ASSESSMENT PLAN
MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY PROGRAM
(M.S. Degree in Counseling, Option in Marriage and Family Therapy)

The program in Marriage and Family Therapy has a sequence of assessment measures to monitor student progress and performance, and program quality and relevance. These measures cover each step of the program, from admissions to graduation and even performance beyond graduation.

Admission to the Program:
The assessment of applicants for admission into the program is based on a profile of evidence. Two members of the faculty independently evaluate each applicant’s file, rating three letters of recommendation, transcripts of previous academic work, a personal statement, evidence of experience related to clinical work, standard test scores (MAT or GRE) and the number of prerequisites completed. The faculty raters use a scale from 10 for superior, to 1 for substandard performance on each of these areas. The “paperwork assessment score” is the average of the two ratings. Then applicants have an interview with one or two faculty members, and receive another score from 10 to 1 for evidence of their ability to interact positively with others, their willingness to take appropriate risks and accept the challenges of new learning, their awareness of their impact on others, their tolerance for ambiguity, and their commitment to the profession of marriage and family therapy.

Formative Assessments:
During the course of their program, students are evaluated in each course on criteria set by the professor for the particular course. The student’s grade in the course reflects these assessments. The faculty apply the same criteria and advising to all students in the program. The faculty teaching in marriage and family therapy courses also meet on a weekly basis. Two meetings each quarter are set aside for the evaluation of every student’s progress, but the agenda in any meeting always includes time for faculty to bring up issues of concern about a particular student’s progress. When students are having difficulty, the faculty constructs a plan of action which is then implemented by the student’s advisor. At the end of the Spring quarter of students’ first year, the faculty meet to formally discuss each student’s progress. Students who are making satisfactory progress are then advanced to Candidacy. Any student not making satisfactory progress is asked to meet with his or her advisor and the MFT Coordinator to resolve the problem(s).

In the second year of the program, if a student has been advanced to candidacy, she or he is placed in a clinical fieldwork site. An evaluation form listing the necessary aptitudes and dispositions and clinical skills of a professional marriage and family therapist is sent to the licensed fieldwork site supervisor twice during the year. These evaluations are then discussed.
between the faculty supervisor and the student, and the faculty supervisor is responsible for helping the student plan for improving unsatisfactory performance. Faculty supervisors bring the issues of such students to the faculty meeting, where further advice, planning and conditions are suggested. In the Winter Quarter of the second year, the faculty meets to determine which students have progressed sufficiently to have their programs of study (major checks) signed. This is a formal step that can be delayed if a student is having problems and not yet performing adequately.

**Knowledge:**
- Assessment of academic progress, based on faculty evaluation of and grade assigned in program coursework.
- Evaluation of performance-based learning activities linking theory to practice, and classroom learning to clinical settings.
- Individual advisory interviews with faculty, conducted on a regular basis.

**Skills:**
- Observations in class and in the field by faculty, agency supervisors, and other agency personnel.
- Licensed supervisor evaluations in the middle and at the end of the second year.
- Advisor/faculty approval of advancement to candidacy and approval of major check for the program of study.
- Self evaluations made in the faculty supervised fieldwork class.
- Meetings of program faculty to monitor candidate progress, followed by planning and intervention as needed.

**Dispositions:**
- Observations by faculty and supervisors in the field.
- Licensed supervisor evaluations, which include ratings of personal and professional dispositions, including initiative, reliability, self-awareness, use of feedback, and interpersonal effectiveness.
- Meetings of program faculty to monitor student progress, followed by planning and intervention as needed.

**Exit Assessments:**
At the end of each class, students fill out instructor/class evaluation forms. Instructors may modify courses based on this feedback, and more programmatic evaluative comments are discussed in the faculty meetings so that all faculty can use them to inform our practice. As mentioned under Formative Assessments, there are two extensive evaluations provided by licensed fieldwork supervisors which are discussed with students by their faculty supervisors. This provides specific evaluations of each student’s knowledge, clinical skills, and dispositions (attitudes) needed for further growth and success as a marriage and family therapist. In addition, students are asked to provide an evaluation of their entire program via the course evaluation
process at the end of their third quarter of Fieldwork at the end of their second year. Students must complete a thesis or project as the final evidence of the level of knowledge. Approval by licensed fieldwork supervisors and the faculty supervisor is based on a satisfactory level of clinical skill. Primary dispositions evaluated at the end of the program are a student’s readiness of clinical work, professional maturity, and personal commitment to the field of marriage and family therapy.
Follow-Up Assessments:
In order to continue on the path toward a license as an MFT, a student must apply to the department for approval of their application for MFT Intern Status from the Board of Behavior Science Examiners. This provides a final step in the department’s approval of the candidate’s satisfactory progress. The MFT program participates in the College of Education and Allied Studies Alumni Surveys of program graduates. This allows us to receive evaluative information from graduates two years after completion of the program. In addition every third year, an evaluation form is mailed to agencies and school sites where our students have been placed, and an evaluation of both our fieldwork students, our post-graduate MFT Interns, and any licensed graduates who are employees is requested.

The involvement of graduates and employers in the interpretation of assessment data is done on an informal basis. Faculty supervisors may request interpretations of particular issues in the course of their regular contact with the licensed supervisors at agencies and schools. Employers also have to keep us updated on changes in their programs and/or policies each year as part of being included in our Web site of fieldwork and employment agencies, schools and programs. This is also a time when the telephone contact includes informal sharing of evaluative data.

To our knowledge there are no system-wide or statewide program evaluations. However, the final achievement of our students is passing the license exam for marriage and family therapists. We do receive the general data on the “pass rate” for different schools, and graduates from our program have had one of the highest pass rates. This data is available every year.

Program Assessment Process:
The knowledge, skills and dispositions required of students in the M.S. Counseling, Option in MFT program are largely mandated by the State of California, Board of Behavioral Examiners. The faculty modify the program as needed to meet state requirements. For example, we added coursework in Chemical Dependency Counseling and Human Sexuality in response to changing state law. In 2004-2005 we will modify our course in Domestic Abuse, and in 2005-2005 we will initiate a course in Elder Counseling, both in response to changing state requirements. The program also uses IAMFC (International Association of Marriage and Family Counselors) division of the ACA (American Counseling Association) in making changes and improvements to our program. However, lack of funds and lack of faculty keep us from achieving excellence in some of the standards. In terms of legal and ethical guidelines, the faculty are committed to making any changes necessary to be current with these standards.

Evaluation data from the admissions process, evaluations of students while they are in the program, exit assessments and follow-up assessments are often congruent. Changes are made in course structure and content by individual faculty, and broader modifications are made following university guidelines. The standards for best practices put forth by professional organizations (ACA, APA), changes in knowledge derived from research, and all the elements in our program review regularly result in changes to the program. For example, the course in Law and Ethics in Counseling was scheduled in the third quarter of the first year in response to feedback from agencies and students. The structure and content of our course in group therapy was changed.
this Spring Quarter in response to professional, student, professor, clinical and agency feedback. The course in counseling practicum is changed nearly every year in response to new needs expressed by one or more of the evaluative groups.

The use of CAPR and CEAS Strategic planning are mostly relevant to resources, particularly additional faculty. However, these faculty are requested on the basis of program needs such as informational content and clinical experience. Changes that are made which are specific to the MFT program are made by faculty teaching in that program. Since students in the School Counseling Credential and the School Psychology Credential also work toward the MFT, proposed changes are discussed eventually by the entire faculty in Counseling. Changes are documented in syllabi, proposed course modifications, proposed sequence of courses, and proposed changes to the Counseling Masters degree. All of these require university documents, and are kept as records in the department office.

The effectiveness of the assessment plan will be evidenced in the changes in different aspects of the program, and the reactions of evaluators at all the levels described in this document.