



# Master's Program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling

## Graduate Student Handbook 2025

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## **PREFACE**

This *Handbook* contains general information about the Master's program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC). The *Handbook* has been prepared by the CMHC Program faculty to provide you with the policies, procedures, and criteria for your program. Students are responsible for all of the information in this document. Please read it carefully at the beginning of your program and refer to it when questions arise.

**Welcome to SOU and the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program!**

**September 2025**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the SOU Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program is to train competent, culturally aware, ethical counselors who will provide exceptional mental health services in both public and private settings to meet the needs of increasingly diverse communities.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE MASTER'S IN CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING PROGRAM**

- The SOU Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program provides a personal academic environment where faculty members are deeply committed to our students' personal and professional growth.
- Students develop a deep understanding of the personhood of the counselor as an important foundation for the counseling relationship.
- Students attain a broad theoretical and empirical understanding of counseling.
- Students grow in counseling skills throughout their studies, beginning experiential training in the first term with close supervision and guidance.
- Students learn to think and act ethically, demonstrating professional accountability and acumen for the welfare of clients, agencies, communities, and the clinical mental health counseling profession.
- Students grow in multicultural competence and demonstrate understanding and support of the increasing diversity of our communities.
- Students develop strong professional identities as clinical mental health counselors.
- Graduates provide exceptional mental health services within public and private agencies and effectively work with individuals, groups, families, and social systems.
- Graduates qualify to become licensed professional counselors (LPC) throughout the United States.
- Graduates are eligible for recognition by the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC), as Nationally Certified Counselors (NCC) after passing the National Counselor Examination (NCE).
- The CMHC curriculum meets the educational requirements for licensure as a Licensed Professional Counselor by the Oregon Board of Licensed Professional

Counselors and Therapists.

- The Clinical Mental Health Counseling program is accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (cacrep.org), to provide employment mobility for graduates.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY**

Various aspects of professional development are fostered during the program in specific courses, practicum and internship experiences, and in the community of graduate students and faculty. Through the course curriculum, students learn about the various professional organizations, accreditation standards, and state licensing laws that regulate the practice of counseling. Students learn the requirements, procedures, and responsibilities for licensure; they become well-versed in the various codes of conduct that guide professional behavior and in applying effective ethical decision-making through case analysis, role play, and supervision. Students develop Professional Disclosure Statements and implement Informed Consent procedures with their pre-practicum and practicum clients in the CMHC Counseling Laboratory, all in preparation for the internship experience in various regional agencies.

Some students opt to collaborate with faculty in research activities to increase their knowledge and gain experience developing knowledge; often this includes joint submission of a conference proposal or a paper for publication. These activities are especially useful for those students considering doctoral studies. Faculty research interests are varied and students are encouraged to seek out faculty members directly to inquire about the possibilities of assisting on specific research projects.

Another aspect of professional identity is participation in professional counseling organizations. Because students are required to obtain Professional Liability Insurance from one of the counseling organizations, they must become members of one of these organizations. This requirement has two functions: students will have a means of obtaining liability insurance and, we hope, will also begin to see the organization as a vital professional resource and community. Students are encouraged to explore, attend conferences or training opportunities, join, and become involved. A brief summary of some professional organizations is provided below.

The American Counseling Association (ACA) is the largest professional counseling association in the country. ACA provides an annual conference, counseling journals, continuing education, and advocacy services for its members. ACA has 19 divisions as well as regional, international, and special interest groups that members may join. Student memberships are available at reduced rates (\$105 as of 2025) and applications can be obtained

on the ACA website (<https://www.counseling.org/membership/join-reinstate>). Membership includes the cost of student liability insurance.

The American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA) is an organization specifically focused on the professional needs of clinical mental health counselors. They provide an annual conference with numerous clinically- relevant presentations and training opportunities, a journal, advocacy on behalf of licensed counselors, and a marketing resource for those in private practice. Student membership is currently \$84 (as of 2025). AMHCA can be contacted via their website (<http://connections.amhca.org/joinamhca>). Membership includes the cost of student liability insurance.

The National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC, [www.nbcc.org](http://www.nbcc.org)) was originally established by the ACA and is currently an independent organization that certifies counselors. This level of recognition may be useful in enhancing one's professional identity, level of competence, and mobility for employment. Many CMHC students complete the NBCC's National Counselor Examination (NCE) shortly after taking the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Exam (CPCE) that is required of all CMHC students in their last term. Successful completion of the NCE allows one to become a National Certified Counselor (NCC) and is the first step in achieving other specialty certifications.

The Oregon Counseling Association (ORCA, [www.or-counseling.org/](http://www.or-counseling.org/)) provides regional conferences and advocacy with the state legislature on behalf of counselors. They also sponsor an annual conference and workshops throughout Oregon. Student memberships are available for \$25 (as of 2025). ORCA can be contacted at <https://or-counseling.org/join-us>

## **STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **LIBRARY SERVICES**

The Hannon Library offers an extensive collection of books, government publications, films, print journals, e- journals, and online databases. There is online access to the full-text of hundreds of counseling and psychology journals, with a very good selection of topics in mental health counseling. Students can access the library catalog and other resources via Hannon Library's website (<http://hanlib.sou.edu>). Within the Hannon Library site, students also have access to over 2200 counseling and therapy videos through alexanderstreet.com. There is also an excellent gateway to all resources related to counseling at <https://libguides.sou.edu/counseling> that includes links to relevant databases, the online catalog, and other resources, as well as a TeacherTube tutorial on using *PsycInfo*. This guide has tabs at the top of that link to related pages for Quick Tips and APA Style Help.

## COMPUTER RESOURCES AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The SOU Ashland Campus provides thousands of wired ports across campus and ubiquitous wireless access. There are 35 computer labs on campus, including one in the Education/Psychology Building on the main floor.

Most classrooms in the Psychology Department are “smart classrooms” that are configured for teaching using computer technology with LCD projectors. Students frequently use this technology for class presentations. There is an orientation for students on using the SOU course management system (Moodle) available online at <http://moodle.sou.edu/mod/book/view.php?id=143884>

The Help Desk offers technical support resources to students every weekday and for a portion of the weekend at 541-552-6900 and online at <https://support.sou.edu>

**DIRECTORY OF OFFICES AND SERVICES**

Telephone Prefix: 541.552+

CMHC Office Coordinator, Angel McDonald	6539
CMHC Program Chair, Dr. Victor Chang	6638
CMHC Clinical Coordinator, Dr. Lindsey Warwick	6528
Dean of College of Natural and Social Sciences, Dr. Vincent Smith	6124
Director of Graduate Studies, Dr. Dan DeNeui	6913
Housing & Dorms	6998
Family Housing	8230
Parking on Campus/Enrollment Services (ESC) Britt Hall	6995
Raider Student Services, Computing Services Center	6600
Dean of Students Office, Stevenson Union 321	6223
Social Justice & Equity Center	8791

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### PATHWAY to GRADUATION

<b>Steps in Process</b>	<b>Check when completed</b>	<b>Date</b>
Admission		
Meet with Faculty Advisor (first fall term)		
Begin tracking KPI Competencies (first fall term)		
Apply for Internship Placement (first spring term)		
File Degree Application Forms (second winter term)		
Complete Coursework (second spring term)		
Complete Exit Requirements for program (Internship, coursework, CMHC Exit Exam - second spring term)		
Receive Letter of Degree Award		
Commencement		

## ADMISSION

### APPLYING FOR ADMISSION

*For priority consideration, applicants must apply by February 1 for admission for the following Fall.* After February 1, applications will be given consideration on a space-available basis only. Admission is competitive and is based on a variety of factors including previous academic performance, relevant experience in the field, and personal qualities that ensure success in the field.

All applicants must apply to *both* Southern Oregon University and the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program. See Admission Requirements on p. 10 for specifics on how to obtain forms and where to send your application materials.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

Basic information about registration, fees, course offerings, financial aid, and student services can be obtained from the Raider Student Services webpage at <https://sou.edu/student-services/> or on the SOU Ashland campus in the SOU Computing Services Center. Other sources of information are the Southern Oregon University *Catalog* online copy on the web page <https://catalog.sou.edu/> and the [student handbook](https://dos.sou.edu/student-handbook/) <https://dos.sou.edu/student-handbook/>

Basic information about the Master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program is available at the program website: <https://sou.edu/academics/clinical-mental-health-counseling/>

### ADMISSION CLASSIFICATIONS AND CODES

Financial aid awards are affected by admission classifications. Be sure to confer with the Financial Aid Office to determine the financial aid for the classification to which you are admitted.

**Graduate Master (GR).** A student who is fully admitted to a specific master's program. Students with this classification are eligible to apply for graduate assistantships\*.

**Non-admitted Graduate (NG).** A student who has at least a baccalaureate degree but has not been admitted to the graduate program and wishes to take graduate coursework for a variety of reasons including professional development. This student is restricted to taking no more than eight (8) credits per quarter during fall, winter, or spring. These credits can be graduate level, undergraduate level, or a combination of both. Students in the NG classification are charged fees based on the level of the courses for which they are registered. There is no guarantee that any courses taken in the NG category are applicable toward a future planned program of study. Students who have completed a graduate degree at another institution, yet lack a few courses to meet licensing requirements, may choose this option to complete their work. Since CMHC courses are restricted to admitted students only, a student interested in such classes must contact the Program Chair and the instructor for permission to enroll in any CMHC course.

Students who want to take more than eight credits per quarter or who wish to enter the degree program must apply for formal admission to the Institution. The Application for Graduate Admission form and other information must be submitted to the Admissions Office. (See “Admission Requirements,” see page 10).

**Post baccalaureate Non-graduate (PN).** A student with a baccalaureate degree who is taking additional coursework at the *undergraduate level only*. This student qualifies to pay undergraduate fees. A student may apply for this status if he or she has undergraduate prerequisites to complete prior to entering a master’s program.

**Post baccalaureate (PB).** A student who is taking additional coursework, either at the graduate level or a mix of graduate and undergraduate courses. Graduate fees are charged. There is no guarantee that graduate coursework taken as a Post baccalaureate student will apply to a future master’s program.

## **MASTER’S IN CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING DEGREE ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

1. You must have a 3.00 or higher Grade Point Average (GPA) in your most recent 90-quarter credits of *undergraduate* coursework.
2. You must have completed the following specific undergraduate prerequisites and the above program requirements set by the CMHC Program prior to admission to the master’s program:

<b>CMHC Prerequisite</b>	<b>Course numbers at SOU*</b>
General Psychology	Psy 202
Statistics	Math 243
Research Design / Methods	Psy 225
Lifespan / Developmental	Psy 370 or another development class
Abnormal Psychology	Psy 479

\*Undergraduate prerequisites may be completed at other institutions.

3. Applicants may complete the SOU Graduate Application online at <http://www.sou.edu/admissions/graduate/gr-apply.html>. Be sure that all of the following documentation is received by the SOU Admissions Office:
  - a. A signed SOU Graduate Student application form
  - b. Graduate Admission Fee
  - c. Official transcripts from all institutions attended
4. Applicants complete the CMHC Application online. Be sure that all of the following documentation is received by the SOU Graduate Studies Support Specialist:
  - a. A signed CMHC application form

- b. Three required recommendation forms
- c. Admission essays

5. The three CMHC recommendation forms should be completed by those familiar with your qualifications for graduate study, such as university professors, clinical supervisors or other professionals. Letters of recommendation may supplement the forms.

6. Your CMHC Admissions essays should describe your characteristics, skills, and motivations in undertaking your proposed CMHC graduate program. Follow the essay prompt regarding length limit.

7. The specifications listed above are minimum requirements. Admission is competitive and subject to space availability. All application materials will be taken into consideration when making admissions decisions.

When the SOU Application for Graduate Admission and all official transcripts have been received by the SOU Admissions Office and when the CMHC Application, all Recommendation Forms, and Admission Essays have been received by the Graduate Studies Support Specialist, your application will be sent to the CMHC Program faculty for review. Your application will not be reviewed unless all materials are received and complete.

### **Formal Admission to the CMHC Master's Program and Required Tuition Deposit**

Once the admission decision has been made, a letter of acceptance is sent to the student and the Admissions Office. Those accepted into the program are required to respond to the offer by completing the Decision form and sending a tuition deposit of \$300. There are firm due dates for this response and the tuition deposit. As soon as these steps are completed, the Admissions Office codes the appropriate admission designation and creates the graduate student record. This matriculation process allows students to register for graduate coursework.

### **Denial of Admission**

A formal letter is sent if you are not accepted by the CMHC Program.

If you show promise of success, but *do not* meet the admission requirements, you may take some coursework and/or seek paraprofessional experience and reapply the following year. Work with the CMHC Program Chair to determine which coursework or experiences may be applicable to strengthen your application. However, this does not guarantee admission in subsequent years.

- a. Contact the CMHC Program for permission to proceed and for specific program requirements.
- b. If you are lacking prerequisite coursework, you must complete these requirements.
- c. You may take up to 16 credits of approved, regularly scheduled graduate coursework,

directly applicable to the CMHC program and receive a grade of “B” or above in each course. (See “Transfer Students” for details. Pg. 21)

## **FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION**

### **LOANS, GRANTS, SCHOLARSHIPS, & WORK-STUDY**

CMHC graduate students are eligible for several loan programs, grants, scholarships, and work-study programs. These resources are available at the SOU Financial Aid Office, 541-552- 6600 and on-line at <https://sou.edu/admissions/afford/financial-aid/>

The CMHC program offers the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP) award to qualified non-resident students from the 14 Western states outside of Oregon (\*Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming.) To apply, potential students should submit an additional 300 word essay as part of the CMHC application that demonstrates how they bring diversity and/or academic excellence to the program. Recipients are allowed to attend for resident graduate tuition.

The CMHC program also offers the Oregon Lottery Scholarship to several incoming students. The criteria include: ethnic and cultural diversity, financial need, and academic accomplishments. The selection committee reviews the CMHC application, financial need as determined by the SOU financial aid office, and student identified ethnicity and other diversity considerations. Students interested in this award need to complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), available on-line at the Financial Aid Office website <https://sou.edu/admissions/afford/financial-aid/>

### **GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS**

Southern Oregon University has a limited number of graduate assistantships. Most assistantships are advertised during spring, summer, or fall terms, and continue through the academic year. You must be fully admitted to a master’s program to qualify for an assistantship. Graduate assistants are paid a stipend per quarter and a portion of the base tuition is waived. Most assistantships require graduate students to progress toward the degree at the rate of at least 9 credit hours and no more than 12 credit hours per quarter. Graduate assistants must complete and receive a grade of B or above for all coursework taken during the quarter.

Currently there are two Graduate Assistantships (GAs) provided to the CMHC program. An announcement is sent to all current and incoming students about job requirements and the application process in the spring each year. The CMHC office coordinator selects the most qualified graduate students for these positions. The GAs work 16 hours (first year) and 12 hours (second year) per week in the CMHC Program under the supervision of the CMHC Office Coordinator.

## **GRADUATE STUDENT ORIENTATION**

The Clinical Mental Health Counseling program begins the school year every Fall with a mandatory new student orientation with faculty and guests. This mandatory orientation is typically held a few days before the regular term begins. Policies are covered including program requirements, remediation and appeals procedures, and student responsibilities including requirements for accessing disability resources.

## **PERSONAL GROWTH**

### **Personal Growth Requirement for CMHC students**

Students enrolled in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program are expected to participate as clients in individual and group counseling during the time they are enrolled as graduate students. This requirement is based on a philosophy that recognizes the value of such an experience to the continuous development of self-awareness and personal identity. It is also based on the belief that firsthand experiences as a client bridges the gap between intellectual and emotional understanding of the client experience.

Each student is required to provide the CMHC Office Coordinator with a written statement by the group or individual counselor of consistent attendance and verification of at least 10 hours of individual counseling and 10 hours of group counseling. While this minimum requirement of personal counseling must be completed by the end of spring term of the first year, we strongly encourage students to continue in counseling as their time, interest, and finances allow. Specifics of the counseling relationship will be kept confidential between student/client and counselor in accordance with ethical guidelines. Students will be required to assume any expense incurred for individual counseling and several low-cost alternatives are fairly readily available in our region. These therapeutic experiences should focus on personal growth and awareness rather than specific skills training. Important components might include: sharing of here-and-now feelings and cognitions, interpersonal feedback, building communication skills, individual expression of concerns, or expression of feelings about self or significant others in one's life, including members of the therapeutic experience (for group setting).

The La Clinica Student Health and Wellness Center (SHWC) on the Ashland campus offers short-term counseling and psychiatric services to all currently enrolled students, including CMHC students. The SHWC currently charges a co-pay fee to access services with psychiatric services incurring additional charges and may seek to bill your insurance. No one is turned away for financial reasons. The SHWC also provides medical care for students. More information about health services can be found at: <https://health.sou.edu/>

One limitation for CMHC students needing to complete 10 sessions of individual counseling is that the SHWC's counseling model may not accommodate CMHC students' need to fulfill this requirement entirely at the SHWC. Another factor influencing the use of SHWC counseling services is that CMHC students may not become a SHWC counseling intern if they have been a recent counseling/mental health client. This policy, jointly established by the SHWC and the CMHC program, addresses the need to avoid the ethical issues regarding dual

roles.

Additionally, SOU student's Voluntary Student Health Insurance provides for mental health services. Further information on student health insurance and the Student Health and Wellness Center is available at: <http://www.sou.edu/health/index.html>.

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

Graduate students are expected to know and attend to the requirements for the program they undertake. While the institution will assist each student as much as possible, the responsibility for any error in enrollment or misinterpretation of policies and regulations rests with the student.

### **Conducting Private Practice While Enrolled in the Program**

CMHC students may not independently offer mental health diagnosis, counseling, individual or organizational assessment, individual or organizational consultation services, or other professional services for which they are being trained, either gratis or for remuneration. Students who are approached by individuals or organizations to provide these or related services should discuss such offers with their advisor. Exceptions that do not violate ethical considerations may be granted in writing by the Program Chair. Students who provide services without permission will be investigated immediately following Evaluation and Retention Procedures.

### **Liability Insurance for CMHC students**

The Oregon Tort Claims Act (ORS 30.260-30.300) prohibits SOU from accepting liability for the acts, omissions, and conduct of students participating in practica/internship assignments either on-campus or in off-campus agencies.

To protect CMHC students in the event of possible litigation, each CMHC student will be required to carry liability insurance to cover their professional work during practica/internship assignments. Liability insurance is provided as part of student membership in the American Counseling Association and the American Mental Health Counselors Association. Coverage must be obtained no later than the first practicum experience (fall term of the first year) and must be documented to the faculty. Liability policies typically cover a one-year period and will need to be renewed in the second year of the program. A copy of the policy must be on file with the CMHC Office Coordinator and an updated copy given at the time of renewal.

### **Signed Agreements**

Students selected for admission into the CMHC program will be asked to sign agreements:

- a) to participate as clients in personal counseling.
- b) not to engage in private practice without explicit written permission from the Program Chair.

- c) to adhere to the relevant ethical principles and codes of the American Counseling Association and the American Mental Health Counselors Association.
- d) to obtain student liability insurance
- e) to adhere to the CMHC Student Evaluation and Retention Procedures, as outlined below.

### **Student Conduct Code**

The student is responsible for conduct which helps to create and maintain a learning atmosphere in which the rights, dignity, and worth of every individual in the college community are respected. Please refer to the Code of Student Conduct Rights and Responsibilities on the University Policies website [www.sou.edu/policies/sou-oars.html](http://www.sou.edu/policies/sou-oars.html) for additional information.

### **Professional Ethics**

Graduate students are expected to honor those standards of ethical and professional practice contained in the [ACA Code of Ethics](#). Candidacy for the graduate degree may be denied, suspended, or revoked should it be established that an individual is a discredit to his or her peers by dishonoring the profession through any flagrant violation of the ethics of scholarship and higher learning. The student may exercise his or her right of appeal to such a decision by procedures outlined in Code of Conduct on the University Policies website: <https://dos.sou.edu/community-standards/raider-responsibilities/#after-the-process>

In matters regarding student responsibility and ethics, the Graduate Council considers the following to be examples of flagrant violations: cheating, plagiarism, forgery, fraud, physical abuse (or threat of physical abuse) against other students or staff members of the university, theft of university property, and unauthorized entry to and/or use of university-controlled property.

### **CONDITIONS FOR ADMISSION AND RETENTION**

The Master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program has developed the following Conditions for Admission and Retention. These follow relevant principles found in the Codes of Ethics of the American Counseling Association and the American Mental Health Counselors Association. Respecting these guidelines, the faculty consider not only academic abilities and skill performance when making admission and retention decisions about students, but also whether the student has appropriate levels of maturity, judgment, emotional stability, interpersonal skills, and self-awareness appropriate to fulfill professional roles in clinical mental health counseling.

### **Academic Requirements**

Students are expected to maintain at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA overall in all graduate coursework and in each core course in the program. In addition, students are expected to meet all learning objectives that are presented through the CMHC curriculum. Each key performance indicator (KPI) is assessed in at least one core class and listed in each course



syllabus. The KPIs are closely tied to the counseling competencies that CACREP and the counseling profession have identified as essential to becoming an effective clinical mental health counselor. Failure to comply with these requirements may result in academic probation and/or dismissal from the program.

### **Criminal Record**

Counseling involves delivery of services to vulnerable individuals and organizations. Because of the trust placed in counselors by such clients, it is essential that they demonstrate professional integrity and responsibility in their professional conduct. Students must be capable of passing whatever level or type of background check that is required by internship sites in order to complete an internship and therefore complete the program. Failure to pass a background check at a site may be grounds for dismissal from the program, especially if this leads to an inability to place a student in an internship. Having prior criminal convictions or traffic infractions will likely surface in the background check/fingerprint/driver's clearance process that internship sites conduct and, depending upon a number of factors, a student's history may prevent them from being accepted as an intern by the agency. The CMHC program has little recourse in these situations but to follow state law and agency policy.

**Furthermore, prospective CMHC students should note that being “fired” from an internship site or an inability to complete an internship, arising from the student’s professional conduct or poor performance may result in a dismissal from the CMHC program. If you have any concerns, please communicate as early as possible with the Clinical Coordinator, program Chair and/or your faculty advisor.**

The State of Oregon Board of Licensed Professional Counselors & Therapists, and similar licensing boards in other states and territories, also ask applicants about previous criminal behavior. Committing a felony or misdemeanor related to counseling or other professional activities may be grounds for denying or revoking a license.

If you are convicted in a court of law for any felony or misdemeanor other than a minor traffic offense while enrolled in the CMHC program, the faculty will evaluate your continued participation by following the Evaluation and Retention Procedures that are presented below.

### **Psychological Impairment**

Counselors with untreated psychological disorders, emotional problems and/or substance abuse disorders of their own can significantly compromise the effectiveness of counseling and other professional activities and may injure their clients. If you are currently being treated for a psychological disorder, with psychotherapy, medications, and/or hospitalization, we would like you to inform the faculty through your advisor.

If, in the judgment of the faculty, a psychological disorder, emotional problem and/or substance abuse is significantly compromising your work as a counselor in training, your continued participation in the CMHC Program will be evaluated by the faculty following

the Evaluation and Retention Procedures. You may be asked to verify participation in a treatment program that deals with specific issues identified by the faculty. If adequate change is not forthcoming, further action, including dismissal, may be taken by the faculty to protect other students, SOU staff, client individuals, and organizations.

### **Disability Resources**

“Southern Oregon University is an inclusive campus environment. Disability Resources is here to ensure equal access for students with disabilities to all of SOU's great classes and programs. We provide academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities and information and resources for all segments of SOU.” - [SOU Disability Resources](#). Please take special note of the rights and responsibilities of students with regard to disabilities. CMHC faculty are unable to make informal accommodations for disabilities. Students are therefore responsible for documenting and contacting Disability Resources every term to establish accommodations. This includes accommodations in practica and internship environments.

### **CMHC STUDENT EVALUATION AND RETENTION PROCEDURES**

Each term, faculty members in consultation with practicum/internship supervisors meet in order to evaluate each student's progress in academic work and intrapersonal and interpersonal effectiveness and counseling skills, as appropriate for the CMHC program. Those students assessed as having difficulty will receive feedback concerning their progress from their advisor.

**A situation that involves a significant ethical violation or incompetence as determined by the faculty of the program may result in immediate dismissal from the program. This includes a failed background check and/or actions that result in the student's dismissal from their internship site.**

Students who are identified as having less-serious deficiencies in one or more of the areas evaluated are provided the following assistance in order to improve their performance:

#### **1. Problem identification with the advisor**

The advisor meets with the student and gives specific examples of the difficulties that have been identified by the faculty, supervisors, recipients of services, or relevant members of the University community. The student and the advisor then discuss change expectations and procedures. Explanation is made at this time as to the seriousness of the problem. Steps for resolution are recommended and both parties agree upon a time frame for change. An agreement about steps for resolution is signed by the advisor, student, and CMHC Chair and is placed in the student's CMHC Program file.

#### **2. Student Support Meeting**

If the situation is a continuing one, or is critical, additional faculty members may meet with the student. During this meeting, the student is given specific information about the particular

problem, the steps needed for resolution, and the time frame allowed prior to determining if further action must be considered. A written contract stating the areas that need to be improved, and the methods and time frame needed for improvement, is signed by the student, the involved faculty members, and the CMHC Chair. A copy of this agreement is given to the student and the original is placed in the student's CMHC Program file.

### **3. Insufficient Progress, Dismissal**

If a student does not make expeditious progress toward resolution of the identified problem(s), and if the faculty agree that the student is unlikely to successfully achieve the academic, skills, or intrapersonal and interpersonal effectiveness objectives needed to be successful in the program, then dismissal of the student from the program will be considered. CMHC faculty will investigate the history of progress toward resolution and the decision whether to dismiss a student is then made. The student is notified of the decision by the CMHC Chair in a letter.

### **4. Due Process Procedures**

A student who wishes to challenge a decision of the CMHC Program faculty regarding dismissal from the program has the right to an appeal. The student may exercise his or her right of appeal to such a decision by contacting the Director of Graduate Studies. The director will review the events of the dismissal and determine whether the graduate program followed their procedure for student evaluation and retention. On the basis of this review, the program's decision may be upheld or overturned.

### **5. Confidentiality**

All proceedings involving disciplinary actions will be held in confidence within the CMHC Program faculty unless to do so would violate legal or ethical guidelines or prevent due process. If the safety of the student or CMHC Program faculty or staff is in question, the office of Student Affairs will be informed of the nature of the problem. If a student is dismissed from the program, the Admissions Office will be notified.

## **STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF THE CMHC PROGRAM**

At the end of each term, students are asked to evaluate the effectiveness of their courses. An anonymous survey is distributed online to solicit feedback. The data is compiled to avoid student identification. The evaluations are distributed to faculty and chair after the close of the term.

Formal program evaluation occurs at the beginning of the program and near the end when current students and alumni are asked to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of various aspects of the CMHC program. An anonymous survey is sent to students and alumni and responses are aggregated and evaluated. Results are summarized and posted on the CMHC website. The Annual CMHC Assessment Report considers these surveys as well as other program evaluation measures and identifies changes that will be made to address concerns. The

CMHC Assessment Report is posted on the CMHC website and emailed to all program constituents.

Informal evaluation and feedback are also vital to the success and integrity of the CMHC program; occasionally, individuals or groups offer concerns or ideas for improvement. CMHC faculty are open to this feedback and value the honesty and intentions of those who come forward. Both formal and informal program assessment are used to modify curriculum, processes, requirements, scheduling, and other aspects of the program.

## **ADVISING**

CMHC students are assigned a faculty advisor during their first term in the program. Students are strongly encouraged to meet quarterly with their faculty advisor to discuss career goals, current academic plans, course objectives (KPIs), internship placement, and other issues that have an impact on progress through the program. While the advising relationship is not counseling, an advisor may be able to provide an appropriate referral for counseling to discuss personal issues. The advisor may also serve as a professional mentor including discussing licensing, job, or doctoral applications and, perhaps, serving as a reference for such endeavors.

It is a student's responsibility to make appointments as needed. Faculty hold regular office hours and most are also available at other times as well via email or phone.

### **Changing Advisors**

Though rare, it may be possible to change advisors under special circumstances. In such a case, please consult with the Program Chair on how best to proceed. After approval has been granted by the Program Chair, an email containing the change information will be sent by the Program Chair to the CMHC Office Coordinator. The name of your current major advisor should always be on file in the office of the CMHC Office Coordinator and with the Program Chair.

### **Whom to talk with about questions or concerns**

If you have any concerns or questions about a procedure, a policy, a requirement, or any matter you feel has not been clearly explained to your satisfaction, and you are not sure where to go for further information, start with your advisor. If you still have questions, please feel free to consult the Program Chair.

## **ACADEMIC STANDARDS**

### **Grading**

Letter grades are required for all courses in the Master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling program, including transfer credits with the exception of Practicum (COUN 504, COUN 506) and Internship (COUN 510). Courses assigned a grade lower than B- are not acceptable. If you should get a grade lower than a B-, you must retake the course; it cannot be removed from the

program or replaced by another course. It is necessary to obtain a grade of B- or better in each course in the student's program.

### **Key Performance Indicators**

All students must achieve a passing grade or score on each Key Performance Indicator (KPI) before they complete the program. Failure to achieve a passing grade or score on each KPI may result in a non-passing grade for a course *even if the student is otherwise passing*. These are critical pieces of counseling education and required to earn a degree.

### **Academic Probation**

Graduate students must maintain at least a 3.0 cumulative GPA overall in the master's degree program. If a student's GPA fails to meet this standard, the student is placed on academic probation and notified by the CMHC Program Chair. A student placed on academic probation must petition the Social Science Division Director, with the support of the advisor and CMHC Program Chair, for permission to continue work toward the degree. If permission is granted, the student must correct the deficiency within the next 12 credits of graduate coursework or be dropped from the program.

### **Grievance Procedure**

A student who has a grievance arising from a graduate regulation should consult the CMHC Program Chair for advice. If the grievance cannot be resolved at this point, the student may undertake formal grievance procedures as outlined on the University Policies website <https://inside.sou.edu/assets/policies/docs/Student-Grievance.pdf>

### **Right of Appeal**

If the student elects to appeal academic probation, the Appeals Committee shall include: (1) the student's advisor, (2) the CMHC Program Chair, and (3) the Chair of the Graduate Council.

## **DEGREE PROGRAM PLANNING**

Each student is provided a planned program of studies and will need to complete the Degree Program Form with their faculty advisor before they complete 24 credits during their 2nd term. After obtaining all necessary signatures, this form will be submitted by the faculty advisor to the CMHC Office Coordinator who will keep it in the student's permanent academic file. A 2nd Degree Planning Form will be completed and submitted in the graduate student's 6th term of the CMHC program.

## **MASTER OF ARTS vs. MASTER OF SCIENCE**

The Master of Arts and Master of Science degrees differ only in the foreign language requirement. To receive an M.A. degree, students must demonstrate fluency in a second language. U.S. students who have completed two years of study in one foreign language at an

accredited college or university automatically meet the second language requirement for the M.A. degree. International students whose first language is not English also meet the second language requirement for the M.A. The request for the designation of M.A. or M.S. is made by the student when applying for graduation.

## **SATISFACTORY PROGRESS**

Once admitted to the CMHC program, you are expected to progress toward the degree in a timely manner. During Spring Term of each academic year, the CMHC Program Chair sends a form to each admitted graduate student who has not been in attendance during that academic year requesting that the student formally withdraw from the program or specify the quarter for resuming coursework toward the degree. If the form is not returned or if the student does not return during the quarter he or she specified, the student will be administratively withdrawn from the master's program.

### **Maximum Course Loads Per Quarter**

The maximum course load for graduate students is 16-quarter hours. Any deviation from the course load restriction requires the filing of an Overload Petition. Overload Petitions require the signatures of the major advisor and the CMHC Program Chair. The student and Enrollment Service Center receive a copy of the completed form. There is a surcharge for all credit hours in excess of the course load restriction.

### **Coursework in Residence**

Two-thirds of the master's program coursework must be taken at SOU; for the CMHC program this would be at least 60 credits of a 90-credit program.

The last 9 credits of the master's program must be taken at SOU unless the CMHC Program Chair approves a waiver. All waiver requests must be submitted in writing by the student and must clearly state the reason the request is being made. (See section on "Prior Coursework & Transfer Coursework" #3 below and page 21).

## **PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

You should follow these guidelines when preparing your planned program of studies.

1. *Outdated Courses.* All courses must be no more than seven years old at the time of completion of the degree. With special approval of the advisor and Program Chair, up to 12 hours of courses previously accepted toward the program, which are more than seven years old but less than 10 years old at the time of degree completion, may be included if they are officially updated. A course 10 or more years old at the time of program completion must be replaced even if it has previously been updated.
2. *Prior coursework & Transfer Coursework.* Up to 16 hours of recent prior or transfer coursework may be included if *approved by the advisor and CMHC Program Chair*. See the next section of this Handbook for more information about prior and transfer courses.

3. *Letter Grade.* All courses must carry a letter grade with the exception of Practicum (COUN 504, COUN 506), and Internship (COUN 510) that are taken Pass/No Pass.
4. *Credit by Examination, In-Service, Professional Growth Courses, Continuing Professional Education, Workshops, Correspondence Courses.* Graduate credit by examination, in-service, professional growth, continuing professional education, and correspondence courses are not acceptable in the CMHC program.
5. *Graduate Internship.* A minimum of 20 internship credits is required for the CMHC program.
6. *Extension Credit and other forms of Nontraditional Coursework.* Extension credit and other forms of nontraditional coursework (e.g., online course) may be included in a graduate program only with the approval of your advisor and the CMHC Program Chair.

### **Change in Your Planned Program of Studies**

To request the use of any course not included in the original approved planned program of studies (Degree Program Form) a Program Change Request form must be submitted. This form can be obtained from the CMHC Office Coordinator. The form requires the approval of the major advisor and the CMHC Program Chair. Any courses approved in this manner are listed in the planned program of studies; the approval is submitted to the CMHC Office Coordinator for the student's permanent file. Copies of the approved Change Request form and the revised program are forwarded to the student; likewise, the student is notified if any courses requested in this manner are not accepted.

### **PRIOR COURSEWORK AND TRANSFER LIMITATIONS**

Up to 16 quarter credits of approved graduate coursework taken prior to regular admission to the CMHC master's degree program at Southern Oregon University **may** be included in the planned program of studies. This limitation applies to coursework taken at Southern Oregon University and coursework transferred from other institutions. Such courses must be appropriate for the CMHC program and must be approved by the major advisor and the CMHC Program Chair. The approval should be submitted to the CMHC Office Coordinator for the student's permanent file.

### **Transfer Students**

A transfer student is an individual previously enrolled in a counseling or closely related graduate program, other than the CMHC program, who has completed at least 12 graduate credits.

- Transfer students must complete the formal application process including prerequisites.
- An accepted transfer student may transfer a maximum of 16 credits from the previous uncompleted program. Syllabi and/or course descriptions will be used to determine which credits will be transferred. The Program Chair and the SOU course instructors will decide which courses will be accepted for transfer.

- Depending on the courses transferred, the student may have a modified Program of Study that reflects different course content. This will be determined by the student, the Program Chair and the student's faculty advisor.
- Qualified students may be admitted into the current program cohort provided that previous course work is reasonably comparable to the specific program curriculum.

The expected time of degree completion is taken into consideration when evaluating prior and transfer coursework for inclusion in a planned program of studies. Generally, prior and transfer coursework is not accepted toward the program if it is five or more years old at the time you are admitted to the master's program.

Prior and transfer credits are not accepted toward the program of studies until the Degree Program Form (or the Program Change Request) form is signed by all appropriate officials.

If the use of prior or transfer credit is requested after your planned program of studies has been approved, a Program Change Request form must be filed and approved by the CMHC Graduate Coordinator before additional courses can be included.

Acceptance of any transfer credit is the prerogative of the degree-granting institution. After admission to a master's program, it is your responsibility to make sure a course has been approved toward the program (through the appropriate channels) *before* it is taken.

## **PART-TIME POLICY FOR CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING**

### **CMHC Program Non-Admitted Students**

CMHC is designed to admit students to a graduate cohort for full time students. Non-Admitted students are not allowed to take courses without the prior approval of the CMHC Program Chair and the course instructor. It is up to each instructor to determine space availability in courses to part-time non-cohort students. CMHC courses are not open to all students. Courses taken before a student is formally accepted into a cohort are considered transfer credits and may not exceed 16 credits.

### **CMHC Program Admitted Students**

Students who enter the CMHC cohort planning on only attending on a part time basis should meet with an advisor prior to the beginning of fall classes. Most core classes are required to be completed before students can begin their internship experience. This requirement may make it necessary for part time students to take 3 or more years to complete this program. There may be financial aid implications in taking courses on a part- time basis. Students may seek advice regarding these issues from the SOU Financial Aid Office <https://sou.edu/financial-aid/>

## **NON-ADMITTED GRADUATE STUDENTS**

The CMHC faculty may be open to including these students in specific classes, on a case-by-case basis, provided that the student/faculty ratio for regularly admitted CMHC students is not compromised.



These students are defined as: A) currently enrolled in another institution and wish to take SOU CMHC courses to transfer to their home institution, or B) licensed professionals who wish to take courses to meet CEU requirements, or C) professionals who must complete a few graduate courses in order to meet licensing requirements, or D) community members who want to take individual courses without completing a degree.

CMHC courses may be taken according to the following guidelines:

- For Non-experiential or non-clinical courses – on availability basis. Non-Admitted students are not allowed to take courses without the prior approval of the CMHC Program Chair and the course instructor. It is up to each instructor to determine space availability in courses to part-time non-cohort students. CMHC courses are not open to all students.
- For Experiential or Clinical courses (COUN 571/502, 504, 574/506, 510)
  - The student must obtain CMHC faculty approval after review of transcript, and letter of recommendation forms from previous faculty and/or supervisors.
  - Any extra fees for these classes must be paid in addition to tuition.
  - Student/faculty ratio is particularly important for CMHC group supervision and should not exceed 12 students:1 faculty member for internship and 6 students:1 faculty member for practicum.

## **COURSE NUMBERING**

SOU courses with a 400/500 number are offered for upper division undergraduate credit and for graduate credit. Courses numbered 501 to 599 are offered for graduate credit only.

## **ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY**

Advancement to candidacy is required for all CMHC students. The purpose of this process is to assess your progress toward meeting the requirements for your program and is required before doing the counseling internship (COUN 510). Typically, by the end of their first year, students will be evaluated by the CMHC program faculty and practica supervisors to determine their readiness for off-campus placement. Each student meets with his or her advisor for specific feedback and also receives notification in writing from the Program Chair addressing Advancement to Candidacy or any deficiencies and appropriate remedial actions to be taken. Advancement to candidacy signifies that you have successfully completed first-year academic and applied coursework, as well as other requirements as defined by the CMHC program, and are ready to move forward to the internship phase of training and second-year coursework. Deficiencies in coursework are one possible reason for denying advancement to candidacy. Other possible reasons include lack of emotional maturity as determined by CMHC faculty, and lack of professional behavior including responding to peer and supervisor feedback.

## **Applying for Internship**

In spring of every year, the CMHC Program holds an Internship Fair. All potential internship site supervisors are invited to come to campus to meet the CMHC graduate students.

Following the Internship Fair, students directly contact the internship sites in which they are interested, and applicants and sites interview each other. Students and sites submit rank order lists of preferences and the Clinical Coordinator matches students with a specific internship site so as to optimize preferences. CMHC students should consult the *CMHC Practica & Internship Manual* for additional specific details and forms.

## CULMINATING EXPERIENCE

### THE CMHC Exit Exam

The Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program has shifted away from using the Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE) as a graduation requirement in the 2024-25 academic year. Instead, the CMHC program administers a comprehensive Exit Exam as a summative evaluation measuring student knowledge in the eight core curriculum areas that are central to CACREP standards, as well as a 9th clinical mental health knowledge area. The CMHC Exit Exam is designed to assess the student's knowledge of counseling information, provide feedback that can be used in program and curriculum development, and give the student a simulated experience for taking the national certification exam (the National Counseling Exam). The content for the Exit Exam is drawn from the current CMHC course offerings and constructed by the CMHC faculty.

The CMHC program administers the Exit Exam to second year students in Spring term, after the majority of their coursework is completed. The passing score on the Exit Exam is calculated by the CMHC faculty. If a student does not pass the Exit Exam the first time, they may retake the exam twice more. Failing the Exit Exam a third time will result in the student needing to pass an oral examination with the CMHC faculty. If a student is not successful in the oral exam, they will face dismissal from the program. Students may find study guides for the National Counselor Examination (NCE) as useful resources for the Exit Exam. However, retaining and reviewing course materials and adequate studying may be more beneficial. Information on the NCE may be found at [www.nbcc.org](http://www.nbcc.org).

### Retaking Exit Exam

A student who fails all or part of the comprehensive examinations is contacted by the advisor and/or the CMHC Program Chair. The conditions under which the examination may be retaken are specified in writing by the CMHC faculty. Ordinarily, any examination may not be retaken until there has been sufficient time for appropriate additional study, reading, or mastery of subjects.

The comprehensive exit examination may not be given more than three times. The student must schedule the retake of the comprehensive examination through the Program Chair following the completion of the established conditions. If a student fails to pass the CMHC Exit Exam on their third attempt, CMHC faculty will provide a comprehensive oral examination. A student who does not pass the comprehensive oral examination will not be eligible for graduation and will be withdrawn from the program.

## **ENDORSEMENT POLICY FOR LICENSURE**

All graduates of the CMHC program are endorsed for licensure because they have successfully completed all required coursework, practica and internship, the Student Learning Outcomes, the exit exam, and quarterly CMHC faculty review.

The last form that each student completes as part of the Internship experience is the [Degree-Program Work Experience Form](#), a form administered by the Oregon Board of Licensed Professional Counselors and Therapists. This form serves as a summary template for endorsement when the student is ready to apply for licensure in Oregon.

CMHC graduates will need a written endorsement for licensure and verification of academic program and internship hours that have been completed. It is the student's responsibility to complete all required documentation concerning clinical hours, including the summary form that will be used to verify clinical hours. Graduates applying for licensure outside of Oregon should contact their State Licensing Board to request the appropriate forms. Then they should submit the appropriate forms to the CMHC Office Coordinator.

## **REFERENCES FOR EMPLOYMENT AND GRADUATE SCHOOL**

Students seeking employment or admittance to doctoral programs often seek letters of recommendation from faculty members. It is important to make personal contact with potential referents to ask their permission to be listed as a reference. We recommend that students ask if the potential referent will provide a positive reference. Further, students should provide information about themselves, such as a current resume and letter of application and information about the position or program, to the referent. Any necessary forms should be provided and the time line discussed so that the faculty member has sufficient time to complete the recommendation.

## **BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT DEGREE COMPLETION**

Degrees are awarded at the end of the quarter in which *all* requirements are completed. Summer, Fall and Winter degree recipients receive diplomas from the Raider Student Services approximately eight (8) weeks following the end of the quarter.

## **APPLICATION FOR COMPLETION OF MASTER'S DEGREE**

Students must submit their Application for Master's Degree form no later than the term before they complete their program of study. For information about applying for graduation see: <https://sou.edu/student-services/enrollment/degrees/> Students also pay a fee for each degree application directly to the Raider Student Services.

Those students who want to participate in Commencement but who will not complete their program until Summer term must submit their Application for Master's Degree no later than the end of April.

After the Application for Master's Degree form is submitted, the CMHC Office Coordinator

completes a program audit. You are then sent a letter confirming or denying qualification for degree completion during the proposed final quarter. If you do not qualify for completion, you will be informed of any program deficiencies by the CMHC Office Coordinator or representative. Deficiencies must be cleared before the end of the quarter of completion or as specified in the audit information.

## **COMMENCEMENT**

During the middle of April, Raider Student Services places commencement information on the SOU web page. Students who have completed their degrees during the previous fall, winter, and those who have been cleared by the CMHC Office Coordinator to complete requirements during spring quarter may participate in commencement. Students scheduled to complete their degree during the post-commencement summer term may participate in the commencement ceremony if they have written verification of completion date from their advisor and CMHC Office Coordinator.

## **DIPLOMAS**

Students who complete all requirements during spring quarter receive diplomas after grades have been posted at the end of the quarter.

**Ordering official transcripts.** You can order official transcripts for a fee through the Raider Student Services, <https://sou.edu/student-services/records/transcripts/> or in person at the Raider Student Services office. Request that the transcripts be sent *after your master's degree has been posted*.

## **CONCLUSION**

If you have further questions about any of the procedures or regulations contained in this Handbook, please seek clarification from your faculty advisor or the CMHC Program Chair.