withdraw or be dismissed

Further, the progress of students completing their internal practicum will be reviewed during both semesters that they are enrolled in the internal practicum. Serious concerns regarding clinical competence will result in a remediation plan. Such concerns among the clinical faculty could lead to immediate removal of clinical cases, a possible leave of absence to address the concerns, and/or immediate termination.

The following two ethical principles from the American Psychological Association Ethical Principles of Psychologists (<http://www.apa.org/ethics/code2002.html>) guide evaluations of the students. **Principle A: Beneficence and Nonmaleficence**, requires psychologists to balance the welfare and rights of patients, clients, supervisees, and students. This includes concern for harm that may derive from impaired or incompetent students. **Principle B: Fidelity and Responsibility**, expresses concern for the community and society in which psychologists work. This includes the responsibility to ensure adequate interpersonal and professional skills in all graduates.

Interpersonal skills and intrapersonal characteristics are considered essential to functioning as a therapist; therefore, deficiencies in these areas will result in a required remediation plan. When a student’s behavior or performance raises concerns about the student’s ability to perform satisfactorily as a therapist, a remediation plan will be developed, and if that remediation plan is not followed or the student continues to present problem behavior, the student will be dismissed from the program. Students must adhere to the laws and regulations relating to the practice of psychology. Given that students work in clinical settings, they will be held to the same ethical and professional standards of conduct within professional psychology environments.

Faculty members and students share a responsibility to take action if they believe

that a person's personal problems may be harmful to patients, clients, colleagues, or other citizens. The appropriate action would be first to bring the concern to the attention of the person believed to be impaired. If that does not result in a corrective response and a perceived risk remains, it would be appropriate to consult with a faculty member or the Director of Clinical Training.

If there is sufficient evidence supporting a student's impairment in program responsibilities due to an emotional, neuropsychological, or substance abuse condition, the faculty may (a) recommend that the student take a leave of absence until the student is no longer impaired, (b) recommend that the student discontinue the program, or (c) formally dismiss the student from the program.

Remediation of deficiencies includes, but is not limited to repeating coursework, repeating practicum or internship experiences, increasing supervision, or taking a leave of absence. Failure to benefit from remediation may be followed by counseling toward voluntary withdrawal from the program or formal termination. Any student who, in the judgment of the clinical faculty lacks the competencies necessary for effective service delivery and/or progress through the program will be advised orally and in writing as to the necessary remediation required.

***Also, in adherence to Texas State HB1508, effective September 1, 2017, amended Texas Occupations Code, Chapter 53, the UHCL Clinical Psychology Program hereby informs anyone enrolled or planning to enroll in our program that individuals who have been convicted of certain criminal offenses might not be eligible to obtain professional licensure in Texas. An individual may request a licensing authority to issue a criminal history evaluation letter regarding the person's eligibility for a license issued by that authority. Thus, students interested in becoming a Licensed Professional Counselor or Licensed Psychological Associate would be advised to contact the Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors or the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists, respectively.***

### **Recognizing and Remediating Personal Difficulties**

We understand that students may experience difficulties during their time in the program. Unfortunately, the potential range of problems is vast, and may include illness, problems with romantic relationships and family members, financial pressures, confusion about career choices, personality conflicts, and others. Such difficulties may lead to the erosion of the student's professional performance. When students experience stressors that adversely affect them, we hope that they feel comfortable approaching any faculty member to discuss their concerns. Students will be encouraged to set some limits on the extent of detail they want this faculty member to share with colleagues, but do not be so restrictive that the faculty member cannot effectively provide guidance and advocacy for the student.

Certain types of behavior create special problems for students. The most blatant difficulties stem from activities that are clearly unethical. Students will be expected to abide by the ethical standards of the profession.

A second blatant stance involves dishonesty. Professionals operate by making and honoring commitments; they understand their reputations are priceless in keeping their standing in the community. A good reputation is painstakingly built but can be quickly ruined; dishonesty will ruin one's reputation quickly and thoroughly.

Avoidance is a third pattern that creates special problems. People tend to avoid onerous or difficult life tasks. Such avoidance is very expensive psychologically. Avoidance also feeds on itself, breeding further avoidance. This difficulty often manifests itself in failure to complete class or research objectives in a timely way. Its negative effects are magnified if students remain away from campus or avoid contact. Faculty will encourage students' learning and involvement, but it is the student's responsibility to complete work in a timely way.

A final area of special concern is when students manifest **patterns** of poor judgment or interpersonal problems. In this scenario, no single problem in and of itself constitutes a blatant violation of ethics or blatant disregard of others, but a student accumulates a history of engaging in troublesome peculiar responses in a variety of situations. Individuals who manifest such problematic behavioral patterns usually are unable to recognize those patterns' existence, and often do not view them as problems. Lack of recognition about how one generally affects others can create problematic interpersonal relationships with faculty and peers—problems that are not easy to address directly.

During all evaluations, whenever an area of concern is serious in nature, the student will be required to develop an action plan of remediation, in conjunction with the student's faculty advisor. This plan should clearly outline behavioral goals and specific steps necessary to meet these goals as well as a timeline for implementation. The action plan should be initiated within a week after the feedback meeting. The student's advisor will place a copy of the plan in the student's personnel record. **It is the student's responsibility to keep the advisor informed of how he/she is progressing with any remedial interventions and to negotiate alterations in the plan.** Any such changes should be mutually agreed upon in writing, as an amendment to the original plan.

### **Reasons for Termination from the Program**

The University and the Psychology Department expect conduct of all students that is consistent with all relevant University and professional policies and rules, including the University Student Conduct Code and the American Psychological Association Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct. Single episode violations or patterns of recurring behavior could result in termination as determined by the Clinical Psychology Faculty Members and/or by the Administration of Human Sciences and Humanities.

The conditions under which a student may be terminated from the program include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Having a cumulative GPA of less than 3.00
- 2) Obtaining less than a B- grade in any course, after taking the course for the second time. It should be noted that withdrawing from classes on a regular basis is not a way to avoid “failing” a course. Thus, students will NOT be able to withdraw from a class more than once.
- 3) Engaging in unethical, unprofessional, threatening, criminal behavior (plagiarism, cheating, violation of APA ethical guidelines, or University policies or governmental law, including harassment) or consistent inability or unwillingness to carry out academic, practicum, or internship responsibilities. These activities include, but are not limited to, refusing to work with a particular group of clients, missing classes, departmental activities or client appointments, failing to complete clinical paperwork or class assignments, failing to attend mandatory meetings, or failing to complete mandatory requirements.
- 5) Displaying problems that affect the student's functioning in the program, including performance or behaviors that demonstrate poor interpersonal skills and an inability to effectively communicate with others or form an appropriate therapeutic relationship with clients; lack of insight into negative consequences of one's own behavior; frequent blame of others or external factors for failures or difficulties; and inability to tolerate different points of view, constructive feedback or supervision.
- 6) Failing to make timely and satisfactory progress on program requirements responsibilities, and activities.
- 7) Demonstrating conduct that is a violation of the University Student Conduct Code (such a violation will also result in a referral to the office for Student Conduct and Community Standards for campus disciplinary action, including possible dismissal from the University as well as possible action by the program faculty). Conduct violations by a student off-campus in university related activities (e.g., external practicum, internship, etc.) will be handled the same as if the violation occurred on-campus.
- 8) Failing to respond to a remediation plan or failure to make adequate progress while under remediation.

Although it is expected that initial attempts to resolve issues will occur between the faculty members and student, a formal remediation plan will specifically outline requirements for successful completion. Inability to resolve and complete the remediation plan satisfactorily will be followed by counseling toward voluntary withdrawal from the program or formal termination. Students who are dismissed from or leave the program are not eligible to reapply or return.

Remediation plans are separate from academic or university probation. Students receiving academic or university probation will have this indicated on their applications for internship. Successfully completed remediation plans are not listed as probation for these purposes.

### **Yearly Information Needed From Students**

It is imperative that students inform the Director of Clinical Training and Clinic Director of their address, email address, and telephone number. Students must be quickly reachable in case of a problem or emergency. Students will also need to inform the Clinic Director and case supervisor as to how she or he can be contacted if going on an extended vacation.

Before graduation, students need to answer a set of questions, including:

1. Current contact number
2. Internship placement
3. Any scientific contribution, while in the program (e.g., research presentations, publications)
4. Any teaching contribution to the program (e.g., formal and informal TA roles)

### **Policy Regarding Web Pages and Social Media Use**

It has become increasingly popular for people to have personal web pages and/or to communicate over the web via blogs, Facebook, Instagram, etc. The purpose of this policy is to provide some guidelines about any public representation of our students or the program over the internet.

Students need to seriously consider what they put on their social media pages and posts. First, if students identify themselves as a UHCL clinical psychology student, it is important to thoughtfully decide what to post, since it matters how the program and students are represented. Increasingly, universities, internship sites, and even clients are seeking out information about people online. There are now numerous anecdotes of well-qualified students being denied jobs or Ph.D. offers because someone viewed something that was considered to be inappropriate or objectionable on students' social media. It is in students' best interest to seriously consider how material that is public may be viewed by future employers, internship sites, or clients.

If we become aware of any social media that identifies a student as a clinical psychology student and this social media is considered by the Clinical Psychology faculty members as unethical, illegal, or in violation of any relevant UHCL, APA, or Texas licensing policy, the student will at the least be asked to modify or remove the problem material. Depending on the nature of the content, the student could receive other disciplinary action commensurate with the violation. If the student refuses to comply, steps will be taken to deal with student

misconduct and/or unethical behavior including possible termination from the program.

### **Master's Thesis**

As stated above, completing a thesis is not a requirement, and very few students do it. It is a time-consuming, challenging process that is not recommended for students unless they have very strong interest in conducting independent research and significant time to invest beyond the already-challenging program curriculum. There are often more efficient ways to take part in publishable research projects than a thesis. If you are interested, talk to faculty.

If a student does pursue a project or thesis, it must be approved by the person's research mentor before it is officially begun. Note that some faculty may not have additional capacity to chair a thesis. Also, students may need to enroll in an independent study to lay the ground work for a thesis and demonstrate commitment to it. Additionally, the university urges students to complete theses before graduating, and some students may need extra semesters to successfully complete a thesis.

To complete the thesis, a student should start the process immediately upon starting the program, as it often takes 12-24 months of dedicated work. To start the process, students should have an idea of the research area they wish to pursue. However, students need to complete a thesis in an area related to their faculty research advisor's areas of expertise. Thus, picking a topic is often a collaborative effort between student and research advisor. Once settled on a thesis topic, students should ask their thesis advisor for suggestions as to who else might serve on the thesis committee. The thesis committee consists of the advisor and one other faculty member in the department (or related department, e.g., Psychology Department).

#### *Writing the proposal*

Students must write a thesis proposal, which should be completed by the end of the first full year in the program (typically summer). The first major step is to write a draft of the proposal, which includes an introduction, method section (participants, procedures, research design, and measures), data analytic plan, references, and appendices (including all measures used in the study). Often it is helpful to develop an outline before writing the draft proposal, and some faculty may require this. Students submit a draft of the proposal to the thesis advisor for comments and revision. Students typically have several revisions based on ongoing input from the thesis advisor before a draft is considered acceptable. It is the sole judgment of the thesis advisor to determine whether a proposal is adequate, ethical, and feasible. Given the wide array of faculty member responsibilities, committee members may need up to three weeks to review each draft. Also, students should be aware that faculty are officially on 9-month (not 12-month) appointments and therefore may require additional time when not officially working for the department (e.g., summers). Students are expected to address committee feedback thoroughly and promptly. Students should negotiate their

proposed timeline with their faculty mentor prior to initiating the proposal document, in order to clarify expectations regarding document reviews.

Once the advisor agrees that the proposal is in good form and ready to be submitted to the thesis committee, the student distributes the proposal to the other committee member(s). The thesis proposal is typically not to be distributed to the committee until after the advisor approves it. The other committee member may take 2-3 weeks to review the proposal before stating if it is ready to be formally proposed or if further revisions are needed. After the proposal has been approved, the student will need to follow procedures defined by HSH in order to formally register for thesis hours. This includes completing an HSH form to register for hours and obtaining signatures from the thesis committee and the Clinical Health and Applied Sciences (CHAS) Department Chair prior to the HSH deadline for the semester. The student should consult with her/his chair throughout this process (also see below). After the proposal is approved and the research has been fully conducted, the thesis is still not complete until the full committee has approved the thesis document, and other HSH and library requirements have been met.

#### *Human subjects review*

**All master's research involving human subjects must have approval from the UHCL Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects.** This institutional review board (IRB) is a committee comprised of faculty within our college. Students submit proposals to this committee (through their advisor) only when the research using human subjects poses no more than "minimal risk." Minimal risk is defined as "the risks of harm anticipated by the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests." This definition acknowledges that most people's daily lives include challenges and stresses. Any research that may involve more than this level of minimal risk or any study involving an intervention must be approved by the University's Human Subjects Review Committee.

### **STUDENTS MAY NOT BEGIN TO COLLECT DATA UNTIL THEY HAVE OBTAINED IRB APPROVAL.**

#### *Academic credit for the thesis*

Students may register for thesis credits, after they have obtained approval of their thesis proposal. Students must register for a minimum total of six master's thesis credits. Students will receive a letter grade change for the thesis once their final draft has been approved by all committee members, the Associate Dean of HSH, and the Dean of HSH. The grade will remain IP, incomplete in progress, until the successful completion. Students should be aware that their overall performance throughout conducting the thesis is evaluated, not simply the final thesis document. Further, it should be noted that the library has to approve the

format of the thesis. The student must look into these guidelines. Also, note that a student must be registered for thesis hours in the semester in which they submit their thesis for approval. Also, once a student has begun to take thesis hours, he or she must stay enrolled in at least 3 thesis hours in each long semester (e.g., fall, spring) until the thesis has been completed and approved. It is usually best to plan on the project and the institutional procedural process (e.g., obtaining signatures, etc.) taking longer than you initially expect.

#### *Completion of the thesis*

Once data is collected and the manuscript is being constructed, progress by the student needs to continue until the thesis is complete. Further, the student needs to respond to feedback in a timely and appropriate manner. If the student is negligent about timely and appropriate action to address feedback, the advisor is not responsible for continued mentoring of the thesis. In fact, a faculty member can refuse to continue to supervise a thesis. Short of this, a student's performance would be reflected in the student's thesis grade.

**Please note:** Theses are due to the Associate Dean's office approximately 1 month prior to the last day of the semester, and the student must have committee approval to submit the thesis to the Associate Dean. The student must also complete necessary documentation from the college (e.g., signature pages). Students will need to plan accordingly to make this absolute deadline. Although a student's committee will try to be helpful within reason, it is not appropriate or fair to expect committee members to significantly speed up turnaround times just so a student can make a deadline. Failure to provide faculty appropriate time to respond could result in the student needing to delay submission of thesis (which would require enrolling for another semester of 3 thesis hours).

#### **General Policies and Procedures Not Covered Elsewhere**

The American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (provided during orientation) guide our policies and practices in the UHCL Clinical Psychology program. Students must familiarize themselves with this code of ethics and use it as a guide in their professional and educational practices. The following are areas that often raise ethical dilemmas for students:

##### *Relationships between Teaching Assistants and Students*

When students serve as a teaching assistant, they are in a position of authority with the students in the class. Teaching Assistants are governed by the same standards of conduct in the performance of their academic responsibilities as are members of the faculty. For purposes of emphasis, the university considers it inappropriate conduct for a teaching assistant or assistant lecturer to have a dating, intimate, sexual, or financial relationship with one of his/her students. If there is any risk of entering into such a dual

relationship, it is the teaching assistant's responsibility to notify the instructor of record immediately and take action to remedy the situation.

### *Relationships between Graduate Students and Faculty*

We aim for collegial, mutually respectful relationships between faculty and students in the clinical psychology program. This applies among faculty and students. Maintaining this culture requires a high level of professionalism and integrity on the part of everyone. In collaborative research: (a) faculty and student should discuss ownership of data and authorship on presentations/publications early enough in the process so that each is aware of his/her role; and (b) faculty and students should publicly acknowledge one another's contributions at conferences, in written work, etc. Guidelines about authorship and authorship order are addressed further in the APA Ethical Standards.

A dual relationship between a faculty member and student exists when the individuals fill roles beyond what is typical in faculty-student relationships and/or the relationship is exclusionary from other faculty-student relationships (see Ethical Standard 3.05 Multiple Relationships). Examples of dual relationships include, but are not limited to, romantic/sexual involvement, financial partnerships, long-time personal friendships, and family relations. The effects of the dual relationship are not limited to the two individuals involved but potentially affect many persons in the program. Potentially problematic dual relationships should be avoided. If you are at all unsure about whether entering into a dual relationship could be problematic, discuss it with faculty. In the event that a dual relationship arises, it is important that these relationships become known to others in the program rather than be kept a secret. Psychotherapy between program faculty and students must be avoided altogether.

The Ethical Principles of Psychologists explicitly state that, "Psychologists do not engage in sexual relationships with students or supervisees in training over whom the psychologist has evaluative or direct authority, because such relationships are so likely to impair judgment or be exploitative" (Ethical Standard 3.08 Exploitative Relationships). Should an intimate or multiple role relationship with a faculty member exist, the guidelines are as follows: a faculty member involved in a dual relationship should not be: (a) instructing or supervising that student, (b) participating in the research or clinical guidance of the student, or (c) participating in the evaluation process of the student.

Depending upon the nature of the dual relationship, these guidelines may also be applied even if the dual relationship is terminated. The current ethical guidelines indicate that even if a faculty member does not have evaluative authority over a student, personal or intimate relationships are inappropriate and unethical.