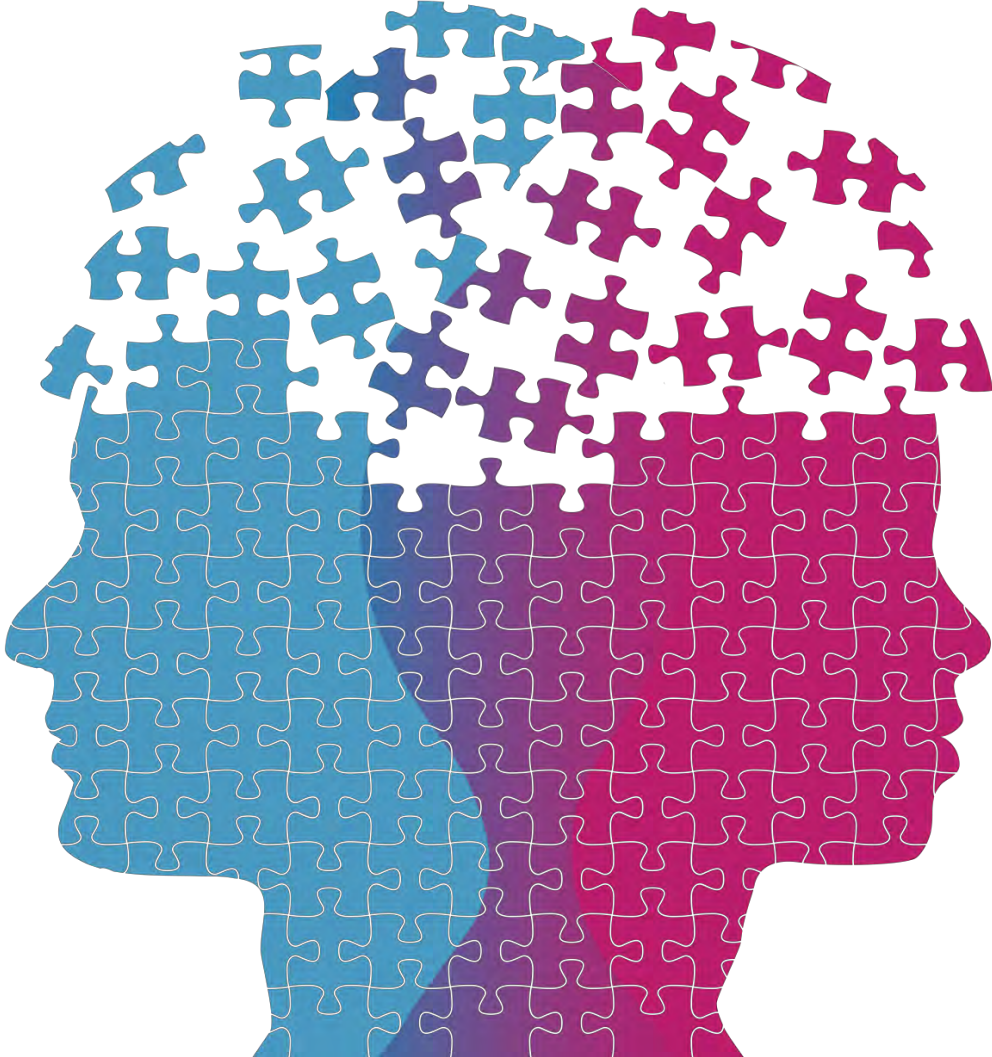


DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING STUDENT HANDBOOK

(Revised: May 2025)



This handbook was prepared based on the best information available at the time. The Department of Counseling reserves the right to change any information, including course offerings, admission and graduation deadlines and requirements without notice or obligation, in keeping with the policies of The University of Texas System Board of Regents and in conformance with the laws of the state of Texas. This handbook is a general information publication. It is not intended to, nor does it contain all regulations that relate to students. The provisions of this catalog do not constitute a contract, expressed or implied, between any applicant, student or faculty member of The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley or The University of Texas System.

PREFACE

The faculty and staff in the Counseling Program at UTRGV welcome you. This handbook is intended to provide master's level students with information about the Counseling Program at UTRGV. It is intended to supplement, not substitute, the graduate catalog. Because graduate procedures, course requirements, and prerequisites may change, students should be familiar with the latest copy of the graduate catalog and meet with faculty when necessary. The requirements, number of hours and class offerings for the M.Ed. Program, School Counselor Certification, and State licensure for Licensed Professional Counselors are subject to change. Changes may apply to both prospective and current students.

Although this handbook provides an overview of the policies, procedures, and requirements of the Counseling Program, the handbook is not intended to be exhaustive. This handbook is a general information publication only. It is not intended to, nor does it contain all regulations that relate to students. Instead, students must seek answers to questions from other sources, including, although not limited to, program faculty, College of Education and P-16 Integration, professional associations, state credentialing agencies, Graduate Catalog, and the UTRGV Graduate Office. The primary responsibility for reading and following correct policies and procedures remains with the student with faculty support and advisement.

In addition, students are expected to abide and stay current with laws and ethical codes set forth by the Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors, the American Counseling Association, the American School Counselor Association, and other ethical standards relevant to their practice. Of particular importance is behavior related to confidentiality in groups, with clients, and with cases discussed in class. Students should take extra care with materials (DVD's, tapes, files, reports, etc.) related to clients. Violations of ethical standards are taken seriously by the program faculty and may affect ability to continue in the program.

Responsibility for class attendance rests with the student. Regular and punctual attendance of all scheduled classes is mandatory. Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and may be dropped from the course after excessive absences. Notifying a course instructor of an absence, being tardy, or leaving early does not guarantee the absence will be excused. It is important to note that course instructors make the ultimate decision regarding excusing absences for extenuating circumstances. UTRGV's attendance policy excuses students from attending class if they are participating in officially sponsored university activities, such as athletics; for observance of religious holy days; or for military service. Students should contact the instructor in advance of the excused absence and arrange to make up missed work or examinations.

Introduction to the Department of Counseling

Welcome

Welcome to the UTRGV Department of Counseling. We hope that each of you will have a successful and rewarding experience as you begin your journey toward professional counseling. We are committed to providing a learning environment that is both challenging and supportive. We believe that our mutual respect, collaboration, and commitment will provide you with opportunities critical to the counseling profession.

While you will be assigned an advisor in the first semester, it is ultimately your responsibility to know the information contained in this handbook and to monitor your progress toward a degree. You are also expected to be familiar with information in the Counseling Student Handbook, Practicum and Internship Handbook, Graduate Student Catalog, and in the degree plan. Review these manuals periodically, and when you have a question, contact your faculty advisor. Contact information for college and department faculty and staff is listed later in this handbook.

About The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) was created by the Texas Legislature in 2013 in a historic move that brings together the resources and assets of UT Brownsville and UT Pan American. There are two main campuses at UTRGV: Brownsville and Edinburg. Counseling classes are offered in Brownsville, Harlingen, and Edinburg. While most classes are offered in a face-to-face, on-campus format, it is not unusual for your professors to post assignments or hold some of their class time online.

The counseling programs offered at UTRGV are identical at each campus, although courses may be taught by different faculty. The admissions, program, and graduation requirements apply to one program: the master's degree in education counseling.

Mission Statement

“UTRGV serves the Rio Grande Valley and beyond via an innovative and unique multicultural education dedicated to student access and success. By championing leading research, healthcare, and application of university discoveries, we support sustainable development, community engagement, and well-being.”

Vision Statement

“Drawing on our unique identity as the leading Hispanic-Serving Institution in a bilingual and bicultural environment, UTRGV will promote student access and success by building from strength in education and creating a vibrant campus experience. By 2027, we will accelerate transformation in the Rio Grande Valley and beyond by driving meaningful advancements in research and creative works, expanding access to high-quality and affordable healthcare, and fostering authentic community engagement and integration.”

About the College of Education and P-16 Integration

Mission Statement

Through systems of shared governance, faculty and staff of the College of Education and P-16 Integration (CEP) is committed to academic excellence in a caring, student-centered culture that serves the broader community. We prioritize research that meets the interests and challenges of our borderland's region.

Vision Statement

The College of Education and P-16 Integration is set to serve the Rio Grande Valley and beyond as a model of a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) that strives to lead the inclusive preparation of diverse educators, education leaders, education researchers, as well as the conduction of community-oriented research that in due course reaches a national impact.

About the Department of Counseling

Mission Statement

The mission of the Master of Education (MEd) in Counseling is to prepare a highly competent professional who can respond to the life span mental health needs of a multicultural community. The Master of Education in Counseling offers two specializations: school counseling and clinical mental health counseling. The degree satisfies the requirements to apply for state of Texas licensure (Licensed Professional Counselor, LPC) or the School Counselor Certification.

Vision Statement

The vision of the Department of Counseling is to be the catalyst for the education and mental health well-being for individuals, families, communities, the region, and our society at large through thoughtful, culturally sustaining partnerships with our schools, communities, mental health facilities, demonstrating responsiveness to the mental health needs to the people of the Rio Grande Valley.

Syllabus Statement

Statement of Inclusiveness, Diversity, and Accommodation

Consistent with and to the extent permissible under applicable state and federal laws and regulations, the Department and UTRGV work to support first-generation college students, low-income students, and underserved student populations. It is the policy of UTRGV that no person will be denied employment with or admission to UTRGV, or otherwise be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity sponsored or conducted by UTRGV, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. Sexual misconduct and sexual harassment in any form (including sexual violence) will not be tolerated. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression are also prohibited. UTRGV will provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities unless doing so creates an undue hardship or burden or fundamentally alters an essential course or program objective. Retaliation against individuals who oppose discriminatory practices, file a charge or complaint of discrimination, or testify for, assist in, or participate in an investigative proceeding relating to discrimination is also prohibited. For more information see UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures Policies [ADM 03-100](#), [ADM 03-101](#), [ADM 03-200](#), and [ADM 03-300](#).

Student Recruitment

The Department of Counseling at UTRGV is committed to recruiting students from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and cultural influences that reflect the multicultural society in which we live. We provide a rich, diverse cultural experience through course offerings, workshops, and faculty seminar events. Faculty are active in professional counseling organizations and strive to introduce students from around the country to the programs we offer. The faculty does not discriminate based on a student's gender, age, race, sexual orientation, disability, or national origin.

Technology Resources and Competence Needed to Complete the Program

Students are expected to have basic knowledge about Learning Management Systems (e.g., Blackboard, Brightspace) as well as TK20 to store assessment information. Once students enter practicum, they are expected to have foundational knowledge in Titanium software.

Program Overview

Students are admitted to the Department of Counseling.

There are two specializations offered by the Department of Counseling:

- Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC)
- School Counseling (SC)

Clinical Mental Health Counseling

The Clinical Mental Health Counseling program prepares students for licensure in professional counseling. Upon graduation, the graduate is eligible to sit for the National Counselor's Examination and the Texas Jurisprudence Examination. With these requirements completed, the graduate will apply with the state of Texas for a temporary license, becoming a Licensed Professional Counselor Intern. Interns are required to complete 3000 hours of direct and indirect service under the supervision of a Texas State Board of Examiner of Licensed Professional Counselors approved supervisor. After 3000 hours under supervision, the LPC Intern will submit the necessary paperwork to the state to receive his or her permanent license. It is the graduate's responsibility to complete all of the necessary steps toward licensure post-graduation.

School Counseling

Upon completion of the School Counselor program, the graduate is prepared to be an integral part of the academic services in public schools, trained to facilitate the growth and learning of students by providing services in guidance curriculum, responsive services, individual planning and systems support. The counselor also provides direct services to students as a counselor and coordinates services with programs and agencies within the school and in the community.

UTRGV Professional Certification Policy

Students in the school counselor professional certification program will have one year after the program completion to take their certification exam. Within this one-year period, program finishers who are requesting test approval will be reviewed by the department chair/program coordinator before approval is granted to ensure that all TAC requirements have been met. After the one-year

period, program completers requesting testing approval will be reviewed by the department chair/program coordinator so that a new certification plan can be created as needed. This certification plan may include additional coursework, modules, or professional development and must be completed before testing approval is granted.

Change in State Standards and Teacher Certification

If TEA certification standards change between the time that the program is complete and the time that certification is sought, the new standards must be met. This may mean taking additional courses or completing additional requirements in the form of a certification plan.

Program Objectives

- **Research and Program Evaluation** - Counseling graduate students will demonstrate knowledge of and use quantitative and qualitative research methods as well as program evaluation to inform evidence-based practice by the time they complete the program
- **Professional Orientation and Identity** - Counseling graduate students will develop a strong professional counseling orientation and identity by the time they complete the program
- **Social and Cultural Identities and Experiences** - Counseling graduate students will demonstrate and use multicultural knowledge necessary for competency in working with diverse populations by the time they complete the program.
- **Lifespan Development** - Counseling graduate students will demonstrate an understanding of development across the lifespan and the impact on normal and abnormal functioning by the time they complete the program
- **Career Development** - Counseling graduate students will demonstrate and use career development theory to help individuals with career planning and decisions by the time they complete the program
- **Counseling Practice and Helping Relationships** - Counseling graduate students will demonstrate and use knowledge and skills of theories and techniques necessary to engage in an effective and therapeutic helping relationship by the time they complete the program.
- **Group Counseling and Group Work** - Counseling graduate students will demonstrate knowledge in group counseling processes and competency in the preparation and facilitation of group counseling by the time they complete the program.
- **Assessment and Diagnostic Processes** - Counseling graduate students will demonstrate and use effective assessment strategies to facilitate treatment planning by the time they complete the program.
- **School Counseling** - Counseling graduate students will demonstrate knowledge of school counseling techniques to enhance their role as a school counselor with children, adolescents, and family members by the time they complete the program.
- **Clinical Mental Health Counseling** - Counseling graduate students will demonstrate knowledge of clinical mental health counseling issues to enhance their role and function as a clinical mental health counselor when working with specific populations by the time they complete the program.

Accreditation of Counseling Program

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award baccalaureate, masters', and doctorate degrees. SACSCOC accredited degrees are fully recognized by the Texas Education Agency for school counseling certification and by the State of Texas for professional counseling licensure.

Counseling programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) adhere to the highest standards in counselor education and accept their responsibility to provide quality training programs. The program is accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).

Benefits to students of CACREP - accredited programs include:

- Students can become National Certified Counselors (NCC) eligible after passing the National Counselor Exam (NCE) without the two-year post master's experience.
- Students in CACREP accredited programs are eligible to take the NCE prior to graduation.
- "CACREP Accreditation provides recognition that the content and quality of the program has been evaluated and meets standards set by the profession. The student, as a consumer, can be assured that appropriate knowledge and skill areas are included and that the program is stable, professionally and financially" (cacrep.org; retrieved November 15, 2011).
- Many doctoral programs require CACREP-graduate status for admissions.
- The Office of Veteran's Affairs and TriCare (serving all currently and retired military personnel and their families) approve reimbursement for mental health services only to professionals with CACREP-graduate status.

Course Requirements

Both the School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling tracks require 60 semester credit hours (SCH), with one course difference (COUN 6344 for school counseling or COUN 6367 for clinical mental health counseling):

Course Number	Course Name
COUN 6301	Introduction to Research Methods in Counseling
COUN 6304	Human Growth and Development for Counseling Professionals
COUN 6310	Professional Orientation to Counseling
COUN 6311	Professional, Ethical, & Legal Issues in Counseling
COUN 6313	Personal/Social Development of the Counselor
COUN 6314	Assessment and Appraisal Techniques in Counseling
COUN 6327	Counseling Theories, Methods, & Techniques I
COUN 6328	Counseling Theories, Methods, & Techniques II
COUN 6340	Abnormal Behavior
COUN 6345	Career Developmental Theories
COUN 6347	Addictions Counseling
COUN 6349	Child and Adolescent Counseling
COUN 6351	Treatment Planning and Crisis Intervention
COUN 6361	Couples and Family Counseling
COUN 6364	Social and Cultural Issues in Counseling
COUN 6365	Counseling Practicum
COUN 6367 OR	Clinical Mental Health Counseling OR
COUN 6344	School Counseling & Guidance
COUN 6368	Group Counseling Theories and Methods
COUN 6369	Counseling Internship I
COUN 6370	Counseling Internship II

Course Description

COUN 6301 – Introduction to Research in Counseling - Introduction to research methods and statistical analysis in counseling. Emphasizes data-gathering techniques in social and behavioral science databases; critical review of literature used in clinical assessment, intervention and evaluation; planning and design of research proposals; and instruction in APA style. Prerequisite: None

COUN 6304 – Human Growth & Development for Counseling Professionals - Advanced study in the application of life span developmental theories to human behavior, learning, and personality. Includes understanding the nature and needs of all people at all developmental levels from prenatal through old age. Prerequisite: None

COUN 6310 – Professional Orientation to Counseling - Students will be introduced to the role of counselors in a variety of settings including their role in advocacy and social justice. They will become familiar with the history of counseling, preparation standards, professional organizations, ethical standards and legal issues pertaining to counseling, and the dynamics of the counseling process. Prerequisite: None.

COUN 6311 – Professional, Ethical, and Legal Issues in Counseling - This course focuses on the ethical codes of professional organizations (APA & ACA) with a major emphasis on professional standards, ethical principles, and legal considerations in the counseling profession. Prerequisite: None.

COUN 6313 – Personal/Social Development of the Counselor - Discussions and practical application of group dynamics within a framework of group therapy. Prerequisite: None.

COUN 6314 – Assessment Counseling & Development - This course explores the theory and techniques of administering, scoring, and interpreting educational and psychological tests. Includes test selection, administration, and the dynamics of test interpretation to enable the counselor to synthesize, integrate, and evaluate appraisal data for use in guidance and counseling. In the last segment of the course, students will practice taking, administering, and interpreting a variety of educational and psychological tests. Prerequisite: COUN 6301

COUN 6327 – Counseling Theories, Methods, Techniques I - A survey of prominent theories in psychotherapy and counseling. Specialized approaches such as group therapy, play therapy, and family therapy will be studied. Prerequisite: COUN 6304 and COUN 6310.

COUN 6328 – Counseling Theories, Methods, Techniques II - Primary focus is on techniques and interviewing skills utilized during counseling sessions. In addition, this course addresses how these techniques are applied to special topics and issues such as career counseling, group counseling and family counseling. Prerequisite: COUN 6304, COUN 6310, COUN 6313 and COUN 6327.

COUN 6340 – Abnormal Human Behavior - The course introduces students to the concepts of psychopathology and to major diagnostic categories of the current DSM. Emphasis is placed on differential diagnosis and understanding of biological, psychological, and environmental factors impacting mental disorders. Prerequisite: COUN 6304, COUN 6310, COUN 6327, COUN 6328, COUN 6368.

COUN 6344 – School Counseling - Students will learn the essential roles and responsibilities of school counselors as they relate to planning, implementation, and evaluation of counseling and guidance programs. Students learn research-based practices in school counseling. Ethical, legal, and multicultural issues are emphasized. Prerequisite: None.

COUN 6345 – Career Development Theories - A survey and analysis of the processes of assisting people to choose, prepare for, enter, and progress in an occupation. The course trains leaders who can help people make decisions and choices in planning a future and building a career. Prerequisite: None.

COUN 6347 – Addictions Counseling - This course will prepare individuals to counsel drug users, addicts and family members using various preventive strategies and treatment regimes. Includes instruction in

outreach, patient education, therapeutic intervention methods, diagnostic procedures, and addiction symptomology. Prerequisite: None.

COUN 6349 – Child and Adolescent Counseling - This course is an introduction to counseling theories and techniques applied to children and adolescents. Appropriate developmental and cultural issues will be presented. The course is designed to teach students about current research and approaches for working with this population. Prerequisite: None.

COUN 6351 – Treatment Planning and Crisis Intervention - The course introduces students to the process of treatment planning and crisis intervention. Special emphasis is given to documentation and evidence-based treatment approaches including contemporary theories of crisis intervention. Psychopharmacological treatment interventions are included. Prerequisite: COUN 6328.

COUN 6361 – Couples and Family Counseling - This course introduces students to the study of individual and family development, family dynamics, interpersonal relationships, and marriage and family systems. The course will include selected theories, methods, and techniques of marriage and family therapy with particular emphasis on multicultural, legal, and ethical issues in the practice of marriage and family counseling. Prerequisite: None.

COUN 6364 – Social and Cultural Issues in Counseling - This course will provide an understanding of the characteristics and needs of culturally diverse clients. The course will include issues related to ethnic groups, gender, family systems, differing lifestyles, and the impact of social, political and economic factors on specific populations. Techniques for counseling culturally diverse populations will also be covered. Prerequisite: None.

COUN 6365 – Counseling Practicum - A study of selected counseling theories and supervised experience in individual counseling. Cases assigned off campus in schools and community agencies. This course must be taken within the last nine hours of program. Prerequisite: COUN 6301, COUN 6310, COUN 6311, COUN 6313, COUN 6314, COUN 6327, COUN 6328, COUN 6340, COUN 6345, COUN 6368 and program approval.

COUN 6367 – Clinical Mental Health Counseling - This course helps students gain knowledge and understanding of community counseling issues including historical foundations, the role and function of the community counselor, and working with specific populations. The administration and function of community counseling agencies are studied with emphasis on the ethical issues confronting various agencies. Prerequisite: None.

COUN 6368 – Group Counseling Theories and Methods - This course develops an understanding of group processes, theories and techniques. Demonstrated competence in this knowledge and in applying group procedures will be required. Prerequisite: COUN 6304, COUN 6310, COUN 6327, COUN 6328.

COUN 6369 – Counseling Internship I - Supervised internship in counseling in an approved agency or school setting. Prerequisite: COUN 6365, and program approval.

COUN 6370 – Counseling Internship II - Supervised internship in counseling in an approved agency or school setting. Prerequisite: COUN 6369, and program approval.

Degree Plan

All UTRGV students in the Counseling program must work with their faculty advisor to follow a degree plan. The Degree Plan includes the catalog year of record, all course requirements, and the projected semester and year of completion for each course. This form will be completed during the “New Student Orientation”. The Degree Plan is an official record of the student’s projected time to graduation.

Plan of Study

Students are required to meet with their faculty advisor every semester for planning and registration clearance. Students will confirm or revise the courses on their Plan of Study. Faculty advising is mandatory and must be completed prior to registration in the Fall and Spring semesters.

The Plan of Study is an agreement between the faculty advisor and the student regarding approved courses each semester. The Plan of Study is approved at the faculty advisor level only and submitted to the Department Chair for registration purposes. The Plan of Study is renewed every semester in a mandatory advising session with the faculty advisor prior to the registration period for each upcoming semester. Advising for the summer and fall semesters occurs in April, while advising for the spring semester occurs in October. Students who do not complete a Plan of Study with their faculty advisor in spring and fall of each year the student is enrolled in the Counseling program will not be cleared for registration.

Students must complete all graduate work for a degree within seven years of the time of their first graduate course registration. Graduate courses more than seven years old might not be accepted for credit toward a degree program.

Degree Plan (Clinical Mental Health Counseling Specialization)

College of Education and P-16 Integration

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Student: This is your approved degree plan which lists all required courses for your degree. You should have a signed degree plan by the end of your first semester as a student. Any changes in courses on this degree plan must be approved with your academic advisor, program coordinator, and department chair. There are additional program requirements to meet before graduation (e.g., pass the Comprehensive Preparation Counselor Examination). Please review the UTRGV Graduate Catalog.

Student Name:

Student ID:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Degree Program: *Counseling M.Ed.*

Specialization: *Clinical Mental Health Counseling*

Semester/Year Beginning Coursework:

Catalog:

Required Courses

COUN 6310 Professional Orientation to Counseling

COUN 6301 Introduction to Research Methods in Counseling

COUN 6313 Personal/Social Development of the Counselor

COUN 6304 Human Growth and Development for Counseling Professionals

COUN 6327 Counseling Theories, Methods, & Techniques I

COUN 6311 Professional, Ethical, & Legal Issues in Counseling

COUN 6364 Social and Cultural Issues in Counseling

COUN 6328 Counseling Theories, Methods, & Techniques II

COUN 6314 Assessment and Appraisal Techniques in Counseling

COUN 6368 Group Counseling Theories and Methods

COUN 6367 Clinical Mental Health Counseling

COUN 6340 Abnormal Behavior

COUN 6345 Career Developmental Theories

COUN 6349 Child and Adolescent Counseling

COUN 6365 Counseling Practicum

COUN 6361 Couples and Family Counseling

COUN 6369 Counseling Internship I

COUN 6351 Treatment Planning and Crisis Intervention

COUN 6370 Counseling Internship II

COUN 6347 Addictions Counseling

Total: 60 Hours

*Courses taken more than seven years before your graduation date will not count toward degree requirements.

**A maximum of nine appropriate graduate hours may be transferred to UTRGV from another institution. Transfer credits must be approved and must meet all the requirements listed in the UTRGV Graduate Catalog.

Student Signature:

Date:

Advisor/Program Coordinator:

Date:

Department Chair:

Date:

Revised 5.7.2025

Degree Plan (School Counseling Specialization)

College of Education and P-16 Integration

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Student: This is your approved degree plan which lists all required courses for your degree. You should have a signed degree plan by the end of your first semester as a student. Any changes in courses on this degree plan must be approved with your academic advisor, program coordinator, and department chair. There are additional program requirements to meet before graduation (e.g., pass the Comprehensive Preparation Counselor Examination and TExES 252 Examination). Please review the UTRGV Graduate Catalog.

Student Name:

Student ID:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Degree Program: *Counseling M.Ed.*

Specialization: *School Counseling*

Semester/Year Beginning Coursework:

Catalog:

Required Courses

COUN 6310 Professional Orientation to Counseling
COUN 6301 Introduction to Research Methods in Counseling
COUN 6313 Personal/Social Development of the Counselor
COUN 6304 Human Growth and Development for Counseling Professionals
COUN 6327 Counseling Theories, Methods, & Techniques I
COUN 6311 Professional, Ethical, & Legal Issues in Counseling
COUN 6364 Social and Cultural Issues in Counseling
COUN 6328 Counseling Theories, Methods, & Techniques II
COUN 6314 Assessment and Appraisal Techniques in Counseling
COUN 6368 Group Counseling Theories and Methods
COUN 6344 School Counseling and Guidance
COUN 6340 Abnormal Behavior
COUN 6345 Career Developmental Theories
COUN 6349 Child and Adolescent Counseling
COUN 6365 Counseling Practicum
COUN 6361 Couples and Family Counseling
COUN 6369 Counseling Internship I
COUN 6351 Treatment Planning and Crisis Intervention
COUN 6370 Counseling Internship II
COUN 6347 Addictions Counseling

Total: 60 Hours

*Courses taken more than seven years before your graduation date will not count toward degree requirements.

**A maximum of nine appropriate graduate hours may be transferred to UTRGV from another institution. Transfer credits must be approved and must meet all the requirements listed in the UTRGV Graduate Catalog.

Student Signature:

Date:

Advisor/Program Coordinator:

Date:

Department Chair:

Date:

Revised 5.2.2025

Plan of Study (POS)

Master of Education (M.Ed.) in Counseling

60 Credit Hour Program/20 Courses

Student Name:

Student ID:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Home Campus:

School/Clinical Mental Health Track:

Birth Month:

Assigned Faculty Advisor:

Course Sequence Requirements

Required Sequence:

- ***COUN 6310** - Professional Orientation to Counseling
- ***COUN 6304** - Human Growth and Development for Counseling Professionals
- ***COUN 6327** - Counseling Theories, Methods, & Techniques I
- ***COUN 6328** - Counseling Theories, Methods, & Techniques II
- ***COUN 6368** - Group Counseling Theories and Methods
- ***COUN 6340** - Abnormal Behavior
- COUN 6365** - Counseling Practicum
- COUN 6369** - Counseling Internship I
- COUN 6370** - Counseling Internship II

The above courses cannot be taken concurrently with other sequenced courses. In other words, each required sequence course must be successfully completed within one semester before registering for the next sequenced course.

Remaining Courses:

- COUN 6313** - Personal/Social Development of the Counselor
- COUN 6301** - Introduction to Research Methods in Counseling
- COUN 6311** - Professional, Ethical, & Legal Issues in Counseling
- COUN 6364** - Social and Cultural Issues in Counseling
- COUN 6314** - Assessment and Appraisal Techniques in Counseling
- COUN 6344** - School Counseling and Guidance
 - Or **COUN 6367** - Clinical Mental Health Counseling
- COUN 6349 - Child and Adolescent Counseling
- COUN 6361 - Couples and Family Counseling
- COUN 6351 - Treatment Planning and Crisis Intervention
- COUN 6347- Addictions Counseling

*** These courses must be completed prior to enrolling in Practicum/Internship. Also, submit internship Application to the Practicum & Internship Coordinator (Dr. J. Cavazos) by the deadline. The application deadline for practicum & internship is priority registration. If you do not submit your application by the deadline, you will not be guaranteed placement in a practicum or internship course.**

- If you plan to enroll in COUN 6365/COUN 6369/COUN 6370 in Spring, your deadline is: October 1st
- If you plan to enroll COUNS 6365/COUN 6369/ COUN 6370 in the Summer/Fall, your deadline is: March 1st
- You will need to secure liability insurance when you begin COUN 6365/COUN 6369/ COUN 6370.

CPCE Exit Exam: You are required to successfully complete the counseling program exit exam – the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Exam in order to graduate. You will have three opportunities to pass the CPCE beginning in the semester you are enrolled in COUN 6365 – Practicum.

Semester Began Program:

Following Suggested POS for their Cohort (**Yes or No**):

Proposed Exit Exam:

Expected Graduation Semester:

Student Signature:

Date of Signature:

Faculty Advisor's Signature:

Date of Signature:

Revised 5.7.2025

Suggested Sequence of Courses

Spring Admission

College of Education and P-16 Integration
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Home Campus:

GR = Grade, LS = Long Summer

Top row courses are required sequence

Block 1 Spring Year								
COUN 6310 (Prof Orientation) GR:	COUN 6304 LS (Human Growth) GR:	COUN 6327 (Theories I) GR:	COUN 6328 (Theories II) GR:	COUN 6368 LS (Group) GR:	COUN 6340 (AHB) GR:	COUN 6365 (Prac) GR:	COUN 6369 LS-14wks(Intern I) GR:	COUN 6370 (Intern II) GR:
&	&	&	&	&	&	&	&	&
COUN 6313 (PSD) GR:	COUN 6301 LS (Research) GR:	COUN 6364 (Social & Cultural) GR:	COUN 6314 (Assessment) GR:	COUN 6345 LS (Career) GR:	COUN 6367 (CMH) GR:	COUN 6361 (Couples & Fam) GR:	COUN 6351 (Treatment Planning & Crisis) GR:	COUN 6347 (Addictions) GR:
	&			&	OR			
	COUN 6311 LS (Pro Ethical) GR:			COUN 6349 (Child & Adol) GR:	COUN 6344 (Sch) GR:	CPCE Exit Exam (2nd Sat. in Feb.)	CPCE Exit Exam (2nd Opp. - 3rd Sat. in July)	CPCE Exit Exam (3rd Opp. - 3rd Sat. in Sept.)

Student Printed Name:

Student ID: Email Address:

Phone Number:

Advisor Printed Name:

Advisor Signature:

Student Signature:

Proposed Exit Exam (CPCE):

Proposed Graduation Date:

Sch/CMH Track:

*I understand that if I do not follow the sequence, I will not be guaranteed the courses needed to graduate in a timely manner. Furthermore, those who are following the sequence will be given priority to the classes listed in their POS.

Revised 5.27.25

Deviation from Original Plan of Study

**Master of Education (M.Ed.) in Counseling and Guidance
60 Credit Hour Program/20 Courses**

Required Sequence Courses

Course Number	Course Title	Semester Offered	Fall	Spring	Long Summer	Sum I	Sum II
COUN 6310	Professional Orientation to Counseling	Fall & Spring					
COUN 6304	Human Growth & Development of the Counselor	Spring & Long Summer					
COUN 6327	Counseling Theories/Methods/Techniques I	Fall & Long Summer					
COUN 6328	Counseling Theories/Methods/Techniques II	Fall & Spring					
COUN 6368	Group Counseling Theories & Methods	Spring & Long Summer					
COUN 6340	Abnormal Human Behavior	Fall & Long Summer					
COUN 6365	Counseling Practicum	Fall & Spring					
COUN 6369	Counseling Internship I	Spring & Long Sum (15wks)					
COUN 6370	Counseling Internship II	Fall & Long Sum (15wks)					

Remaining Courses

Course Number	Course Title	Semester Offered	Fall	Spring	Long Summer	Sum I	Sum II
COUN 6313	Personal/Social Development of the Counselor	Fall & Spring					
COUN 6301	Introduction to Research Methods in Counseling	Spring & Long Summer					
COUN 6311	Prof Ethical & Legal Issues in Counseling	Summer					
COUN 6364	Social & Cultural Issues in Counseling	Fall & Long Summer					
COUN 6314	Assessment & Appraisal Techniques in Counseling	Fall & Spring					
COUN 6367 OR COUN 6344	Clinical M.H. Counseling (CMH-Track) OR School Counseling (School Track)	Fall & Spring					
COUN 6345	Career Development Theories	Long Summer					
COUN 6349	Child & Adolescent Counseling	Summer					
COUN 6361	Couples and Family Counseling	Fall & Spring					
COUN 6351	Treatment Planning & Crisis Intervention	Spring & Summer					
COUN 6347	Addictions Counseling	Fall & Summer					

Student Printed Name:

Student ID:

Student Email Address:

Advisor Printed Name:

Advisor Signature:

Date:

Proposed Exit Exam (TExES or CPCE):

Proposed Graduation Date:

Student Phone Number:

Revised 5.7.2025

Field Experiences

The practicum and internship courses are taken toward the end of the student's program of study and involve direct client contact in professional counseling settings. Please refer to the Practicum and Internship Handbook for complete information about the field experience courses.

Comprehensive Examination

The purpose of the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE) is to assess a student's knowledge of core counseling areas taught in counselor education programs. The CPCE can also provide counselor education programs with the ability to gain an objective view of the effectiveness of their curriculum, offer pre- and post-test comparisons at various points during matriculation, compare student data to national averages, and utilize data in self-studies. The core areas assessed in the CPCE are:

1. Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice
2. Social and Cultural Diversity
3. Human Growth and Development
4. Career Development
5. Counseling and Helping Relationships
6. Group Counseling and Group Work
7. Assessment and Testing
8. Research and Program Evaluation

The UTRGV Department of Counseling requires the CPCE as a measure for the student to demonstrate competency. Students must pass the CPCE to graduate. The Counseling Department has identified the passing score for the CPCE as determined by one standard deviation below the national mean for each administration of the exam. In other words, the mean or average score minus the standard deviation of all students in the nation who have taken the exam on the same date is the cutoff for passing. The mean and the standard deviation fluctuate each time the test is administered, as does our cutoff score for passing the exam. The passing score for the CPCE will change to the mean score effective for fall 2025 new admits and beyond.

Beginning in Fall 2024, students will complete end-of-course exams and a comprehensive practice exam as diagnostic measurements and to become familiar with the CPCE test format as a way to prepare for the CPCE. Students may attempt the CPCE three (3) times. If unsuccessful, the student will be reviewed by the Goodness of Fit department committee for a remediation plan before being allowed an additional attempt. Beginning in Fall 2025, students must complete the following requirements in order to be cleared to register for the CPCE:

1. Pass end-of-course exams in CACREP/CPCE core courses in which they are enrolled beginning Fall 2025
2. Pass the comprehensive practice exam

For detailed information about the end-of-course and comprehensive practice exam, please see the section titled "End-of-Course and Comprehensive Practice Exams."

Students are strongly encouraged to attempt the CPCE starting in the semester that they take Practicum. This will allow the student who fails the exam to study and attempt again in Internship I and II if necessary. Students must be enrolled in a course in order to be approved for CPCE registration. Students who have completed all courses will be required to enroll in a one-hour, no-credit course at the student's expense in order to meet this requirement.

You can find more information about the CPCE in the [CPCE Handbook](#). You can find helpful resources including study and preparation materials on [Pearson Vue](#).

Process and Policies

In alignment with the University of Texas of Rio Grande Valley guiding principles, the College of Education & P-16 Integration (CEP) has established a mission of excellence in the preparation of educators, instructional leaders and school leaders. UTRGV has an esteemed reputation of having an educator preparation program with national accreditation and seeking continued status through CAEP accreditation. The College of Education & P-16 Integration (CEP) holds the values of exemplary program and assessment standards, rigorous, relevant preparation as measures of distinction in the application of best practice in K-12 schools.

Test Waiver Information

Section 21.048(a-1) of the Texas Education Code specifies that a person may not retake a certification examination more than four times unless the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) waives the limitation for good cause. The SBEC has defined the waiver application process in [Chapter 230, Subchapter C of the Texas Administrative Code](#). To request a waiver, you must complete all waiver requirements as specified in the [waiver application](#). After we receive your completed waiver application, you will be contacted about submitting the \$160 waiver application fee through our online system. Applicants and educator preparation program staff should review the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document about the test waiver process for answers to common questions and further information on completing the waiver application. If you have any questions, please call Educator Testing at (512) 463-9039 or email [Jennifer Perez](#) or [Rebecca McCoy](#). To open the waiver application, a PDF (Portable Document Format): A universal file format that preserves the look and layout of a printed document. These files are accessible through a [free viewer published by Adobe](#).

Policies Related to Program Completed

This handbook is not meant to be a complete listing of all University of Texas Rio Grande Valley student policies. Please see the UTRGV Graduate Catalog for general information about university policies.

Statement of Intent

It is the intent of this faculty that all students who are accepted into this program successfully complete their course of training. Our aim is to help develop highly competent and self-aware professionals. We strive to provide students with high quality academic and clinical training and to support them in their personal growth and development. If any problems arise, we make provisions for additional support and training as possible to remediate developmental weaknesses. We consider it our responsibility to act in the best interests of future consumers and clients and to that end we endorse this student evaluation and continuation policy.

Expectations

The UTRGV Department of Counseling conducts a developmental, systematic assessment of each student's progress through the student's course of study. This evaluation includes consideration of scholastic, clinical, intrapersonal and interpersonal functioning. Students are assessed after each semester on these components and a consensus about his or her readiness to proceed to the next level of training is reached.

Faculty expectations of students' academic, professional, and personal development are explicit in admission and grade point policies, course syllabi, and clinical evaluations. Additionally, deadlines are expected to be met, knowledge of departmental policy is expected, and periodic contact with the advisor is expected. The department faculty also expects that students will read the Student Handbook, the Field Experience Manual applicable to their program, and other documents important to the student's success.

Students are expected to abstain from unethical, unprofessional and/or illegal conduct such as but not limited to substance abuse, inappropriate relationships with clients, failure to protect a client, or presenting themselves in a way other than as in-training. Students will also be subject to disciplinary action for unprofessional conduct such as excessive absences from classes or field site, failure to contact faculty or site supervisors when absences occur or engaging in inappropriate social media behavior.

In addition to meeting the academic standards set forth by the Graduate College and by the Counseling Department, students are expected to conduct themselves in an ethical, responsible and professional manner. They must be knowledgeable of and at all times adhere to the general standards of professional ethics and practice set forth by the American Counseling Association

(ACA), and the additional standards set forth for professional practice in specific settings (e.g., American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA), American School Counselor Association (ASCA), the International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors (IAMFT), and the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW).

The general and specific ACA standards for ethical practice of counseling are listed on the [American Counseling Association](#). Further, students in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program must adhere to the requirements of the [Texas State Board of Examiners of Licensed Professional Counselors](#), and students in the School Counseling program must adhere to the [Texas Education Agency Code of Ethics](#). These codes were developed to protect the client, the counselor, and the student. Ethical practices such as informed consent, confidentiality, and dual relationships will be introduced in the students' beginning coursework and impressed upon students throughout the programs. Practicing unethically will be cause for dismissal from the program. At the outset of their academic program, students are directed to review these standards and seek any clarification needed from their respective advisors.

As future professional counselors, the faculty expects students to be concerned about other people, to be stable and psychologically well adjusted (personally and professionally), to be capable of effective interpersonal relationships, to be able to receive and apply feedback willingly, and to give feedback constructively. Further, students are expected to behave generally in a manner that demonstrates fitness for a role in the helping professions. Finally, we expect students to be committed to continued personal growth and professional development and to demonstrate

that commitment through self-reflection and responsiveness to supervision in all activities related to their degree program.

For all the reasons cited above, the faculty will regularly monitor not only students' academic progress through coursework and scholarship but also selected personal dispositions that will affect their performance in the field. The assessment of these dispositions and skills necessarily involves subjective judgment by the faculty. When a student's academic or professional progress does not meet program standards, faculty will undertake procedures for remediation to support retention or dismissal from the program, if in the professional judgment of the faculty it is warranted. The purpose of this monitoring process is to ensure that all graduates of the UTRGV Department of Counseling programs sufficiently possess those characteristics so that they do not interfere with their professionalism or helping capacity.

Academic Program Standards

The student must maintain the GPA required for continued enrollment consistent with the University's graduation requirements. Students working on a master's degree must maintain a 3.0 or better GPA.

All courses with a grade of A, B, C, and F are counted in the calculation of GPA. Satisfactory Academic Progress cannot be determined until all incomplete (I) grades are resolved. Transfer grades that are accepted by the University are not counted in the determination of GPA because they are not part of the institutional or native GPA. However, the credits from all attempts accepted by UTRGV are counted in the calculation of pace and the maximum time frame requirement because transfer credits will be applied to meet prerequisites and course requirements for a student's UTRGV degree. Repeated courses are included in the calculation of GPA, pace, and the maximum time frame requirements. Audited courses do not count toward the qualitative or quantitative standards. Credit is not granted for audited courses. (Source: [UTRGV Graduate Catalog](#))

In addition, the Department of Counseling requires that the student must earn a 'B' or better in every course. In the event that a student does not meet the aforementioned requirement, the student must seek advisement to schedule the course repeat. Students earning more than two Cs during the program may be exited from the program. (Source: [UTRGV Graduate Catalog](#))

Vaquero Honor Code

Rules and regulations relating to the students of the University are enacted with the view towards protecting the best interests of the individual, the general welfare of the entire student body, and the educational objectives of the University. These rules and regulations are few, and most students will not find them unduly restrictive. Violations of institutional rules and regulations, including others that may subsequently be enacted, may subject a student to disciplinary action.

The Vaquero Honor Code can be found here. Additional expectations for academic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal functioning can be found in the [UTRGV Graduate Catalog](#).

Fitness to Practice

UTRGV Department of Counseling-School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Specializations
This Fitness to Practice policy applies to all students upon enrollment in the Clinical Mental Health or School Counseling specialization (Counseling Program) and remains in effect until program completion. Satisfying the curriculum requirements is not sufficient for completion of the Counseling Program. In addition to satisfactory completion of the academic requirements and standards of the UTRGV Graduate School (delineated in the [UTRGV Graduate Catalog](#)), all students are expected to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions sufficient to provide mental health services in clinical mental health and school settings. Satisfactory progress in the Counseling Program is a result of successful completion of university coursework and the demonstration of important characteristics and professional dispositions identified below in the Fitness to Practice Professional Dispositional Inventory. The Counseling Program Principles guide these professional dispositions, which are based on the counseling profession's values and reflect goals for those graduating from the Counseling Program. Because of the nature of the services provided by Clinical Mental Health or School Counselors, program faculty reserve the right to recommend or not recommend students' continuation in the program based on whether students demonstrate Fitness to Practice skills and professional dispositions.

In addition to meeting the academic standards set forth by the UTRGV Graduate College, counseling students are expected to conduct themselves in an ethical, responsible, and professional manner. They must be knowledgeable of and at all times adhere to the general standards of professional ethics and practice set forth by the [American Counseling Association \(ACA\)](#), and the additional standards set forth for professional practice in specific settings (e.g., American Mental Health Counselors Association-AMHCA), [American School Counselor Association \(ASCA\)](#), the International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors-IAMFT), and the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW). The general and specific ACA standards for ethical practice of counseling are listed on the [ACA website](#). Further, students in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program must adhere to the requirements of the [Texas State Board of Examiners of Licensed Professional Counselors](#), and students in the School Counseling specialization must adhere to the requirements in the [Texas Administrative Code \[Title 19, Part 7, Chapter 239, Rule 239.15\]](#). These codes were developed to protect the client, the student, and the counselor. At the outset of their academic program and in the new student orientation, counseling students are directed to review these standards and seek any clarification needed from their respective academic advisors.

As future professional counselors, the faculty members expect students to be concerned about other people, to be stable and psychologically well adjusted (personally and professionally), to be capable of effective interpersonal relationships, to be able to receive and apply feedback willingly, and to give feedback constructively (American Counseling Association Code of Ethics, 2014). Further, students are expected to behave generally in a manner that demonstrates fitness for a role in the helping professions. Finally, we expect students to be committed to continued personal growth and professional development and to demonstrate that commitment through self-reflection and responsiveness to supervision in all activities related to their degree program. For all the reasons cited above, the faculty will regularly monitor not only students' academic progress through coursework but also fitness to practice professional dispositions that will affect their performance in the counseling profession. The assessment of these dispositions and skills necessarily involves program faculty members' professional judgment. When a student's academic or professional progress does not meet program standards, faculty will undertake procedures for remediation to support development, retention, personal growth, and/or dismissal from the program, if warranted. The policy, practices, and procedures below are consistent with UTRGV's [Academic Policies and](#)

Procedures as well as counseling ethical codes (e.g., ACA, ASCA) and standards of counseling practice (Texas Educators, Title 19, Texas Administrative Code, Rule 247.2).

A. Counseling Program Principles

Principle A: Commitment to Self-Reflection (Garner et al., 2020)

Principle B: Commitment to Personal Wellness (Miller et al., 2020)

Principle C: Commitment to Responsiveness to Supervision and Feedback (American Counseling Association, 2014; American School Counselor Association, 2022)

Principle D: Commitment to Client Care (American Counseling Association, 2014)

B. Essential Professional Practice Dispositions

- Academic Skills
 - Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice
 - Social and Cultural Identities and Experiences
 - Lifespan Development
 - Career Development
 - Counseling Practice and Helping Relationships
 - Group Counseling and Group Work
 - Assessment and Diagnostic Purposes
 - Research and Program Evaluation
- Clinical Skills
- Professional Conduct
- Interpersonal Skills

C. Essential Abilities

The ability to perform the following essential functions, with or without reasonable accommodations, is required:

- a. **Observation:** Counseling students must be able to accurately observe demonstrations and students or clients close at hand and at a distance to learn skills and to gather their student's or client's data.
- b. **Communication:** Counseling students must be able to communicate orally and in writing. They also must be able to read and comprehend written material.
- c. **Psychomotor Skills:** Counseling students must exhibit motor and sensory abilities to attend and participate in class and practicum or internship placements.
- d. **Intellectual and Cognitive Abilities:** Counseling students must be able to measure, calculate, reason, analyze, synthesize, integrate, and apply information.
- e. **Behavioral and Social Attributes:** Counseling students must possess the emotional health required to fully use their intellectual abilities, such as exercising sound judgment, and developing mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with others such as their clients, client's parents, colleagues, and professors. Counseling students must possess the ability to function effectively under stress, adapt to changing environments, and display flexibility.
- f. **Application of Ethical Standards:** Counseling students must demonstrate professional demeanor and behavior and must perform in an ethical manner in dealings with others.
- g. **Accommodations.** An individual with a disability who requests a reasonable accommodation must initiate a request by contacting the Office of Student Accessibility Services. Accommodations will be provided in accordance with University policy, UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures, [**ADM 03-200**](#).

D. Fitness to Practice Criteria

Counseling students are evaluated throughout their enrollment in the program using criteria of student achievement and professional dispositions (see page 9) that have been set to measure students' professional development as it relates to their professional competence as well as interpersonal and intrapersonal functioning. These criteria are defined as the following five (5) areas of professional and personal performance standards (American Counseling Association, 2014; American School Counseling Association, 2022; Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2024; Center for Credentialing and Education, 2024; Garner et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2020):

- 1. Academic Skills (CACREP, 2024; CPCE, 2024): Students will**
 - a. Complete assignments as outlined in the course syllabus that are aligned with CACREP 2024 standards and CPCE core content areas
 - b. Actively participate in class discussions.
 - c. Demonstrate academic potential.
 - d. Submit quality of work.
 - e. Be punctual and present for class.
 - f. Develop presentation skills.
 - g. Develop professional writing skills including American Psychological Association format.
- 2. Clinical Skills and Treatment Planning (Garner et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2020): Students will develop knowledge and skills in**
 - a. Self-care and personal wellness strategies
 - b. Understanding and application of counseling theories
 - c. Assessment
 - d. Case conceptualization
 - e. Record keeping
- 3. Ethical Conduct (American Counseling Association, 2014): Students will**
 - a. Adhere to professional codes
 - b. Demonstrate academic honesty (e.g., use of AI)
- 4. Professional Conduct (Miller et al., 2020): Students will**
 - a. Develop a professional counseling identity
 - b. Develop a counseling theoretical orientation
 - c. Maintain professionalism at conference presentations
 - d. Maintain professional communication with peers and professors
- 5. Interpersonal Skills (Garner et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2020): Students will demonstrate knowledge and skills in the following:**
 - a. Emotional stability
 - b. Collaboration
 - c. Assertiveness
 - d. Maturity
 - e. Respect for diversity
 - f. Motivation
 - g. Flexibility
 - h. Caring
 - i. Professional/personal balance
 - j. Self-examination
 - k. Being receptive to feedback
 - l. Incorporating feedback
 - m. Appropriate boundaries

E. Assessment of Professional Dispositions and Dispositional Review Procedures.

1. Upon acceptance to the program, students will be apprised of the required professional dispositions.
2. Students will acknowledge and electronically sign the Fitness to Practice Policy in Watermark SLL and retain one copy for their own records. The signed acknowledgement forms will be stored in Watermark SLL. Students will also acknowledge and sign the Educator Preparation Program Exit Policy.
3. Throughout each course, full- and part-time faculty will document student behavior that deviates from dispositions using the Fitness to Practice Professional Dispositional inventory.
4. The Fitness to Practice Professional Dispositional Inventory is conducted at the end of each semester by all program and part-time faculty. The results are reported and discussed at a bi-annual (fall and spring) faculty meeting. If any concerns arise aligned with levels of review below, the academic advisor will contact the student to address the concern.
5. Student dispositions occurring during the summer semesters will be documented by the instructor of record, staff, clinic supervisors, or site supervisors and reported to the student's academic advisor. The counseling department chair and graduate program coordinator will also be copied on the email. The academic advisor will contact the student at the start of the Fall semester to address the concern. The academic advisor and instructor of record will complete the fitness to practice professional dispositional form together and present it to the student.

F. Retention, Remediation, and Dismissal Policy

The purpose of our retention, remediation, and dismissal policy is to support students as well as gatekeeping in the counseling profession. Faculty members, staff, clinic supervisors, and/or site supervisors use the Fitness to Practice Professional Dispositional Inventory in every course or at any time for students who knowingly engage in illegal, unprofessional, or unethical activities or for students whose professional performance is deemed to present an immediate threat to the well-being of others. In such cases and depending upon the level of perceived threat, we would skip most steps below and go straight to Level 2 that includes a faculty retention committee. The level of review will depend on factors such as the nature, severity, and frequency of the incident or concern. For example, repeated violations or severe unprofessional behavior may result in immediate Formal Level 2 Review. The procedures below were designed to support students' development, retention, and growth.

Level of Review

1. **Informal Review.** An informal review involves a meeting between a student and their academic advisor. When a faculty member expresses concerns (e.g., student struggles with punctuality) for the first time about a student and assigns a rating of 0 on students' fitness to practice dispositions, an informal review protocol is initiated. The faculty member/academic advisor must take steps a-c below. Step d may be necessary in extreme cases.
 - a. Discuss the concerns directly with the student within 7 business days of the initial concern and seek to work with the student to improve their fitness to practice.
 - b. Document the concerns in writing and advise the Graduate Program Coordinator and Department Chair of the concern(s) to identify potential patterns.
 - c. Document dates and content of meetings with students using the Fitness to Practice

Review Form (see page 12) and provide a copy of the signed form to the Graduate Program Coordinator and Department Chair.

- d. Initiate Level 1 or Level 2 protocol if the concern warrants it (e.g., severe unprofessional behavior).

2. **Formal Review (Level 1).** A Level 1 Formal Review is initiated when the student receives a rating of 0 on fitness to practice professional dispositions on two separate occasions or faculty members believe that a student could benefit from completing a remediation plan to improve fitness to practice. It is important to note that if faculty members express significant concerns on an important professional disposition (e.g., student has not demonstrated clinical skills), they can recommend a Level 2 review even if there has only been one incident. The following steps must be implemented for a Formal Level 1 Review:

- a. The academic advisor contacts the student to set up a meeting to discuss fitness to practice concerns. The Fitness to Practice Professional Dispositional Inventory is conducted at the end of each semester by all program and part-time faculty. The results are reported and discussed at a bi-annual (fall and spring) faculty meeting. Therefore, the academic advisor will be aware of the fitness-to-practice concern. The student must respond within 7 business days of the notification. If the student does not respond within the timeframe, then a Level 2 review is initiated.
- b. The academic advisor meets with the student and collaborates on constructing a remediation plan. The student will have 7 business days to review, sign, and return the remediation plan to the academic advisor. Copies of the remediation plan will be kept in the student's file. The academic advisor will then notify the Graduate Program Coordinator and Department Chair regarding the meeting with the student and the proposed remediation plan with a timeline to complete activities.
- c. The student will submit the remediation plan within the agreed upon timeframe to their academic advisor. If the academic advisor determines that all stipulations in the remediation plan have been met, no further action is required. The academic advisor notifies the Graduate Program Coordinator and Department Chair. However, if the student does not meet the stipulations set forth in their remediation plan or receives a rating of 0 on a fitness to practice professional disposition in another academic semester, they would need to be reviewed by a faculty retention committee as part of a Level 2 Review.

3. **Formal Review (Level 2).** A Level 2 Review is initiated in the following ways: (1) faculty members, site supervisors, clinic supervisors, or staff have expressed significant concerns on a professional disposition and given a rating of 0 on a student's fitness to practice dispositions on three separate occasions; (2) faculty members, clinic supervisors, site supervisors, or staff believe that a student has engaged in unprofessional behavior that warrants a Level 2 Review; or (3) a student has not fulfilled their remediation plan under the Level 1 Review. When a level 2 review protocol is initiated, the following steps must be implemented:

- a. The Faculty Retention Committee will hear the student's case. The Faculty Retention Committee consists of three full-time faculty members in the department of counseling elected by full-time faculty. The Faculty Retention committee will determine whether the student's matter should be referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (SSR) for review under the applicable University policies. Also, the department chair will not participate in a level 2 review.
- b. The chair of the Faculty Retention Committee will email the student letting them know about the Level 2 violation and to schedule a meeting. The student must respond within 7 business days (excluding holidays) of receiving the notification.
- c. The student may appear in person (or zoom) before the Faculty Retention Committee and present evidence. No person other than the student and faculty retention committee members may be present.

- d. After the Faculty Retention Committee has heard the evidence, they will decide a course of action for the student.

G. Appeals and Procedures Subsequent to Request for Dismissal

Following the review of information at the Faculty Retention Committee meeting, the Committee must decide and report to the student that the student: (1) should be allowed to remain in the program with or without conditions or (2) should be dismissed from the program, immediately dropped from enrollment in current courses, and prevented from enrolling in subsequent courses. The Faculty Retention Committee decision will be written and emailed to the student within 7 business days of the close of the hearing. The committee will copy the Academic Advisor, Graduate Program Coordinator, Department Chair, and CEP Associate Dean for Graduate Studies.

1. If the student is not satisfied with the Faculty Retention Committee's decision, the Department Chair will consider the matter and based on information submitted by the Faculty Retention Committee, the Department Chair may meet with the Faculty Retention Committee and/or with the student. The Department Chair will render their decision and send to the student within 7 business days (excluding holidays) of receiving the appeal. If the student is not satisfied with the Department Chair's decision, they can appeal to the Educator Preparation Committee (EPC) in the College of Education and P-16 Integration. We will follow the CEP Educator Preparation Program Exit policy for general dismissal.
2. The EPC will consider the matter based on information submitted by the Faculty Retention Committee. The EPC will render their decision and send to the student within 7 business days (excluding holidays) of receiving the appeal. If the student is not satisfied with the EPC's decision, they can appeal to the Dean in the College of Education and P-16 Integration.
3. A dismissed student may dispute the decision of the EPC by appealing to the CEP Dean whose decision is final. The dismissed student must file a written appeal to the Dean within five (5) business days of receipt of the EPC's written decision. The student's appeal must include a justification statement for appeal and all documentation provided by the student to the EPC. Within fifteen (15) business days from receipt of the student's appeal, the Dean will provide a written decision to the student and the EPC Chair. The decision of the Dean is the final appellate review.

Grade Appeals Process

Please review the grade appeals process on [Graduate College](#).

"Students wishing to appeal final grades or decisions regarding academic standards should first discuss the matter with the instructor of the class. If no resolution occurs, and the student wishes to pursue the matter further, the student may appeal in writing to the appropriate department chair/school director within one long semester after the disputed grade or decision is issued.

The department chair/school director will respond in writing to the student within 14 calendar days (excluding holidays) of the receipt of the student's written appeal. Pursuant appeals will be written and directed within 14 calendar days (excluding holidays) of the date of the department chair's decision to the school, college, or division College Academic Appeals Committee.

The committee will consist of a panel of three faculty members, two of whom may not be from the department in which the appeal originated. The dean will appoint the panel members upon receipt of the written appeal and notify the student in writing of the date, time, and location of the hearing and the names of the members of the panel.

The student and the faculty member involved may appear in person before the panel and present evidence. The hearing will be closed to the public, and no person other than the student, the faculty member involved and panel members may be present.

No person may represent the student or the faculty member. After the College Academic Appeals Committee has heard the appeal, it will deliberate and come to a decision. The committee's decision will be written and mailed, or delivered in person, to the student and faculty member within three class days of the close of the hearing. The student may appeal in writing within 14 calendar days to the dean/director (excluding holidays). The dean's decision will be final, and it must be mailed or delivered in person to the student within 14 calendar days (excluding holidays) of the receipt of the student's written appeal."

Professional Liability Insurance

All counseling graduate students are required to carry professional liability insurance throughout the entire program beginning with the semester they enroll in field courses or courses with practice components. Liability insurance needs to be renewed on an annual basis. To ensure liability insurance is effective throughout the professional practice experiences, students should obtain this insurance every August. You will receive information on how to enroll in your field experience courses. Employee insurance does not cover professional practice experiences.

Professional Organizations and Involvement

Counseling is a dynamic profession sensitive to the needs of society throughout its evolution. Counselors are committed to being involved in their profession in order to support the mission of serving humanity. Therefore, counseling students are strongly encouraged to seek student membership in the American Counseling Association (ACA) or the Texas Counseling Association (TCA); and/or American School Counseling Association (ASCA) or the Texas School Counseling

Association (TSCA), Rio Grande Valley Counseling Association (RGVCA) top of Texas Counseling Association (TTCA), Counseling and Guidance Counseling Association (CGSA).

Individual faculty members model this commitment to professionalism through extensive involvement as members and leaders in state, national, and international counseling associations. Most professional organizations offer reduced membership rates to students as well as the following benefits: receipt of professional publications (journals and newsletters); reduced registration fees for professional meetings (seminars, conventions, workshops) sponsored by the organization; eligibility for member services (library resource use, legal defense funds and services, etc.); involvement in activities and issues which are directly or indirectly pertinent to the profession

(legislation and professional credentialing including licensure, certification, and program accreditation); and affiliation with other professionals having interests and areas of expertise similar to one's own.

Name and Address Changes

For a variety of reasons, it is important that the department be able to reach students. In order to facilitate correspondence, please report any change of physical address, personal email address, or phone number to the Department's Administrative Assistant II, Ms. Norma Sepulveda at norma.sepulveda@utrgv.edu 956-665-3449, as well as changing it through [U Central forms](#).

General Communication

A UTRGV account and university email is created for each student upon their enrollment in the program. It is the student's responsibility to regularly check messages at this account and email address and to respond in a timely manner. A variety of informational items are communicated through these venues including book lists, registration information, upcoming deadlines, exam information, and other important items. Faculty at will use students' UTRGV email addresses for all communications.

Financial Aid

In accordance with Financial Aid guidelines, a graduate student who is enrolled for at least six hours of credit during a regular semester, or six hours of credit during the summer sessions (six hours can be taken for one summer session or split between the two summer sessions) may be eligible to receive financial aid. Students must complete a [FAFSA](#) to apply. Contact the UTRGV Financial Aid Office for more information.

Course Load

The Department of Counseling recognizes the rigorous and demanding nature of graduate study and strongly suggests that students who are employed in full-time positions in addition to pursuing a graduate degree enroll in no more than six hours per semester and nine hours total in the summer. Students wishing to exceed the recommended course load per semester must have permission from their faculty advisor and the department chair to do so.

Transfer Credits

A maximum of nine (9) semester hours of appropriate graduate work earned at other institutions, subject to the approval of the director of the graduate program or chair of the major department and certification by the Graduate College, may be transferred to UTRGV for degree credit. Individual graduate degree programs may accept fewer hours or have additional requirements.

A course may be transferred only if:

1. The course is equivalent to a graduate-level course at UTRGV or is appropriate for elective credit at the graduate level within the student's degree program;
2. The grade for the course is not less than B; and
3. The course was not taken at such a date that it would extend the student's time for achieving the degree beyond the approval limit for the graduate program (seven years for a master's program and 10 years for a doctoral program).

Transfer of graduate credit is not automatic. The student must submit a written request for approval of transfer to the director of the graduate program or chair of the major department, who determines whether all the conditions for transfer have been met before the hours are added to the graduate degree plan. The department must specify which course is to be transferred by prefix, name, course grade and indicate the equivalency (providing that the student graduates within the approved time limit for the degree) on the student's Application for Degree form which is approved by the dean of the college and routed to the Graduate College for review and approval by the dean of the Graduate College. (Source: [UTRGV Graduate Catalog](#)).

Incompletes

An incomplete (I) grade is a temporary grade given only during the last one-fourth of a term/semester and only if:

1. The student is passing the course to date;
2. The student will not have completed the required coursework within the allotted time of a regular semester or summer session; and
3. The instructor determines that the reason for the work being incomplete is valid and that the grade of "I" is justified.

A written agreement between the student and the instructor specifying the work to be made up and the deadline for its accomplishment must be filed in the office of the Department Chair at the time that the "I" is submitted. The work agreed upon must be satisfactorily completed and the "I" changed no later than the end of the next regular (Fall or Spring) semester from the date the "I" was received (unless an extension is requested by the instructor) or the grade will automatically be recorded as the grade alternatively assigned by the faculty at the time of submitting the written agreement.

The Office of the Registrar must receive the complete Request for Grade of Incomplete Form with all required signatures by the published deadline for faculty to enter grades, or an NR grade will be entered. (Source: [UTRGV Graduate Catalog](#), pg. 52.)

Time Limit for Degree Completion

All requirements must be completed within one seven-year period. Work more than seven years old will not meet graduation requirements and can be reinstated only by special permission of the Dean for graduate studies. (Source: [UTRGV Graduate Catalog](#)).

Counseling Services for Students

Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) is a center that provides free and confidential counseling services to address mental health concerns and to promote personal growth for currently enrolled UTRGV students. Counseling services are provided by either licensed mental health professionals or graduate-level interns under the supervision of a licensed counselor.

Students being seen for counseling may work on a wide variety of issues. Examples include Stress, Family Problems, Depression, Sexual Assault, Anxiety, Abuse, Eating Disorders, Grief/Loss, Self-Esteem, Anger Management, Sexuality, Parenting, Divorce, Academic Difficulties, Harassment, Partner/Relationship Problems, Suicidal Ideation, Domestic Violence, Health Issues, Post-Traumatic Stress, Substance Abuse, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. In some cases, such as with more severe or complex conditions, a student may be referred out for additional or more appropriate treatment options.

There is no charge to enrolled students for counseling services. The following locations offer counseling services:

Brownsville Campus
Cortez Hall, Rm. 237
Brownsville, TX 78520
Phone: 956-882-3896

Edinburg Campus
University Center, Rm. 109
Edinburg, TX 78539
Phone: 956-665-2574

You can contact CaPS or find more information at

- Email: counseling@utrgv.edu
- Web: [UTRGV Counseling Center](#)

Exit Requirements

All Students

1. Completion of all course requirements with a minimum 3.0 grade point average.
2. Satisfactory completion of all benchmarks.
3. Passing Score on the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE)

Endorsement, Licensure and Certification

The policy of the Department of Counseling at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley is that graduates are recommended by faculty for employment only for positions consistent with the specialty areas in which they have had internships or field experience and completed the required courses.

School Counseling Certification Requirements

To meet the academic requirements for licensure as a school counselor in Texas, one must successfully complete a school-counseling graduate program. The degree must be awarded before certification can be issued. Texas Education Agency Requirements for School Counseling Certification at UTRGV:

- Complete the 60-hour master's program in counseling with a school counseling specialization.
- Hold a master's degree from an institution of higher education that is accredited by an accrediting agency, as recognized by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (UTRGV is accredited by SACSCOC, which is recognized by THECB).
- Complete Special Education modules with a minimum 80% score during enrollment in COUN 6304-Human Growth and Development for Counseling Professionals.
- Complete School Counseling specialization program coursework including COUN 6344 (School Counseling). Students must complete COUN 6344 and complete the Empowering Educator Modules with a minimum 80% score.
- Go to the UTRGV Counseling Student Info Hub (School Counseling/Applying for School Counselor Certification). Register and complete the TExES 252 practice examination. Send your test scores (multiple choice section) to Mr. Damian Ramirez (damian.ramirez@utrgv.edu) and copy Norma Sepulveda (norma.sepulveda@utrgv.edu) and Javier Cavazos (javier.cavazos@utrgv.edu).
- Students must pass the TExES 252 Practice Examination (Representative) with an 80 or above. Once Mr. Damian Ramirez confirms that students passed the TExES 252 practice examination, he will contact students to clear them to take the TExES examination. Students will then need to complete the exam eligibility form (can be found in the UTRGV Counseling Student Info Hub under School Counseling/Applying for School Counselor

- Certification) and send to the coug@utrgv.edu for approval.
- Once approved, the department of counseling will send students a signed Eligibility form. Students will then need to submit the TExES Testing Request application via [Watermark SLL](#) to take the 252 Certification Exam.
 - Complete Practicum, Internship I, and Internship II in a school setting and upload all required documentation to [Watermark SLL](#). All field experience documentation in the clinical portfolio must be completed to be cleared.
 - Obtain Certification Recommendation form.
 - Finalize certification process (after finishing field experience coursework, 252 certification exam and degree has been awarded)
 - Submit GR Standard Certificate Application to UTRGV Office of Education Preparation and Accountability via [Watermark SLL](#). Apply and Pay for a Standard Certificate via [TEA](#).

Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) Requirements

Graduate programs offered by the Department of Counseling meet the academic requirements specified by the Texas Board of Examiners of Licensed Professional Counselors. The Board also requires passage of the post-master's supervised experience. Consult the website of Texas Board of Examiners of Licensed Professional Counselors for the latest requirements at National counselor Exam (NCE), for the [Jurisprudence Exam](#).

Requirements as of the printing of this handbook are:

- A graduate degree in counseling or related field from a university, which meets the accreditation requirements of the board (UTRGV meets these requirements).
- Pass National Counseling Examination
- Complete Jurisprudence Exam
- Pass Background check
- Obtain practicum documentation form
- Obtain supervisory agreement form
- Complete Three thousand (3,000) clock-hours of supervised experience under supervision of approved LPC supervisor.

The School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling programs offered by the Department of Counseling at UTRGV prepare the student to apply for certification and/or licensure. It is the student's responsibility to complete all state requirements for certification and licensure upon graduation from the Counseling program. Students should apply for certification and/or licensure as soon as they are eligible. If requirements change between the time a student completes the program and the time he or she applies for certification and/or licensure, the student will be required to meet the new standards. This may mean taking additional courses or completing additional requirements.

Student Feedback

Course Evaluations

Students are encouraged to evaluate faculty members through the University's course evaluation process at the end of each semester. This affords the student the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the teaching effectiveness of faculty members. The course evaluations are compiled and posted for faculty to review. All evaluations are anonymous. The course evaluations are reviewed carefully when faculty are considered for retention, promotion, or tenure.

Alumni Survey

Every three years, the department conducts a follow-up study of program graduates and their employers. The department is interested in the perceptions of the graduate's preparedness to work as counselors in school and clinical mental health settings. Please take the time to respond

to surveys and questionnaires post-graduation sent to you from the Department of Counseling. (This timeline is under review by the COE UTRGV.)

Student Resource Contact Information

College of Education and P-16 Integration Administration/Faculty/Staff

Name	Position	E-Mail Address	Phone #	Office
Dr. Alma D. Rodriguez	Dean	alma.rodriquez@utrgv.edu	665-3627	EEDUC 3.102E
Dr. Javier Cavazos	Department Chair	javier.cavazos@utrgv.edu	665-2873	EEDUC 1.202A
Ms. Norma Sepulveda	Admin. Assistant II	norma.sepulveda@utrgv.edu	665-3449	EEDUC 1.202B
Ms. Cristina Reyes	Office Assistant	cristina.reyes1@utrgv.edu	882-7268	BMAIN 2.200
Ms. Celinda Quintanilla	Clinic Director	celinda.quintanilla@utrgv.edu	665-3073	EEDUC 1.226

College of Education and P-16 Integration Brownsville Faculty/Staff

Name				
Ms. Briana Garcia	Admin. Support Clinic	briana.garcia@utrgv.edu	882-7792	BNOBL 114
Ms. Patricia Fernandez	Clinical Supervisor	patricia.fernandez@utrgv.edu	882-7792	BNOBL 122
Dr. Rachelle Morales	Faculty	rachelle.morales@utrgv.edu		EEDUC 1.205
Dr. Eunice Lerma	Faculty	eunice.lerma@utrgv.edu	882-5850	BNOBL 129
Dr. James Whittenberg	Faculty	james.whittenberg@utrgv.edu	882-7593	BNOBL 127
Dr. Selma Yznaga	Faculty	selma.yznaga@utrgv.edu	882-7855	BNOBL 130

College of Education and P-16 Integration Edinburg Faculty/Staff

Name	Position	E-Mail Address	Phone #	Office
Ms. Amanda Loera	Admin. Support Clinic	amanda.loera01@utrgv.edu	665-5251	EEDUC 1.270
Mr. Roy Rosales	Clinic Supervisor	roy.rosales@utrgv.edu	665-3738	EEDUC 1.224
Dr. Clarissa Salinas	Faculty	clarissa.salinas@utrgv.edu	665-3470	EEDUC 1.207
Dr. Veronica Castro	Faculty & Graduate Program Coordinator	veronica.castro@utrgv.edu	665-5319	EEDUC 1.220
Dr. Jean Shen	Faculty	jean.shen@utrgv.edu	665-7086	EEDUC 1.650
Dr. Arlett Zamarripa	Faculty	arlett.zamarripa01@utrgv.edu	665-3449	EEDUC 1.202

College of Education and P-16 Integration Laredo Faculty/Staff

Name	Position	E-Mail Address	Phone #	Office
Dr. Sharon Mata	Faculty & Graduate Program Coordinator	sharon.mata@utrgv.edu		LAR 2.100.04
Dr. Adwoa Bonny-Graves	Faculty	adwoa.bonnygraves@utrgv.edu		LAR 2.100.04
Carla Luna	Program Coordinator	carla.luna@utrgv.edu		LAR 2.100.04

Student Support Resources

Centers Website	Email Address
Advising Center	academicadvising@utrgv.edu
Career Center	careercenter@utrgv.edu
Counseling Center	counseling@utrgv.edu
Food Pantry	foodpantry@utrgv.edu
Learning Center	learningcenter@utrgv.edu
University Library	circulation@utrgv.edu
Writing Center	wc@utrgv.edu
U Central	ucentral@utrgv.edu

Websites of Professional Counseling Organizations and Resources

- [American Counseling Association \(ACA\)](#)
- [American Mental Health Counselors Association \(AMHCA\)](#)
- [American School Counselor Association \(ASCA\)](#)
- [Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs \(CACREP\)](#)
- [National Board of Certified Counselors \(NBCC\)](#)
- [Center for Credentialing & Education \(CCE\)](#)
- [Information Regarding NCE and NCMHCE Examinations](#)
- [Texas Counseling Association \(TCA\)](#)
- [Texas School Counselor Association \(TSCA\)](#)
- [Texas Board of Examiners of Licensed Professional Counselors \(TxLPC\)](#)

Acknowledgement of Student Responsibilities and Fitness to Practice and EPP Exit Policy

I, _____ have read The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Department of Counseling Student Handbook. I understand that my enrollment status in the Department of Counseling is based on my ability to continue to satisfy all academic program requirements, including but not limited to adequate grades, professional and personal development and dispositions, and skill development during my entire graduate enrollment. I also have read The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Department of Counseling Fitness to Practice and the EPP Exit Policy. I understand that my enrollment status in the Department of Counseling is based on my ability to continue to satisfy all academic program requirements and fitness to practice professional dispositions. I understand that I must follow the Fitness to Practice Policies and Procedures and that I may be dismissed at any time if I do not satisfy these requirements and adhere to these policies.

I understand I will be continually evaluated regarding my appropriateness for the field of counseling. I further understand that UTRGV may modify the policies and procedures as stated in the Graduate Student Handbook, the Graduate Catalog, and the Department of Counseling Student Handbook at any time. If modifications do occur, I will be notified via my UTRGV email.

Signature:

Date: