EDCP 619B: Master’s Level Counseling Practicum

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BACKGROUND
The Master’s level practicum, by design, enables students to establish their professional counseling competencies. Practica typically occur in di-prac (didactic-practicum) form, and are fashioned to work with each student where he or she is. The practicum is a highly individualized experience designed to assist the student in developing a higher level of functioning in the role of counselor. The overall focus is on developing helping skills, enhancing self-understanding and confidence, as well as integrating and applying counseling theory.

TRAINING SITE
The University Counseling Center, as the primary mental health facility for the campus, provides full service to the undergraduate and graduate student population, and more limited counseling services for faculty and staff. Center services include: individual, couples and group counseling; personal/social and educational/vocational counseling; and assessment of clients through psychological and vocational inventories. Individual counseling typically is short-term with a limit of 12 sessions in a given 12-month span. Group counseling is unlimited.

COUNSELING CENTER SPECIFICS

Contact Information
Students are expected to supply the Practicum Receptionist with their telephone numbers, addresses, class schedules, and the like to facilitate communication. Additionally, students should check the practicum mailbox each day after a client has been requested or assigned to receive both notification of client assignments and messages from clients.

Tape Recording and Progress Notes
Students are expected to have in their possession a standard cassette tape recorder or digital recorder; a micro-cassette tape recorder is not sufficient. Recorders are not available in the Practicum Rooms. Students listen to their taped sessions of each client prior to their supervision session. Written comments are noted at points in the sessions where, upon reflection, more appropriate interventions might have been made. In effect, students begin to develop self-supervision skills as they critically listen to their tapes. Prior to recording a client session, the counselor should identify him or herself, the client’s first name (or initials), as well as the session number and date. It is also important that the tape recording be audible so the student’s supervisor can hear and critique the session. Some tape recorders may need an external microphone to achieve an adequate sound level. Progress notes on each client should be written immediately following the session or no later than 24 hours after the client contact, and should include all pertinent information and interpretations.
Confidential Counseling Information
Folders are stored in the practicum file behind the Front Desk at the Center. Practicum supervisors secure tapes from that file for listening purposes. Client tapes and folder material are never placed in the supervisor’s mailbox or taken to practicum rooms. Under no circumstances are tapes of client sessions or the client folder removed from the Counseling Center.

All tape listening is conducted in the Center using the Practicum offices. The practicum file at the Front Desk for the storage of client information is put under lock and key after 9:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 4:30 p.m. on Fridays. The file is unlocked at 8:30 a.m. Monday through Friday for counseling work. Folders not returned to this file by 9:00 p.m. must be secured in the special “lock box” in the Front Desk area. Receptionists return all counselor material to their individual files the following morning.

External Inquiries for Client Information/Referrals
At times, clients completing their short-term counseling contact at the Center require referral to off-campus therapists for on-going counseling work. All referrals from practicum students must be developed and monitored by the instructor of record for the class. From time to time, outside individuals (parents, faculty, staff, or potential employers) request counseling information on clients seen at the Center. Again, no information on clients is released from the Center by practicum students. Should requests for client information be made of practicum students by outside individuals and/or clients themselves (such as letters of recommendation) the practicum students’ response is governed and determined by the instructor of record for the course. If the recommendation of the instructor is unclear as to how to proceed, then consultation with the Assistant Director of the Counseling Service or the Center Director is appropriate.

Counseling Center Coordinator of Practicum Training
The Coordinator of Practicum Training at the Counseling Center has a number of responsibilities, which include: (a) orienting practica classes; (b) arranging for Intake observations; (c) maintaining communications with practica faculty and supervisors; (d) working with the Training Director to arrange special supervision of trainees by Interns; and (e) ensuring appropriate termination and evaluation procedures by practica students at the end of each semester.

FORMAT OF CLASS
The seminar portion of the di-prac lasts approximately two hours each week. Typically, the first part of class will be spent discussing the topics listed on the schedule, with the second part usually devoted to questions and concerns students have about their cases and counseling sessions. Individual supervision sessions of an hour each week will be scheduled with each student at a time mutually agreeable to student and instructor. As much as possible seminar topics are linked to actual client dynamics reflected in cases assigned to students. Seminars represent a shared learning experience, and students’ constructive critique of each other is encouraged.
STUDENT PRACTICUM OBJECTIVES

1. To develop and sustain a helpful relationship with clients characterized by respect, trust, warmth, and regard for the client as a person
2. To focus on the central concerns of the client and not be distracted by peripheral issues
3. To establish appropriate goals with their clients
4. To understand the client’s emotions and differentiate between the client’s cognitive and affective responses
5. To appreciate your own dynamics as a counselor and be able to tease apart the client’s needs from your own needs
6. To conceptualize the process and direction for the given counseling interview hour, as well as the overall direction of counseling work with their clients
7. To master a variety of counseling strategies in appropriate ways
8. To locate and use appropriate sources of information (e.g., test information, referral sources) needed to assist the client
9. To understand legal and ethical issues of counseling
10. To develop multicultural sensitivity and display such understanding in the act of counseling
11. To give and receive constructive comments from fellow students and the instructor regarding their practicum work
12. To terminate the counseling relationship

TYPICAL TIME COMMITMENT

2 hours of seminar
2 hours of client sessions
2 hours of review of session tapes/write-up of notes for supervision
1 hour of supervision

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

- Work with an average of two (2) individual cases per week
- Tape record every session with every client
- Write case notes for the Counseling Center file and the supervisor within 24 hours of each session
- Maintain a weekly log of personal reactions and questions related to client work and the counseling process; logs are often helpful in facilitating individual supervision sessions
- Attend weekly individual supervision
- Discuss client cases as appropriate at weekly seminar meetings
- Complete assignments as indicated elsewhere in this practicum guideline
ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES

**Counseling Logs**
Each student maintains a weekly log of personal reactions and questions related to client work and the counseling process. Logs (although not typically evaluated by instructors) play a role in both the mid-semester and final feedback/evaluation sessions.

**Initial Paper**
The purpose of this paper is for students to assess their stance as counselors at the beginning of the practicum. This paper should build on your learning in the pre-practicum lab experiences of EDCP 618. It should include the student’s: (1) view of human behavior, (2) definition of appropriate and inappropriate behavior, and (3) assessment of how counselors enable change within the client (to move the client to a healthier state).

Papers should be no more than 3-5 double-spaced, typewritten pages using 12-point font and one-inch margins. Papers should be submitted prior to the second class session. Consider the following questions in structuring your essays:

- What have been your previous counseling experiences and how do you plan to draw on these in this counseling practicum?
- What is your theoretical orientation to helping? What theories and perspectives do you feel comfortable with? And why?
- How do you believe people change? How do you define appropriate and inappropriate behavior?
- What personal qualities enhance your effectiveness as a counselor? What might detract from your effectiveness?
- What are your personal goals for this practicum? In what ways, do you want to help as a counselor?
- What expectations do you have for this practicum? What specific interests, issues and topics would you like to see addressed in this practicum?
- What type of feedback is most useful for you? How can your instructor/supervisor help you best to develop as a counselor?

**Case Presentations**
Each student will present one of his/her client’s case histories to the class. Ideally, the student will learn a great deal about the process of counseling through this exercise. Guidelines for the written protocol will be distributed during the semester. The case history enables students to comprehend at a deeper level how change occurs in counseling. Case presentations will take place toward the end of the semester.
**Topical Presentation**

This assignment involves the development and presentation of a clinical issue related to the counseling of college students and an annotated bibliography on the selected topic. The topic should be reviewed with the instructor in advance. Examples of topics include clients with eating disorders, suicidal clients, cross-cultural counseling, anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive personality, issues of sexual orientation, and counter-transference, to name a few.

One or two readings central to the topic should be assigned to the class one week in advance of the presentation. The readings should be designed to enhance the group’s understanding and discussion of the topic. The presentation, including time for questions, should last 50-60 minutes and may include an experiential activity to enhance the class’ understanding of the topic.

An annotated bibliography of readings related to the topic should be distributed in class on the day of the presentation. The document can include the materials reviewed to prepare for your class presentation. The bibliography should be selective (i.e., no more than 5-7 key references).

**EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE**

The development of a professional stance toward client concerns, punctuality at client sessions, client confidentiality, and the maintenance of client records play a central role in the evaluation process of students enrolled in the EDCP 619B. Determination of grades will also be based on the quality of work weighted accordingly (see immediately below). Practica at the Center are evaluated through the use of letter grades.

- Level of counseling skill and competency (50%)
- Self-assessment papers (10%)
- Case conference presentation (10%)
- Topical presentation (15%)
- Class participation (15%)

Note:  *Based on number and quality of contacts

**ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact the instructor during the first week of the semester.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

The Student Honor Council at the University has approved a Code of Academic Integrity, available on the web at [http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/code.html](http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/code.html). This class abides by the statements in the Code.
## CLASS SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 25th</td>
<td>Introduction to Course / Counseling Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 1st</td>
<td>Intakes/First Session/Assessing Suicidality // Initial Paper Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 8th</td>
<td>Counseling Process/Relationship</td>
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<td>February 15th</td>
<td>The Nature of Change // Read Change book by today</td>
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<td>February 22nd</td>
<td>Time-Limited Counseling</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 1st</td>
<td>SEMINAR TOPIC</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 8th</td>
<td>NASPA CONVENTION (NO CLASS)</td>
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<td>March 15th</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK (NO CLASS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 22nd</td>
<td>ACPA CONVENTION (NO CLASS)</td>
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<td>March 29th</td>
<td>Couples/Family Counseling</td>
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<td>Weekly logs submitted - Informal Evaluation</td>
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<td>April 5th</td>
<td>SEMINAR TOPIC // Case Presentation</td>
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<td>April 12th</td>
<td>Topical Presentation // Case Presentation</td>
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<td>April 19th</td>
<td>Topical Presentation // Case Presentation</td>
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<td>April 26th</td>
<td>Termination Issues in Counseling // Case Presentation</td>
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<td>May 3rd</td>
<td>Topical Presentation</td>
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<td>May 10th</td>
<td>Topical Presentation</td>
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<td>Weekly logs submitted - Final Evaluation</td>
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**SEMINAR TOPICS MAY INCLUDE:**
- Assessment in Counseling
- Diversity Issues in Counseling
- Vocational Counseling
- Ethical/Legal Issues
- Grief/Loss Issues in Counseling
- Others

**REQUIRED TEXT**


Articles may be assigned as appropriate