UT San Antonio Deapertment of Counseling
Fitness to Practice Policy

Fitness to practice is defined as a cluster of awareness, knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary for program students to achieve to be successful professionals. Department of Counseling students are evaluated on their fitness to practice throughout the program in order to evaluate their readiness for practicum and internships, as well as to prepare them for their professional roles post-graduation. Fitness to practice is evaluated continuously by multiple evaluators throughout each student's program of study. Students must demonstrate success in all categories and, when applicable, meet minimum benchmarks. Where indicated (i.e., key performance indicators, professional dispositions, and skills acquisition), students are assessed developmentally.

Developmental Assessment and Expectations

The Department of Counseling is deeply committed to each student's development and providing the strongest learning environment possible. When students are evaluated, evaluators do so *developmentally* so students have opportunities to continue to grow and mature throughout their program of study. Additionally, aggregate student evaluation data are used to make program improvements.

Definition of Developmental Expectations

Developmental expectations denote the progress students are projected to make, within the spectrum of normal limits, on specific criteria based on how far they have progressed within their plan of study. For example, the developmental expectations for students who have completed 9 credits are different than for students who have completed 36 credits because students who have completed 36 credits will have more awareness, knowledge, and skills than students who have completed 9 credits. As such, developmental expectations change as students progress through their program and acquire more awareness, knowledge, and skills.

Faculty and supervisors understand developmental expectations through the frameworks of their ongoing experiences with students and trainees, clinical and educational expertise and judgment, professional literature, and ethical codes. Faculty and supervisors consult when they suspect developmental expectations may be shifting and assess students accordingly. Students are assessed using the following rubric.

Rubric Summary Table

Points	Category	Sub-Category
N	Not Observed/Unable to Assess	Not applicable
0	Does Not Meet Developmental Expectations	Not applicable.
1-2	Below Developmental Expectations	1 = Struggling to make progress to meet developmental expectations
		2 = Making progress to meet developmental expectations
3-4	Meets Developmental Expectations	3 = Recently met developmental expectations

		4 = Consistently meets developmental expectations

Rubric Descriptions
N = Not Observed/Unable to Assess.
The student did not have the opportunity to demonstrate the behaviors related to this assessment area or the assessor does not believe they have adequate information to assess this area.

0 = Does Not Meet Developmental Expectations.
Despite having the opportunity to demonstrate the behaviors for this area, the student did not demonstrate them in ways that meet developmental expectations relative to their developmental level in the program. This rating is appropriate to use if the student has received prior corrective feedback and has not taken steps toward improvement or change and/or has exhibited attitudes that do not show openness to improvement/change.

Below Developmental Expectations.
1 = Struggling to make progress to meet developmental expectations.
The student shows minimal progress toward meeting expectations relative to their developmental level in the program. They may not be integrating feedback, taking initiative to improve or to obtain support, or committing the necessary time needed to improve. They require additional opportunities, substantial support, and/or a stronger commitment to improvement in order to progress.

2 = Making progress to meet developmental expectations.
Based on their developmental level in the program, the student is progressing toward meeting the developmental expectations for this area. The student has been developing in this area and may exhibit some elements appropriately yet still needs support and continued effort to meet expectations. The student has taken initiative and has an attitude that is likely to result in meeting expectations with continued effort.

Meets Developmental Expectations.
3 = Recently met developmental expectations.
The student meets the expectations for this area relative to their developmental level in the program, though they have only recently met expectations and have not had the opportunity to consistently demonstrate mastery. It is appropriate for students to still be developing and receive this rating if their behaviors and attitudes related to the listed area are within normal limits and show promise for continued success.

4 = Consistently meets developmental expectations.
The student has met the developmental expectations for this area based on their developmental level in the program by regularly and predictably exhibiting the behaviors and attitudes associated with this area. They have demonstrated consistency over time and have demonstrated mastery congruent with their developmental level.

When Students are Assessed
Students are assessed at key points throughout their program of study on a regular schedule. In the next section, we describe the fitness to practice components and the regular assessment schedule for key performance indicators, professional dispositions, and skills acquisition. However, these fitness to practice components may be assessed outside of the regular assessment schedule when concerns about a student arises. This is referred to as off-time assessment

Off-time assessments occur because a student has demonstrated behaviors and/or attitudes that are maligned with the minimum expectations for students enrolled in a professional counseling program. Instances in which these behaviors and/or attitudes occur include, but are not limited to, class, extracurricular activities, social events, practicum, internship, and research activities. Faculty, staff, and university affiliates (e.g., site supervisors) complete off-time assessments. If you are concerned about the behavior of a classmate that you are unable to address yourself (see Student Decision Making Model), please discuss your concerns with your instructor or faculty advisor.

For all off-time assessments, the evaluator must complete a Fitness to Practice Evaluation (FTPE) Form (see Appendix D). The off-time assessment must accompany the FTPE Form and will be submitted to the Graduate Advisor of Record (GAR) of the program in which the student is enrolled. Following the procedures outlined in the remediation and retention policy, the GAR will review the FTPE Form and off-time assessment; they may consult with appropriate individuals (e.g., program faculty, student's advisor, legal counsel) to determine whether to refer the student to remediation and retention.

Fitness to Practice Components: Clinical Mental Health and School Counseling Programs
In this section, we name and define the Fitness to Practice components for the clinical mental health and school counseling programs. For all fitness to practice components, we indicate the ramifications when a student is not successful. The Counseling Program faculty work to identify concerns about students' fitness to practice as early as possible so concerns can be addressed and ideally, corrected. Faculty address concerns related to students' fitness to practice using the guidelines listed in the remediation and retention Policy.

Academic Success
Academic success is defined as meeting the minimum educational requirements for the UT San Antonio Graduate School and Department of Counseling.

In accordance with the UT San Antonio Graduate School policies, students in all programs must maintain a minimum 3.0 grade point average and no student may earn a grade lower than a "C" in any non-clinical course. Additionally, the Department of Counseling does not permit a student to earn more than two "C" grades in non-clinical courses, and all grades earned in clinical courses must be a "B" or higher for students to continue to progress in their plan of study.

For the masters programs, the clinical courses are COU 5233, COU 5393, COU 5683, COU 5713, COU 5723, COU 5793, COU 5803, and COU 5813.

Per UT San Antonio [Graduate School policies](), students will be placed on academic probation if they fall into one of the following categories:

- A student who fails to achieve a grade point average in any term at UT SAN ANTONIO of 3.0 or higher, irrespective of level of courses taken.
- A student who received a grade of "D+," "D," or "D-" in any course in a term and a grade point average of 3.0 or higher.
- A student who does not meet all requirements for unconditional or regular admission and who, by special action, is admitted on academic probation.
- A student who has been reinstated following academic dismissal.

Academic probation is cleared only when none of the above criteria apply and when the student achieves an overall grade point average of 3.0 as a graduate student at UT San Antonio. Students on academic probation are encouraged to discuss their status with their graduate advisor.

Students may receive academic dismissal:

- When a student at the graduate level earns a grade point average of less than 2.0 in any term.
- When a student at the graduate level earns a grade of "F" in any course.
- When a student at the graduate level is admitted on probation with conditions and fails to meet a condition.
- When a student at the graduate level who is on academic probation during a term would again be placed on academic probation under the provisions of academic probation set forth above. If, however, the student's UT San Antonio grade point average for the term is at least 3.0, they will continue on academic probation.
- When a student at the graduate level is unable to pass an oral or written exam (such as the Comprehensive Examination or Qualifying Examination) required for the degree after the maximum of two attempts. Some programs may have more stringent requirements.
- When a student at the graduate level fails to make satisfactory progress toward the degree, as defined by UT San Antonio regulations and the regulations of the graduate program in which the student is enrolled.

Please see the Graduate School website linked above for information regarding graduate student reinstatement if academic dismissal occurs.

Please note, academic success indicators are regulated under the policies noted in this section and are not subject to remediation and retention plans like other fitness to practice components are.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
KPIs are essential, core practice areas named by our accreditor (i.e., CACREP) and defined by the faculty. There are eight KPIs that are consistent across the masters programs and one distinct KPI for each specialization. KPIs consist of knowledge and skill indicators, are evaluated on a regular schedule at least twice during students' program of study, and have minimum benchmarks assigned.

Students are expected to meet minimum benchmarks set for KPIs throughout their programs. KPIs serve the purpose of individual student evaluation and program evaluation. KPIs are assessed regularly throughout the program in specified courses and specific assignments.

Core Masters Programs KPI Assessment.

KPI	Courses in which KPI is Assessed	Benchmark
Domain 1: Professional Counseling Orientation & Ethical Practice: Demonstrate knowledge and application of ethical principles, decision-making models, and professional codes of conduct to develop and maintain a strong counselor identity across diverse clinical settings.	COU 5113	3
Domain 2: Social & Cultural Identities and Experiences: Assess how cultural, societal, and structural factors influence client identity and mental health, and demonstrate skills in providing culturally responsive, context-sensitive counseling interventions.	• COU 5283 • COU 5713/5723 (CMHC) • COU 5793/5803/5813 (School)	• 3 • 3 • 3
Domain 3: Lifespan Development: Apply theories of human development to assess and conceptualize client concerns across the lifespan, and demonstrate the ability to tailor counseling interventions to clients' developmental needs.	• COU 6523 • EDP 5033	• 3 • 3
Domain 4: Career Development: Demonstrate knowledge and application of career development theories, tools, and techniques to support clients' career decision-making, transitions, and vocational wellness.	• COU 6153 • COU 5223	• 3 • 3
Domain 5: Counseling Practice & Relationships: Articulate and apply emerging theoretical orientations to clinical case conceptualization, treatment planning, and the development of effective counseling relationships.	• COU 5213 • COU 5713/5723 (CMHC) • COU 5793/5803/5813 (School)	• 3 • 3 • 3
Domain 6: Group Counseling & Group Work: Demonstrate knowledge and skills in planning, facilitating, and evaluating group counseling processes across diverse populations and clinical settings.	• COU 5233 • COU 5683	• 3 • 3
Domain 7: Assessment & Diagnostic Processes: Demonstrate understanding and application when selecting, administering, and interpreting of culturally and developmentally appropriate assessments, diagnostic processes, and clinical interventions to effectively evaluate, diagnose, and treat a wide range of mental and emotional presenting concerns.	• COU 5223 • COU 6883	• 3 • 3

| Domain 8: Research & Program Evaluation: Demonstrate the ability to critically analyze and evaluate qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research findings as informed and discerning consumers of research. | • EDU 5003
• COU 5203 (CMHC)
• COU 5103 (School) | • 3
• 3

• 3 |

Specialty Masters Programs KPI Assessment.

KPI	Courses in which KPI is Assessed	Benchmark
CMHC: Demonstrate the ability to apply evidence-based, culturally sustainable interventions and advocacy strategies to prevent and treat a broad range of mental health issues, through assessment, diagnoses and treatment plan development.	• COU 5243 • COU 5713/5723	• 3 • 3
School: Implement comprehensive PK-12 school counseling models that integrate evidence-based, culturally sustaining interventions to advance academic achievement, career readiness, postsecondary transitions, and graduation rates through strategic advocacy, collaborative partnerships, program evaluation, and effective consultation.	• COU 5253 • 5793/5803/5813	• 3 • 3

All students' performance on KPIs are reviewed by faculty each semester. If a student earns ratings below the set benchmarks for KPIs in more than one course in a semester or in two courses across two consecutive semesters, the student's performance will be discussed by faculty and may be referred for remediation and retention. If a student earns a rating of 1 or 2, indicating "below developmental expectations" for any KPI, the student's performance will be discussed by faculty and the student may be referred for remediation and retention.

Program faculty monitor trends in students' KPI scores by program annually. The expected aggregate score for KPIs is a minimum of a 3 for 80% of the student body in each program. In the event the faculty identify that a significant percentage of student are struggling with specific KPIs, faculty make program improvements to ensure students are receiving necessary knowledge and skills to meet KPI minimums.

Professional Dispositions
Professional dispositions are attitudes, behaviors, and mindsets that contribute to a positive and productive professional environment and are essential for professional practice. Professional dispositions are assessed on an established schedule four times during each student's plan of study. At each assessment point, students are assessed developmentally and are expected to have an aggregate score of 3 on 80% of the assessed areas. Professional dispositions may be assessed outside of the established schedule if a concern arises.

As essential components of academic and professional growth, professional dispositions encompass attitudes, behaviors, and mindsets that contribute to a positive and productive professional environment for all and are essential for professional practice. By fostering a culture of respect, responsibility, collaboration, and perseverance, the UT San Antonio Counseling

Program aims to prepare students not only for academic success but also for meaningful contributions to society. These expectations are designed to support students in developing professional counseling qualities and skills that align with shared values within the counseling profession, ensuring students can thrive as ethical, competent counselors while contributing to a respectful and inclusive community.

Students are assessed developmentally on the follow specific professional dispositions connected to four practice areas: (a) Professional Responsibilities and Ethics, (b) Interpersonal Communication and Self-Awareness, (c) Cultural and Advocacy Orientation, and (d) Work Habits.

Professional Responsibility and Ethics.
The ability to consistently demonstrate competence in adhering to ethical and legal standards required in the field of counseling, including accountability, integrity, and professional conduct.
- Knows and applies ethical and legal requirements relevant to practice.
- Dependable and consistent in meeting professional obligations and professional norms and guidelines.
- Follows professionally recognized conflict resolution processes, seeking to address concerns first with the individual(s) with whom the conflict arises, while actively examining and acknowledging one's own role in the conflict when appropriate.
- Understands and demonstrates appropriate professional boundaries.
- Prioritizes self-care and monitors for signs of physical, mental, and/or emotional impairment and seeks assistance so impairment does not negatively impact professional responsibilities and/or academic progress.

Interpersonal Communication and Self-Awareness.
The ability to exhibit behaviors and attitudes that promote effective, respectful, and professional interactions and communication in diverse settings.
- Expresses feelings effectively and appropriately and demonstrates self-regulation, self-control, and maturity.
- Recognizes how one's own words and actions impact others and demonstrates fairness, honesty, and respect.
- Responsive, open, and receptive to feedback, and incorporates feedback to enhance professional and personal development.
- Open to new ideas, manages ambiguity well, and demonstrates a tolerance to change.
- Is responsive, adaptable, and cooperative, and shows reasonable efforts to adjust behaviors in response to changes in professional and interpersonal contexts.
- Openly discusses, respects, and considers perspectives other than one's own.

Cultural and Advocacy Orientation.
The ability to demonstrate awareness, openness, and active engagement in personal and professional development and activities aligned with counseling standards and ethical codes related to culture and advocacy.
- Respects the fundamental rights, dignity, and worth of all people.

- Displays respect for cultural, individual, and role differences related to identities (e.g., age, gender, sex, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, social class, sexual/affectual orientation, disability, language).
- Demonstrates sensitivity to differences in power between themselves and others and does not exploit or mislead people.
- Demonstrates cultural and advocacy competencies, and the commitment aligned with professional counseling and documented in the professional counseling literature.
- Applies objective reasoning, ensuring personal perspectives do not interfere with professional responsibilities.
- Engages in cultural discussions with humility, genuineness, congruence, and respect.

Work Habits.
The ability to demonstrate attitudes, and skills for success in academic environments (e.g., classroom, labs, placement sites).
- Meets attendance requirements and notifies others in advance regarding tardiness and absences.
- Meets deadlines and satisfactorily completes obligations.
- Participates appropriately and compromises in cooperative activities.
- Demonstrates honesty and academic integrity.
- Participates fully in learning experiences.
- Demonstrates professionalism in written, oral, and electronic communication.

Professional Disposition Assessment Schedule

Assessment Point	Benchmark
COU 5203 Introduction to CMHC (clinical mental health students) COU 5013 Introduction to School Counseling (school counseling students)	3
COU 5233 Group Theory and Process	3
COU 5393 Development of Counseling Skills	3
COU 5683 Practicum in Counseling	3

Students' professional dispositions are regularly evaluated and students are expected to meet minimum benchmarks. At each assessment point, students are expected to have an aggregate score of 3 on 80% of the assessed areas. If a student earns a 1 or 2 rating of "below developmental expectations" in one or more disposition area, the student will be reviewed by faculty for possible remediation and retention. If a student earns a 0 rating of "does not meet developmental expectations" in any disposition area, the student will be reviewed by faculty and be referred for remediation and retention.

Faculty review aggregate professional disposition ratings and monitor trends in students' professional disposition scores by program annually. For each disposition, the aggregate score should be a minimum of a 3 for 80% of the student body in each program. In the event the faculty identify that a significant percentage of student are struggling with specific professional dispositions, faculty make program improvements to ensure students are receiving necessary training to meet professional disposition minimums.

Skills Acquisition
Skills acquisition consists of developmental mastery of individual and group counseling skills. The Counseling Program has a Comprehensive Skills List (see Appendix A) as well as specific skill assessment for individual and group assessment (see Appendix B and Appendix C). Individual and group skills are each assessed twice on an established schedule during students' plan of study. Both evaluation points have minimum benchmarks assigned. Practicum and Internship mid-term and final supervisor evaluations also serve as skills acquisition assessment data. Skills acquisition may be assessed outside of the established schedule if a concern arises.

Skills acquisition is one of the corner stones of professional practice. Students are evaluated on their individual and group counseling skills at specific timepoints in the program.

Masters Programs Skills Acquisition Assessment

Skill	Courses in which Skills are Assessed	Benchmark
Individual Counseling Skills	• COU 5393 • COU 5683 • COU 5713 (CMHC students) • COU 5793 (School students)	• 3 • 3 • 3 • 3
Group Counseling Skills	• COU 5233 • COU 5683	• 3 • 3

Students are expected to meet developmental expectations for at least 80% of the skills listed on the individual and group skills evaluations in order to proceed in their plan of study (i.e., students must pass COU 5393 prior to enrolling in COU 5683; must pass COU 5233 before enrolling in COU 5683; must pass COU 5683 prior to enrolling in COU 5713 or COU 5793). If students do not meet developmental expectations, a minimum of a "3" rating, for at least 80% of the skills on the individual or group skills assessment in a course listed above, they will not receive a passing grade in the course; the highest grade they can earn is a "C" and they must repeat the course as per the Academic Success policy.

Program faculty review students' skill acquisition scores each semester. If a student earns a rating of 1 or 2, indicating "below developmental expectations" for more than a quarter of the skills on the assessment, the student's performance will be discussed by faculty and the student may be referred for remediation and retention.

Program faculty monitor trends in students' skills acquisition scores by program annually. The expected aggregate score for both individual and group skills is a minimum of a 3 for 80% of the student body in each program. In the event the faculty identify that a significant percentage of student are struggling with specific skills, faculty make program improvements to ensure students are receiving necessary training to meet skill minimums.

Rules, Regulations, Policies, and Laws

Students follow the rules, regulations, and policies of the Department of Counseling (including the handbook specific to the student's degree), College of Education and Human Development, and UT San Antonio, including the *Handbook of Operating* Procedures and Student Conduct policies, as well as those of clinical and other placement sites; adheres to local, state, and federal laws. Additionally, students comply with Texas rules, statutes, and requirements for professional counseling licensure and/or school counselor certification.

Students must be able to comply with the laws set forth by the State of Texas for licensure as a professional counselor and/or certification as a school counselor. If an applicant or student plans to become licensed in another state, it is their responsibility to know the laws of that state and ensure they can meet them, including specific course requirements that may not be part of students' typical plan of study in the UT San Antonio Counseling Programs.

The Department of Counseling does not exclude applicants who have a legal history from applying to the program or accepted students from engaging in general course work. However, while a student's prior, current, or future legal interactions may have no bearing on their ability to practice, they are advised that there are background checks they must pass to participate in Practicum and Internship as well to obtain licensure/certification post-graduation. The Program recommends students to obtain a preliminary evaluation from the State of Texas as described below.

If a student encounters interactions with the legal system during their time in the program, the program recommends that the student consult with their legal counsel and request a preliminary background check as indicated in the information below. If a student is enrolled in practicum or internship and encounters interactions with the legal system that could impact their ability to perform counseling, legally or otherwise, students must inform their course instructor and site supervisor immediately so proper steps can be taken to ensure client care.

Clinical Mental Health Counseling Students.
- Per Texas State Rule §882.2.a, individuals must provide:
  - (3) A fingerprint based criminal history record check through the Texas Department of Public Safety and the Federal Bureau of Investigation;
  - (4) A self-query report from the National Practitioner Data Bank (NPDB) reflecting any disciplinary history or legal actions taken against the applicant. A self-query report must be submitted to the agency as a PDF that ensures the self-query is exactly as it was issued by the NPDB (i.e., a digitally certified self-query response) or in the sealed envelope in which it was received from the NPDB;
  - (5) Verification of the citizenship and immigration status information of non-citizen, naturalized, or derived U.S. citizen applicants through the DHS-USCIS Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements Program (SAVE). Applicants must submit the documentation and information required by the SAVE program to the Council.
- If you have a legal history that could permit you from becoming licensed as a counselor, Texas Rule §882.41allows you to have a preliminary evaluation to determine whether

you will be eligible. You are encouraged to pursue this process prior to beginning the program.

School Counseling Students.
- Criminal Background Check
  - A criminal background check including fingerprinting will be performed by the Texas Education Agency before a candidate will be allowed to certify or gain employment on a non-teacher certificate. TAC 227.1(b)(1)(2).
  - Items on a candidate's criminal history report may render the candidate ineligible for Candidates may request a preliminary TEA background check for an evaluation of the criminal history.
  - Please note that applicants may request a preliminary TEA background check for an opinion of charge prior to starting a program.
- English Language Proficiency
  An applicant for certification in Texas must be able to communicate, listen, read, write, and comprehend the English language sufficiently to use it easily and readily in daily communication and teaching. English language proficiency shall be evidenced by ONE of the following:
  1. completion of an undergraduate or graduate degree at an accredited institution of higher education in the United States; OR
  2. verification of minimum scaled scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language internet- Based Test (TOEFL iBT) of 24 for speaking, 22 for listening, 22 for reading, and 21 for writing; (TOEFL scores must not be older than 2 years from date of application) OR
  3. if an undergraduate or graduate degree was earned at an institution of higher education in a country outside of the United States listed in TAC 230.11

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Remediation and Retention Policy

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The Counseling Program makes every effort to remediate and retain students, including students who are struggling to meet one or more fitness to practice components. Concurrently, the Counseling Program has a responsibility to the public and serves in a gatekeeping role, pursuant to local, state, and federal laws, and professional counseling ethical codes. The Program takes their roles as gatekeepers seriously and uses a variety of tools and methods to ensure students are acting in accordance with professional and developmental expectations, as well as practicing within their scope of competence throughout their program.

As outlined in the *fitness to practice components* section, students are evaluated regularly throughout the Program, known as *regular assessment*. Additionally, students may be evaluated at any time, outside of regular assessment; this is referred to as *off-time assessment*. Off-time assessment is used when concerns arise about a student's academic performance, skills, professional dispositions, behavior(s), and/or attitude(s) that do not comport with professional expectations, ethics, legal mandates, developmental expectations, and/or their behavior(s) and/or attitudes pose a risk to others. Department faculty, staff, and affiliates (e.g., site supervisors) use the Fitness to Practice Evaluation (FTPE) form (see Appendix D) to indicate the area(s) of concern that arise from either regular assessment or off-time assessment.

Student Support During Remediation and Retention Procedures
At all times, the Program encourages students to seek support for their wellbeing, both preventatively and as intervention when concerns arise. During any remediation and retention interventions, the program strongly encourages students to seek external support as appropriate, including but not limited to professional counseling, medical care, religious/spiritual supports, and social outlets (e.g., clubs, teams, relationships).

During intervention procedures, students may choose to have a support person present during committee intervention meetings or other interventions by request. The role of a support person is to be an encouraging presence for the student, not be an active participant in the meeting. The support person will not participate by speaking during any meeting. If a student chooses to have a support person present, they are advised to select that person carefully and ensure they are comfortable with them being privy to their private educational information.

To have a support person present in a meeting, the student must inform the committee in writing no less than three (3) business days prior to a scheduled meeting. To protect student privacy, the student must complete an agreement indicating they permit the support person to be present, and the support person must sign an agreement that is submitted to the committee chair no less than three (3) business days prior to the scheduled meeting (see Appendix E.) If the support person the student selects is a lawyer/attorney, the committee reserves the right to have University legal counsel present as well.

Documentation
Student concerns and all remediation and retention efforts are documented and placed in the student's secure file.

Completing an FTPE Form
Any evaluator who completes an FTPE form must notify the student by email that they are completing an FTPE. The FTPE is completed in a timely fashion relative to when the concern(s) arose or an incident occurred; this time may vary based on what documentation needs to be gathered to complete the FTPE accurately but will not exceed fifteen (15) business days. The completed FTPE form is submitted to the Graduate Advisor of Record (GAR) of the program in which the student is enrolled (i.e., clinical mental health counseling, school counseling, or counselor education and supervision)

Once the evaluator emails the FTPE to the student, the student must sign the FTPE to acknowledge receipt and return it to the evaluator via email within three (3) business days. If the student does not return the signed FTPE within three (3) business days, the evaluator notifies the student via email that they will forward the FTPE without a signature to the GAR and documents that they did not sign the FTPE. If the GAR is the person initiating the FTPE, they will notify the department chair and follow the steps as outlined in the next section, *FTPE Next Steps*.

FTPE Next Steps
Once the *Completing an FTPE Form* process is finished, the evaluator sends the FTPE via email within three (3) business days to the GAR for the program in which the student is enrolled. If the GAR for the program in which the student is enrolled is the person initiating the FTPE, they will

send the FTPE to another program GAR to complete the next steps for the FTPE. The purpose of this differential process is to ensure each FTPE is evaluated objectively.

Once the GAR receives the FTPE, they decide the appropriate next step(s) within ten (10) business days. The GAR may consult with other necessary parties (e.g., other GARs, advisor, pertinent faculty, legal counsel, individuals outside of UT San Antonio with expertise) to make decisions about next steps. Potential outcomes of an FTPE are:

- No action;
- Faculty and/or advisor intervention;
- Committee intervention;
- Full faculty review; and/or
- Recommendation to dismiss the student from the program.

Each outcome is described in the next sections. Once the GAR makes a decision about the FTPE, they will contact the student via email regarding the decision. The student must confirm receipt of the decision within three (3) business days. If a student wishes to appeal the decision, the first step is to email their concerns to the GAR within five (5) business days of receiving the decision. If the student does not feel their concerns have been resolved, the next step is to email their concerns to the Chair of the Department of Counseling within five (5) business days of their concern not being resolved by the GAR. The Chair of the Department of Counseling or their designee will review the GAR's decision and process, consult with any necessary individuals, and email an outcome to the student within ten (10) business days.

Implications When an FTPE Form is Completed

When an evaluator completes an FTPE form, the student may continue to engage in all program activities until the GAR decides next steps, unless the student is notified differently by the GAR or the Chair of the Department of Counseling. If the GAR notifies the student that the outcome of the FTPE is a a) faculty and/or advisor intervention; b) committee intervention; c) fully faculty review; or d) recommendation to dismiss the student from the Program, the student may not engage in any extracurricular Program activities (e.g., CSI, research labs, program events) until the FTPE is resolved or the student is notified via email that they may resume extracurricular Program activities.

Additionally, students who have been notified that the FTPE outcome is a a) committee intervention; b) fully faculty review; or c) recommendation to dismiss the student from the program, may not apply for Practicum or Internship or contact any potential Practicum or Internship sites until they are expressly given permission to do so by the GAR and/or the Chair of the Department of Counseling. With FTPEs that are related to Practicum or Internship, the student will be notified via email whether they are permitted to continue going to the site and/or working with clients.

Students who violate any the terms outlined in this section may be recommended for immediate dismissal from the Counseling Program.

Remediation and Retention Interventions

Early Intervention

An early intervention (EI) is defined as actions an instructor, site supervisor, advisor, or other Program affiliate (henceforth referred to as *evaluator*) takes to correct a student's behavior(s) and/or attitude(s) without completing an FTPE form. With EI, the evaluator provides the student with formative feedback by clearly stating what needs to be corrected, and, when appropriate, provides resources for making corrections. To be considered an EI, the evaluator must meet with the student to discuss the formative feedback. EI may be supported by additional written or verbal feedback including but not limited to course assignments, through email, additional meetings, supervision, etc. Evaluators document all EI efforts as they occur and once the evaluator meets with the student, they provide their documentation to the GAR to be placed in the student's file. The evaluator updates the GAR with additional documentation as needed.

Students are encouraged to engage fully with EI and to take it seriously because it is an early corrective step intended to prevent future concerns. Students may ask their faculty advisor or other University resources to support their success during EI efforts.

EI is used whenever possible when minor concerns arise that the evaluator perceives can be corrected with minimal intervention. EI is not appropriate in all situations and is not required to be completed prior to other interventions. In some cases, EI interventions that are unsuccessful can serve as the basis for an FTPE.

Faculty and/or Advisor Intervention

A Faculty and/or Advisor Intervention (FAI) occurs when a plan has been devised for a student to work with one or more instructor and/or their advisor to improve their performance in one or more areas. The faculty and/or advisor works with the student one on one, gives ongoing feedback, highlights how the student is improving, and advises the student how they can improve. The faculty and/or advisor will set the meeting frequency and any specific tasks the student must complete to be successful. The student is expected to engage fully with the FAI and to make necessary modifications to their schedules and responsibilities when needed in order to do so.

An FAI may only be used once an FTPE has been completed. An FAI may be a) assigned directly by the GAR who evaluates the FTPE or, b) in instances in which a Committee Intervention is initiated, the committee may use an FAI as part of the student's remediation and retention action plan. FAI may be used after an early intervention has proved insufficient, though completing an early intervention is not necessary for an FAI to be initiated.

If the student does not comply with the FAI or complete it in its entirety, another FTPE form may be filed. If another FTPE form is filed, the GAR reviews it following the procedure stated in the *FTPE Next Steps* section; they may make new determinations regarding the student's interventions and will notify the student via email within ten (10) business days.

If the FAI is successful, the individuals involved in the FAI document this outcome and share it with the GAR, making any recommendations to support the student's ongoing development. The

GAR notifies the student they have successfully completed the FAI, includes any pertinent information, and whether the FTPE is considered resolved or if it will continue to be monitored.

Committee Intervention
A Committee Intervention (CI) is a remediation action in which a committee of three (3) faculty members is formed to address concerns about a student's performance as documented on the FTPE. The CI is used in instances in which a student is struggling in multiple areas, the documented concerns warrant additional evaluation, and/or ongoing work with the student and/or monitoring is deemed to be necessary. While a CI is used most commonly when an EI and/or FAI have been completed and not been sufficient or successful, completing an EI and/or an FAI are not required for a CI to be assigned by the GAR.

The committee is comprised of three (3) Program faculty members assigned by the GAR, one of whom is designated as the committee chair. The evaluator who completes the FTPE form will not serve on the committee. Given the size of the Counseling Program faculty, the student may or may not know the faculty members who are assigned to their committee. All committee members are trained counselors who hold doctoral degrees in counselor education or a related field, and therefore are knowledgeable about professional counseling expectations, laws, ethics, student development, and how to engage in student success efforts. If the student has concerns about a faculty member(s) assigned to their committee (e.g., a conflict of interest), they may discuss these concerns with the GAR. The GAR may make changes to the committee membership if there is compelling reason to do so.

The committee works on the following timeline to ensure that the student receives a fair and timely process.
- The GAR sends an email to notify that faculty have been assigned to serve on a CI for a specific student and specifies who the committee chair will be. The GAR informs the student via email that a CI has been formed within ten (10) business days in compliance with the timeline stated in the FTPE Next Steps section.
- Within five (5) business days of the committee being formed, the committee contacts the student to schedule the initial meeting. The meeting will be scheduled within ten (10) business days of the committee contacting the student during the regular year (i.e., Fall and Spring semester). During summer, the committee will make every effort to schedule the initial meeting within ten (10) business days, yet they may have to apply reasonable flexibility to account for committee members' summer schedule. The student must respond to committee email within three (3) business days and reasonably work with the dates and times the committee has provided to schedule a meeting.

  If the student does not respond to the email, the committee chair will notify the GAR. The GAR will notify the student via email that they are not permitted to register for classes, apply for Practicum or Internship, contact any potential Practicum or Internship sites, or engage in any program activities until their FTPE is resolved. Unless otherwise indicated by the GAR or department chair, the student is permitted to complete the courses in which they are actively enrolled and participating in during the semester in which the FTPE occurs. When the FTPE is connected to a practicum or internship

dismissal, the student is not permitted to contact any sites until they receive expressed written permission from the committee chair.

If the student fails to communicate with the committee chair or GAR by the end of the semester, the FTPE will go to full faculty for review and final decision.

- Prior to the initial meeting, committee members review all documentation they have received.
- In the initial meeting, the committee seeks to understand the student's perspective of the documented concerns, incidents that occurred, and the student's level of understanding and insight regarding the documented concerns in terms of professional practice.
- After the initial meeting, the committee discerns an outcome using a decision-making model. The committee reviews all information they have received and may seek additional information from pertinent individuals (e.g., instructors, site supervisors). When appropriate, the committee reviews professional literature, laws, ethics, handbooks (e.g., Program Handbook, Handbook of Operating Procedures), etc. to inform their decision-making process. The committee may seek consultation with other necessary professionals, keeping the student's identity confidential unless required by law to disclose (Mandated and Selected Reporting section). The committee may contact the student for more information if additional questions arise during this process.
- Within ten (10) business days, the committee contacts the student via email to inform them of the outcome. If there are extenuating circumstances in which the committee needs more time, they will email the student by the 10th business day and inform them of the reason for the delay and the anticipated date when they will receive the committee's decision.
-

Committee Decision

The committee has four decision options: no action, remediation and retention action plan, recommendation for full faculty review, and recommendation for dismissal. Each is outlined below. With all decision options, the student will receive an email from the committee chair documenting the decision, pertinent information, and any next steps.

- **No action.** The committee documents their decision-making process and the reason(s) no action will be taken at this time.
- **Remediation and retention action plan.** The committee creates an individualized remediation and retention action plan the student must complete with the intent of correcting the concerns outlined in the FTPE. The plan will include:
    o The purpose of the plan;
    o The areas of concern the student is working to address and the expected outcomes;
    o Specific requirements the student must complete to reach expected outcomes;
    o How the plan will be monitored until it is completed;
    o The deadlines by which plan components must be completed.

The student must complete the action plan in its entirety by the stated deadlines and make sufficient, developmental progress; failure to do so may result in recommendation for additional interventions and/or dismissal. Additionally, an action plan may be extended if

the student, in good faith, has made developmental progress and needs more time to make sufficient progress. The committee makes all recommendations regarding when the plan is completed, whether the student requires additional monitoring after the plan is completed, and when to deem that the plan is completed or closed.

Students have the right to ask the committee questions about their plan. If a student has concerns about their remediation and retention plan, they must first address their concerns with the committee directly. If their concerns are not resolved, they may contact their program GAR to discuss it. The GAR may review the plan or ask faculty outside the committee to review the plan.

If a student takes a leave of absence from the Program before their remediation and retention action plan is completed, they must complete their action plan before they will be permitted to resume any participation in the Program (e.g., courses work, site placement processes, extracurricular activities, research labs). If a student withdraws or is academically dismissed from the Program before their remediation and retention action plan is completed, they must address their action plan in their application materials if they reapply to the Counseling Program. If the individual is accepted back into the Program, they will have to complete their action plan within the first semester they are enrolled and may only take two courses during that semester, none of which can be a Practicum or Internship course. If the student only has Practicum and/or Internship Courses remaining, the student may not enroll in these courses until the action plan is completed.

- **Recommendation for full faculty review**. If the committee or GAR discerns that the concerns and breadth of information they received regarding the FTPE requires input from the full faculty before making a decision, they will bring the concern to the Program faculty. This option may be used when the FTPE is received from the evaluator, if the student does not respond to contacts for meetings, after the initial committee meeting with the student, during the time in which the student is completing a remediation and retention action plan, or if an additional FTPE is filed.
- **Recommendation for dismissal.** The recommendation to dismiss a student from the Program is not a decision that is made lightly. Program Faculty use a decision-making model to assess each case and work earnestly to make the best decision for the student, Program, UT San Antonio community, clients, and the public.

  While the Program makes reasonable attempts to remediate and retain students, there are instances in which remediation and retention are not possible because remediation and retention efforts have failed, a student's actions do not align with the Program's ability to remediate, or the student's behaviors pose a significant risk to others (e.g., clients, other students, the community, etc.). Instances that can lead to the recommendation to dismiss a student from the program include, but are not limited to:
    - violation(s) of the University *Handbook of Operating Procedures*;
    - ethical and/or legal violation(s) that pose a threat to clients, the UT San Antonio community, and/or the general public;

o behavior(s) and/or attitude(s) that threaten the safety of other students, clients, the UT San Antonio community, and/or the reputation of the Program or UT San Antonio;

o ongoing attempts to remediate behaviors have not been successful, that is, the student has not made sufficient improvements to continue in the Program.

Recommendation for dismissal may occur with or without intervention, depending on the severity of the student's behaviors. Any recommendation to dismiss without intervention will be reviewed, discussed, and voted on by program faculty.

Student Appeals of Committee Decision

If a student wishes to appeal the committee's decision, the first step is to email their concerns with the committee within five (5) business days of receiving the decision. If the student does not feel their concerns have been resolved, the next step is to email their concerns to the Chair of the Department of Counseling within five (5) business days of their concerns not being resolved with the committee. The Chair of the Department of Counseling or their designee will review the committee's decision and process, consult with any necessary individuals, and email an outcome to the student within ten (10) business days.

Practicum and Internship Review Procedures

The information below documents the policy and procedures for when a student is dismissed from a Practicum and/or Internship site to ensure accountability, support, and public wellbeing.

- If a student is dismissed from a clinical practicum or internship site, the student's practicum or internship course instructor will complete an FTPE and submit it following the procedures in the Completing an FTPE section. Because being dismissed from a practicum or internship site is a serious concern, the GAR will initiate a committee intervention or, in cases of dismissals for ethical or legal offenses, recommend the FTPE for full faculty review. The full faculty review may result in a recommendation for committee intervention or for dismissal from the program. Students who are dismissed from a site will not receive a passing grade for the practicum or internship course in which they are enrolled.

  With either intervention, the outcomes may include the student completing an action plan, being required to delay practicum or internship for one or more semesters before being approved for another placement, or the recommendation for dismissal. If a student is permitted to return to a new placement, they will not be permitted to apply any of the hours they accrued during the semester in which they were dismissed.

- If a student is dismissed from a second clinical site, the student's practicum or internship course instructor will complete an FTPE and submit it following the procedures in the Completing an FTPE section. Given the seriousness of a dismissal from a second site, at minimum, the student will not be permitted to restart practicum or internship for at least one semester. The GAR may recommend a committee intervention or a full faculty review. If a committee intervention is recommended, the same committee members who worked with the student for the prior site dismissal will evaluate the pattern of concerns and determine the student's suitability for continued clinical training. Being dismissed

from a site a second time may be grounds for immediate dismissal from the Counseling Program.

Recording Intervention Meetings
While Texas is currently a one-way recording state, any parties involved in any remediation and retention interventions demonstrate respect by disclosing if they plan to record the meeting. All parties must give consent and be given access to the recordings. This policy is congruent with the recording policy stated in all Program course syllabi.

Student Appeal Process for Dismissal Recommendations
When the recommendation to dismiss a student has been made, the recommending party (i.e., committee chair, GAR) sends their decision to the department chair. The department chair reviews the decision prior to submitting the recommendation to the Dean of the College of Education and Human Development. The student may submit an appeal to the Dean within ten (10) business days of receiving the notice of the recommendation for dismissal. The College Dean or their designee will review all pertinent documentation. The Dean will make the final decision.

Mandated and Selected Reporting
If a student discloses suspected abuse or neglect of a minor or vulnerable adult, suicidal ideation, or homicidal ideation, UT San Antonio employees are required by law to make a report to appropriate services to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those involved.

Additionally, if a student discloses an incident of sexual misconduct to any UT San Antonio employee (other than to a designated confidential employee such as mental health counselor or PEACE advocate, a UT San Antonio police officer using a pseudonym form or at a public awareness event), that information is not confidential; the UT San Antonio employee must report all known information to the UT San Antonio Office of Equal Opportunity Services. Employees may also report any concerns about the health and safety of students or others to other school officials and/or law enforcement. For a complete list of exceptions to FERPA, please see Student Catalog Annual FERPA Letter and HOP 5.01.

If a UT San Antonio employee has significant concerns about a student's wellness, they may select to contact the UT San Antonio Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT). The BIT is designed as a non-punitive intervention that can help the student identify resources and access support when they are experiencing struggles.

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Addressing Concerns as a Counseling Department Student:
Utilizing the American Counseling Association Ethical Decision-Making Model
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As counseling students, you will inevitably face dilemmas and challenges that require careful analysis and decision-making. These challenges are not only part of the counseling process; they can arise in any setting, including within educational environments. As such, we want to normalize these instances and offer tools you can use to handle them professionally when they arise.

The American Counseling Association (ACA; 2014) has developed a structured Ethical Decision-Making Model to help professionals make ethical choices that align with the ACA *Code of Ethics* (Forester-Miller & Davis, 2016). Below, we outline the steps of the model and provide guidance on how to apply it effectively. When dealing with issues involving another professional (e.g., classmate, professor, supervisor), the *Code of Ethics* recommends addressing the concern directly with the individual as the first step before involving others. We acknowledge that this course of action may not be feasible in situations of power imbalance, threats, harassment, discrimination, retaliation, or other *legal concerns. Please consult your advisor or faculty if talking directly with another person may not seem like the best course of action.
At the student's discretion and if needed, with faculty guidance, students are encouraged to utilize the *American Counseling Association Ethical Decision-Making Model*.

Step 1: Identify the Problem
Clearly define the problem or dilemma by gathering all relevant facts. Consider the nature of the conflict, the people involved, and any legal or institutional policies that may apply.

Step 2: Apply the ACA Code of Ethics
Consult the ACA Code of Ethics to determine relevant ethical principles and standards. Identify any sections that specifically address the situation you are evaluating.

Step 3: Determine the Nature and Dimensions of the Dilemma
Examine the situation from multiple perspectives. Consider cultural, social, and contextual factors that may influence the problem and potential decisions. Seek guidance from ethical principles such as autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, veracity, justice, and fidelity.

Step 4: Generate Potential Courses of Action
Brainstorm possible actions you could take to resolve the dilemma. Consider the potential outcomes, benefits, and risks associated with each option.

Step 5: Consider the Potential Consequences
Evaluate the implications of each course of action on all parties involved. Predict both short-term and long-term consequences and weigh them against ethical principles.

Step 6: Choose an Action
Make a decision based on ethical guidelines, professional judgment, and any relevant consultation. Ensure that the chosen action upholds the values and principles outlined in the ACA *Code of Ethics*.

Step 7: Evaluate the Outcome
Reflect on the effectiveness of the decision and assess whether it aligns with ethical standards. Make adjustments to ensure the best possible outcome for all involved.

Step 8: Implement and Document the Decision
Carry out the chosen course of action while maintaining professionalism and integrity. Keep detailed records of the decision-making process and the rationale behind your choice for future reference and accountability.

Applying the ACA Ethical Decision-Making Model ensures that dilemmas and challenges are approached systematically and thoughtfully. As counseling students, practicing this model will strengthen your ability to navigate complex situations while upholding the highest standards of professional conduct.

*Please refer to policies on Equal Opportunity Services (EOS; https://www.utsa.edu/eos/), Wellbeing Services (https://www.utsa.edu/students/wellbeing/) and Ombuds services (https://www.utsa.edu/ombuds/).

References

American Counseling Association. (2014). *2014 ACA code of ethics.*
        https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/ethics/2014-aca-code-of-ethics.pdf

Forester-Miller, H., & Davis, T. E. (2016). *Practitioner's guide to ethical decision making* (Rev. ed.). https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/ethics/practioner-39-s-guide-to-ethical-decision-making.pdf?sfvrsn=10/1000

Appendix A: Comprehensive Skill List

Throughout the program, students will develop mastery in individual and group counseling skills. The skills listed are applicable to all counseling modalities, yet may be modified based on setting, population, or counseling type. When applicable, nuances related to group counseling are included in the definition. Skills are taught throughout coursework and specific skills are assessed on a regular schedule in designated courses (please see Individual Skills Assessment and Group Skills Assessment).

Attending Skills
Non-verbal skills in which counselors create a positive therapeutic environment using their body language and facial expressions.

- **Active Listening.** Fully listening and attending to clients' verbal and non-verbal communication while remaining present in the "here and now." In a group setting, this includes scanning and attending to all clients in session.
- **Facilitative gestures.** Non-verbal motions that facilitate communication and convey empathy, understanding, and that the counselor is attending to the client (e.g., nodding, empathic gestures, expressions used as reinforcers, cues to pace the conversation). They are used appropriately and with regard to the client's cultural background (e.g., use of personal space, eye-contact, hand gestures).
- **Nonverbal Skills.** Facial expressions, posture, and physical distance between counselor and client conveys to client counselor engagement and respect for client's preferred personal space.
- **Silence.** Intentional and strategic pauses and gaps in conversation with the aim of allowing the client to reflect, process, and to respond without pressure. In a group setting, silence allows the group to use its own resources.
- **The counseling space.** All counseling spaces (e.g., virtual, in-person) are accessible and comfortable for all clients, reasonably ensure confidentiality, safe, and conveys a professional environment (e.g. clean, unclutter, neutral and calming background; adequate lighting)
- **Eliminates distractions.** Behaviors (e.g., fidgeting, tapping objects, unnecessary technology) or conditions (e.g., noise, décor, dress) that could distract or take away from the client or the session.

Facilitative Conditions
Counselor ways of being that promote relationship building and developing ongoing trust in the counseling relationship.

- **Congruence.** Expressing genuine thoughts and feelings in a transparent and professional manner, ensuring alignment between verbal and nonverbal communication.
- **Unconditional positive regard.** Accepting and valuing clients without judgment, fostering a safe and supportive therapeutic environment in which clients' humanity is exalted and respected.
- **Warmth.** A welcoming demeanor that welcomes clients into trust, comfort, and safety in the counseling relationship.
- **Empathy.** Holistically demonstrating a deep understanding of the client's experiences and feelings through verbal and non-verbal skills.

- **Nonjudgment.** An open and caring presence in which counselors respect and accept clients based on their humanity, and do not assess or evaluate a client's "goodness" based on what they have done or not done in their lives.

Basic Counseling Skills/Microskills
Fundamental and facilitative counseling skills that are used across theoretical approaches to ensure clients are heard and understood and are essential for information gathering, session progression, and form the basis for using a theoretical orientation.

- **Minimal verbal encouragers.** Very brief verbal interjects (e.g., "mmhmm," "uh-huh," "go on") that encourage the client to continue speaking and to convey active listening.
- **Paraphrasing.** Rewording short client statements to enhance understanding and reflection while maintaining the essence of their message.
- **Summarizing.** Highlighting key points client(s) make during a specific portion of the session to enhance client clarity, reinforce insights, facilitate progress, or close the session. In a group setting, summarizing often includes summarizing information offered by more than one group member.
- **Repeating.** Reinforcing a key word or phrase the client used.
- **Open-ended questions.** Inquiries designed to stimulate explanation, storytelling, and/or more full description rather than a dichotomous response (e.g., "yes, no"). Balances the use of open-ended questions with other basic counseling skills.
- **Closed-ended questions.** Requests for factual information or dichotomous responses that are used only when necessary. While helpful in certain situations, overuse can limit exploration and potentially feel like interrogation.
- **Probes.** Statements (e.g., "say more," "tell me more," "explain further," "describe what you experienced") that guide clients toward deeper self-reflection and insight while maintaining a supportive and non-directive approach.
- **Reflection of feelings.** Accurately identifying the client's emotions based on the client's verbal or nonverbal messages.
- **Reflection of meaning.** Advanced reflecting skill in which the helper feeds back to the client the underlying meanings based on the client's worldview and values to foster deeper self-awareness, self-exploration, and understanding.
- **Normalization.** Techniques that help clients feel understood and to reduce feelings of isolation and shame by framing experiences, thoughts, and/or feelings as common and shared.
- **Tone.** Varied vocal intonations throughout the session that demonstrate curiosity, interest, and are appropriate to the feelings the client conveyed or the feeling the counselor is working to elicit.
- **Pacing.** Moderating the speed at which conversation occurs and how quickly or slowly the session progresses based on client needs
- **Grammatical matching.** The use of terms and intonation that corresponds with the client's ways of communication that are congruent with the counselor's ways of communication.

Advanced Counseling Skills
Progressive skills that can be used sparingly and intentionally once a strong counseling relationship has been established.

- **Immediacy.** Addressing present-moment emotions, dynamics, or interactions in the counseling session to enhance authenticity and connection.
- **Redirection.** Statements or questions used to refocus the session and maintain a productive focus while respecting the client's needs.
- **Self-disclosure.** Sharing relevant and appropriate personal experiences or insights that focus squarely on the client to build rapport and/or support client growth.
- **Confrontation/Challenge.** Strategies designed to highlight inconsistencies, self-defeating patterns, and/or areas for growth while maintaining empathy and support. In group work, confrontation/challenge is typically used not only for the benefit of an individual but for the benefit of the group (e.g., to highlight group communication patterns that likely occur in everyday life, to facilitate perspective taking, to practice conflict management).
- **Interpreting.** Offering possible explanations for certain behaviors, feelings, and thoughts to encourage deeper self-reflection and self-exploration.

Attending to Client Worldview
Intentional efforts to understand client context, identities, beliefs, and ways of being to positively enhance the counseling process.
- **Client identities.** Exploring salient facets of identity that are meaningful to the client to identify strengths and resiliencies and to foster awareness and growth.
- **Cultural integration.** Intentionally incorporating the client's worldview, context, identities, beliefs, and ways of being into the counseling process to ensure client-centered care rather than imposing the counselor's own values.
- **Humility.** Actively seeking to understand the client's unique experiences curiously and respectfully without judgment or adding undue burden to the client. Includes openness to making mistakes and willingness to be corrected and/or redirected by the client.
- **Advocacy for client needs.** Identifies unique client needs and responds to them inside and outside of session. Works to increase equitable access to programs, resources, and services with and on behalf of clients.

Group Specific Skills
Skills used expressly with group counseling.
- **Blocking.** Intervening to stop counterproductive behaviors in group settings (e.g., interrupting harmful comments).
- **Protecting.** Safeguarding clients from emotional harm within group dynamics, especially during early stages when conflicts may arise.
- **Facilitating.** Guiding group dynamics or individual sessions to ensure productive interactions.
- **Linking.** Identifying commonalities among group members to foster connection and universality.

The Counseling Process
Skills related to facilitating sessions in ways that reflect ethical practice.
- **Informed consent.** Outlining and explaining client rights, limits to confidentiality, counseling expectations, and obtaining client agreement, both in the initial session and as needed throughout the counseling process. In group work, specifically highlighting

     nuances such as confidentiality not being guaranteed, expectations regarding relationships among group members, etc.

- **Goal Setting.** A collaborative process in which counselors help clients identify realistic counseling objectives. This provides direction and measures progress throughout the counseling journey. In a group setting, this includes planning specific goals for the group process.
- **Beginning the session.** Welcomes the client, summarizes prior discussions/content, offers opportunity for the client to decide what to discuss, and provides focus for the session.
- **Closing the session.** Manage time effectively, summarizes key insights, assigns homework (if applicable), and ensures the client is emotionally and physically stable and prepared to leave.
- **Termination.** Preparing the client or group to integrate and apply learning to everyday life when nearing the end of the counseling relationship. Includes skills for ethically ending the counseling relationship.
- **Community resources and referrals.** A robust, current list of community resources to make appropriate referrals during and at the end of the counseling relationship.
- **Recordkeeping.** Accurate, timely, and ethical reporting of client data, activities, and communication that conform to state regulations.

Assessment Skills
Skills for gauging client symptoms, risk, diagnosis, and progress.
- **Skill integration and delivery.** Using attending skills, facilitative skills, microskills, and basic counseling skills while conducting assessments, delivering informed consent, etc.
- **Intake assessment.** Collecting holistic information prior to or within the first session. Includes written information the client completes, as well as intake interviews with follow-up questions, diagnostic, and biopsychosocial questions.
- **Suicide/homicide.** In the initial session and continually as needed, based on behavioral and diagnostic cues, directly addresses suicidal/homicidal ideation and taking action to protect clients and others as indicated by state law.
- **Stage of change.** Continually assesses the client's readiness for change and for treatment and tailors interventions, treatment plan, and process to align with where the client is in their developmental process.
- **Specific diagnostic tools.** The use of appropriate and specific assessments for which the counselor is trained to diagnose DSM-5-TR disorders with the intent to provide accurate and helpful treatment and/or referral.
- **Assessment of diagnosis.** Accurately differentiating between diagnosis and developmentally appropriate reactions, including during crisis or other trauma event, as well as attending to cultural nuances that may influence whether diagnosis is appropriate.
- **Culture specific tools.** An array of assessment methods (e.g., Cultural Formation Interview, broaching) intended to understand the influence of culture on clients' presenting concerns, strengths, resiliencies, and meaning making.
- **Client progress.** Consistently evaluating the methods, interventions, and interactions to determine what is benefiting the client and what is not with the intent to make changes when needed. In a group setting, individual client process is assessed, including whether group continues to be an appropriate modality, yet group progress is assessed as well.

Supervision and Feedback
Receiving and applying clinical supervision to clinical practice.
- **Receiving feedback.** Openly and attentively listening to and taking in direction and strengths offered about their dispositions, skills, techniques, and other components germane to professional development. Respectfully and openly asks questions and seeks clarity, while thoughtfully acknowledging the feedback they have received.
- **Assessing feedback.** Thoughtfully considers the information they have received from supervisors, peers, and/or clients with the aim to discern next steps and strengthen their practice.
- **Applying feedback.** Actively integrating feedback in a thoughtful and respectful way. Does not avoid applying feedback.

Appendix B: Individual Skills Assessment

All masters students will be assessed on the skills listed below during COU 5393 (Development of Counseling Skills) and the first semester of Internship (COU 5713 or COU 5793). Students are assessed using the developmental rubric explained in the [Developmental Assessment and Expectations](#) section of this document.

The assessment points and benchmarks for the individual skills assessments are as follows:

Individual Student Assessment
- COU 5393: Students will meet expectations for at least 80% of all skills in which they are evaluated.
- COU 5683: Students will meet expectations for at least 80% of all skills in which they are evaluated.
- COU 5713/5793: Students will meet expectations for at least 80% of all skills in which they are evaluated.

Program Assessment
- COU 5393: 80% of students will receive an overall score of 3.
- COU 5713/5793: 80% of students will receive an overall score of 3.

Assessed Skills

Active Listening
Fully listening and attending to clients' verbal and non-verbal communication while remaining present in the "here and now." In a group setting, this includes scanning and attending to all clients in session.

Nonverbal Skills
Facial expressions, posture, and physical distance between counselor and client convey to client counselor engagement and respect for client's preferred personal space.

Silence
Intentional and strategic pauses and gaps in conversation with the aim of allowing the client to reflect, process, and respond without pressure. In a group setting, silence allows the group to use its own resources.

Unconditional Positive Regard
Accepting and valuing clients without judgment, fostering a safe and supportive therapeutic environment in which clients' humanity is exalted and respected.

Empathy
Holistically demonstrating a deep understanding of the client's experiences and feelings through verbal and non-verbal skills.

Reflection of Feelings
Accurately identifying the client's emotions based on the client's verbal or nonverbal messages.

Reflection of Meaning

Advanced reflecting skill in which the helper feeds back to the client the underlying meanings based on the client's worldview and values to foster deeper self-awareness, self-exploration, and understanding.

Summarizing

Highlighting key points client(s) make during a specific portion of the session to enhance client clarity, reinforce insights, facilitate progress, or close the session. In a group setting, summarizing often includes summarizing information offered by more than one group member.

Open-ended Questions

Inquiries designed to stimulate explanation, storytelling, and/or more full description rather than a dichotomous response (e.g., "yes, no"). Balances the use of open-ended questions with other basic counseling skills.

Closed-ended Questions

Requests for factual information or dichotomous responses that are used only when necessary. While helpful in certain situations, overuse can limit exploration and potentially feel like interrogation.

Probes

Statements (e.g., "say more," "tell me more," "explain further," "describe what you experienced") that guide clients toward deeper self-reflection and insight while maintaining a supportive and non-directive approach.

Immediacy

Addressing present-moment emotions, dynamics, or interactions in the counseling session to enhance authenticity and connection.

Redirection

Statements or questions used to refocus the session and maintain a productive focus while respecting the client's needs.

Client Identities

Exploring salient facets of identity that are meaningful to the client to identify strengths and resiliencies and to foster awareness and growth.

Cultural Integration

Intentionally incorporating the client's worldview, context, identities, beliefs, and ways of being into the counseling process to ensure client-centered care rather than imposing the counselor's own values.

Informed Consent

Outlining and explaining client rights, limits to confidentiality, counseling expectations, and obtaining client agreement, both in the initial session and as needed throughout the counseling

process. In group work, specifically highlighting nuances such as confidentiality not being guaranteed, expectations regarding relationships among group members, etc.

Beginning the Session
Welcomes the client, summarizes prior discussions/content, offers opportunity for the client to decide what to discuss, and provides focus for the session.

Closing the Session
Manage time effectively, summarizes key insights, assigns homework (if applicable), and ensures the client is emotionally and physically stable and prepared to leave.

Skill Integration and Delivery
Using attending skills, facilitative skills, microskills, and basic counseling skills while conducting assessments, delivering informed consent, etc.

Stage of Change
Continually assesses the client's readiness for change and for treatment and tailors interventions, treatment plan, and process to align with where the client is in their developmental process.

Applying Feedback
Actively integrating feedback in a thoughtful and respectful way. Does not avoid applying feedback.

Appendix C: Group Skills Assessment

All masters students are assessed on the skills below during COU 5233 (Group Counseling) and Practicum (COU 5683). Students are assessed using the developmental rubric explained in the Developmental Assessment and Expectations section of this document.

Individual Student Assessment
- COU 5233: Students will meet expectations for at least 80% of all skills in which they are evaluated.
- COU 5683: Students will meet expectations for at least 80% of all skills in which they are evaluated.

Program Assessment
- COU 5233: 80% of students will receive an overall score of 3.
- COU 5683: 80% of students will receive an overall score of 3.

Assessed Skills

Active Listening
Fully listening and attending to clients' verbal and non-verbal communication while remaining present in the "here and now." In a group setting, this includes scanning and attending to all clients in session.

Nonverbal Skills
Facial expressions, posture, and physical distance between counselor and client convey to client counselor engagement and respect for client's preferred personal space.

Silence
Intentional and strategic pauses and gaps in conversation with the aim of allowing the client to reflect, process, and respond without pressure. In a group setting, silence allows the group to use its own resources.

Unconditional Positive Regard
Accepting and valuing clients without judgment, fostering a safe and supportive therapeutic environment in which clients' humanity is exalted and respected.

Empathy
Holistically demonstrating a deep understanding of the client's experiences and feelings through verbal and non-verbal skills.

Summarizing
Highlighting key points client(s) make during a specific portion of the session to enhance client clarity, reinforce insights, facilitate progress, or close the session. In a group setting, summarizing often includes summarizing information offered by more than one group member.

Open-ended Questions
Inquiries designed to stimulate explanation, storytelling, and/or more full description rather than a dichotomous response (e.g., "yes, no"). Balances the use of open-ended questions with other basic counseling skills.

Closed-ended Questions
Requests for factual information or dichotomous responses that are used only when necessary. While helpful in certain situations, overuse can limit exploration and potentially feel like interrogation.

Probes
Statements (e.g., "say more," "tell me more," "explain further," "describe what you experienced") that guide clients toward deeper self-reflection and insight while maintaining a supportive and non-directive approach.

Blocking
Intervening to stop counterproductive behaviors in group settings (e.g., interrupting harmful comments).

Protecting
Safeguarding clients from emotional harm within group dynamics, especially during early stages when conflicts may arise.

Facilitating
Guiding group dynamics or individual sessions to ensure productive interactions.

Linking
Identifying commonalities among group members to foster connection and universality.

Immediacy
Addressing present-moment emotions, dynamics, or interactions in the counseling session to enhance authenticity and connection.

Redirection
Statements or questions used to refocus the session and maintain a productive focus while respecting the client's needs.

Cultural Integration
Intentionally incorporating the client's worldview, context, identities, beliefs, and ways of being into the counseling process to ensure client-centered care rather than imposing the counselor's own values.

Informed Consent
Outlining and explaining client rights, limits to confidentiality, counseling expectations, and obtaining client agreement, both in the initial session and as needed throughout the counseling process. In group work, specifically highlighting nuances such as confidentiality not being guaranteed, expectations regarding relationships among group members, etc.

Beginning the Session
Welcomes the client, summarizes prior discussions/content, offers opportunity for the client to decide what to discuss, and provides focus for the session.

Closing the Session
Manage time effectively, summarizes key insights, assigns homework (if applicable), and ensures the client is emotionally and physically stable and prepared to leave.

Applying Feedback
Actively integrating feedback in a thoughtful and respectful way. Does not avoid applying feedback.

Appendix D: Fitness to Practice Evaluation (FTPE) Form

Student Name	
Student Email Address	
Student's Program	
Number of Credits the Student Has Completed	
Name of Person Completing the FTPE	
Date FTPE is Being Completed	
Date or Date Range of Incident(s) Leading to FTPE	
Fitness to Practice Areas Specific to this FTPE	Please select one or more of the following as they apply to this FTPE and remove the rest: • Academic Success • Key Performance Indicators • Professional Dispositions • Skills Acquisition (specify individual or group skills) • Rules, Regulations, or Policy Violation(s) • Dismissal from a Practicum or Internship Site
Are you completing this form based on an incident(s) you a) directly observed; b) student self-report, c) gained knowledge about an incident(s) through a third party (e.g., site supervisor) or d) both: you observed an incident(s) directly _and_ gained knowledge about an incident(s) through a third party. **Please indicate your response and provide a brief explanation.**	

Description of Concerns

1. What incident(s) has led to completing this FTPE? Please explain fully what has occurred for each specific Fitness to Practice Area listed in the above section.

2. Are there other individuals who have been impacted by the incident(s) described in question one? Please explain and if possible, please name the individuals.

3. Are there any other entities involved in the incident(s) described in question one (e.g., UT San Antonio BIT, Title IX Office, UT San Antonio Police, etc.)? If yes, please describe.

4. Do you have an immediate safety concern for anyone involved in this situation? If yes, please contact the the Chair of the Department of Counseling and the Graduate Advisor of Record (GAR) for the appropriate program (i.e., Clinical Mental Health Counseling, School Counseling, or Doctoral Program) immediately. If the safety concern is harm to self or others, immediately contact the UT San Antonio Police Department or UT San Antonio Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) prior to contacting department leadership.

5. To date, what actions have faculty or other Program constituents taken to work with the student regarding the concern(s) documented in question one?

6. To date, what actions has the student taken to correct the concern(s) documented in question one?

7. Please attach all pertinent documentation related to the concern(s). If the specific Fitness to Practice Area is a key performance indicator, professional dispositions, or skills acquisition, please indicate whether the assessments were part of regular assessment and attach assessments. If the concern is connected to a practicum or internship placement site, please include site supervisor evaluations. Other forms of documentation may include but are not limited to, emails, assignments, assignment rubrics and/or feedback.

8. As per the remediation and retention policy, the GAR will decide how to proceed with this FTPE. However, do you have any recommendations for the GAR to consider?

Names and Signatures

Name of Evaluator: _____

Evaluator Signature and Date: _____

Name of Student: _____

*Student Signature and Date: _____

*Student signature indicates receipt of the FTPE Form not agreement with the contents of the FTPE Form. The FTPE Form is intended to be a documented record of the evaluator's concern(s) about a student's performance in accordance with the policies stated in the student's program handbook.

Appendix E: Support Person Agreement Form

The Counseling Program at UT San Antonio is committed to student success and preparing students for the demands of the counseling profession. At times, students need additional support to develop the knowledge, awareness, skills and behaviors that align with the counseling profession. In those instances, the Counseling Program works with students using a variety of remediation and retention interventions to increase their success.

As part of our program policy, students who are engaging in remediation and retention interventions are permitted to have a support person present for meetings. The support person must be approved by the committee chair at least three (3) days prior to the meeting. The role of the support person is to provide the student, as named below, support with their presence only. The support person is not an active participant in the meeting. To be a support person for a student, the support person, as named below, must:

- Keep all information discussed in the meeting confidential. They may not speak with anyone other than the student about what occurred during the meeting.
- Not speak, intervene, disrupt, or otherwise interfere with the meeting.
- Not record the meeting in any form (e.g., audio, video) as per UT San Antonio Counseling Program policy.
- Not contact any committee member or UT San Antonio Counseling Program faculty member regarding this student.
- Not have an actual or perceived conflict of interest with any committee member.

If the support person the student chooses is a lawyer/attorney, this information must be disclosed in the "relationship to student" question in the signature portion of this document. The committee reserves the right to have University Legal Counsel present in the event the student chooses to have a lawyer/attorney present.

These stipulations are in place to ensure a safe and productive working environment for the student and faculty members engaged in this process within an academic environment. If a support person violates these policies, they may be asked to leave the meeting and/or legal actions may be taken if the student's privacy is violated.

By signing below, all parties agree to the policies and procedures outlined in this document. The student may choose to remove this support person at any time by emailing the committee chair.

Student Name: _____

Student Signature/Date: _____

Support Person Name: _____

Support Person Email: _____

Support Person Phone Number: _____

Support Person Relationship to Student: _____

Support Person Signature/Date: _____

Committee Chair Name: _____

Committee Chair Signature/Date: _____