

TOP TEN

Most Frequently Asked Questions About the Mental Health Counseling Track

1. Can I work and go to school at the same time?

Yes. Our program caters especially to people who have part-time or full-time employment. Our classes typically are offered evenings once a week either at 4:30 to 7:15 or at 7:30 to 10:15. In addition, during the summers we also offer variable credit courses which sometimes meet over weekends.

2. Can I complete the program in two years and will I be licensed as a Mental Health Counselor upon graduation?

Yes... and no. It is possible to complete the requirements in two academic years, plus one semester if you are taking an average of 9 credits per semester, including the summers. At the completion of your degree you will be "license-eligible." You will have satisfied the educational requirements dictated by the state of Florida's licensing board; however, you will need to complete an additional two years of clinical experience, as a "Registered Mental Health Intern." During this period you will need to be supervised by a board-approved licensed Mental Health Counselor. You will also need to complete an 8 hour course on Florida Rules and Laws and receive a passing score on the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Exam (see <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/mqa/491/index.html> for a detailed description of licensure requirements). Students who graduate from our program are also eligible for national certification through the National Board of Certified Counselors.

3. How do your graduates fare in terms of employment? What is the average starting salary?

Based upon alumni surveys the majority of our graduates are employed in the mental health field shortly after graduation. Graduates are employed in a variety of settings including inpatient facilities, schools, private practices, substance abuse treatment facilities, domestic violence shelters, etc. The 2006 UNF mental health counseling alumni survey reveals mean starting salaries tend to range from \$28,500 to \$60,000 and national salary averages are available through the Occupational Outlook Handbook, U.S. Department of Labor (see <http://stats.bls.gov/oco/ocos067.htm#earnings>).

4. Are scholarships or assistantships available to help supplement the cost of tuition?

Yes. There are some graduate assistantships available in several areas throughout the university such as Residence Life and the Women's Center (contact Jim Owen, Graduate Studies at 620-1360 for further information). A limited number of assistantships are also available through the College of Education and Human Services (contact Deirdre Meehan at 620- 2520 for further information). The College of Education and Human Services also offers tuition fee waiver awards anywhere from \$500 to \$800 a semester. This tuition fee waivers are competitive and students must apply through the Counselor Education Program. In addition, the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs awards the Delores A. Auzenne Graduate Fellowship every summer.

5. How does your program differ from the program in the Psychology Department at the University of North Florida?

The major distinction between programs is that the Mental Health Counseling track is accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). We offer evening classes especially for students who are employed part-time or full time while pursuing their degree. The curriculum in both programs, is however, very similar and includes courses which address the eight cores areas of human development, appraisal, research, social and cultural foundations, career, and professional orientation, individual, and group counseling skills. Please refer to the UNF Graduate Catalog (<http://www.unf.edu/unfinfo/catalogs/grad/index.html>) for further information about the curriculum.

6. What is CACREP?

CACREP is only national accrediting body which reviews and credentials graduate-level counselor education programs in various areas including mental health counseling and school counseling. Thus far, UNF's mental health counseling track is only one of 45 from around the nation which is CACREP accredited (see <http://www.cacrep.org/directory-current.html>). Students who graduate from CACREP-approved programs have an easier time progressing through the application process for licensure as a Mental Health Counselor in any state since this is a nationally recognized accreditation for counseling programs. Licensure is an important asset for counselors because it enables them to accept 3rd party reimbursements from insurance companies.

7. Are master's comprehensives or a thesis required to complete the program?

No. Our program is practitioner-oriented in the sense that students are required to complete a demanding field experience requirement of 1,000 supervised hours before graduation. A 100 hour practicum in the middle of the program and a 900 hour internship at the end of the program of study. Our 60 credit hour requirement includes room for 9 credit hours of electives.

8. What kind of internship opportunities exist and can you also get paid while completing your internship?

Currently, we have over 41 sites located in Jacksonville and surrounding areas which are available for students to complete either their practicum or internship. These sites range from out-patient day treatment facilities to in-patient hospitals and include such diverse populations as children, adolescents, the chronically mentally ill, the terminally ill, persons with AIDS, juvenile offenders and adult sexual offenders. Typically our interns do not get paid for their time.

9. If I'm already employed in a mental health setting, can I complete my internship hours at my job?

This is usually considered on a case by case basis. As a first step, students are asked to meet with the faculty supervisor to develop an individualized contract. The contract may require the student to assume additional responsibilities and activities not typically included in his or her job description. Also, the specified requirements for the practicum and internship must be met in terms of completing the required number of direct client contact hours. Specifications about these requirements are clearly delineated in the [Guidelines for Practicum/Internship](#) and in the [Graduate Student Handbook](#) which are available from either the program secretary or the program director.

10. Do I have to be formally admitted to the program before I can take courses? What do I have to do to apply to the program?

UNF permits students to take up to 10 credits under the classification of "Post-Baccalaureate" without being fully admitted into a graduate program. Students who wish to take courses before being admitted into the Counselor Education Program should seek advisement from the Office of Student Services of the College of Education at 620-2530. Satisfactory completion of courses does not necessarily qualify students for admission into the program; students are therefore strongly encouraged to submit their application. Applicants who have met the program prerequisites will be invited to interview with the faculty. Candidates who are admitted into the program are assigned a program sponsor who will assist them throughout their studies.

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