



MARRIAGE & FAMILY THERAPY DOCTORAL PROGRAM

*See also Policies & Procedures for the Family Therapy Center of Virginia Tech,
the training facility of the MFT Doctoral Program*

PROGRAM HANDBOOK **2018-2019**

(Revised August 13, 2018)
(Approved August 16, 2018)



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This document does not constitute official policy for Virginia Tech and does not constitute a contract, expressed or implied, between any person and Virginia Tech. The University reserves the right to change or vary from any of the provisions herein when University officials deem it expedient to do so.

Students are held to the curriculum and program requirements of the Program Handbook that were in effect when they entered the program. However, students are required to follow the most recent version of the Program Handbook regarding any policy and procedure changes.

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Purpose of the Program Handbook

The purpose of the Program Handbook is to set forth in general terms the policies and procedures governing the MFT doctoral program, the operations of the Family Therapy Center, and the ethical and responsible conduct of all its staff and students. It is nonetheless not exhaustive, and students, faculty, and other staff alike must recognize that certain situations will require consultation and judgment about how best to proceed. It is expected, however, that all faculty, staff, and students will follow the strictures contained here, along with endeavoring to conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner in all circumstances. For students, failure to do so may result in dismissal from the program. For faculty or staff, official disciplinary action may be taken. Readers are urged to therefore study this manual closely, to note inconsistencies or problems, and to consult and raise questions.

MFT Program History

The Center for Family Services, forerunner of the Family Therapy Center, was established in March 1979, as an interdisciplinary training and service facility for the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. Graduate students in Marriage and Family Therapy and Human Nutrition used the facility for clinical experience during the first year of operation.

Subsequently, the Center for Family Services focused exclusively on training Marriage and Family Therapy doctoral students by providing relational therapy to members of the public under faculty supervision. The Center was originally located on the Virginia Tech campus in the basement of Wallace Annex, but soon moved downtown to Jackson Street, across from the old Armory building, then moved again in the mid-1980s to 1601 South Main Street. The Center relocated once again in September 1997 to its current site on University City Boulevard, and also changed its name to the Family Therapy Center of Virginia Tech (FTC). Traditional services of the FTC include family, couple, individual, and other relational therapy, support groups, consulting, and continuing education. These services are targeted primarily to the New River Valley and surrounding communities, with clients coming from as far away as eastern West Virginia in the west, Salem and Roanoke in the east, Craig County in the north, and North Carolina in the south.

The MFT doctoral program, based at the FTC, is fully accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. It is the oldest continuously accredited family therapy program in the nation. The program has graduated over 150 students since it began.

Mission Statements

Virginia Tech

Virginia Tech is a public land-grant university serving the Commonwealth of Virginia, the nation, and the world community. The discovery and dissemination of new knowledge are central to its mission, as is its motto, *Ut Prosim* ("that I may serve"). Through its focus on teaching and learning, research and discovery, and outreach and engagement, the university creates, conveys, and applies knowledge to expand personal growth and opportunity, advance social and community development, foster economic

competitiveness, and improve quality of life. (<https://www.president.vt.edu/about-the-office/mission-vision/index.html>)

College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences

The mission of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, the home college of the MFT doctoral program, is to illuminate human experience and expression through discovery, learning, and engagement. The College creates works of lasting scholarly, cultural, and aesthetic value, and empowers individuals to engage critically with the complexities of a diverse, global society. The College fosters the inquiry, innovation, and growth that produce individual and social transformation.

Department of Human Development and Family Science

The mission of the MFT doctoral program's home department, the Department of Human Development and Family Science, is to understand and improve the lives of people of all ages in relationships, families, organizations, and communities.

MFT Program Mission

The mission of the Marriage and Family Therapy PhD Program is to develop scholar-clinicians who demonstrate respect for diversity and inclusion and will advance the field of MFT through research, clinical supervision, teaching, practice, and community and professional engagement.

Initial Draft Approved by MFT Faculty – May 31, 2017

Community of Interest Review – June 6, 2017

Revised Draft Approved by MFT Faculty – July 6, 2017

MFT Program Educational Outcomes

Initial Draft Approved by MFT Faculty – May 31, 2017

Community of Interest Review – June 6, 2017

Revised Version Approved by MFT Faculty – July 6, 2017, January 22, 2018; May 21, 2018; August 16, 2018

Program Goal #1: Research & Scholarship

Students will conduct methodologically sophisticated research that advances knowledge and that has clinical implications for marriage and family therapy.

(1.1) Student Learning Outcome #1:

Students will articulate a coherent personal research agenda.

(1.1.1) Benchmark #1:

As part of MFT Research (HD 6484), all students will prepare a statement of their personal research agenda.

(1.1.2) Benchmark #2:

As part of MFT Research (HD 6484), at least 75% of students will earn a grade of B+ or higher on the personal research agenda assignment.

(1.2) Student Learning Outcome #2:

Students will design and implement a methodologically sophisticated, rigorous research study.

(1.2.1) Benchmark #1:

All students will pass their dissertation proposal defense.

(1.2.2) *Benchmark #2:*

All students will successfully pass their dissertation defense.

(1.3) Student Learning Outcomes #3:

Students will contribute scholarship to the field of marriage and family therapy, or a related field.

(1.3.1) *Benchmark #1:*

Prior to graduation, at least 75% of students will have authorship on a minimum of one peer-reviewed journal article and/or book chapter.

(1.3.2) *Benchmark #2:*

Prior to graduation, at least 75% of student will present, as a first-author, at least two regional and/or national conference presentations. This can include a variety of presentation formats including, but not limited to, papers, posters, workshops, roundtables, etc.

(1.4) Student Learning Outcome #4:

Students will demonstrate proficiency with qualitative and quantitative research methods.

(1.4.1) *Benchmark #1:*

At least 75% of students will pass the research methods question(s) on the preliminary examination.

(1.4.2) *Benchmark #2:*

As part of the Graduate Student Annual Review, at least 75% of students will earn ratings of “Excellent” or “Good” from their advisors for their ability to conduct methodologically sophisticated research.

(1.4.3) *Benchmark #3:*

At least 75% of students will earn grades of B+ or higher in required research methods courses, as outlined on the Plan of Study.

Program Goal #2: Supervision and Teaching

Students will be proficient in clinical supervision and teaching.

(2.1) Student Learning Outcome #1:

Students will articulate a relationally- and systemically-oriented personal philosophy of supervision.

(2.1.1) *Benchmark #1:*

As part of MFT Supervision (HD 6464), at least 75% of students will earn a grade of B+ or higher on the philosophy of supervision assignment.

(2.2) Student Learning Outcome #2:

Students will demonstrate proficiency in conducting relationally- and systemically-oriented supervision.

(2.2.1) Benchmark #1:

At least 75% of students will earn grades of B+ or higher in HD 6464, MFT Supervision.

(2.2.2) Benchmark #2:

Within 7 years of graduation, 50% of students will obtain the AAMFT Approved Supervisor designation or will become a state-approved supervisor.

(2.3) Student Learning Outcome #3:

Students will articulate a personal philosophy of teaching that gives consideration to MFT.

(2.3.1) Benchmark #1:

As part of HD 5974 (Teaching Seminar), or in consultation with their advisors, all students will develop a philosophy of teaching.

(2.4) Student Learning Outcome #4:

Students will be proficient at teaching in a higher-education classroom setting.

(2.4.1) Benchmark #1:

Prior to graduation, all students will demonstrate teaching experience in the form of 1) no less than 3 guest lectures on at least two different topics, 2) serving as a graduate teaching assistant, or 3) independently teaching an undergraduate course.

(2.4.2) Benchmark #2:

At least 75% of student instructors will receive a rating of at least 4 (out of 5) for all items on the SPOT course evaluation form.

Program Goal #3: Clinical Practice

Students will demonstrate proficiency in systemic practice with a diverse clientele across the lifespan.

(3.1) Student Learning Outcome #1:

Students will demonstrate the ability to utilize multiple clinical theories and approaches.

(3.1.1) Benchmark #1:

At least 75% of students will pass the clinical models question on the preliminary examination.

(3.1.2) Benchmark #2:

At least 75% of students will earn grades of B+ or higher in the MFT theories courses, HD 6414 and HD 6444.

(3.1.3) Benchmark #3:

As part of MFT Practicum (HD 5964), at least 75% of students will earn ratings of "Very Good" or "Excellent" in their clinical performance evaluations for knowledge and application of models/theories.

(3.2) Student Learning Outcome #2:

Students will display competence in the professional practice of marriage and family therapy.

(3.2.1) *Benchmark #1:*

At least 75% of students will earn grades of “A” in HD 5964, MFT Practicum.

(3.2.2) *Benchmark #2:*

As part of the clinical evaluation for MFT Practicum (HD 5964), at least 75% of students will earn average ratings of “Very Good” or higher for 1) Admission to Treatment, 2) Clinical Assessment and Diagnosis, 3) Treatment Planning and Case Management, 4) Therapeutic Interventions, 5) Legal Issues, Ethics, and Standards, and 6) Research and Program Evaluation.

(3.2.3) *Benchmark #3:*

Within 7 years of graduation, 50% of students will achieve licensure as a marriage and family therapist.

Program Goal #4: Community Engagement & Professional Service:

Students will engage in community engagement and/or professional service activities related to MFT and/or working with diverse, marginalized and/or underserved communities.

(4.1) Student Learning Outcome #1:

Students will maintain membership in a professional organization.

(4.1.1) *Benchmark #1:*

Each year, at least 75% of students will maintain membership in a professional organization related to their career, clinical, and/or research interests.

(4.2) Student Learning Outcome #2:

Students will demonstrate experience in community engagement activities related to MFT, their research interests, and/or to working with diverse, marginalized and/or underserved communities.

(4.2.1) *Benchmark #1:*

Each year, at least 50% of students will participate at least one community engagement activity (e.g., community presentations, volunteering, etc.) related to MFT, their research interests, and/or to diverse, marginalized and/or underserved communities.

4.3) Student Learning Outcome #3:

Students will demonstrate experience with professional service activities.

(4.3.1) *Benchmark #1:*

Each year, 50% or more of students will participate in at least one professional service activity (e.g., journal reviewer, committee service, etc.).

Program Goal #5: Diversity and Inclusion

Students will demonstrate respect for diversity and inclusion.

(5.1) Student Learning Outcome #1:

Students will demonstrate respect for and competence in working with diverse populations in their clinical work, teaching, clinical supervision, and research.

(5.1.1) Benchmark #1:

As part of MFT Practicum (HD 5964), at least 75% of students will earn ratings of “Very Good” or “Excellent” in their clinical performance evaluations for sensitivity to diversity.

(5.1.2) Benchmark #2:

As part of the Graduate Student Annual Review, at least 75% of students will earn ratings of “Excellent” or “Good” for sensitivity to diversity and cultural competence.

(5.1.3) Benchmark #3:

Within the best practices assignment for HD 6444, at least 75% of students will demonstrate effective strategies for working with diverse populations by earning a grade of B+ or higher.

(5.2) Student Learning Outcome #2:

Students will demonstrate efforts to improve their skills and/or knowledge related to diversity and inclusion.

(5.2.1) Benchmark #1:

Each year, at least 75% of students will document their participation in at least one activity (e.g., training, workshops, readings, etc.) designed to improve their competence related to diversity and inclusion.

The program mission, outcomes, and student learning outcomes have been derived from and reflect the following professional influences: (1) Professional Marriage and Family Therapy Standards and Educational Guidelines; (2) AAMFT Core Competencies; (3) AAMFT Code of Ethics; and (4) AMFTRB Guidelines. Documentation related to these connections is available from the Program Director. Also available from the Program Director is documentation of the alignment of student learning outcomes and associated benchmarks with the program curriculum.

MFT Program & Family Therapy Center Staff

Program Director – Dr. Megan Dolbin-MacNab

The responsibilities of the Program Director, who also serves as the Director of the Family Therapy Center, are the development and scheduling of MFT courses, oversight of the curriculum, recruitment of students, organization of candidate interviews and selection of new students, development of policies for the MFT program and the Family Therapy Center, oversight of the program budget, oversight of the Family Therapy Center equipment and its physical facilities, public relations and outreach, program quality assessment, and compliance with accreditation and legal requirements. The Program Director has a 12-month appointment and is an AAMFT Approved Supervisor.

Clinical Director – Dr. Jenene Case Pease

The Clinical Director, who has a 12-month appointment and is an AAMFT Approved Supervisor, has overall responsibility for 1) clinical supervision 2) clinical assignment and scheduling, 3) clinical screening procedures, 4) clinical records, 5) clinic-based research, and 6) statistical reports of supervision and client contact. The Clinical Director works in consultation with the Program Director on oversight of the Family Therapy Center equipment and its physical facilities and public relations and outreach for the

Family Therapy Center. Additionally, the Clinical Director also provides oversight for students completing their advanced practical experience requirements.

Office Manager – Christine Sokol

The Office Manager is responsible for day-to-day record keeping and maintenance of contact with practicum and other MFT students, clients, and referral sources. The Office Manager is also responsible for client intakes, client billing, and assists with clinical recordkeeping and data collection. The Office Manager also works in collaboration with the Program Director and Clinical Director on maintenance of the physical facilities of the Family Therapy Center. This position reports to the Program Director, but also works closely with the Clinical Director. In addition, the Office Manager orders all textbooks and assists with course evaluations for the Human Development and Family Science faculty. This position also gives clerical support for full-time and adjunct department faculty, and for graduate teaching assistants, as assigned by the Human Development and Family Science Department Head.

Clinical Faculty

The Program Director, Clinical Director, and any other faculty assigned to teach in the MFT program are collectively known as the clinical faculty. These faculty teach MFT content courses, provide clinical supervision as part of MFT practicum, and serve as advisors and doctoral committee members to MFT students. They also maintain other teaching, research, engagement, and service responsibilities as assigned by the Human Development and Family Science Department Head and in accordance with university expectations for their faculty appointments.

Clinical Associates

Clinical Associates are clinicians, instructors, or supervisors who, though not directly part of the Family Therapy Center staff, may work closely with Family Therapy Center personnel and whose professional credentials establish them as competent and ethical practitioners, instructors, and/or supervisors. For example, they may serve as adjunct supervisors, instructors, or researchers. Clinical Associates are appointed by the Program Director after consultation with the clinical faculty.

Family Therapy Center Graduate Assistant

The Graduate Assistant reports to the Program Director or the Clinical Director and acts as a liaison between the Office Manager, the clinical faculty, and the MFT practicum students regarding tasks such as coordinating phone coverage (in Office Manager's absence), and ensuring that there is another person in the building when only one therapist is meeting with a client. The Graduate Assistant also assists with the program display at the AAMFT annual conference and assists with Interview Day, including arranging the pre-Interview Day party, helping candidates tour the Family Therapy Center, and assisting with resettlement for the incoming fall class. Finally, the Graduate Assistant works with the Program Director and/or Clinical Director on assigned tasks related to assessment, accreditation, clinical operations, and clinical data collection. This is a 10-hour/week, academic year appointment.

MFT Practicum Students

MFT students who are currently enrolled in MFT 5964 (MFT Practicum) serve as therapists at the Family Therapy Center, providing individual, couple, family, and group therapy to clients from the New River Valley and surrounding communities. Practicum students are responsible for all aspects of clinical services (e.g., scheduling, seeing clients, recordkeeping, submitting billing to the Office Manager). They are also responsible for attending practicum and seeking supervision as needed. More information about the clinical requirements of the program can be found in those sections and in the policies and procedures manual for the Family Therapy Center.

Undergraduate Interns

The Undergraduate Interns are enrolled Virginia Tech field study and provide administrative assistance to the Clinical Director and Office Manager and provide evening clinic coverage for the MFT Practicum Students. Undergraduate Interns also receive mentoring from the MFT Practicum students. They must apply for the internship and be recommended by two faculty members or supervisors. They serve approximately 10 hours per week and are able to observe cases and attend seminars as determined by the Clinical Director. All Undergraduate Interns report to the Office Manager and, ultimately, the Clinical Director.

Communities of Interest

The Virginia Tech MFT Doctoral Program has a number of Communities of Interest. These Communities of Interest are stakeholders of the program and, as a program, the program considers their needs and expectations when determining, evaluating, and revising our educational outcomes. The program also seeks their regular input, via both formal and informal means, on various aspects of the program including its educational outcomes, curriculum, and overall operations, policies, and procedures. While the Virginia Tech MFT Doctoral Program has a wide range of Communities of Interest, the program has identified the following Communities of Interest as being primary, in terms of providing the program with feedback:

- Virginia Tech MFT Students
- Family Therapy Center Clients
- Local Client Referral Sources
- Employers of Virginia Tech Graduates
- Virginia Tech MFT Alumni
- Advanced Practical Experience Supervisors
- Department of Human Development and Family Science – Faculty and Department Head

Program Governance

The Program Director is responsible for the overall governance of the MFT program. The Clinical Director, Clinical Faculty, and Office Manager also contribute significantly to the governance of the program. While there are policies and procedures that are specific to the MFT program and within the control of the clinical faculty, given that the program is housed within the larger Department of Human Development and Family Science, some policies and procedures are decided upon and implemented at this level. Similarly, policies at the level of the Graduate School and the university also impact the policies and procedures within the MFT program.

The clinical faculty value student involvement in the governance of the program. All students may be involved in program governance via their participation in program meetings and various evaluation mechanisms. Additionally, the program utilizes a student representative at the MFT (clinical) faculty meetings. Generally, the role of the student representative is to 1) share student perspectives on various issues being discussed and 2) bring student issues to the attention of the MFT faculty. Of course, students are always welcome to bring issues directly to a MFT faculty member, if they would prefer. The student representative is selected by self- or other-nomination, followed by a student vote. The student representative is appointed for the period of one academic year, unless scheduling conflicts

precludes student participation in a given semester. In this case, a new student representative is identified, using the process outlined above.

In addition to participating in MFT (clinical) faculty meetings, the student representative also provides leadership for planning one brown-bag session per semester. This involves working with the other MFT students to identify a topic of interest, identifying/securing a presenter, and coordinating the logistics (i.e., date, time, location). Faculty are willing to assist with presenting and/or brainstorming presenters, and the student representative is encouraged solicit the assistance of other students.

Department of Human Development & Family Science

The MFT program is housed in the Department of Human Development and Family Science, one of the largest departments in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. In addition to the MFT program, the department is home to graduate programs in Family Studies, Child and Adolescent Development, and Adult Development and Aging. Upon graduation, all MFT students receive a degree in Human Development and Family Science, with a specialization in marriage and family therapy. More information about the Department of Human Development and Family Science is available at: www.liberalarts.vt.edu/departments-and-schools/departments-of-human-development.html

As the departmental faculty have expertise in a wide range of subjects, this makes for fertile collaborations between MFT students and the faculty and students in these areas. MFT students commonly have assistantships supervised by other HDFS professors, and program students often ask faculty from these other areas to serve on or chair their doctoral advisory committees. MFT students are encouraged to seek opportunities to interact with the larger Department of Human Development and Family Science, as a means of further enhancing their doctoral training.

Academic Requirements

Prerequisites for Doctoral Study

Students should hold a master's degree or its equivalent in a mental health field. At the time of enrollment in the doctoral program, students should have approximately 500 clinical contact hours with individuals, couples, and families, with approximately 40% (200) of those hours being relational. The clinical hours should have been conducted under the supervision of a licensed marriage and family therapist, an AAMFT Approved Supervisor, or an equivalently qualified mental health professional.

All incoming MFT students must document their completion of the COAMFTE foundational curriculum. This means that the academic prerequisites for the MFT doctoral program include coursework in the following COAMFTE Foundational Curriculum Areas (FCA):

- Foundations of Relational/Systemic Practice, Theories, and Models (FCA1; 6 Credit Hours)
- Clinical Treatment with Individuals, Couples, and Families (FCA2; 6 Credit Hours)
- Diverse, Multicultural, and/or Underserved Communities (FCA3; 3 Credit Hours)
- Research and Evaluation (FCA4; 3 Credit Hours)
- Professional Identity, Law, Ethics & Social Responsibility (FCA5; 3 Credit Hours)
- Biopsychosocial Health & Development Across the Lifespan (FCA6; 3 Credit Hours)
- Systemic/Relational Assessment & Mental Health Diagnosis and Treatment (FCA7; 3 Credits)
- Contemporary Issues (FCA8; No Credit Requirement, but Document Training)

- Community Intersections & Collaboration (FCA9; No Credit Requirement, but Document Training)

Please see the COAMFTE Accreditation Standards V12 (www.coamfte.org) for additional information about the FCAs. Students who cannot document completion of the COAMFTE foundational curriculum may need to complete leveling coursework as part of their doctoral program. Students should work with their temporary advisors during their first semester of full-time enrollment (or prior to enrollment, in certain cases) in order to determine if any leveling coursework is needed. Please note that leveling coursework may delay a student's progress through the doctoral program.

Doctoral Curriculum

The doctoral curriculum addresses the Advanced Curricular Areas (ACA) delineated in the COAMFTE Accreditation Standards V12 (www.coamfte.org). The following table summarizes the doctoral curriculum that all students entering in Fall 2018¹, must complete in order to graduate:

Course Identifier	Course Title	Credit Hours	Date Completed
ACA1: Advanced Research			
HD 5514	Research Methods	3	
STAT 5214G	Advanced Statistics – Regression	3	
HD 6514	Advanced Research Methods – SEM	3	
HD 6524	Topics in Advanced Research Methods – SEM Lab	1	
HD 5624	Qualitative Methods in Family Research	3	
HD 6484	MFT Research	3	
	<i>*ADDITIONAL METHODS COURSE</i>	3	
HD 5964	HD Research Team (4 Credits Total)	4	
ACA2: Advanced Relational/Systemic Clinical Theory			
HD 5005	HDFS Theories: Individual & Lifespan	3	
HD 5006	HDFS Theories: Family & Systems	3	
HD 6414	Advanced Traditional Models in MFT	3	
ACA3: Advanced Relational/Systemic Applications to Contemporary Challenges			
HD 6444	Advanced Contemporary MFT	3	
HD 5964	MFT Practicum (Y1SP, Y1SU, Y2FA, Y2SP, Y2SU, Y3FA)	6	
HD XXXX	<i>(ADDITIONAL HDFS COURSE)</i>	3	
ACA4: Foundations of Relational/Systemic Teaching, Supervision, Consultation &/or Leadership			
HD 6464	Clinical Supervision of MFT	3	

¹ Students entering the program prior to Fall 2018 are held to the curriculum requirements in place at the time of their enrollment. Please see Canvas or consult with the Program Director for the course checklists for previous cohorts.

HD 6004	Professional Development Orientation Seminar (2 Semesters)	2	
Advanced Practical Experience			
HD 5754	Internship	1	

Recommended Timeline for Program Completion

The following table provides a recommended timeline for program completion. In reviewing this table, please note that it does not include Research & Dissertation credits (HD 7994) or Research Team credits (HD 5964), as the timeline for taking these credits and the number of credits taken in a given semester is highly variable. Given that students have the option of choosing their electives and/or completing various specialized certificates, students should consult with their major professor on their exact timeline for completing the program requirements, as any extra requirements may extend a student's time in the program. Additionally, this recommended timeline should not be viewed as "final," as course offerings vary based on Departmental needs and faculty availability.

Recommended Timeline for Fall 2018 Cohort:

Semester I (Fall 2018 – Year 1):

- HD 5505: Theories in HDFS I
- HD 5514: Research Methods
- HD 6004: Professional Seminar
- HD 6414: Advanced Traditional MFT
- *Meeting with Faculty to Discuss Interests – Select Advisor/Form Committee*

Semester II (Spring 2019 – Year 1):

- HD 5506: Theories in HDFS II
- HD 5964: MFT Practicum
- HD 6004: Professional Seminar
- HD 6484: MFT Research
- STAT 5214G: Advanced Statistics (Regression)
- *Meeting with Faculty to Discuss Interests – Select Advisor/Form Committee*
- *Plan of Study Meeting*

Summer I & II (Summer 2019 – Year 1):

- HD 5964: MFT Practicum

Semester III (Fall 2019 – Year 2):

- HD 5964: MFT Practicum
- HD 6514/6524: Advanced Research Methods (SEM)
- *(ACA1 or ACA3 Elective)*
- *Preliminary Exam Planning Meeting*

Semester IV (Spring 2020 – Year 2):

- HD 5624: Qualitative Methods in Family Research
- HD 5964: MFT Practicum
- HD 6444: Advanced Contemporary MFT

- *(ACA1 or ACA3 Elective)*
- *Preliminary Exam Planning Meeting/Preliminary Exam*

Summer I & II (Summer 2020 – Year 2):

- HD 5964: MFT Practicum
- *Preliminary Exam*

Semester V (Fall 2020 – Year 3):

- HD 5964: MFT Practicum
- *(ACA1 or ACA3 Elective)*

Semester VI (Spring 2021 – Year 3):

- HD 6464: MFT Supervision
- *(ACA1 or ACA3 Elective)*
- *Dissertation Proposal Defense*

Summer I & II (Summer 2021 – Year 3):

- *Advanced Practical Experience and/or Dissertation*

Semester VII (Fall 2021 – Year 4):

- *Advanced Practical Experience and/or Dissertation*

Spring VIII (Spring 2022 – Year 4):

- HD 5754: Internship
- *Advanced Practical Experience and/or Dissertation*

Doctoral Preliminary Examination

MFT students take preliminary examinations (prelims) prior to undertaking the doctoral dissertation. As learning opportunities, the prelim questions invite critical analysis and creative integration of your knowledge of the field of human development. As a means of assessment, prelims test a comprehensive understanding of the field; critical analysis of key issues; and integration across theories, prior research, and methodologies. Besides reflecting both depth and breadth of knowledge, prelims usually engage the student's emerging line of research. The *Human Development Graduate Policy Guide*, which is available on Canvas, provides detailed information about the preliminary examination process, including information about scheduling the preliminary examination in the Graduate School's Approval System. Students are encouraged to consult with their major professors about the doctoral preliminary examination and the timing for taking this exam that would work best for them.

Research Team

The research team experience provides an opportunity to work directly with faculty in MFT and Human Development and Family Science. These direct experiences in collaborative relationships complement knowledge and understanding acquired in coursework. The research team experience can enhance expertise, foster career goals, and advance skills needed for the thesis or dissertation. All MFT students are required to take a minimum of 4 credits (HD 5964 – Research Team) of research team, and should consult with their major professors about the types of research team experience would be most beneficial to them, and about the timing for scheduling the research team credits. Please see the *Human Development Graduate Policy Guide* on Canvas for additional information about research teams.

Research & Dissertation Credits

See the *Human Development Graduate Policy Guide* (on Canvas) for the guidelines related to HD 7994 (Research & Dissertation) credits. MFT students must take at least 30 credits of HD 7994, spread out over their time in the program. Students are encouraged to consult with their major professor about how to plan for and schedule those required credits.

Doctoral Dissertation

Upon successful completion of the preliminary examination, the student will prepare a written dissertation proposal, which is presented to the student's advisory committee. The advisory committee must approve the proposal and IRB approval (www.irb.vt.edu; see the *Human Development Graduate Policy Guide* on Canvas for additional information about the IRB and dissertation research) must be obtained before the dissertation research may begin, namely any data collection. Upon completion of the dissertation research, each candidate must pass a final examination (i.e., the dissertation defense) with the student's advisory committee. Dissertation proposal meetings and dissertation defense may only be scheduled during fall and spring semesters and students are required to be physically present for these meetings. Please see the *Human Development Graduate Policy Guide* for information about guidelines related to 1) scheduling the dissertation proposal meeting and the final examination, 2) options for formatting the dissertation, including the article style dissertation, and 3) other dissertation-related policies. In order to comply with all dissertation-related policies, students should work closely with their major professors throughout the dissertation process.

Clinical Requirements

Part of the mission of the MFT doctoral program at Virginia Tech is to develop scholar-*clinicians* who will advance the field of MFT through research, clinical supervision, teaching, *practice*, and community and professional engagement. As such, one of the program's goals is that "students will demonstrate proficiency in systemic practice with a diverse clientele across the lifespan." In light of this goal, part of students' doctoral training at Virginia Tech focuses on continued growth and development as clinicians. Improving as a clinician is essential in order to train the next generation of MFT to become competent clinical supervisors and teachers of MFT.

In addition to the material listed below, please refer to the policies and procedures manual for the Family Therapy Center of Virginia Tech. This manual provides guidance related to all aspects of clinical work at the Family Therapy Center. The manual is available on Canvas. All forms related to the program's clinical requirements are also available on Canvas.

Client Contact & Supervision Hours

In order to graduate from the program, students must complete 1000 client contact hours, 40%² of which must be relational (i.e., couples, families, shared residence). Of the total number of required client contact hours, up to 100 alternative hours (e.g., live teaming, live cases where reflecting teams are directly involved in working with clients) may be counted. The remaining hours must involve direct client contact, defined as the provision of individual, couple, family, or group therapy services by the student. Students must also complete 200 hours of supervision from an AAMFT Approved Supervisor,

² Please note that most licensure boards require that 50% of direct client contact hours be relational. While the 40% requirement listed above is in accordance with COAMFTE Version 12.0 Accreditation Standards, ***it is in students' best interests to strive for 50% of their client contact hours being relational in nature.***

Supervisor Candidate, or the equivalent, and can be a mixture of “individual” (two or fewer supervisees) or “group” (6 or fewer supervisees³) supervision. At least 100 of the total number of supervision hours must be based on observable data (i.e., audio, video, live) and at least 100 of the total number of supervision hours must be in an “individual” setting. Students must receive supervision on a weekly basis, while active at the Family Therapy Center, and maintain a 1:5 ratio of supervision to client contact hours throughout their time in the program.

To meet these requirements, students may transfer in up to 500 client contact hours and 100 supervision hours from their master’s program (for additional information about this process, see below). The remaining 500 client contact and 100 supervision hours may be accumulated via practicum at the Family Therapy Center and during a student’s Advanced Practical Experience⁴. Students are responsible for tracking and documenting their client contact and supervision hours, with the assistance of the program, to ensure completion of this requirement. Students also bear sole responsibility for securing an Advanced Practical Experience that will allow them to complete any needed client contact and supervision hours, beyond the hours that are transferred to the program and obtained as part of practicum. Students may elect to conduct more client hours at the Family Therapy Center, during the six semesters in which they are enrolled in practicum, if desired. Students should consult with the Clinical Director and/or their advisors, early in the program, about their plan for completing the program’s clinical requirements.

As the practicum requirements are part of the program’s curriculum, students are still required to satisfy the practicum requirements, regardless of the number of client contact and supervision hours accumulated. Students may not end practicum early due if they exceed the practicum or the program’s clinical requirements. See below for additional information about the practicum requirements.

Students occasionally enter the program fully licensed as a marriage and family therapist, or gain full licensure during their enrollment. Regardless of licensure status, students are still required to 1) transfer in up to 500 client contact hours and 100 supervision hours and 2) complete the practicum requirements (as outlined below). However, for those students who are fully licensed as marriage and family therapists by the start date of their Advanced Practical Experience, any remaining clinical requirements are waived⁵. Students must submit a copy of their license to the Clinical Director in order to obtain the waiver.

Practicum

Students begin practicum in their second semester, and are continuously enrolled through the fall semester of their third year. Because the Family Therapy Center operates on a 12-month basis, this means that students will have a continuous 24-month practicum experience. Students, therefore, must register for one hour of practicum (HD 5964) during their 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th semesters. They must also register for one hour of practicum (HD 5964; 12 week extended enrollment course) in Summer Session I for 1) the summer after their first year in the program and 2) the summer after their second year in the program. Please see the section on “Financial Requirements and Assistance” for additional information about summer practicum. Students should also review the program’s “Vacation Policy.”

³ The program defines “group” supervision as 6 or fewer supervisees, in accordance with many state licensure requirements.

⁴ This policy is applicable to all students who have not yet graduated from the program, as of August 2017.

⁵ This policy is applicable to all students who have not yet begun their Advanced Practical Experience as of December 2017.

Requirements for Beginning Practicum

In preparation for beginning practicum, students must complete the following:

- Prior to beginning practicum, all students must agree to the stipulations in the *MFT Practicum Agreement*. Students will receive this from the Clinical Director at the beginning of their first practicum, which is in the spring semester of their first year in the program.
- Prior to seeing clients, students must also complete the required credit card training and other university trainings as assigned by the Clinical Director. The Clinical Director will provide information about how to complete the trainings and deadlines for completion. Typically students complete required university trainings at the beginning of their second semester in the program. As these trainings must be renewed annually, continuing students will update their trainings at this time as well.
- Criminal Background Check (for additional information, please see this section under “Professional Conduct & Program Climate”).
- Attend any designated Family Therapy Center orientation meetings. The Clinic Director will distribute information about this meeting.
- During the first few weeks of the first semester of practicum, observe at least one case for up to four weeks (sessions) live and discuss this case with the therapist. Students may count these observations as alternative client contact hours. Students should refer to their practicum syllabus and the FTC Policies & Procedures for additional information about this requirement.

Probationary Period & Student Consultation

Students in their first semester of practicum (i.e., second semester in the program) are considered as having probationary status in the clinic. During this semester, students will begin to be assigned cases, at the discretion of the Clinical Director. During the probationary period, students must demonstrate compliance with Family Therapy Center policies and procedures, maintain proper and timely documentation, and meet all assigned deadlines. Student must also demonstrate compliance with the AAMFT Code of Ethics as well as clinical competence commensurate with their level of training. Students who successfully meet these expectations by the end of their first semester of practicum will no longer be considered as having probationary status. Poor or careless performance in any of these areas may impact practicum grades and/or result in the student receiving a clinical remediation plan (see this section below, for additional information). Significant issues may also impact continuance in the program, regardless of performance in other areas (e.g., assistantship, coursework).

During the probationary period, both a clinical faculty member and a third- year student consultant in HD 6464 (MFT Supervision) will supervise students on their assigned cases. The instructor of HD 6464 will supervise the third- year student’s consultation. Both client contact hours and faculty supervision hours should be reported on Canvas. However, consultation by third-year students does not count as supervision hours for the first-year student. Third-year student consultants may only count supervision as alternative clinical hours in the case of a live supervision session. The clinical faculty supervisor, and not the third-year student consultant, will be the primary supervisor for the first-year students, and will assign the practicum grade for HD 5964. Critical client issues should always be referred to the faculty supervisor, even if they have already been discussed with the third- year student consultant.

Following the completion of the practicum requirements and HD 6464, students may not seek or receive information related to any current or former FTC clients. To do so will be viewed as a

violation of ethical guidelines related to confidentiality. In addition, following the completion of HD 6464, third-year student consultants are not permitted to continue to provide any further consultation for on-going clinical cases.

Practicum Caseloads

During their time in practicum, students will serve approximately 10 clock hours in the clinic per week. This time estimate includes direct client contact, individual and/or group supervision, and other clinical work (e.g., telephone calls, documentation). The program expects that students will average approximately 5 direct client contact hours per week. Please note that, in order to maintain an average of 5 direct client contact hours per week, it is often necessary to schedule more than 5 client sessions to account for cancellations and no-shows. While weekly client contact hours may be less than or greater than 5 clients, depending on client needs and attendance, if a student's average weekly hours are consistently below expectations, new cases will be assigned. Students whose average weekly client contact hours are consistently above expectations will not be assigned new cases. The Clinical Director tracks students' client contact hours and makes all case assignments. During their time in practicum, students must accumulate a minimum of 300 hours of direct client contact and 60 hours of supervision. Students are not permitted to stop seeing clients or reduce caseloads after meeting the program's minimum expectations for client contact and supervision.

Please note that students can complete the additional 500 hours of direct client contact and 100 hours of supervision as part of their clinical work at the Family Therapy Center within the time expectations listed above. In these cases, students would have maximum flexibility in selecting advanced practical experiences, as they will have already met the program's clinical requirements. Students should consult with their advisors and Clinical Director about their career goals, so that they can pursue an advanced practical experience that will be most beneficial to them. For example, students who are interested in becoming supervisors and teachers would benefit from working as a full-time clinician in a community mental health setting.

Reporting Clinical and Supervision Hours

Practicum students must report their client contact hours and supervision hours on a monthly basis via the program's Canvas site. Failure to report client contact hours and supervision hours will negatively impact a student's practicum (HD 5964) grade as well as students' clinical evaluations. Students may not begin their Advanced Practical Experience until all clinical and supervision hours reports for practicum have been submitted.

Transfer of Contact Hours

Students who enter the program with supervision and client contact hours under AAMFT Approved Supervisors or equivalents, either from their master's programs or other clinical work, may transfer up to 500 client contact hours and 100 supervision hours toward the program's clinical requirements. To formally transfer these hours, students should complete the *Practicum Transfer of Hours Form* (available on the program Canvas site) and submit it to the Clinical Director for approval. The Clinical Director will prioritize transferring relational client contact hours and supervision hours in individual settings and/or live, audio, or video supervision. This form should be submitted by the end of the first semester in the program. Students may not begin their Advanced Practical Experience if this form has not been submitted.

Liability Insurance

While all practicum students are covered by Virginia Tech's liability insurance, as that insurance is primarily designed to protect Virginia Tech, all practicum students are strongly encouraged to maintain their own personal liability insurance throughout their time in practicum. AAMFT offers free liability insurance coverage to student members, though other options may be available for purchase. During their Advanced Practical Experience, students are required to have their own liability insurance, as they are no longer covered by Virginia Tech (see section, "Advanced Practical Experience Guidelines").

Clinical Evaluations

One of the program's goals is that "students will demonstrate proficiency in systemic practice with a diverse clientele across the lifespan." Within that, the program has identified two student learning outcomes related to clinical proficiency:

- (3.1) Students will demonstrate the ability to utilize multiple clinical theories and approaches.
- (3.2) Students will display competence in the professional practice of marriage and family therapy.

Relevant to 3.2, students' clinical competence will be evaluated by supervisors using the *Clinical Performance Evaluation* at the conclusion of each semester of practicum. This form is available on the program's Canvas site. Students will also be asked to provide a self-evaluation using the same form. All students will receive feedback on their clinical performance from their supervisors. The practicum grade will be influenced by the student's clinical evaluation. As such, poor or careless performance in any of these areas may impact the quality of the clinical evaluation and therefore, the practicum grade. Identified areas of concern may result in the student receiving a clinical remediation plan (see this section below, for additional information). Significant concerns related to clinical performance may also impact continuance in the program, regardless of performance in other areas (e.g., assistantship, coursework).

Clinical Remediation Plans

Students identified as having significant deficits in their clinical competence or performance will receive a clinical remediation plan. This plan is intended to help improve student performance and is developed by the clinical faculty. Clinical Remediation Plans identify 1) areas in need for improvement, 2) recommendations and/or requirements associated with making improvements in those areas, 3) a timeline for completion, and 4) evaluation processes and expected outcomes. Failure to meet the expectations of the clinical remediation plan will result in an unsatisfactory rating during the Graduate Student Annual Review, regardless of performance in other domains within the program. Receiving two unsatisfactory ratings is grounds for dismissal from the MFT program. Please see the *Human Development Graduate Policy Guide*, which is available on Canvas, for additional information about satisfactory progress and annual evaluations.

Adjunct & Outside Supervision

While practicum students typically receive supervision from one of the Clinical Faculty, students may be assigned to qualified adjunct supervisors if the Program Director and Clinical Director determine such arrangements are necessary. Adjunct supervisors will be chosen by the Clinical Faculty after careful consideration of the potential supervisor's suitability for supervision mentoring, including readiness for guidance, developmental skills, fit with potential supervisees, and program resources. Adjunct supervisors will be evaluated each semester they are actively engaged in supervision with MFT students. Adjunct supervisors may be relieved of their duties at any time at the discretion of the Clinical Faculty.

Generally, adjunct supervisors do not receive compensation for their services, though this may depend on specific circumstances.

No outside supervision or consultation on any Family Therapy Center cases is permitted without prior permission from the Clinical Director. Requests for outside supervision should be made in writing to the Clinical Director. The request must provide 1) the rationale for working with an outside supervisor, 2) the expected outcomes of the supervision arrangement, 3) logistics of the supervision arrangement (e.g., frequency of supervision, type of supervision, etc.), and 4) evaluation procedures of both the supervisee and the supervisor. The nature of the outside supervision (i.e., supplementary to supervision from the Clinical Faculty or replacing supervision by the Clinical Faculty) must be clearly articulated. Please note that these requests are *unlikely* to be approved if appropriate supervision is available from Clinical Faculty. The Clinical Director, in consultation with the Clinical Faculty, will make determinations about feasibility or suitability of any proposed outside supervision arrangements, including the adequacy of the qualifications of any proposed outside supervisors.

Whether the case with adjunct or outside supervisors, if appropriate to the supervisory arrangement, students should always report the total number and type of all cases, and ensure that the supervisor has a clear understanding of the therapist's total caseload and work, not simply selected cases. Expectations of supervisees with adjunct or outside supervisors are identical to those for students working with Clinical Faculty supervisors. Specifically, students working with adjunct or outside supervisors must be punctual, attentive, respectful, professional, and responsible. Failure to meet these expectations may negatively impact students' grades in HD 5964 (MFT Practicum) or evaluations of their overall clinical performance within the program (see section on Clinical Evaluations).

Supplemental Clinical Work

On rare occasions, practicum students may request to be permitted to receive additional client contact and supervision at off-campus sites. These arrangements must be worked out in advance with the Clinical Director and the proposed site supervisor. These arrangements will only be permitted in unusual circumstances, as students' first clinical responsibilities will always be to the Family Therapy Center. Students receiving off-campus supervision will report their clinical and supervision hours on a monthly basis via the program's Canvas site (see the section on reporting clinical and supervision hours).

Verification of Clinical Requirements Completion

As soon as they complete their clinical requirements, but no later than the final academic (i.e., Fall or Spring) semester of their Advanced Practical Experience (see the section, "Advanced Practical Experience Guidelines," for additional information), students should seek verification of their completion of the program's clinical requirements from the Clinical Director. Verifying completion of the program's clinical requirements early does not exempt a student from having to complete the Advanced Practical Experience or from having to fulfill the program's practicum requirements.

To obtain verification of the completion of the program's clinical requirements, students should formally request, in writing (email is acceptable), a review of their completion of the program's clinical requirements from the Clinical Director. The Clinical Director will obtain the official record of the student's clinical and supervision hours from the Office Manager and review those hours using the *Verification of Completion of Clinical Requirements* form. This form is available on the program's Canvas site. Prior to submission of the request for review of clinical requirements, students should work with the Office Manager to ensure that their hours are accurate. Regardless of when the verification of the clinical requirements is requested, students who have not completed the program's clinical requirements will receive a "NG" for HD 5754 (Internship). Students cannot graduate until all "NG"

grades have been resolved. The Clinical Director will confirm completion (or lack of completion) of the program's clinical requirements with the student within two weeks. It is the student's responsibility to arrange for this review to be completed by no later than the last day of classes in any given semester.

Students who have completed at least 950 client contact hours may petition in November/April for a waiver of the program's remaining clinical requirements in order to participate in December/May graduation. Waivers are only considered in unusual situations and will only be approved if the student can clearly document a plan for timely completion of the remaining clinical hours. Students interested in requesting a waiver should consult with the Clinical Director.

Advanced Practical Experience Guidelines

All MFT students are required to complete an Advanced Practical Experience during their fourth year in the program⁶. This full-time (at least 30 hours/week) experience must last for a minimum of 9 months. In order to be eligible to begin the Advanced Practical Experience, students must have successfully completed all required coursework, practicum hours at the FTC, and passed their preliminary examination. Additionally, students may not begin their Advanced Practical Experience until they have 1) transferred in their client contact/supervision hours from their master's programs and 2) submitted all client contact and supervision hours associated with practicum. Students may not complete the Advanced Practical Experience while on an official leave of absence from Virginia Tech.

While the clinical faculty will provide general guidance about the Advanced Practical Experience, each student is responsible for locating and securing a site placement(s). Students may not complete the Advanced Practical Experience at The Family Therapy Center. Additionally, returning to a previous site of practicum or other employment is not encouraged⁷. Generally, students are also not permitted to complete clinical requirements in a private practice setting, except in unusual circumstances. Students may work in multiple sites, although working in more than two sites is not encouraged. While a list of current and previous sites is available from the Clinical Director, many students elect to locate their own site for personal, financial, or geographic reasons. Programs offering annual clinical or teaching internships typically request applications in January or February, though this timeline varies widely. Other positions may not require an application until a month or two before beginning to provide services at the site. Students should, therefore, discuss where they wish to apply with their faculty advisor or the Clinical Director early in their third year of the program.

Advanced Practical Experience Competencies

In accordance with the program's educational outcomes, and in order to complete the requirements of the Advanced Practical Experience, MFT doctoral students must demonstrate competence in at least two of the following areas:

1. **Research & Scholarship:** Application of qualitative or quantitative research methods and writing skills to produce presentations and publications. This does not include dissertation research.

⁶ These requirements are effective for all students who have yet to complete their Advanced Practical Experience, as of December 2017.

⁷ Any student considering returning to a previous site must have a different supervisor and/or work in a different clinical/other role (e.g., in a different division of the agency).

2. **Program Development and Evaluation:** Apply principles of program development in a supervised work setting. The program needs to be fully prepared for implementation and evaluation so that the student is able to conduct a planned evaluation of the program.
3. **Teaching:** Take major responsibility for teaching undergraduate or graduate students in courses related to marriage and family therapy. Document teaching responsibilities, teaching accomplishments, as well as student and supervisor's evaluation of teaching excellence.
4. **Administration/Leadership:** Assume oversight of a clinical program or service component in a supervised work setting. Student must document successful completion of job description through a supervisor's evaluation and their own self-evaluation.
5. **MFT Supervision:** Supervise trainees and receive supervision mentoring to become an AAMFT Approved Supervisor. In addition to supervisor and self-evaluations and documentation of supervision accomplishments (e.g., hours), completion of requirements to become an AAMFT Approved Supervisor is another way of documenting competence.
6. **Clinical Practice:** Obtain direct clinical contact hours with individuals, couples, and families. All client contact must be supervised. See more information about clinically-focused Advanced Practical Experiences below. This could also include completion of all requirements to become a professionally licensed marriage and family therapist.
7. **Grant Writing:** Take major responsibility for writing a research or service delivery grant in a supervised work setting. Student must document a successful submitted application through a supervisor's evaluation and their own self-evaluation.
8. **Policy Development:** Take major responsibility for initiating or advancing public policy with the intent to improve mental health and/or the lives of couples and families. Student must document successful progress through a supervisor's evaluation and their own self-evaluation⁸.

Students should work closely with their faculty advisors and the Clinical Director to determine what competencies they would like to emphasize as part of their Advanced Practical Experience. What each student chooses to emphasize during their Advanced Practical Experience should be aligned with their particular career goals. As such, each student's plan for the Advanced Practical Experience will look different.

Advanced Practical Experience Requirements

The Advanced Practical Experience must meet the following requirements:

- Full-time (30-40 hours/week) work
- Minimum of 9 months in length
- Address at least two of the competencies listed in the previous section.
- Students must receive regular and appropriate supervision. This means that they must meet with their designated supervisor(s) at least weekly for the duration of their Advanced Practical Experience. It is possible to have more than one supervisor.

In addition to these requirements, students are expected to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Students are required to abide by the current *AAMFT Code of Ethics* (http://www.aamft.org/imis15/AAMFT/Content/Legal_Ethics/Code_of_Ethics.aspx) for the duration of the Advanced Practical Experience.

⁸ Competency descriptions adapted from *BYU Professional Development Internship Requirements* with permission from Lee Johnson and Jonathan Sandberg, 9/1/17.

- Student must keep their own documentation of progress made toward completion of the activities and outcomes for selected competencies and, if applicable, direct clinical contact and supervision hours.
- Maintain professional liability insurance. This is required for students engaged in clinical work for their Advanced Practical Experience and strongly recommended for all students. See the section “Liability Insurance” for additional information. Documentation of this coverage must be submitted to the Clinical Director prior to beginning the Advanced Practical Experience. Clinical and supervision hours will not be counted until this documentation has been submitted.

Clinical Practice Requirements

Student who are incorporating clinical practice into their Advanced Practical Experience must adhere to the following guidelines, in addition to those listed above:

- The number of required direct clinical contact hours is dependent upon the number of clinical hours the student attained prior to beginning the Advanced Practical Experience. For more information about the program’s clinical requirements, please see the section, “Client Contact and Supervision Hours.”
- In accordance with the program’s overall clinical requirements, 40% of the client contact during the Advanced Practical Experience must be relational (i.e., couples, families, shared residence).
- Students must receive clinical supervision on a weekly basis from an AAMFT Approved Supervisor or the equivalent.
- The ratio of supervision hours to client contact hours must be 1:5 for the duration of the Advanced Practical Experience. Supervision can be a mixture of “individual” (two or fewer supervisees) or “group” (6 or fewer supervisees⁹) supervision. The total number of supervision hours based on observable data (i.e., audio, video, live) and the total number of individual supervision hours required during the Advanced Practical Experience is dependent upon each student’s attainment of individual supervision hours based on observable data in their master’s programs and at the FTC. See the program’s clinical requirements for additional information.
- Students must report direct clinical contact and supervision hours by the 15th of the month following the first month hours were accrued into the designated assignment area of the MFT Doctoral Program Canvas site. The Clinical Director will review this initial hours upload and, assuming all is in order, students will upload (as one document) the second month of hours through the midpoint of hours’ accumulation at the same time they upload their midpoint self-evaluation and signed supervisor’s midpoint evaluation. The final hours upload of clinical contact and supervision hours earned from the midpoint through the final month of the Advance Practical Experience is due at the same time students upload their final self-evaluation and signed supervisor’s final evaluation. Failure to report client contact hours and supervision hours will result in hours not being counted and/or a “NG” for HD 5754 (Internship). Students cannot graduate until all “NG” grades have been resolved. For additional information, see the section “Advanced Practical Experience Enrollment.”

⁹ The program defines “group” supervision as 6 or fewer supervisees, in accordance with many state licensure requirements.

Advanced Practical Experience Enrollment

All students¹⁰ must register for one credit hour of HD 5754 during the last academic (i.e., fall or spring) of their Advanced Practical Experience. Students should register for this credit as Pass/Fail.

Advanced Practical Experience Approval Process

1. Students should meet with their faculty advisor and/or the Clinical Director to discuss their ideas and goals for the Advanced Practical Experience. This discussion should focus on determining the competencies (see above) that the student would like to emphasize. This should happen at the end of the student's second year or the beginning of the third year in the program.
2. Students should first meet with their faculty advisor to complete an *Advanced Practical Experience Plan*. This form is available on Canvas. The plan must highlight:
 - How the student will obtain experience necessary to demonstrate competency in at least two of the Advanced Practical Experience areas listed above.
 - How evidence for the specified competencies will be measured/evaluated (including both activities and measurable outcomes).
 - Who will supervise and evaluate the work (supervisor/mentor).
3. Once the *Advanced Practical Experience Plan* is completed, it should be submitted to the Clinical Director for review, along with the curriculum vitae of any supervisors/mentors. Following this review, students will work with their faculty advisors to make any necessary revisions to the plan.
4. The final *Advanced Practical Experience Plan* must be signed by the student's faculty advisor, the Clinical Director, the site supervisor(s)/mentor(s), and the Clinical Director (in this order) *prior* to beginning any work. This plan serves as the contract for the Advanced Practical Experience. As such, any student who fails to submit the *Advanced Practical Experience Plan* will not be considered as actively pursuing the Advanced Practical Experience and any work completed will not be counted toward the program's requirements.
5. A copy of the *Advanced Practical Experience Plan* must be filed with the MFT program, via the Clinic Director. The student and the students' faculty advisor are encouraged to keep copies of the plan as well.
6. Prior to beginning the Advanced Practical Experience, students will provide updated contact information to the Clinical Director by completing the *Post-Approval Doctoral Advanced Practical Experience Form*, which is available on Canvas. If applicable, students accruing clinical contact hours will also complete and sign the portion of this form that addresses guidelines for reporting clinical hours.

Clinical Practice Approval

Students who are incorporating clinical practice into their Advanced Practical Experience must also do the following, in addition to the items listed above:

- Provide a copy of liability insurance coverage to the Clinical Director. Clinical and supervision hours will not be counted until this documentation has been submitted.

¹⁰ Beginning with students who entered the MFT program in Fall 2017.

- The student must work with the clinical supervisor to provide the following to the Clinical Director for approval: a) a copy of the proposed clinical supervisor's AAMFT Approved Supervisor certificate noting expiration date; or b) if the proposed supervisor is not an AAMFT Approved Supervisor, the student will request that the proposed supervisor complete the *Clinical Supervisor Equivalency Form* and the student will return the form to the clinical director to determine equivalency. Students may not count their clinical or supervisory hours until the Clinical Director has approved their supervision.
- In addition to the *Advanced Practical Experience Plan*, students must complete an *Advanced Practice Experience Clinical Agreement* before beginning to provide services at their proposed site. This agreement includes signatures of the student, the designated supervisor(s), and the Clinical Director. If a student begins clinical work at a proposed site before completing the *Advanced Practical Experience Clinical Agreement* by obtaining all required signatures, any clinical and supervision hours earned prior to obtaining the required signatures will not be counted.

Evaluation of the Advanced Practical Experience

Students are required to obtain, from their supervisors, two evaluations of their performance during the Advanced Practical Experience. The first evaluation will occur half-way through (and no earlier than the beginning of the 5th month of) the Advanced Practical Experience; the second evaluation will occur during the last month of the Advanced Practical Experience. For both evaluations, supervisors should complete the *Advanced Practical Experience Evaluation* via Qualtrics (a link will be provided by the Clinical Director, and the form is available on Canvas). Students should complete a self-evaluation, via Qualtrics, using the same form. The Clinical Director will provide the link to the survey to the student.

In addition to the *Advanced Practical Experience Evaluation*, students who are incorporating clinical practice into their Advanced Practical Experience must have their clinical supervisor complete the program's *Clinical Evaluation Form* via a Qualtrics link provided by the Clinical Director. The first clinical evaluation will occur half-way through (and no earlier than the beginning of the 5th month of) the Advanced Practical Experience; the second clinical evaluation will occur during the last month of the Advanced Practical Experience.

Verifying Completion of the Advanced Practical Experience

Within 30 days following the completion of their Advanced Practical Experience, students are responsible for requesting that the Clinical Director complete a review to verify progress made toward completion of the activities and outcomes for selected competencies. This review of the student's completion of the *Advanced Practical Experience Plan* takes into account the supervisor's and the student's evaluation responses received by the date of the review, as well as any supplemental data received (progress toward completion of clinical contact hours, documentation of projects and accomplishments, etc.). It is the student's responsibility to gather this information and provide it to the Clinical Director. Failure to request this review will result in a "NG" for HD 5754 (Internship). Students cannot graduate with an "NG" on their transcripts.

The Advanced Practical Experience will be considered complete once the Clinical Director receives and reviews all required documentation noting satisfactory completion of the activities and outcomes of the selected competencies on the *Advanced Practical Experience Plan*. The Clinical Director will notify the student of completion status (satisfactory or unsatisfactory) by email and via their grade for HD 5754.

Academic Policies & Procedures

The **Human Development Graduate Policy Guide** outlines a number academic policies and procedures relevant to MFT students. Students should refer to this policy guide, which is available on Canvas, for information related to these topics. Students are responsible for being familiar with this information, in addition to the information outlined below. What is included below is supplementary information specific to MFT students.

In addition, the **Virginia Tech Graduate School** policies are applicable to all MFT students. Some of the policies that are most relevant to MFT students are excerpted below and are referenced in the Human Development Graduate Policy Guide. Complete information about these policies is available at:

<https://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/graduate-catalog-policies-procedures.html>.

Please note that changes to Departmental and Graduate School policies will be applicable to MFT students and supersede any policies and procedures outlined in this document.

Advising

The *Human Development Graduate Policy Guide* provides information about 1) Temporary Advisor, 2) the Advisory Committee, 3) the Protocol for Changing Committee Membership, and 4) Internal Transfers within the Department of Human Development and Family Science.

Specific to MFT students, the advisory committee must consist of 1) the student's major professor, who must be a Human Development and Family Science faculty member and have directive status (see the *Human Development Graduate Policy Guide* for additional information about directive status) and 2) three other committee members. A minimum of three committee members must be from the Department of Human Development and Family Science, and at least one committee member (does not have to be the major professor) must be a faculty member affiliated with the MFT doctoral program. Any "outside" committee members must meet the requirements for academic training and research experience expected of other committee members. Again, see the *Human Development Graduate Policy Guide* for additional information.

As students have varied needs and preferences when it comes to mentoring, students are encouraged to consult with their Temporary Advisors about strategies to consider when selecting a major professor and advisory committee.

Plan of Study

All MFT students are required to develop a Plan of Study, in consultation with their major professor and advisory committee. MFT students must prepare *three documents* in order to meet the requirements for the Plan of Study:

Documentation of Foundational Curriculum

Students in doctoral MFT programs must document their completion of the COAMFTE foundational curriculum using the *Documentation of Foundational Curriculum Form*, which is available on the program's Canvas site. Students who have graduated from a COAMFTE-accredited master's program will have completed the foundational curriculum, and should list their courses on the form (please note that practicum courses may not be included on the form as part of the foundational curriculum). Students from non-COAMFTE accredited master's program must document competence or course completion in each of the areas of the foundational curriculum. Students should work with their temporary advisors

or the Program Director during their first semester of full-time enrollment to complete this form, in order to determine if any leveling coursework is needed. Completed forms must be reviewed and approved by the Program Director *prior* to the Plan of Study meeting. Copies of the signed *Documentation of Foundational Curriculum Form* should be submitted to 1) the Department and 2) the MFT Office Manager.

MFT Doctoral Curriculum Requirements

Students in doctoral MFT programs must document that their curriculum meets the COAMFTE advanced curriculum areas using the *MFT Doctoral Curriculum Requirements Form*, which is available on the program's Canvas site. Students should work with their major professors to complete this form in time for the Plan of Study meeting. Please note that courses included on the *Documentation of the Foundational Curriculum Form* cannot be listed (i.e., double-counted) on the *MFT Doctoral Curriculum Requirements Form*. Following the completion of the Plan of Study meeting, the student's major professor and the Program Director must sign *MFT Doctoral Curriculum Requirements Form*. Copies of the signed *MFT Doctoral Curriculum Requirements Form* should be submitted to 1) the Department and 2) the MFT Office Manager.

Plan of Study in Human Development and Family Science

The *Plan of Study in Human Development and Family Science* lists all of the coursework that students will complete in order to meet Virginia Tech's graduation requirements. This form is available on the program's Canvas site. Students should work with their major professors to complete the form. The completed form will be reviewed and approved (signed) by the student's advisory committee during the Plan of Study meeting (see below for more information about this meeting). The completed form, containing signatures of all advisory committee members, should be returned to the Department office where it will be screened for compliance with Departmental and Graduate School policy. Plans of Study that deviate from Departmental and Graduate School policy will be referred to the Human Development and Family Science Graduate Committee for review and action.

After preparing all of the required Plan of Study documents, the student holds a Plan of Study meeting (usually scheduled for 1 hour – check with your major professor for their preferences) with their advisory committee. During this meeting, the student and the advisory committee discuss the student's content focus, coursework, and timeline for the completion of program requirements. The Plan of Study meeting must be held and the associated completed forms must be submitted to the departmental Graduate Secretary by the end of the second semester of full time enrollment (i.e., Spring Semester of Year 1). A copy of the *Documentation of Foundational Curriculum Form* and the *MFT Doctoral Curriculum Requirements Form* should also be submitted to the Office Manager.

Length of Program & Time Limits for Degree Completion

For students who enrolled prior to Fall 2017, the minimum program length (i.e., the shortest time possible that a student could complete the program) is 3 years. The advertised program length (i.e., the amount of time the program is designed to complete as written) is 7 years. The maximum allowable time for program completion is 12 years, though students beginning with the Fall 2015 should note the Department of Human Development and Family Science's guidelines related to time limits for degree completion. These departmental guidelines supersede any MFT program guidelines.

Beginning in Fall 2018, the minimum and advertised amount of time in which an MFT student can complete the program is 4 years. The maximum amount of time allow for program completion is 8 years, in accordance with Department of Human Development and Family Science guidelines. Since the

inception of the MFT program, students complete their degrees in average of 4.40 years ($n = 157$). For students graduating since 2005, the average length of time for degree completion is 5.02 years ($n = 52$; Range: 3 to 10 years). Degree completion times for individual students vary greatly, depending on advanced practical experience choices, previous preparation, dissertation topics, and family life issues like personal health, relocations, employment decisions, caregiving responsibilities, and marriage and pregnancy.

As noted previously, the MFT program's maximum time allowed for degree completion is in accordance with the Department of Human Development and Family Science's maximum time limits. Students who reach these time limits will no longer be allowed to enroll in credits. Appeals to these time limits will be accepted only once and will be considered by the Director of Graduate Studies. Please contact the Director of Graduate Studies for the appeals process. Time while on a Leave of Absence does not count against the maximum time allowed for degree completion.

Continuous Enrollment

Graduate students in degree programs must be registered continually during the academic year (fall and spring semesters) and pay the required tuition and fees. The number of credit hours taken, especially for those students working on their dissertations (see also the section on Research & Dissertation credits), should reflect the extent of a student's study and/or research activity. The minimum enrollment is for 3 credit hours, except for those students who meet the requirements for a Start of Semester Defense Exemption (see below for additional information about this policy). Please note that students holding assistantships must be enrolled in a minimum of 12 credit hours each semester.

There are two exceptions to the continuous enrollment policy:

Leave of Absence

When students experience situations in which they cannot be continuously enrolled (e.g., health, family emergency, change in parental status, military service, financial hardship, personal or academic reasons, or other reasons), a student may request a leave of absence to suspend activities associated with coursework, the Advanced Practical Experience, or their dissertation research. Please note that students on leave of absence are not entitled to use *any* University resources (e.g., students may not consult with advisors or work on courses or research). Students seeking a leave of absence must complete the *Leave of Absence Request Form* (available at the link below and on the program's Canvas site) and submit it at least two weeks before the beginning of the semester for which the leave is requested. The student's advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies must approve the leave of absence before submission to the Graduate School. The MFT Program Director should also be informed of the student's leave of absence. If the leave of absence request is approved, the continuous enrollment requirement will be relaxed during the period of leave. The Leave of Absence form indicates when the student will return to the program and any conditions the department or the Graduate School may stipulate for the student's readmission within that time. Leaves of absence may be granted for up to one year at a time. If a leave longer than one year is required, students will need to apply to the Graduate School for readmission (see the *Human Development Graduate Policy Guide* and below for information about readmission). International students should consult an immigration advisor in the Graduate School before requesting a leave of absence. For more information about this policy, including a link to the *Leave of Absence Request Form*, please see:

https://secure.graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/policies.htm?policy=ff8080815d17d8ba015d994f7a4200e9

In Absentia Status

Graduate students in good standing who, for academic reasons, need to spend an entire Fall or Spring semester away from campus can apply for and be granted in absentia status. In absentia status is granted for work that is directly related to a student's academic course of study and that is integral to her or his degree. For MFT students, the Advanced Practical Experience may qualify the student for in absentia status.

In absentia status is approved by each student's home academic unit and then by the Graduate School. During each Fall or Spring semester while in absentia, students must register for one credit hour. For MFT students, this is HD 5754 (Internship). Tuition rates will be determined by the Bursar's Office. F1 visa students must always be enrolled under slightly different protocols. These students should consult with an Immigration Specialist in the Graduate School.

To qualify for in absentia status, students must be stationed a minimum of 50 miles away from Blacksburg, and must not work on or in conjunction with any of Virginia Tech's satellite campuses and facilities. While in absentia, this means that students cannot work with their advisors on their dissertation research. Students can remain in absentia for two consecutive semesters, but must then return to residency (a minimum of a 3 credit enrollment) at the University for a minimum of one semester. The Graduate School may grant exemptions when longer periods of absence are required. In absentia status is not available to students who have not adhered to the continuous enrollment requirement, are supported by an assistantship, or are participating in an exchange program or dual degree program with an officially designated partner institution.

For more information about this policy, please visit:

https://secure.graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/policies.htm?policy=ff8080814d91d304014e63f8c46000d5

To access the form required to apply for in absentia status, please visit:

http://graduateschool.vt.edu/content/dam/graduateschool_vt_edu/GAAPforms/In_Absentia_Request_2015.pdf

Please note that students granted in absentia status may request a waiver of their comprehensive fees for each semester they are in absentia. For more information, please visit:

<https://www.bursar.vt.edu/forms/guidelinesforcompfees.html>

Start of Semester Defense Exemption

The Start of Semester Defense Exemption allows students to enroll in a one-credit placeholder for the student's final semester in order to defend the dissertation, instead of a regular three-credit course as is normally required. To qualify for this exemption, students must:

- Have been enrolled in at least three credits for the previous semester.
- Have completed all degree requirements except for your final exam.
- Submit a final dissertation to the advisory committee during the first three weeks of the semester. The advisory committee must read it and agree that it's ready to defend by the Friday of the third week of classes.
- Submit a Start-of-Semester Defense Exception form by the Friday of the third week of classes or no later than two weeks prior to your exam, whichever comes first.
- Submit the ETD within two weeks of the dissertation exam date.

International students using the Start of Semester Defense Exemption must defend by the end of the fifth week of the semester and submit an ETD no more than two weeks after their exam to maintain immigration status. They must also complete the Request for Reduced Enrollment form to get approval for less than full time enrollment status. This form is available through the Graduate School.

For more information about the Start of Semester Defense Exemption, please visit:

<http://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/what-you-need-to-graduate/deadlines-for-academic-progress/start-of-semester-defense-exception.html>

Readmission

When a student has not been enrolled for two consecutive academic semesters, the Graduate School and the Department of Human Development and Family Science require a readmission application. Additional information about this policy and the process for seeking readmission is available in the *Human Development Graduate Policy Guide*. See also information about the Continuous Enrollment policy.

Financial Requirements & Assistance

Assistantships

The Department of Human Development and Family Science provides financial assistance for its graduate students in the form of assistantships (Graduate Assistants, GA; Graduate Teaching Assistants, GTA; Graduate Research Assistants, GRA). Students may have the opportunity to receive summer funding; however, this is not guaranteed. To be eligible for an assistantship, a student must be admitted to the Graduate School on a full-time basis. All students on assistantship must be registered for a minimum of 12 hours per semester. To retain eligibility, a student must maintain a quality credit average of 3.0 or higher and make satisfactory progress toward completion of degree requirements. Assistantships carry with them tuition waivers and the majority of assistantship placements require 20 hours/week of assistantship work. MFT students are typically admitted with 3 years of assistantship funding, pending satisfactory progress toward the degree requirements and satisfaction assistantship performance. For additional information about assistantships, please see the *Human Development Graduate Policy Guide*.

Tuition

Tuition rates are available through the University Bursar: www.bursar.vt.edu. Students not on assistantships are required to cover their own tuition expenses. Whether a student pays in-state or out-of-state tuition rates is determined by the Bursar's Office. Assistantships of 10 hours or more qualify the student for in-state tuition rates; however, all out-of-state students should obtain Virginia residency. Non-residents will need to continue to pay the capital fees, so it is in students' best interest to become in-state students (applicable for US students only). For more information on residency, please see: http://www.registrar.vt.edu/academic_records/instate/index.html

Financial Obligations

MFT students are responsible for several costs that are not covered by assistantships. Information about some of these costs is provided below.

Comprehensive Fees

All students must pay student fees for any semester in which they enroll. Fees can change from semester to semester, but tend to be about \$900/year. These fees pay for access to health care, student activities, recreational sports, discounted sporting events, free local bus services, and similar non-academic services. More information about these fees is available at www.bursar.vt.edu. Please note non-residents pay higher comprehensive fees than students who obtain Virginia residency.

Please note that students granted in absentia status, which may be applicable during the Advanced Practical Experience, may request a waiver of their comprehensive fees for each semester they are in absentia. Please see the section on in absentia status, under “Academic Policies & Procedures,” for additional information. For information the comprehensive fee waiver itself, please visit:

<http://www.bursar.vt.edu/forms/guidelinesforcompfees.html>

Summer Practicum

Students are responsible for all tuition and comprehensive fee costs for summer practicum. That said, students are sometimes paid in the summer to work on a research project or teach a summer undergraduate course, and this helps to cover summer tuition. Students holding assistantships are eligible for in-state tuition for the summer, which is about \$2300/summer. Though students only register for one hour of practicum in Summer Session I, which covers Summer I and Summer II via a 12-week extended enrollment course, the Graduate School requires a minimum enrollment of 3 credit hours. This is an excellent opportunity to take additional HD 7994: Research and Dissertation credits required for graduation.

In previous years, MFT students have received an exemption to the minimum enrollment requirement for summer practicum, which allows them to enroll for one credit in Summer I (instead of the three required credits). It should be noted that this exception is requested by the department on an annual basis *and is NOT guaranteed*. Students will be informed in a timely manner as to what arrangements have or have not been able to be made for a given summer.

Advanced Practical Experience

Please see the section, “Advanced Practical Experience Enrollment” for additional information.

Research & Dissertation Credits

Students who are no longer covered by an assistantship, but still need to complete their dissertations, are responsible for all costs associated with enrollment in HD 7994 (Research & Dissertation). See also the section on “Continuous Enrollment.”

Travel & Research Support

The MFT program and the larger Department of Human Development and Family Science strives to provide first, second, and third year MFT students with funds to support travel to professional conferences. The availability of these funds and how they are distributed is determined on an annual basis. Generally, students who are presenting at national conferences receive priority for the receipt of travel funds. The Program Director or the Director of Graduate Studies will announce available travel funds, eligibility for those funds, and the process for obtaining those funds, as soon as the information becomes available; this is usually early in the fall semester.

The Department of Human Development and Family Science also offers small grants in support of students' dissertation research. The availability of these grants is dependent on available funds. Information about these grants will be shared with students via the Director of Graduate Studies.

Travel and research support is also available through the Virginia Tech Graduate Student Assembly. For additional information, please visit: <http://blogs.lt.vt.edu/graduatestudentassembly/what-we-can-offer-you/funding-opportunities/>

Scholarships & Financial Aid

Scholarships and financial aid are available. Please visit <http://finaid.vt.edu/> and <http://graduateschool.vt.edu/funding/scholarships-and-fellowships.html> for more information about the types of aid that may be available. MFT students may also be eligible for scholarships offered through the Department of Human Development and Family Science and other entities. The Program Director will communicate information about these opportunities, as it becomes available, to MFT students.

External Fellowships

The MFT program encourages students to pursue external fellowships, as these fellowships provide opportunities for enhanced learning and recognition of scholarly achievements. Students holding external fellowships are expected to gain comparable research and teaching experience even when the external funding is not directly tied to an assistantship appointment. Students are required to inform their major professor and the MFT Program Director about applications for external fellowships and/or assistantships. They should inform the Director of Graduate Studies before accepting or declining external fellowships and/or assistantships. Having an external fellowship does not preclude a student from also having an assistantship.

Assessment & Evaluation

Assessment of Student Performance

Student performance within the program is assessed and evaluated in a number of ways including course and/or assignment grades, clinical evaluations (see the section, "Clinical Evaluations," for additional information), advanced practical experience evaluations (see the section, "Advanced Practical Experience Guidelines," for additional information), assistantship performance reviews (see this section, below, for information about this process), and the Graduate Student Annual Review (GSAR; including student reported activities and faculty evaluations of performance, see below for additional information on the GSAR). In addition to these formal mechanisms of evaluation, students may also receive informal feedback from their major professors, advisory committee members, assistantship supervisor, and other faculty and/or mentors.

With regard to the assessment of student performance related to the "MFT Program Educational Outcomes," data are obtained from the following sources:

Program Goal #1 – Research & Scholarship

- SLO1: Personal Research Agenda Completion/Grade in HD 6484 (MFT Research)
- SLO2: Successful dissertation proposal defense and dissertation defense
- SLO3: Authorship on peer-reviewed publication(s) and presentations
- SLO4:

- Preliminary Examination – Research Methods Question(s) (Pass Rates)
- GSAR/MFT Student Annual Evaluation Ratings
- Research Methods Courses Grades

Program Goal #2 – Teaching & Supervision

- SLO1: Philosophy of Supervision Grade in HD 6464 (MFT Supervision)
- SLO2:
 - HD 6464 (MFT Supervision) Grades
 - AAMFT Approved Supervisor Rates
- SLO3: Documentation of teaching philosophy
- SLO4:
 - Documentation of teaching experience
 - SPOT Evaluations

Program Goal #3 – Clinical Practice

- SLO1:
 - Preliminary Examination – Clinical Models Question (Pass Rates)
 - MFT Theories (HD 6414 and HD 6444) Course Grades
 - Clinical Evaluations – Knowledge/Application of Models/Theories
- SLO2:
 - Practicum (HD 5964) Grades
 - Clinical Evaluations - 1) Admission to Treatment, 2) Clinical Assessment and Diagnosis, 3) Treatment Planning and Case Management, 4) Therapeutic Interventions, 5) Legal Issues, Ethics, and Standards, and 6) Research and Program Evaluation
 - MFT Licensure Rates

Program Goal #4 – Community Engagement & Professional Service

- SLO1: Report of membership in professional organizations
- SLO2: Documentation of participation in community engagement
- SLO3: Documentation of participation in professional service

Program Goal #5 – Diversity & Inclusion

- SLO1:
 - Clinical Evaluations – Sensitivity to Diversity
 - GSAR/MFT Student Annual Evaluation
 - Best Practices Assignment Grade – HD 6444 (Advanced Contemporary MFT)
- SLO2: Documentation of participation in activities related to diversity and inclusion

See also the section, “Outcome Data Collection,” for additional information about assessment related to the program’s educational outcomes.

Assistantship Performance Review

As noted in the *Human Development Graduate Policy Guide*, students on assistantship will receive a performance review (evaluation) from each of their assistantship supervisors at the end of the fall semester. The *Graduate Assistantship Evaluation Form*, which is used for the assistantship performance reviews, is available on the program’s Canvas site.

Students are encouraged to be proactive in their approach to their assistantships. Meaning, students should clarify expectations, seek feedback, and ask questions of their assistantship supervisors, as appropriate. Students should also keep records of their assistantship hours worked. Concerns about assistantships should be addressed with the Director of Graduate Studies, after first trying to address those concerns with the assistantship supervisor. See the section, “Grievance Procedures,” for additional information.

Graduate Student Annual Review (GSAR)

The Graduate School requires that all students receive an annual review of their progress toward completion of degree requirements. In the Department of Human Development and Family Science, this process occurs during each spring semester of enrollment and is known as the Graduate Student Annual Review (GSAR). Additional information about the GSAR, including policies related to satisfactory/unsatisfactory progress and guidelines for student remediation and dismissal, is available in the *Human Development Graduate Policy Guide*, which is available on Canvas. Relevant forms for the GSAR are also available on Canvas.

Concurrently with the GSAR process that is conducted by the HDFS faculty, the Clinical Faculty conduct a Clinical GSAR, in which each student’s clinical performance and progress toward the program’s clinical requirements are reviewed. The Clinical Faculty utilize the *Clinical GSAR Form* (available on Canvas) as a basis for reviewing each student. Students receive a copy of this form for their records. Please note that an unsatisfactory rating for the Clinical GSAR will result in an unsatisfactory rating for the overall GSAR, regardless of the quality of the student’s performance in other areas of the program.

In addition to the materials required by the Department of Human Development and Family Science, MFT students are required to complete the *MFT Student Annual Review Survey* (available on Canvas and distributed via Qualtrics), and submit that information along with their other Graduate Student Annual Review (GSAR) materials. This survey is due on the same day as the Departmental GSAR materials. As part of the GSAR process, MFT students will also receive feedback from their major professors on their performance with regard to the program’s educational outcomes. This feedback will be documented on the *MFT GSAR Annual Evaluation* form, which is available on the program’s Canvas site.

Outcome Data Collection

In accordance with the program’s assessment plan (available, upon request, from the Program Director) and COAMFTE accreditation standards, the program regularly collects and aggregates various types of data about our current students and graduates for the purposes of measuring the program’s educational outcomes. In addition to collecting data related to the program’s student learning outcomes and associated benchmarks, we also collect information about demonstrated achievements of graduates, employer satisfaction, graduation rates, national (or state) licensing examination pass rates, and job placement rates, as appropriate.

Current Student Data Collection Procedures

Each spring, current students will be asked to complete a supplementary form (*MFT Student Annual Review Survey*, available on Canvas and distributed via Qualtrics), and submit that information along with their other Graduate Student Annual Review (GSAR) materials (this form is due on the same day as the GSAR materials). Other data, relevant to the student learning outcomes and their associated benchmarks, will be gathered from appropriate sources. Students will also be asked, each spring, to complete an anonymous online *Annual MFT Program Evaluation Survey* (questions available in Canvas) in order to provide feedback on the program

and its faculty. The MFT faculty reviews the results from the evaluation survey, and recommendations for change are considered and/or implemented, as appropriate.

Please note that, as part of our data collection procedures, we will not publish any individually identifying information. We will always aggregate all data so that no individual can be identified.

Questions or concerns about this policy should be directed to the Program Director.

Graduate Data Collection Procedures

Approximately every two years, the Program Director will gather information about program graduates from their employers (*MFT Graduate Evaluation*, available on Canvas). This evaluation asks employers to evaluate graduates' performance in their current position, as it relates to the program's educational outcomes. We will ask your explicit permission to send this survey to your employer and will only do so with your written consent.

Additionally, approximately every two years, the Program Director will ask graduates to complete the online *Graduate Program Evaluation* (questions available in Canvas) survey, which focuses on assessing graduates' satisfaction with their education, and the degree to which they felt prepared to be successful in their current position.

Please note that, as part of our data collection procedures, we will not publish any individually identifying information. We will always aggregate all data so that no individual can be identified.

Questions or concerns about this policy should be directed to the Program Director.

Professional Affiliations & Credentials

Professional Affiliations

Students are encouraged to maintain membership in professional organizations related to their career, clinical, and/or research interests. Different students may have different interests, and thus not all students who choose to join a professional organization may want to join the same ones. Nonetheless, we encourage all students to consider student membership in the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT). Dues for students are relatively inexpensive, and give student members reduced fees for AAMFT conferences and a subscription to the *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*. They also give students free malpractice insurance, which is required of all clinically active students.

Previous MFT students have been members of many professional organizations including, but not limited to, the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR), the Gerontological Society of America (GSA), the American Family Therapy Academy (AFTA), the International Family Therapy Association (IFTA), the American Psychological Association (APA), the Collaborative Family Healthcare Association (CFHA), and the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists (AASECT). Student should consult with their clinical supervisors and doctoral advisory committees for additional guidance related to the professional affiliations that might best facilitate their career, clinical, and/or research interests and goals.

Professional Licensure

While not a program requirement, students are strongly encouraged to consider seeking licensure in Virginia or another state early in their doctoral training. In considering licensure, students should remember that licensure for MFTs is regulated at the state level, such that licensure requirements are unique to each state. As such, it is the student's responsibility to become familiar with the licensure requirements for the state in which they wish to become licensed. A listing of state licensure requirements is available through AAMFT or each state's licensing board.

Attaining professional licensure typically involves doing three things:

1. Applicants must meet the educational requirements for the license, which, for MFTs in nearly all states, involves having a master's degree in a mental health discipline and meeting whatever specific requirements for MFT coursework a given state may set (e.g., some states may require specific coursework in substance abuse or domestic violence). Virtually all states accept master's (or doctoral) degrees from COAMFTE accredited programs as meeting some or all the educational requirements for licensure. While a doctoral degree from the MFT Program at Virginia Tech will help facilitate licensure, it is the student's responsibility to be familiar with the academic requirements for licensure in the state in which they wish to become licensed. It is possible that additional coursework may be needed. It is not Virginia Tech's responsibility to provide this additional coursework.
2. Applicants must meet post-degree clinical experience and supervision requirements, which generally requires one to two (or occasionally more years) of supervised post-masters practice. This requirement is often expressed as a certain number of hours, such as 4,000 hours of post-degree supervised clinical practice. Some states count only direct client contact hours, while others count any clinical work (e.g., direct client contact, record keeping time, staff meetings, etc.) toward the post-degree clinical requirements. As such, MFT students are encouraged to keep careful records of *all* of their clinical hours, as they may not know what hours they may need to report in the future. Additionally, students should be aware that, while some states will accept hours accumulated within a master's program as part of the state's supervised clinical experience requirement, this is not necessarily the case and will vary by state. The same is true for clinical and supervisory hours obtained within a doctoral program.
3. Applicants must take (and pass) the MFT licensure exam, typically the National Examination in Marital and Family Therapy, administered by the Professional Testing Service. An increasing number of states are permitting applicants to sit for the licensure exam prior to completing their clinical and supervisory experience requirements, often terming applicants who pass the exam "Associates" or "Intern" licensees.

The part of the licensure process most relevant to program students is usually the post-master's clinical experience requirement. This is because, in order to have your post-masters clinical experience (i.e., clinical work at the FTC) count toward licensure, many (but not all) states require that you *register*, or formally record, your post-master's supervised clinical work (which would include your doctoral practicum and possibly your Advanced Practical Experience) with the relevant licensing board. Clinical work not registered with the relevant state licensing board frequently will not be counted towards licensure.

What this all boils down to is that MFT students seeking to become licensed marriage and family therapists who have a fairly clear idea of their post-graduation plans are strongly encouraged to contact the MFT licensing board in the state in which they plan to practice following their graduation in order to

determine the relevant state regulations for licensure. For students who are not sure of their post-graduation plans, there are a couple of options:

- Consider registering with the Virginia licensing board as a precaution, in case you do later decide to seek Virginia licensure. If you later seek licensure in another state, it is possible the new state may accept Virginia's previous registration of your clinical and supervision hours, *but there is no guarantee of this*.
- Consider seeking licensure in your home state. If you consider this route, you will want to carefully review the state's supervision requirements to be sure that out-of-state clinical and supervision hours will count. You should also verify that the supervision provided by Clinical Faculty would count as well.

Again, it is critical to remember that *licensure is an individual state process and requirements vary widely*. No one, least of all the Clinical Faculty, can know the individual regulations for every state. Even in Virginia, differing licensing boards may change the regulations relatively frequently. It is therefore incumbent on each student who is interested in professional licensure to contact the licensing boards in those states where the student may be seeking licensure to obtain the exact requirements.

Students who are interested in academic jobs should think carefully about licensure, particularly as they consider options for their Advanced Practical Experience. Many MFT academic jobs require licensure and/or the AAMFT Approved Supervisor designation. While some positions require applicants to have these credentials at the time of applications, other positions may have a timeline in which applicants are expected to obtain these credentials. It can be very difficult to obtain licensure and the Approved Supervisor designation after beginning an academic job, given all of the other demands placed upon faculty's time. Thus, there may be some advantages to becoming licensed (or very close to becoming licensed) prior to obtaining an academic job. This means that, depending on a student's individual circumstances and goals, there may be some advantage to pursuing a clinically-focused Advanced Practical Experience, especially if it will help the student obtain licensure more quickly. Students are encouraged to discuss these issues with the Clinical Director and/or their advisors.

Approved Supervisor Candidacy

In their third year of the program, all MFT students are required to take HD 6464 (Clinical Supervision of MFT). The program's fundamentals of supervision course will be approved by AAMFT in 2018 and therefore can be used toward the requirements for the designation of AAMFT Approved Supervisor. As part of the course, students provide supervision to first year MFT students, and receive supervision-of-supervision from the course instructor. While students may count their supervision and supervision-of-supervision hours toward the AAMFT Approved Supervisor candidacy requirements, these hours may not be counted toward the program's clinical (i.e., therapy and supervision hours) requirements.

While not a graduation requirement, students who wish to become Approved Supervisors will need to take additional steps which are outlined on the AAMFT website (www.aamft.org). As with other issues of credentialing beyond the scope of the program, such as licensure, the actual time needed to complete the Approved Supervisor designation will vary. Students interested in becoming AAMFT Approved Supervisors are ultimately responsible for ensuring they have taken the necessary steps to have the various components of HD 6464 count toward the requirements for becoming an Approved Supervisor. Students should obtain a copy of the *Approved Supervisor Designation Standards and Responsibilities Handbook*, which is available online from AAMFT.

Professional Conduct & Program Climate

The MFT doctoral program values professionalism, ethical conduct, and a climate of safety, respect, and appreciation for all learners. To that end, all students, faculty, and staff must adhere to the following:

AAMFT Code of Ethics

All students, at the time of their application to the program, agree in writing to abide by the *AAMFT Code of Ethics* (https://www.aamft.org/Legal_Ethics/Code_of_Ethics.aspx). In considering how the AAMFT Code of Ethics relates to doctoral training, please note the following:

- First, the most basic requirement of any person seeking the trust of the public to engage in services such as marriage and family is trustworthiness. To that end, little can count more in a student's work in this program. Thus, from the perspective of the program, there is no separation between clinical trust and academic trust. A breach of one impeaches the other.
- For this reason, students must not only be trustworthy as clinicians, but also as scholars. Offenses such as plagiarism or academic fraud are violations not merely of the Virginia Tech Graduate Honor Code, but of the public trust each of demands as a member of our profession. Because of this, regardless of the statutes of the Virginia Tech Graduate Honor Code, students may be judged more severely than regular enrollees in other programs, because the status MFT students seek is greater, and requires greater degrees of public certification, than that sought by most other students. This is given added weight by the fact that students in our program also are trained to supervise future marriage and family therapists. As trainers, their obligations to be trustworthy are even greater, and require that they be held to even more stringent standards. Therefore, violations of the AAMFT Code in any form may result in serious consequences, from restricted or reduced assignments, course failure, or dismissal from the MFT program.

Criminal Background Check

All students, faculty, and staff working with clients must have a criminal history check *prior* to participating in any Family Therapy Center operations. The criminal history check is performed online, by the Office Manager and Virginia Tech Human Resources. Results are communicated to the Office Manager. The Clinical Director tracks compliance with this program requirement.

To complete this requirement, give the Office Manager your full legal name, your email address, and the last four digits of your Student ID number. After you are entered into the system, you will receive an electronic waiver request form. Fill it out, submit it, and the criminal background check will be generated. The Clinical Director will communicate deadlines for the submitting the necessary information to the Office Manager. Failure to comply with this request may result in a delayed start to practicum, which can significantly delay a student's overall progress in the program.

All students, staff, and faculty must receive a criminal background check prior to providing clinical services at the Family Therapy Center. In addition faculty, staff, and students are obligated to report any **new** investigations, disciplinary actions, or convictions at the time that they occur to the Program Director.

Virginia Tech Code of Student Conduct

The Code of Student Conduct, governed by the University Student Conduct System (<https://www.studentconduct.vt.edu>) provides standards of behavior that all Virginia Tech students are required to uphold.

Virginia Tech Graduate Honor Code

“The Graduate Honor Code establishes a standard of academic integrity. The code demands a firm adherence to a set of values and is founded on the concept of honesty with respect to the intellectual efforts of oneself and others. Compliance with the Graduate Honor Code requires that all graduate students exercise honesty and ethical behavior in all their academic pursuits at the university, whether these undertakings pertain to study, coursework, research, extension or teaching.

It is recognized that graduate students have very diverse cultural backgrounds. In light of this, the term *ethical behavior* is defined as conforming to accepted professional standards of conduct, such as codes of ethics used by professional societies in the United States to regulate the manner in which their professions are practiced. The knowledge and practice of ethical behavior shall be the full responsibility of the student. Graduate students may, however, consult with their major professors, department heads, International Graduate Student Services, or the Graduate School for further information on what is expected of them.

More specifically, all graduate students, while being affiliated with Virginia Tech, shall abide by the standards established by Virginia Tech, as these are described in the Graduate Honor System Constitution. Graduate students, in accepting admission, indicate their willingness to subscribe to and be governed by the Graduate Honor Code and acknowledge the right of the University to establish policies and procedures and to take disciplinary action (including suspension or expulsion) when such action is warranted. Ignorance shall be no excuse for actions which violate the integrity of the academic community.

The fundamental beliefs underlying and reflected in the Graduate Honor Code are that (1) to trust in a person is a positive force in making a person worthy of trust, (2) to study, perform research, and teach in an environment that is free from the inconveniences and injustices caused by any form of intellectual dishonesty is a right of every graduate student, and (3) to live by an Honor System, which places a positive emphasis on honesty as a means of protecting this right, is consistent with, and a contribution to, the University's quest for truth.”

The complete Graduate Honor System Constitution is available at:

https://graduateschool.vt.edu/content/dam/graduateschool_vt_edu/graduate-honor-system/Constitution2018.pdf

The Graduate Honor Code is in effect for *all* academic work associated with the program. Violations of the Graduate Honor Code will be reported and include cheating, plagiarism, falsification, academic sabotage, and misconduct in research and/or teaching. More information about these violations is available in the Graduate Honor System Constitution (see link above).

Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Statement

The MFT program complies with the policies of the university regarding equal opportunity/affirmative action: “Virginia Tech does not discriminate against employees, students, or applicants on the basis of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation,

race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, or veteran status; or otherwise discriminate against employees or applicants who inquire about, discuss, or disclose their compensation or the compensation of other employees, or applicants; or any other basis protected by law. For inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies, contact the Office for Equity and Accessibility at 540-231-2010 or Virginia Tech, North End Center, Suite 2300 (0318), 300 Turner St. NW, Blacksburg, VA 24061.” Further, the MFT program does not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, relationship status, socioeconomic status, health status, or spiritual beliefs.

Within the MFT program, this policy applies to recruitment, admission, codes of conduct, hiring, retention, and/or dismissal of faculty, students, and supervisors or other educators.

Harassment, Discrimination & Retaliation

The MFT program complies with the policies of the university regarding harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. For additional information about these policies, please visit: <http://oea.vt.edu/harassment-discrimination.html>

Virginia Tech Principles of Community

As the MFT program endorses the Virginia Tech Principles of Community, all students, faculty, and staff are expected to uphold them. The Virginia Tech Principles of Community (<http://inclusive.vt.edu/vtpoc0.html>) read as follows:

“Virginia Tech is a public land-grant university, committed to teaching and learning, research, and outreach to the Commonwealth of Virginia, the nation, and the world community. Learning from the experiences that shape Virginia Tech as an institution, we acknowledge those aspects of our legacy that reflected bias and exclusion. Therefore, we adopt and practice the following principles as fundamental to our on-going efforts to increase access and inclusion and to create a community that nurtures learning and growth for all of its members:

- *We affirm* the inherent dignity and value of every person and strive to maintain a climate for work and learning based on mutual respect and understanding.
- *We affirm* the right of each person to express thoughts and opinions freely. We encourage open expression within a climate of civility, sensitivity, and mutual respect.
- *We affirm* the value of human diversity because it enriches our lives and the University. We acknowledge and respect our differences while affirming our common humanity.
- *We reject* all forms of prejudice and discrimination, including those based on age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, and veteran status. We take individual and collective responsibility for helping to eliminate bias and discrimination and for increasing our own understanding of these issues through education, training, and interaction with others.
- *We pledge* our collective commitment to these principles in the spirit of the Virginia Tech motto of *Ut Prosim (That I May Serve)*.”

Grievance Procedures

For your convenience, we have reprinted here the Department of Human Development and Family Science grievance procedures. As these are subject to change, please refer to the *Human Development Graduate Policy Guide* for the most current procedures. Students can also contact the Graduate

Ombudsperson for additional assistance. More information is available at:
<http://www.graduate.ombudsman.vt.edu/>

MFT Program Complaints & Concerns

Before program area concerns develop into problems, students are encouraged to present these issues in the form of constructive suggestions to any of the Clinical Faculty or to the Program Director. If possible, it is best to first address and try to resolve the issue or concern with the person to whom it relates, before bringing it to the attention of other Clinical Faculty or the Program Director. The Clinical Faculty may discuss any concerns and possible solutions with students in a program wide meeting, which typically resolves the concern. If this stage of communication with a view toward resolution does not produce a resolution, movement to Level 1 (see below) is appropriate.

Departmental-MFT Program Grievance Procedures

These procedures apply to issues that reflect policies idiosyncratic to the program itself (Child and Adolescent Development, Marriage and Family Therapy, Family Studies, Adult Development and Aging), issues involving supervision of clinical students, required courses concerns, and other course work.

At Level 1, a student may request a meeting with the individual faculty/supervisor involved to present and discuss concerns. If satisfactory resolution is not forthcoming, move to Level 2. Do not proceed to Level 2 until Level 1 has been attempted. At the second level, a student may request a meeting with the Director of Graduate Studies to present and discuss their concerns. The Director of Graduate Studies, in consultation with the Department Head, may meet with the individual faculty member and the student to try to resolve the issue. The Director of Graduate Studies, in consultation with the Department Head, will provide options to resolve the situation after hearing the student grievance and the faculty position.

Department-Wide Grievance Procedures

These procedures apply to issues that reflect policy for students across programs (e.g., departmental requirements, assistantships, fee waiver issues, and assignments). At the first level, a student should request meeting with the Director of Graduate Studies. If satisfactory resolution of the grievance is not forthcoming at this level, move to Level 2. Do not proceed to Level 2 until Level 1 has been attempted. At the second level, a student may request meeting with the Department Head. If satisfactory reconciliation of grievance is not forthcoming at this level, move to Level 3. Do not proceed to Level 3 until Level 2 has been attempted. At the third level, please see Graduate School appeals procedure in the latest Graduate Catalog, which is available at:

https://secure.graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/index.htm

Statement on Diversity

The MFT program believes that it is important for our students and graduates to be multiculturally-informed clinicians, who are sensitive to issues of diversity. The MFT program upholds a broad understanding of diversity that includes beliefs, values, and life experiences in addition to race, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, culture, gender, gender identity, gender expression, relationship status, sexual orientation, religion, spirituality, health status, veteran status, ability, national origin, and ability. Ultimately, the program is seeking a diversity that leads not only to social complexity and variety, but to diverse clinical and scholarly outcomes: new ideas and approaches that will help improve the way all human beings live their lives. A good portion of the research conducted by program students and faculty have focused on a variety of diversity-related topics.

For the past several years, the program's student body has fluctuated between 15% and 30% members of underrepresented groups, and has included students from outside the United States (e.g., Bolivia, Canada, China, Columbia, India, Iran, Lebanon, Malaysia, Slovakia, Russia, South Africa, Taiwan, Turkey, and Zimbabwe), as well as students from over 24 states. Our relatively small student numbers mean that very small changes in enrollment cause relatively large changes in the program's diversity statistics.

Currently, the MFT program faculty is all women, and all identify as European-American. The faculty has diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, religious affiliations, and philosophical perspectives.

As the program values diversity and inclusion and strives to foster a climate of safety, respect, and appreciation for all learners, please see the policies related to *Professional Conduct & Program Climate*.

Social Media Policy

MFT students are ambassadors for the program, Virginia Tech, and the field of marriage and family therapy. Therefore, MFT students must demonstrate respect for these entities by exercising care in any public statements that may reflect on themselves as clinicians, their clients as individuals, the program, or on the larger field. Thus, except for private email accounts, *statements made in nearly all web-based forums, including social media sites and blogs, and Virginia Tech email accounts (vt.edu) must be considered public*, regardless of a user's so called "privacy" settings.

Students should approach online interactions with respect and professionalism. Just as in speaking in any public forum, therapists must therefore avoid any web-based comments that may be considered to reflect poorly on themselves as therapists, on their clients, the program, or the field in general. This does not preclude legitimate criticism of policies, practices, or actions of other professionals or professional entities, including the program and clinical faculty. But it does preclude comments about clients or any revelations that might knowingly or unknowingly reveal client information or postings that defame other students, the program, Virginia Tech, or the profession. In using social media, students must also be alert to the risks of clients seeking to "friend" or otherwise connect with them in a non-therapeutic context, just as they must refrain from such associations in the non-virtual world. Student should also be alert to the possibility of friends or relatives of clients attempting to elicit information about them through direct or indirect means. They also may need to discourage clients from writing about their experiences in therapy on social media sites or weblogs as they may inadvertently violate their own confidentiality.

In sum, online conversations on social media sites and elsewhere on the web in anyway related to students' clinical work must be treated as professional conversations in all but the most limited circumstances. Examples of prohibited behaviors include but are not limited to:

- Email, texting or other electronic communications with clients or former clients.
- Friending, following, or linking in any way with clients or former clients.
- Jokes or remarks that may appear to disparage certain groups or classes of people.
- Chats or comments that in any way may reveal the content of therapy or the identity of current or former clients, even with identifying information obscured.

Should there be postings that are identified as violating this policy, the student will meet with the MFT faculty. In some cases, a remediation plan may be implemented. Serious policy recommendations may be grounds for dismissal from the program.

Vacation Policy

As students have obligations to assistantships, courses, students, clients, research participants, and other entities, all vacation requests should be made with these obligations in mind, so as to avoid any liability issues or unprofessionalism.

Students who are clinically active at the Family Therapy Center must adhere to the program's vacation and closing policies:

- When the university is closed due to a holiday, inclement weather, or any other authorized closing, the Family Therapy Center is also closed. Students are not permitted to see clients at the Family Therapy Center when the university is closed.
- Students are responsible for covering their client caseloads during all vacations and breaks, including extended absences due to illness or other causes. As clients may not be ignored, neglected, or abandoned, students may not be away from the Family Therapy Center repeatedly over the course of a semester or for more than two weeks at a time. Students should remember that official university closings and attendance at professional conferences are viewed as part of the total amount of time away from the Family Therapy Center.
- Failure to follow the program's vacation policy may result in a grade penalty for a given practicum or a negative evaluation on the annual Clinical GSAR.
- The Clinical Director must approve all vacation requests. Students should complete the *Vacation Request Form* (which is available on Canvas or from the Office Manager) and submit it to the Clinical Director for approval in advance.

Absences from assistantships and classes must be coordinated with those supervisors and instructors. Approval of any leave is at their discretion. Student should recognize that different supervisors and instructors may have differing policies and expectations related to leave.

Academic Resources & Student Support Services

Virginia Tech offers a variety of academic resources and student support services designed support students in satisfying the requirements of the program and in achieving the programs' student learning outcomes (and associated benchmarks). As students may not be aware of the variety of academic resource and student support services available to them, a resource list has been posted to the program's Canvas site. Students are encouraged to peruse this list and consult with faculty if additional resources and/or student support services are needed.

Technology Requirements

In terms of technology requirements, in order to be successful in the program, students will need to utilize the following:

- Computer with...
 - Internet Access
 - Office Software (e.g., Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel)
 - Email Access
- Printer
- Canvas (Virginia Tech's Learning Management Service): <http://canvas.vt.edu>. Instructions for using Canvas are available on the Canvas site, under "Help." In-person Canvas trainings are also available through Virginia Tech's Networked Learning Initiatives (NLI; <https://nli.tlos.vt.edu/>)

Some classes may require that students purchase statistical software packages (e.g., SPSS, LISREL), usually at a discounted student rate. Assistantship supervisors may also request that students utilize specific technological resources (e.g., Qualtrics, GoogleDocs, etc.). Questions about these requirements, or information about how to use these programs, should be directed to relevant course instructor or assistantship supervisor.

Family Therapy Center

As part of their clinical training at the Family Therapy Center, MFT students will use the case management software program, Titanium (to be launched in 2019), as well as clinic recording equipment, which is operated via the software, iVMSC 4200. Information about the use of these software packages, and any associated equipment, is available in the policies and procedures manual for the Family Therapy Center. Students also receive training in the use of Titanium and the clinic recording system during their first semester in practicum. Finally, the Family Therapy Center provides clinicallyC active students will access to internetC connected computers, which also provide access to Office software and basic statistical software (e.g., SPSS).

Program Disclosures

Program Recruitment & Admission

The MFT program is interested in diverse (see the section, "Statement on Diversity," for information about the program's definition of diversity and disclosure about the diversity of the program's students and clinical faculty) students who value research and are interested in developing into scholarC clinicians who demonstrate respect for diversity and inclusion and will advance the field of MFT through research, clinical supervision, teaching, practice, and community and professional engagement. The program encourages applications from a diverse pool of students, including international applicants.

The program attracts applicants from COAMFTEC accredited MFT masters programs and other mental health masters programs. Our applicants tend to have high GPAs and above average GREs. Most recently, their GPAs have averaged about 3.89 on a 4.0 scale; their GRE verbal scores averaged 153 and their GRE quantitative scores averaged 150. It is possible to be accepted into the program, however, with GPAs or GRE scores above or slightly below these averages.

There are several prerequisites necessary for admission into the MFT program. Students should hold a master's degree or its equivalent in a mental health field. At the time of enrollment in the doctoral

program, students should have approximately 500 clinical contact hours with individuals, couples, and families, with approximately 40% (200) of those hours being relational. The clinical hours should have been conducted under the supervision of a licensed marriage and family therapist, an AAMFT Approved Supervisor, or an equivalently qualified mental health professional. Additionally, all students must be able to document completion of the COAMFTE foundational curriculum. Please see the COAMFTE Accreditation Standards V12 (www.coamfte.org) for additional information about the FCAs. Students who cannot document completion of the COAMFTE foundational curriculum may need to complete leveling coursework, if they are accepted into the program. Please note that leveling coursework may delay a student's progress through the MFT program.

The MFT program accepts between four and six students per year. All MFT students are offered a total of 20 hours of assistantship support for three years, often divided between teaching, research, and administrative duties, pending satisfactory progress.

Student Retention

Since 2005, the MFT program has an overall attrition rate of 19%. While students infrequently fail to make satisfactory progress and are dismissed from the program, most students who have left the program have done so voluntarily for any number of reasons: interest in a different area of study, deciding they do not need a PhD, and changes in life circumstances that interfere with study (e.g., marriages, pregnancies, or voluntary relocations).

Student Achievement Data

The program's Student Achievement Data, which is reported to the COAMFTE on an annual basis, is available via a link on the program's homepage: www.familytherapy.vt.edu. The Student Achievement Data provides information about graduation rates, time to graduation, placement within jobs utilizing skills learned within the program (within 3 years of graduation), and MFT licensure exam pass rates.

With regard to the assessment of the program's success in meeting its educational outcomes (see the section, "MFT Program Educational Outcomes"), the following reflects a selection of the assessment data that has been obtained from members of the program's Communities of Interest in 2015-2016 (see the section "Communities of Interest"):

- The majority of clients find the therapy services at the FTC to be very helpful.
- The vast majority of internship supervisors rate interns as excellent.
- Employers rate program alums positively in terms of their clinical competence, research skills, and ability to teach/supervise.
- Of those students who entered the program since 2005, 63% of graduates are licensed as MFTs, and 41% of current students are licensed as MFTs.
- Of those students who entered the program since 2005, 48% of graduates are AAMFT Approved Supervisors, and 6% of current students are AAMFT Approved Supervisors.
- 100% of graduates since 2005 had gained experience with teaching in higher education.
- Current program students who are teaching undergraduate courses received an overall evaluation rating of 5.25/6.
- 95% of current MFT students are members of AAMFT.

Complete data for each of the program's student learning outcomes and associated benchmarks is available from the Program Director.

Program Graduates

The program's graduates have careers all over the United States and around the world that span the range of research, teaching, and helping professions, and sometimes include a few in entirely different fields. The majority of the program's graduates are working in academic positions, either in private or public colleges and universities. The next largest career area for program graduates is private practice. Program graduates can also found working in public agencies and medical facilities. Additional information about the careers of the program's graduates is available from the Program Director.