

Graduate Student Retention Policy and Appeals Process

University of Texas at Tyler Department of Psychology and Counseling
Voted and Approved by Faculty on 11 November, 2020

Comprehensive Evaluation and Retention Policy

Faculty, training staff, supervisors, and administrators of the Psychology and Counseling graduate programs at the University of Texas at Tyler have a professional, ethical, and potentially legal obligation to: (a) establish criteria and methods through which aspects of competence other than, and in addition to, a student-trainee's knowledge or skills may be assessed (including, but not limited to, emotional stability and well-being, interpersonal skills, professional development, and personal fitness for practice); and, (b) ensure, insofar as possible, that the student-trainees who complete our programs are competent to manage future relationships (e.g., client, collegial, professional, public, scholarly, supervisory, teaching) in an effective and appropriate manner. Because of this commitment, and within the parameters of our administrative authority, our faculty, training staff, supervisors, and administrators strive not to advance, recommend, or graduate students or trainees with demonstrable problems (e.g., cognitive, emotional, psychological, interpersonal, technical, and ethical) that may interfere with professional competence to other programs, the profession, employers, or the public at large.

As such, within a developmental framework, and with due regard for the inherent power difference between students and faculty, students and trainees should know that the faculty, training staff, and supervisors of our programs will evaluate their competence in areas other than, and in addition to, coursework, seminars, scholarship, comprehensive examinations, or related program requirements. These evaluative areas include, but are not limited to, demonstration of sufficient: (a) interpersonal and professional competence (e.g., the ways in which student trainees relate to clients, peers, faculty, allied professionals, the public, and individuals from diverse backgrounds or histories); (b) self-awareness, self-reflection, and self-evaluation (e.g., knowledge of the content and potential impact of one's own beliefs and values on clients, peers, faculty, allied professionals, the public, and individuals from diverse backgrounds or histories); (c) openness to processes of supervision (e.g., the ability and willingness to explore issues that either interfere with the appropriate provision of care or impede professional development or functioning); and (d) resolution of issues or problems that interfere with professional development or functioning in a satisfactory manner (e.g., by responding constructively to feedback from supervisors or program faculty; by the successful completion of remediation plans; by participating in personal counseling/therapy in order to resolve issues or problems).

This policy is applicable to settings and contexts in which evaluation would appropriately occur (e.g., coursework, practica, supervision), rather than settings and contexts that are unrelated to the formal process of education and training (e.g., non-academic, social contexts). However, irrespective of setting or context, when a student-trainee's conduct clearly and demonstrably (a) impacts the performance, development, or functioning of the student-trainee, (b) raises questions of an ethical nature, (c) represents a risk to public safety, (d) negatively impacts the learning of other students, or (e) damages the representation of psychology and counseling to the profession or public, appropriate representatives of our programs may review such conduct within the context of the program's evaluation processes.

[Adapted from the Comprehensive Evaluation of Student-Trainee Competence in Professional Psychology Programs statement developed by the Student Competence Task Force of the Council of Chairs of Training Councils (CCTC), (<http://www.apa.org/ed/graduate/cctc.html>), approved March 25, 2004.]

Student Fitness Evaluation Program

Standards

Students enrolled in all graduate programs in the UT Tyler Department of Psychology and Counseling must maintain high scholastic standards and develop skills necessary to work effectively with people with diverse needs. Students are expected to demonstrate emotional and mental fitness in their interactions with others, use skills and techniques that are generally accepted by others in the professional fields and conform to the codes of ethics of relevant professional associations and the state of Texas. A student's acceptance in any program does not guarantee their fitness to remain in that program. The faculty is responsible for assuring that only those students who continue to meet program standards are allowed to continue in any program.

Evaluating Student Fitness and Performance

Members of the faculty, using professional judgment, continuously evaluate each student's fitness and performance. Students receive information related to their fitness and performance from faculty members, their advisers, and their supervisors. The criteria used by the faculty to make such judgments include instructor's observations of course performance, evaluations of students' performances in simulated practice situations, supervisors' evaluations of students' performances in practice situations, and the disciplines' codes of ethics. Students are formally evaluated at least annually by the program faculty. Students who are not making satisfactory progress or who are not meeting program standards should consider withdrawing from the program. In this context, the term "unsatisfactory progress in the program" refers to an academic judgment made regarding the student's fitness and performance. It is a determination that the student has failed to meet academic and/or professional standards.

First Semester Candidacy Interview (CMHC Only)

A formal evaluation will occur at the end of each CMHC student's first semester enrolled in the program upon completion of [COUN 5312](#) Counseling Theories and Applications, [COUN 5328](#) Foundations and Ethics of Clinical Mental Health Counseling, and [COUN 5391](#) Essential Counseling Skills (note: for six credit hour first semester students [COUN 5328](#) and [COUN 5391](#)). This formal evaluation occurs at the Candidacy Interview. The Candidacy Interview committee will be comprised of at least three CMHC faculty members. During this interview, the student and committee will review the student's academic progress, dispositions related to work as a professional counselor, and any intra/interpersonal elements that pertain to work as a professional counselor. The purpose of this interview is to recommend continuation in the program (i.e., Candidacy) or determine areas of improvement needed to continue. The following areas are considered for admission to Candidacy:

1. Academic Progress – All students must demonstrate adequate academic progress. During the Candidacy Interview students need to demonstrate that they are in good academic standing in their courses (i.e., their grades indicate that they are projected to earn a grade of B or better in each of their initial courses).
2. Counselor Dispositions – Counseling is a profession that requires interacting with a diverse population. Professional counselors must be able to interact with individuals, families, and groups and demonstrate unconditional positive regard, an attitude of respect for individual values and beliefs, good interpersonal skills, and effective communication skills. Due to the nature of the work and ethical obligations to protect future clients, faculty must evaluate an individual's fitness for the profession. This is an ongoing process and concerns are addressed as they arise. Depending on the nature, severity, frequency, and duration of a concern, members of the faculty may develop a remediation plan to provide an opportunity for the student to demonstrate growth and improvement. Ultimately, if the student does not meet the goals of the remediation plan or demonstrates a lack of fitness for the profession, dismissal from the program can occur.
3. Personal Concerns – There are times in which the training processes trigger intra/interpersonal concerns that may interfere with the ability to be an effective counselor. When this occurs, faculty members may develop a remediation plan which

may include a requirement that the student engages as a client in personal counseling related to the concern(s). Counseling services are available at no cost to students through the UT Tyler Student Counseling Center. At the request of the student or the discretion of the counseling faculty, the counseling faculty may provide referrals to three appropriate alternatives. The student is fully responsible for any costs associated with partaking in counseling services other than the UT Tyler Student Counseling Center. Serious or persistent impairments and/or violations of personal or professional ethics can result in dismissal from the program. This includes issues related to a violation from the UT Tyler Student Standards of Academic Conduct. All counseling students are expected to adhere to the current version of the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics.

Students will be notified via e-mail of the faculty's decision regarding their status, which are as follows:

- a. Approved for Candidacy to the CMHC program
- b. Approved for Candidacy with reservations. These students will be required to meet with their academic advisor to address areas of growth or concerns identified during the Candidacy Interview.
- c. Denied Candidacy provided a remediation plan and a timeline for completion. A copy of the remediation plan will be signed and retained by the student's faculty advisor, the Department Chair, and student. Thorough documentation of communication between the student and facilitating advisor during the remediation process will be kept. Once the remediation plan has been completed, students may sit for the Candidacy Interview one additional time. If admission is denied a second time, the student will be dismissed from the program.
- d. Dismissal from the CMHC program may result due to serious concerns in the aforementioned categories (i.e., counselor dispositions, personal concerns), or violations of the Graduate School's academic policies, the University's Code of Student Conduct, the Department of Psychology and Counseling Graduate Student Code of Conduct, the ACA Code of Ethics, or as deemed necessary to protect the public.

Required Withdrawal from a Program

If a faculty member believes that a student is making unsatisfactory progress or is not meeting program or university standards, they will discuss the situation with the student. If the faculty member believes this will restore satisfactory progress, then this informal resolution will be documented, with a copy to the student, and the student allowed to continue in the program. If the faculty member believes the student's performance is unlikely to improve, or has not improved to acceptable standards through informal resolution, the faculty member will refer the student to the Program Faculty Review Committee, hereinafter the Committee. The Committee will consist of three faculty members from the student's discipline, although a fourth member outside the discipline may be added from either the department or another department at the discretion of the Department Chair. This ad hoc Program Faculty Review Committee will be appointed by the department chair, upon receipt of a referral from a faculty member. The Committee will notify the student of the reasons why they are not making satisfactory progress or meeting program standards. Furthermore, the student will have the opportunity to meet with the Committee to respond and present information and witnesses. The Committee will also meet with the faculty member who referred the student to the Committee. After considering the matter, and within 15 working days of meeting with the student, the Committee will report to the student and the department chair, recommending that the student either be allowed to remain in the program or be removed from the program. The Committee may make other recommendations, such as suspension for a specified period of time, with criteria for readmission, and/or placing restrictions or conditions on the student's continuance in the program. Within 15 working days of receipt of the faculty recommendations, the student will notify the Chair of the Department of Psychology and Counseling, in writing (paper or email from UT-Tyler Patriot account) of the acceptance of or intent to appeal the Committee's recommendation.

If the student appeals the Committee's recommendations, the Department Chair, after considering the Committee's recommendation and after meeting with the student, will determine whether the student will be allowed to remain in the program. The Chair need not meet with the student before making a decision if the Chair has given the student a reasonable opportunity to meet and the student has either failed or refused to meet. The student will be notified of the Chair's decision in writing within 15 working days of the chairperson's meeting with the student. If the student is dissatisfied with the Chair's decision, they may appeal to the Dean of the College of Education and Psychology. However, in order for an appeal to the Dean to be considered, the student must submit a written notice for an appeal to the Dean within 15 working days of receiving the Chair's decision. The Dean will consider the matter based on results compiled by the Department Chair and notify the student of their decision within 15 working days of the Dean's receipt of the appeal from the Chair.

Grievances

If at any time a student has a complaint against a faculty or staff member or another student, the chart below outlines the point of contact and resolution process depending on the type of complaint.

Complaint	Resolve Informally	File Formal Appeal	Appeal Contact	Location of Policy
Sexual Misconduct	NO	YES	Title IX Coordinator	<p>Student Success: Nondiscrimination and Sexual Harassment Policy https://catalogs.uttyler.edu/en/2018-2019/Catalog/Student-Success/Nondiscrimination-and-Sexual-Harassment-Policy-and-Complaint-Procedure</p> <p>Handbook of Operating Procedures: https://catalogs.uttyler.edu/en/UTTyler/2015-2016-HOP/Series-200-General-Policies-and-Procedures/2-4-3-Sexual-Harassment-Complaint Investigation and-Grievance</p>
Discrimination: age, race, and gender	NO	YES	Chief Student Affairs Officer	<p>Student Success: Nondiscrimination and Sexual Harassment Policy https://catalogs.uttyler.edu/en/2018-2019/Catalog/Student-Success/Nondiscrimination-and-Sexual-Harassment-Policy-and-Complaint-Procedure</p> <p>Handbook of Operating Procedures: https://catalogs.uttyler.edu/en/UTTyler/HOP/Series-200-General-Policies-and-Procedures/2-4-1-Nondiscrimination-Policy-and-Complaint-Procedure</p>
Disability Discrimination	NO	YES	Assistant Director of Student Accessibility	<p>Student Success: Nondiscrimination and Sexual Harassment Policy https://catalogs.uttyler.edu/en/2018-2019/Catalog/Student-Success/Nondiscrimination-and-Sexual-Harassment-Policy-and-Complaint-Procedure</p> <p>Handbook of Operating Procedures: https://catalogs.uttyler.edu/en/UTTyler/HOP/Series-200-General-Policies-and-Procedures/2-4-1-Nondiscrimination-Policy-and-Complaint-Procedure</p>
Academic Grievances	YES	YES	Provost	<p>Academic Policies: Academic Complaints https://www.uttyler.edu/academicaffairs/student-complaint.php</p>
All Other Complaints	YES	YES	V.P. of Area Involved	<p>Student Success: Non-Academic Student Grievances http://catalogs.uttyler.edu/en/2012-2014/Catalog/Student-Affairs/Non-Academic-Student-Grievances</p>