

MASTER OF ARTS IN MARRIAGE & FAMILY COUNSELING (M.A.)

Purpose

The Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Counseling is a 60-hour graduate level residential program designed to meet the Virginia requirements for licensure as a marriage and family therapist (LMFT). The faculty provide quality professional training of marriage and family therapists from a faith based perspective. Our mission is to produce ethically and spiritually aware marriage and family therapists who possess the knowledge, values, skills, and personal disposition to promote the mental health and holistic wellness of individuals and families across diverse populations. Our mission is achieved, in significant measure, through offering rigorous academic programs, dynamic interaction with mentors, faculty, and carefully structured practicum and internships.

Program Learning Outcomes

The student will be able to:

- Apply the ethical and professional principles, standards, and expectations that are integral to a professional counselor's role and identity.
- Apply the social and cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills required to work with diverse populations at all developmental stages across the lifespan in a culturally sensitive and ethical manner.
- Assess the individual and group counseling skills necessary to establish and build a therapeutic relationship and will form a preliminary theoretical framework when counseling individuals at all developmental stages across the lifespan.
- Use developmentally appropriate assessment relevant to the client's academic/education, career, personal, and social development and identify ethical, social, and cultural factors related to assessment.
- Evaluate research and apply it to their counseling practice in accordance with best practices, and identify social and cultural implications for interpreting and reporting results.
- Integrate faith and spirituality into counseling where appropriate in an ethically competent manner
- Synthesize theories of family systems and dynamic into a comprehensive systems approach to counseling that informs assessment, diagnosis, and treatment planning for marriage, couples, and family client(s) with a broad array of presenting problems.

Program Specific Admission Procedures

In addition to the General Admission Procedures outlined in this Catalog, Master's applicants to the Marriage and Family Counseling program must have:

1. Apply online or download application for admission and submit via mail.
2. Fax/scan unofficial college transcripts.
 - **Please Note - Unofficial transcripts can be used for acceptance purposes with the submission of a transcript request form.**
3. Mail official college transcripts (sealed, unopened copy).

- Regionally or Nationally accredited bachelor's degree with at least a 2.7 GPA for good standing. Applicants who have earned a master's degree or at least 12 graduate credits from an accredited institution may be assessed on the basis of the master's-level degree work. NOTE: Once accepted into the program, a 3.0 graduate GPA is needed to maintain good academic standing in the program.

4. Students without the following coursework on their undergraduate transcript will be required to complete the following class upon admission to the program:
 - 3 credit hours in Statistics (can be MATH 201 Introduction to Probability and Statistics (3 c.h.))
5. Admission to this program requires:
 - a. Contact information for two recommenders (login required). As a part of the application process, we require contact information from two professional sources (i.e., not family/friends but individuals who have supervisory or evaluative knowledge of your work, volunteer, church, or academic experience). These individuals should be qualified to address the applicant's ability to complete graduate level coursework, their disposition and ability to become a counselor, and their maturity, motivation, and ethics. Some examples of individuals that may be suitable include professors, employers, or leaders in an organization where the applicant volunteers.
 - b. Prompts for statement of purpose, please address each of the following items:
 - i. Please describe in 200-250 words why you desire to become a counselor and indicate the type of counselor certification you plan to seek after graduation?
 - ii. Describe in 200-250 words an occasion in which you have interacted with an individual or a group of individuals **from another culture**. Identify the cultural differences which were present and **how you demonstrated respect** for those differences.
 - iii. Describe in 200-250 words **how** you form effective interpersonal relationships with others in individual and group settings.
 - c. Students seeking to be admitted into this program and plan to finish it outside of the US will be required to sign an International Disclosure Agreement.
6. Students seeking to be admitted into this program and plan to finish it outside of the US will be required to sign an International Disclosure Agreement.

Students must agree to the Department of Counselor Education and Family Study's Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Counseling Mission Statement and Diversity Statement, which is available at the following link: <https://www.liberty.edu/behavioral-sciences/counselor-ed/>.

Notification of Admission

Admission decisions normally are made within a few days following the receipt of **all** of the student's documentation and faculty review of the application packet. Official notification of admission, and of any conditions attached to that admission, is sent by letter to the applicant by the Office of Graduate Admissions. Correspondence or notification from other sources does not constitute official notice of admission. The term for which the applicant is admitted is stated in the official admission letter from the Office of Graduate Admissions.

Transfer of Credit

Students may transfer up to 30 hours of coursework into the Marriage and Family Counseling program. For a transferred course to replace a Liberty University course, the following requirements must be met:

1. The school at which the course was taken must be appropriately accredited.
2. The course credit must be at least three semester hours or five quarter hours.
3. The student must have earned a grade of B- or better in the course.
4. The course must overlap one of Liberty's courses by at least 80%.

Courses related to counseling that meet all but the last criterion may be transferred in as elective courses. Course work must have been completed within the previous 10 years. Transfer credits **will not** be accepted for the following courses:

Code	Title	Hours
CEFS 602	Assessment, Diagnosis, and Treatment Planning in Marriage and Family Counseling	3
COUC 500	Orientation to Counselor Professional Identity and Function	3
COUC 501	Ethical and Legal Issues in Counseling	3
COUC 505	Counseling Techniques and the Helping Relationship	3
COUC 506	Integration of Spirituality and Counseling	3
COUC 512	Group Counseling	3
COUC 698		3
COUC 699	Counseling Internship	3

Credit will not be awarded for life experience or continuing education workshops.

Licensure

Liberty University's Department of Counselor Education and Family Studies 60-hour Marriage and Family Counseling program (CACREP) is designed to provide academic course work in all areas required by the Virginia Board of Counseling for licensure as an LMFT in Virginia. Students interested in seeking licensure in another state after graduation are required to contact the licensing boards of those states to obtain copies of their licensing laws and regulations. These will help students ensure they take all courses necessary for licensure in those states.

Evaluation and Retention

Students are responsible for meeting the academic and professional standards of Liberty University and the counseling profession. The following requirements apply to all students:

1. Students are expected to use the American Counseling Association "Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice," this Catalog, the Graduate Student Honor Code, and the *Liberty Way* as guides for their behavior throughout their program. Students will undergo periodic evaluation by the Counseling faculty for suitability as students and prospective counselors.
2. Students must remain in good academic standing, are required to maintain high ethical standards, and must demonstrate evidence of functional competency in fulfilling the professional roles required by the discipline.

3. Students must pass a comprehensive examination that requires the ability to analyze, synthesize, and integrate the core curricular content within the counseling discipline.

Consult specific program sections of this catalog for additional requirements.

Course Requirements

The *M.A. in Marriage and Family Counseling program (60-hour)* consists of a minimum of 60 hours of counseling courses that provide students with a thorough curricular experience in the areas of integration of faith and spirituality into practice; individual and group counseling theories and skills; clinical practice; ethical, professional, and legal issues in counseling; social and cultural factors in counseling; human development across the lifespan; career counseling and development theories and interventions; appraisal and assessment issues in counseling; and the application of research methodology and statistics to understand mental health issues. Students take an additional 12 hours of specialized coursework in marriage and family counseling. This degree prepares individuals for licensure and national certification and careers in mental health agencies, hospital programs, private practices, faith based counseling centers, and other public and private facilities.

Detailed information, policies, and procedures regarding the various programs offered are provided in the Student Handbook. Students should familiarize themselves with the Student Handbook before they begin their studies and before they register for classes every semester.

Comprehensive Examination

Students enrolled in the Marriage and Family Counseling program must take a comprehensive examination. The examination should be taken after the student has completed at least 39 hours of graduate coursework, including all of the COUC 500-level core coursework and CEFS 602 Assessment, Diagnosis, and Treatment Planning in Marriage and Family Counseling (3 c.h.). The study guide for the comprehensive exam is available online at the departmental website. Students will be given three attempts to successfully complete the exam. Students who have failed the CPCE® twice are required to complete a CPCE® Third Attempt Plan (CTAP) form and prepare for an additional minimum of one semester before registering for their final attempt. If after three attempts, a student has not been able to pass the comprehensive examination, the student will not qualify for a master's degree in Marriage and Family Counseling. At that point, students may choose to apply to the Human Services Counseling program for possible conferral of the MA in Human Services Counseling degree.

This examination is offered periodically throughout the year. To register for the Comprehensive Exam, please contact the Comprehensive Exam Coordinator at least 30 days prior to the exam date. (See the *Counseling Comprehensive Examination* website for scheduling information).

Administrative Dismissal

Students will be eligible for Administrative Dismissal from the Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Counseling if any of the following are true:

1. It will be mathematically impossible for them to raise their cumulative Graduate GPA to 3.00 with their remaining required courses.
2. They do not have a cumulative Graduate GPA of at least a 2.7 after completion of early core counseling courses (Gate 2) and/or a 3.0 at Practicum.

3. They have three (3) grades or three (3) courses of C+/C/C- applying to their degree and they have applied the repeat policy for the maximum allowed nine (9) hours or three (3) courses, and they earn two (2) or more additional grades or courses of C+ or lower.
4. They earn two (2) grades of D+ or lower.

Program of Study

Delivery Format: Residential Only

- Marriage & Family Counseling (M.A.)

Career Opportunities

- Christian Counselor
- Legal and Correctional Systems Counselor
- Mental Health Agency Counselor
- Public or Private Practitioner
- Social Services Manager