

Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling

Technical Standards Affidavit

Technical Standards for Admission, Matriculation, and Graduation

Students in Sonoran University of Health Sciences' Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (MSCMHC) program must possess aptitude, abilities, and skills in all four areas listed below and be able to meet them with or without accommodation. These standards must be met throughout the program in order for students to make satisfactory progress and graduate. Any intention of the student to practice only a narrow part of the curriculum upon graduation does not alter the requirement that all students perform satisfactorily in the full curriculum and meet all graduation requirements. If at any time the candidate can no longer meet these technical standards or requires additional accommodation, the Dean of Students must be notified immediately.

Observation

A student must be able to observe clients accurately at a reasonable distance and close at hand, noting non-verbal as well as verbal signals. Specific observational requirements include but are not limited to the following abilities: detecting emotional mood; noting non-verbal communication (e.g., lack of eye contact); recognizing distress; observing trauma-based reactions; noting discrepancies in verbal and non-verbal communication.

Communication

Students must be able to actively listen and relate effectively and sensitively to clients of all genders, ages, races, lifestyles, sexual orientations, and cultural backgrounds and be able to convey both understanding and empathy.

Students must be able to observe and clearly communicate with clients in order to elicit information, accurately describe changes in mood, activity, and posture; and be able to perceive verbal as well as nonverbal communications. Communication includes verbal and/or nonverbal communication as well as reading and writing. Counselor education presents exceptional challenges in the volume and breadth of required reading and the necessity to utilize evidence-based strategies with clients.

Students must be able to communicate quickly and effectively in oral and written English with all members of the health care team. Specific requirements include but are not limited to the following abilities: documenting sessions through case notes, developing and updating the client's treatment plan, communicating rapidly and clearly with the team during a case report, eliciting a thorough intake history from clients, and communicating complex findings in appropriate terms to clients and various members of the healthcare team.

Students must learn to recognize and promptly respond to emotions such as sadness, worry, and agitation, as well as a lack of comprehension of a provider's communication. Students must be able to read and record observations and plans, legibly, efficiently, and accurately in documents such as the client record. Students must be able to prepare and communicate concise and complete summaries of individual sessions. Students must be able to complete forms manually and on the computer keyboard, according to directions, in a complete and timely fashion.

Intellectual, Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities

These abilities include analysis, judgment, and synthesis of complex human behaviors. The student must also be able to recognize patterns in clients and signs of progress or regression. Clinical reasoning and problem-solving, critical skills demanded of counselors, require all of these intellectual abilities and must be performed quickly, especially in crisis situations. Moreover, the effective counselor often must deal complicated cognitive, emotional and behavioral issues simultaneously.

Students must be able to identify significant findings from history, presenting issues and current presentation of client; provide a reasoned explanation for likely mental health diagnostic impressions; construct a reasoned and evidence-based treatment-plan; and support clients in incorporating psychotropic medications with therapy, recalling and retaining information in an efficient manner.

Students must be able to identify and communicate their scope of competence to others when appropriate. The ability to incorporate new information from peers, teachers, and literature in formulating mental health diagnostic impressions and treatment plans is essential. Good judgment in client assessment and therapeutic planning is essential.

Behavioral and Social Attributes

Empathy, integrity, honesty, concern for others, good interpersonal skills, ethical decision-making, interest, and motivation are all required personal qualities.

Students must be able to fully utilize their intellectual abilities, exercise good judgment, and promptly complete all responsibilities attendant to the diagnosis and care of clients in all clinical and academic settings. They must be able to develop mature, professional, and effective relationships with patients of all genders, ages, races, lifestyles, sexual orientations, and cultural backgrounds, as well as with their families, with other healthcare providers, and with all members of the learning and working community. At times, this requires the ability to be aware of and appropriately react to one's own immediate emotional responses. For example, students must maintain a professional demeanor and be able to function at a high level in the face of personal fatigue, dissatisfied clients and their families, and tired colleagues.

Students must be able to develop professional relationships with clients, providing comfort and reassurance when appropriate while protecting client confidentiality. Students must be able to maintain professional conduct when interacting with clients suffering from severe mental illness trauma, and complicated grief and loss. Students must possess adequate endurance to tolerate physically taxing workloads and function effectively under stress. At times, all students are required to work for extended periods, seeing clients one after another through the day. Students must be able to adapt to change, display flexibility, and learn to function with the uncertainties inherent in the clinical problems of many patients. Students are expected to accept appropriate suggestions and criticism and, if necessary, respond by modifying their behavior.

Signature 

REMAINDER OF PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK. [DEPOSITION PAGE FOLLOWS.]

Student Deposition

The undersigned deposes and states that they have read the above-described Technical Standards for Sonoran University of Health Sciences for Admission, Promotion, and Graduation and declares that they possess aptitude, abilities, and skills in all the following areas:

1. The emotional health required for the full use of intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, and the prompt and safe completion of all responsibilities; the ability to adapt to change, display flexibility and learn to function in the face of uncertainties and stressful situations; empathy, integrity, concern for others, interpersonal skills, interest, and motivation which will be assessed during the admissions process and throughout their education.
2. The ability to reason, learn, and perform independently demonstrating the conceptual, integrative, and quantitative skills that are necessary for critical thinking, problem-solving, the ability to comprehend three-dimensional and spatial relationships, diagnosis, and therapeutic applications.
3. The visual, hearing, and communication skills and personal hygiene requisite to professional performance including reading all forms of diagnostic impressions, eliciting, and recording client histories, and performing any and all other diagnostic and therapeutic procedures.
4. The understanding and empathy for individuals in psychological distress including the use of counseling techniques to support client growth.

Statement of Understanding and Agreement

By signing below, I agree that I possess the aptitude, abilities, and skills in all the areas listed above and am able to meet Sonoran University's Technical Standards with or without reasonable accommodation. I understand that fulfillment of the technical standards for graduation from Sonoran University does not mean that I will be able to fulfill the technical standards required for licensure. This document applies to all years of my counselor school training at Sonoran University.

Signature Date

Evaluation and Implementation of Reasonable Accommodations

Sonoran University is committed to the full and meaningful inclusion of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities should contact the Accessibility Office within the Dean of Students Office to request accommodation. Given the clinical nature of counselor education, additional time may be needed to implement accommodations. Timely disclosure and requests by students are essential and encouraged.

Sonoran University Accessibility Office
2140 East Broadway Road, Tempe, AZ 85282 | 480.222.9237
Email: accessibility@sonoran.edu | www.sonoran.edu/student-accommodations/

I am interested in receiving information on requesting an accommodation:

Please initial that have read page 3