

MARRIAGE, COUPLE AND FAMILY COUNSELING TRACK ASSESSMENT REPORT

Messiah College

Spring 2017

Data on Student Learning & Outcomes

- Gathered data from Summer of 2014 to Spring of 2016 (2 academic years ~ 10 terms)
- 40 CACREP Marriage, Couple and Family (MCF) Track Standards
- 55 assessment points of student learning
 - 14/40 standards (35%) assessed by more than one item
- Data came from assignments in 7 MCFC track courses and 2 Core courses
- Targets:
 - 100% of students graded 83% (B) or above
 - 100% of students at Acceptable or above (for site supervisor evaluations)

Marriage, Couple and Family Counseling (MCFC) Courses

- **509 Foundations of Marriage, Couple and Family Counseling:** historical and theoretical foundation
- **530 Contemporary and Integrative Theories of Counseling:** contemporary and integrative theories and modalities
- **531 Premarital and Marital Counseling:** approaches, interventions, assessment and treatment related to premarital and marital counseling
- **573 Marital, Couple and Family Counseling Skills and Practice:** techniques, assessments, interventions and strategies to work with families in stress and crisis, seek optimal function
- **587 MCF Counseling Practicum:** initial field placement; 100 hours
- **588 MCF Counseling Internship I:** field placement: 300 hours
- **589 MCF Counseling Internship II:** field placement: 300 hours

Note: MCFC Students also take 539 Human Sexuality and 543 Substance Abuse/Addiction and Family along with students from other tracks. These courses are used to address standards C.3 and D.4

Organization of CACREP (2009) Standards

509	A.1	A.2	A.3	A.4	A.5	A.6	A.7	C.1	C.4										
530	I.3																		
531	E.2	E.4																	
573	C.2	E.1	E.3	G.2	G.3														
587	B.1	B.2	D.1	D.6	E.5	F.2	F.3	G.1	G.3	H.1	H.2	H.3							
588	B.1	B.2	D.1	D.6	D.2	D.3	D.4	D.5	F.1	F.2	F.3	F.4	H.1	H.2	H.3	I.1	J.1	J.2	J.3
589	B.1	B.2	D.1	D.6	D.2	D.3	D.4	D.5	F.1	F.2	F.3	F.4	H.1	H.2	H.3	I.2	J.1	J.2	J.3

Results

- Across all terms:
 - For 20 out of 55 (36%) assessment points, 100% of students reached the learning outcome target across 2 years of data
 - For 40 out of 55 (73%) assessment points 93% or more of students reached the learning outcome across 2 years of data

Note:

We realized that small class sizes impacted results significantly. For example, in an internship class with 4 students, if one of them did not hit the target, then that showed up as only 75% (3 out of 4) of students meeting the target. This is a drawback to using percentages as data points.

Overall takeaway: The large majority of students are meeting learning objectives most of the time

Conclusions, Questions, and Actions

The process of assessing student learning produces conclusions but it also produces questions and should lead to changes in curriculum and teaching. The following is a description of what we learned about our Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling track students' learning outcomes. We have broken it down by section of the 2009 CACREP standards for the specialty area. For each section we have provided results/conclusions, questions raised, and possible action points.

Section A: Learning Outcomes

- The *Foundations: Knowledge* area of the MCFC CACREP Standards (A:1-A:7) was an overall area of strength. Students consistently demonstrated knowledge of theories, ethics, and professional identity issues.
- Questions:
 - Could we find a more robust way to determine if students are gaining knowledge about the history and development of their profession? A.1
 - How could we better assess knowledge of legal and ethical standards specifically related to marriage, couple and family counseling? A.2
 - Does the Professional Identity Presentation in COUN 509 cover all the parts of standards A.3 & A.4?
- Possible Action Points:
 - Use Family Therapy Grid (509) to demonstrate learning profession's history A.1
 - Add ethical and legal aspects of practice and professional associations to Professional Identity Presentation in 509 A.2

Section B: Learning Outcomes

- The *Foundations: Skills* area of the standards (B:1 & B:2) was also strong. Across two years, internship site supervisors rated 51 interns (100%) as “acceptable” or better on their ability to adhere to ethical codes and 50 interns (98%) as acceptable or better in choosing appropriate interventions for couples and families.
- Questions:
 - Where else in the curriculum can we assess student’s ability to choose appropriate interventions? B.2
- Possible Action plans:
 - Look for additional ways to assess ability to choose appropriate interventions or see where it is already being done in curriculum B.2

Section C: Learning Outcomes

- In the *Counseling, Prevention, and Intervention: Knowledge* standards area (C:1-C:4) the main area of weakness appeared to be the students' ability to apply knowledge of human sexuality. However, because this area of knowledge was being assessed via a research paper it appeared on closer investigation that the students' research and writing skills were the actual deficit being reflected. This can be corrected with a change in the assessment instrument. Students demonstrated consistent knowledge of marriage couple and family dynamics, common problems for families, and professional issues.
- Questions:
 - Does the movie review assignment in 509 cover enough of the common issues in marriage, couple and family counseling? C.1
 - How can human sexuality content be more applied to the work of couples counseling? C.3
- Possible Action Points:
 - Examine movie review assignment in 509 C.1
 - Revise research paper in 573 to better represent “problems” and “interventions” C.2
 - Add applied aspect to assignment in Human Sexuality that could vary by track C.3

Section D: Learning Outcomes

- For the *Counseling, Prevention, and Intervention: Skills and Practices* section of the standards (D:1- D:6) much of the assessment took place in practicum and internships, specifically via site supervisor evaluations. Students were consistently rated high on: using systems theory, adhering to professional responsibilities (e.g. confidentiality), and self-awareness in supervision. Students were not rated as high on implementing wellness or prevention initiatives. Feedback from site supervisors indicated that these later tasks are not common internship opportunities. Students did have the opportunity to demonstrate these skills in an “Educational Presentation” Practicum assignment, and all students met the learning outcome target except in two cases (out of 19 students).
- Questions:
 - How can we infuse preventive, developmental, and wellness approaches better throughout the curriculum? And are field experiences the right place to assess this? D.1
 - Is site supervisor evaluation a good way to assess student ability to address suicide risk? Would video role-play assignment be better? D.4
- Possible Action Points:
 - Revise site supervisor evaluations to better align them with the consistent opportunities that students have to demonstrate certain skills, specifically prevention work and suicide intervention. Find other assessment instruments to assess these skills. D.1 & D.4

Section E: Learning Outcomes

- The standards in the *Diversity and Advocacy: Knowledge* (E:1- E:5) area were assessed in the courses *Marriage Couple and Family Counseling Skills and Practice* and *Premarital and Marital Counseling* which are each offered once a year. So the data across two years is limited and was affected by small class sizes. Ninety percent or more of students met targets related to demonstrating knowledge about the impact of multiculturalism on families, social trends' impact on families, current literature on helping diverse families, and the effect of different forms of discrimination on families. Standard E:5 (impact of policies and programs on families) was assessed in four Practicum semesters. One hundred percent of students met the target on the Practicum advocacy project in all the semesters but one, which was the first time the project was implemented.
- Questions:
 - Is the research paper assignment in COUN 573 specific enough to assess learning of effective approaches with diverse families? E.3
 - Are we relying too heavily on Practicum Advocacy Project to assess more than one standard? E.5; F.3
- Possible Action Points:
 - Determine if other assignments could better address standard E.3
 - Determine if other assignments are also addressing standards E. 5 and F.3

Section F: Learning Outcomes

- All of the *Diversity and Advocacy: Skills and Practices* standards (F:1- F:4) were assessed in the field experiences via a project or site supervisor evaluation. Students were rated highly by their supervisors on their ability to modify services based on diversity and advocate for families. Ratings were lower on students ability to make appropriate referrals, often this is due to students' not being provided this opportunity. However, students did consistently demonstrate they could identify appropriate community resources in the Referral Project. Students also performed well on case presentations in which they had to identify diversity issues related to actual clients.
- Questions:
 - How can we assess ability to refer appropriately other than with site supervisor evaluation? F.2
- Possible Action Points
 - Revise referral project in field experiences to be more specific (include psychiatry referral) F.2
 - Remove referral skills from site supervisor evaluations and find an alternative assessment instrument F.2

Sections G & H: Learning Outcomes

- Students' demonstrated learning related to the *Assessment: Knowledge and Assessment: Skills and Practice* standards (G:1-H:3) were very strong overall. For 5 of the 6 standards, at least 95% of students met the targets across all terms. The one area of weakness was site supervisor's rating on students' ability to determine what members of a family system should be involved in treatment.
- Questions:
 - Should we add a role-play evaluation in COUN 573 to better assess interviewing and assessment skills? H.1 & H.2
 - What is the best way to assess students' ability to determine who in a system should be included in counseling? H.3
- Possible Action Points:
 - Create mock counseling assignment for 573 H.1 & H.2
 - Remove assessment of H.3 from site supervisor evaluation and create forum discussion in COUN 530 to address the standard

Sections I & J: Learning Outcomes

- For the two standards areas related to *Research and Evaluation* (I:1- J:3) students demonstrated stronger outcomes in the *Knowledge* area than they did on the *Skills and Practice* area. Site supervisors rated students on how well they applied research to clinical work, developed measurable outcomes for clients, and used data to improve counseling. On these evaluation items around 85% of students met the target across all terms.
- Questions:
 - Is it useful to ask site supervisors to evaluate students' skills in applying research to clinical practice? J.1; J.2; J.3
- Possible Action Points:
 - Revise the Research Presentation in internships to make it a case study that better addresses analysis and application of research J.1 & J. 3
 - Remove questions from site supervisor evaluation related to research application J.1, J.2, and J.3
 - Determine appropriate assignments to assess learning of creating measurable outcomes of counseling, possible in 531 or internships J.2