

Frequently Asked Questions

Applicable for All Three Concentrations:

- (a) Career Counseling; (b) Marriage, Couple, & Family Counseling; and
(c) Rehabilitation Counseling**

Thank you for your interest in our Professional Clinical Counseling Program. In applying to our program, you are applying to ONE of the three concentrations. **Please read carefully.**

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CONCENTRATIONS, DEGREE TYPES, & ELIGIBILITY FOR LICENSES

- 1. What are the Concentrations offered by the Professional Clinical Counseling Program at Sacramento State University?**
 - The Counseling Program offers three concentrations: Career Counseling; Marriage, Couple, & Family Counseling; and Rehabilitation Counseling.
 - For those interested in School Counseling (PPS), please see the separate program/website for Y-HOPE School Counseling PPS Masters.
 - Graduates from any of these three concentrations are eligible for licensure in the state of California as an LPCC. Additionally, graduates from the Marriage, Couple, & Family Counseling concentration are eligible for licensure in the State of California as both LMFT and LPCC.
 - For more information on licensure and the licensure process, please see the Licenses and Credentials FAQ section below.
- 2. Can I apply to more than one concentration or get degrees in more than one concentration?**
 - No, you can only apply to one concentration as part of the application process. Due to the nature of the specialized classes in each concentration and fieldwork requirements (practicum and internship), specializing in multiple concentrations is not practical and thus not admitted. This program follows a cohort model (see cohort FAQ section), students can only obtain a degree for one concentration.

- 3. Is the Marriage, Couple, & Family Counseling Concentration different than the MFT?**
 - Although the license in California for professionals in marriage and family therapy is called an LMFT (Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist), the degree earned at Sacramento State University is the MS in Counseling with a concentration in Marriage, Couple, & Family Counseling. The title of the degree complies with CACREP accreditation standards and embodies the focus on counseling in the program, as opposed to psychology or other helping professions. The degree title is approved by the BBS for eligibility towards licensure of both LPCC and LMFT in the State of California.
- 4. Is the Professional Clinical Counseling Program at Sacramento State University CACREP-accredited?**
 - Currently, all three concentrations are accredited by CACREP.
 - See the CACREP Accreditation FAQ section for more information on CACREP and the impact of whether a program is accredited.

APPLICATION, MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS, TRANSFER CREDITS, & CLASSES WITHOUT DEGREE

- 5. Can I apply to more than one concentration or get degrees in more than one concentration?**
 - Please see the response in the section above
- 6. When do applications open/close?**
 - Please see the Program Admissions sections of our website, as dates update each year. In general, dates will be similar from year to year. If you are awaiting next year's dates, these are posted sometime in the summer each year.
- 7. Who can help me with my application materials?**
 - The career center at most undergraduate institutions can help provide direct support on graduate school applications for students and alumni (including resume review, writing review, etc).
 - Neither the program team nor the Counseling Ambassadors can opine on candidate information or likelihood of admissions. The admissions review is a holistic approach (looking at all aspects of a candidate's knowledge, skills, and professional disposition/development), and applications are evaluated against the other pool of applicants for any given year.
 - For information on what our Counseling Ambassadors and the program team CAN do to address your questions, please see the "Ambassadors, FAQ, & Support" page of our website.
- 8. Is there a spring admissions application?**
 - No, we do not offer spring or summer admission; we only offer fall admission. You will apply by January for the upcoming academic year, which begins in the upcoming fall semester. For reasoning, please see the FAQ questions below regarding our cohort model approach.
- 9. Is the GRE required?**
 - No, we do not require or accept GRE scores. However, we will ask for a writing sample and have a writing assessment as part of the screening and interview processes.
- 10. Can I take classes without being admitted into the program?**
 - No, all courses in our program are only offered to students accepted into the counseling program within one of the concentrations.

11. Can I transfer credits from other counseling programs?

- In general, this is not possible. The Sac State Office of Graduate Studies policy limits the transfer of graduate school credits to a maximum of 6 units. However, our program is built with classes which are both built upon each other and specifically evaluated for BBS and CACREP requirements (based upon these cumulative elements). We require each student of the program to attend the required cohort sequence to ensure that each student is meeting all of the requirements of each of those accrediting bodies. Evaluation for possible transfer of units are rare, must meet all of our class's requirements, and must come another CACREP-accredited program.

12. Can I apply for the program as a part-time student?

- See the next cohort model section of the FAQ document for a detailed response.

13. Can you apply to different CSU programs in Cal State Apply?

- The Cal State Apply website allows you to apply to multiple programs and schools within the California State University system. Applicants have the ability to add as many programs (from the same or different schools) as they wish. Once multiple programs are added to the website, you should be able to see each of them separately on your homepage/dashboard.
- Sections 1-3 of the application create a shared input screen which allows you to not have to duplicate data entry for information that all programs request. Section 4 of the application (Program Materials) are screens/inputs unique to each program - entry into one of these screens does not get transmitted to any other institution. For application submission, applicants are permitted to submit all the applications at once or submit each program application separately. Information on each of these items and how to do them can be found in the [Cal State Apply guidebook](#).

14. Do I need a 3.0 GPA? What do I do if I have a low GPA?

- The faculty review committee will view all applications even if it does not meet the program GPA requirement. We will view all applications and can make a determination based on viewing all applications and submitted materials holistically.
- Review of GPA includes:
 - i. Overall GPA and academic success
 - ii. The minimum GPA requirement of 3.0 is set by the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) and pertains to the last 60 semester units (90 quarter units) taken - no matter from which school/combination of schools these credits were earned. On very rare situations, OGS will create conditional exceptions for this requirement if the GPA is close — however, this in these cases the applicant must have an overwhelmingly strong application otherwise (through things such as years of work/volunteer experience in a related field, strong writing submissions, and strong recommendations, etc.).
- The counseling program is **highly competitive**, therefore it is recommended to bring up your GPA with additional classes if possible.
 - i. Some applicants who are close to the GPA threshold on the last 60/90 units and wish to increase their GPA choose to take additional courses. This can be done via any collegiate institution, including continued enrollment, continuing education programs (like California's Open University program), community colleges, or online institutions. For those looking to do so, we recommend considering taking the following courses at CSUS, through Open University, (but again, it need not be these courses):
 1. EDUC 155 Introduction to Counseling
 2. EDUC 156 Power, Privilege and Self Identity in Counseling
 3. EDUC 157 Child and Family Psychopathology

15. How do I calculate the last 60 semester/90 quarter credits for my GPA? Which colleges and classes should I count?

- *Tools:* Calculating GPA is done by using a basic weighted average formula, so it can be easily done via a spreadsheet like Google sheets or Excel. However, there are also sites that will do this for you as well.
- *How to Calculate:* There are many sites online that walk you through how to calculate GPA on your own if you don't remember how to do weighted averages. Follow those instructions and include the last 60 semester (or 90 quarter) units that you have taken. (Most undergraduate institutions have a page on their website that walks through this process and relates it to their specific transcript format.)
- *Classes from Multiple Schools:* For the classes you have taken at other schools:
 - All of your courses will be evaluated - please make sure you are including transcript information from ALL institutions.
 - For the minimum GPA calculation... all classes from other schools will count towards the minimum GPA calculation if they are within the most recent 60 sem/90 qtrr units you have taken, no matter the subject.
 - If some were taken as semester units, others as quarter units — you will need to convert the classes to the same base
 - Ex a - mostly took quarters classes but took a couple of one-off semester classes at another institution: convert semester classes to quarter credits first so that the quarter credit GPA is calculated only using quarter credits. To convert semester credits to quarter credits, you can multiply the number of semester credits by 1.5 (ex: 3 semester credits x 1.5 = 4.5 quarter credits)
 - Ex b - mostly took semester classes but took a couple of one-off quarter classes at another institution: convert quarter classes to semester credits first so that the semester credit GPA is calculated only using semester credits. To convert quarter credits to semester credits, you can divide the number of quarter credits by 1.5 (ex: 3 quarter credits / 1.5 = 2 semester credits)

16. Are there any pre-requisite classes or type of bachelor's degree for admission?

- Our program does not require specific undergraduate courses or majors, just an earned undergraduate degree (we do have individuals who come from backgrounds/degrees other than traditional psychology/counseling/child development, as well as individuals changing careers).
 - i. Please note as indicated earlier in this document and on the program's application instructions, the Office of Graduate Studies does require a minimum 3.0 GPA for the last 60 units. See items earlier in this section for more details.
- The review of an application is performed using a holistic approach, which looks not only at education, but at work and volunteer experience, and personal and professional development. This is discussed in a bit more detail in our Information Night event. As part of the holistic review, we look at experience and goodness of fit for someone entering into a mental health graduate program.
- Therefore, candidates usually have experience with (a) working or volunteering in mental health or mental health adjacent positions, and/or (b) working with issues and populations of interest to the applicant (such as vulnerable or specific populations, specific mental health issues, school-aged children for school counseling concentration, etc.). Although not required, many individuals changing careers may also have taken additional classes post-graduation to further their knowledge on foundational psychology, counseling, and human development items.

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THE COHORT MODEL & FULL/PART-TIME

17. What is a cohort?

- A cohort is defined as a group of students who begin and work through a curriculum together in order to achieve the same 60-unit M.S. in Counseling degree. The cohort system is structured in such a way that all counseling courses are organized in a developmental progressive sequence that allows students to develop and demonstrate acquired knowledge, awareness, and skills.
- The cohort model allows for students to build relationships with peers in shared experiences throughout the program and within the experiential courses that provide opportunity for interpersonal growth. Often, these relationships that are formed continue post-graduation. The Counseling Community is a small tight knit community, both locally and nationally; therefore, the cohort model fosters development of professional relationships and integrated approaches to wellness, prevention, and treatment.

18. Will I follow a specific path of classes (cohort sequence) or will I get to choose my own?

- There is a cohort sequence to follow. A cohort sequence is a specific order of courses to take each semester in order to complete your degree in the three-year time frame. Most of our courses are offered once a year, therefore the sequence provides direction as to which courses need to be taken during which period (e.g. fall/spring) and which year (e.g. year one, year two, or final year) in order to support the developmental structure of the course content.

19. Why is the cohort sequence 3 years long in Sacramento State's program as compared to the 2 years that some other programs follow?

- Each counseling program is designed based on different philosophies, emphasis, and approaches, along with the availability of courses during certain semesters. There is not one correct approach and applicants should look to understand each program's approach and fit with their specific values and areas of focus.
- Our program views the Counseling profession's ability to work with clients as both a privilege and a large responsibility. To support both clients and our students, our program's approach is to focus on developing students' foundational and experiential knowledge before they directly take on client responsibilities.
- Thus, the first half of the cohort sequence is designed with classes which focus on foundational knowledge with extensive experiential learning opportunities, practicing the skills they will use with clients within the classroom with themselves, the faculty, and their fellow cohort members. In the second half of the program, classes become more specialized and often decrease in number to allow for increasing levels of client work through the practicum, then internship experiences.
- For more information about the sequence, including which classes each concentration takes, please see the 'About our Program' section of our website. For more information about the practicum and internship experiences, see the 'Internship & Practicum' section of this FAQ document.

20. Can I attend remotely or part time?

- Classes are in-person at Sacramento State campus and are not available online or via a hybrid format. Students are only admitted on a full-time basis. Please see the cohort sequence questions above for more details.

21. Can I work during the program? When do classes meet?

- Our program is a full-time in-person program for the three years, with traditional fall/spring classes (no summer classes). While many, if not most, of our students do maintain at least part-time work while in the program, whether someone is able to attend while also accommodating their existing or full-time work schedule is truly a case-by-case

situation based upon the facts of each person's work flexibility, number of hours, etc. Some students are able to balance a full-time job during the program while others are not able to do so. However, it is worth noting that some practicum and internship sites (for second semester in year 2, and full year for year 3) require that you do your clinical duties (clients and associated work) during standard business hours.

- Each class in which you will enroll will meet once a week for ~3hours. Classes are held Monday through Thursday (no Friday or weekend classes available; no classes during the summer semester). These class sections are offered during the day and evening. You can peruse the [CSUS class schedule website](#) for any given semester for an example of Professional Clinical Counseling Program class times (look for Ed - Counselor Education EDC as class type/major).
- However, as with any full-time master's program, success in the program can only come with schooling being a priority. In addition, we cannot guarantee evening availability for any particular section/class for students, as class size is obviously limited to ensure adequate instruction. If you would like to discuss your situation more, we would recommend scheduling a meeting with a Counseling Ambassador.

LICENSES & CREDENTIALS

22. What is licensure?

- Licensure (“getting licensed”) allows individuals to practice a particular profession. In order to become licensed, individuals must demonstrate that they have satisfied specific educational requirements, completed a regulated number of supervised internship hours, post-graduate supervised hours, and passed state licensing exams. Each state is responsible for licensing professionals and maintaining its own regulations.
- In California, there are three licenses that allow for performing the various types of counseling or psychotherapy:
 - i. Counseling Related Licenses
 - 1. Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT)
 - 2. Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC)
 - ii. Social Work Related Licenses:
 - 1. Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)
- These licenses allow individuals to independently practice psychotherapy in the State of California. The California Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS) oversees all associate and licensed designations.
- Our program focuses on the Counseling profession and has been fully evaluated by the BBS for licensure. See the first page of this document for details on which concentrations are eligible for which license(s). For information on social work, please see the [Masters in Social Work website](#).

23. What is the difference between the LPCC and the LMFT? Are they the same in every state?

- The LPCC allows counselors in the State of California to provide therapy to individuals (and group counseling).
- The LMFT allows counselors in the State of California to provide therapy to groups, individuals, couples, and families. LMFTs have specialized training coursework and clinical client training hours related to couples and families.
- LPCCs and LMFTs may both work in a variety of settings, including private practice, nonprofit organizations, community agencies, and hospitals. The LMFT license has been around longer in California and may be more familiar to older clinicians, however, the LPCC license has been developed to allow for specialization in scope of practice and to align with other states where the LPCC (or similar equivalent) is more prevalent.

- The LMFT and LPCC licenses may or may not be the same name in other states – licensure is governed separately by each state, including name of licenses, scope of practice, requirements for licensure, and portability of licenses from one state to another.
- For more information about these licenses in California, visit the BBS website at www.bbs.ca.gov.
- For more information about licenses in other states, including the portability of licenses from one state to another, visit the specific state licensing body’s website.

24. What is the BBS?

- The Board of Behavioral Sciences is a California state regulatory agency, responsible for licensing, examination, and enforcement of professional standards for:
 - i. Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFT) and Associates (AMFT)
 - ii. Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW) and Associates (ASW)
 - iii. Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors (LPCC) and Associates (APCC)
 - iv. Licensed Educational Psychologists (LEP)

CACREP ACCREDITATION

25. What is CACREP?

- The Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP) is a national accrediting body for counseling programs. Its goal is to ensure quality and high standards in counselor education. Programs accredited by CACREP have demonstrated a commitment to the counseling profession, ensuring they differentiate themselves from other helping professions, including psychology and social work. For more information about CACREP, please visit www.cacrep.org.
- CACREP is a national programmatic accrediting entity.

26. Is the Professional Clinical Counseling Program at Sacramento State University CACREP-accredited?

- Currently, all three concentrations are accredited by CACREP.

27. Is accreditation required for licensure? What is the purpose of being “secondarily accredited”? Does this impact moving states?

- *Primary Accreditation:* To be licensed in California as either an LMFT or LPCC, individuals must graduate from a regionally-accredited university. Sacramento State University is regionally-accredited by WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges), which fulfills this requirement.
- *Secondary Accreditation:*
 - i. Secondary accreditation is an additional process performed at the program-specific level, overseen by a secondary accrediting body which ensures the quality of the program for meeting certain industry, educational, and professional standards.
 - ii. Our program (for all three concentrations) is CACREP-accredited; and the MCFC is both CACREP-accredited and COAMFTE-aligned. All courses meet the standards set out by those programmatic accrediting bodies; accreditation is verified by the accrediting bodies and aligned is designed to meet the accrediting requirements but not directly accredited by COAMFTE.

- *Is Secondary Accreditation Required:*
 - i. Secondary programmatic accreditation is not required for licensure in the state of California. Therefore, a program does not need to be CACREP-accredited in order for its graduates to qualify for licensure in the state of California. However, the LPCC is directly aligned with CACREP requirements and the NBCC exam.
 - ii. This is not true for all states.
 1. Some states require either CACREP accreditation or CACREP alignment for LPCC/LPC/PCC licensure, and/or COAMFTE accreditation or COAMFTE alignment for LMFT/MFT licenses.
 2. While not all states require secondary accreditation, only a few do, but the application, education, and licensure requirements are more extensive if the person did not graduate from a program with CACREP or COAMFTE accreditation and/or alignment. For individual state requirements, visit the specific state licensing board website.
 3. All states require a status with the state licensing board in order to be eligible to provide psychotherapy. A credential will not suffice in place of a license, whether conditional or full.
- *What if I plan to Move?*
 - i. Please see the note above about differing state requirements. If you are planning to leave California and seek licensure in other states, such as the case for service members/military members, reach out to your current faculty for guidance and/or look up state board requirements.

INTERNSHIP & PRACTICUM

28. What's the difference between Practicum & Internship?

- The process for licensure in California is outlined on our website in the [About the Program page](#). BBS licensure and CACREP standards requires a certain amount of supervised hours working with clients during the masters program. BBS licensure further requires differing amounts (and types) of supervised hours working with clients after graduation before becoming fully-licensed. These requirements differ depending on the degree concentration and the license for which you are applying.
- Practicum is performed during the second semester of the second year (after foundational and experiential classes prepare the student for their first work with external clients). This is a 100-hour process working with clients under faculty supervision. These hours are required for graduation. They do not count towards post-graduation supervised hours required for licensure in California.
- Students engage in an external internship throughout their third year of the program with one of our program's community internship site partners. During this period, they must accrue at least 600 hours of client work and are under the supervision of both faculty and the internship site supervisor. These hours are required for graduation and do not count towards post-graduation LPCC licensure requirements. Some of these hours may qualify for post-graduation LMFT licensure if they meet additional requirements set by the BBS.
- Students in the program are guided through all of these details. Please refer to the BBS website or our Practicum & Internship Handbook for more information.

29. Will you help with site placement for practicum & internships?

- **Practicum:** Yes, for all three concentrations, practicum is performed at our on-site [Counseling Clinic at the Center for Counseling and Diagnostic Services](#) (CCDS)
- **Internships:** Yes, our Fieldwork Coordinator and faculty advisors will work with you for onsite-placements during the end of your second year through an interview and matching process. The internship lasts for the full third year of your program. Each spring, the

program holds a Site Fair networking event to provide students the opportunity to meet site contacts and inquire about each site and its population.

- The Professional Clinical Counseling Program has approved partnerships in the greater Sacramento area (and beyond), for which you will have the option of working. Many of these partnerships are long-standing relationships. All internship site options have been vetted to ensure they can provide the appropriate supervision experience within the concentration, and meet BBS and CACREP standards.
- Each year, the program holds orientation events to orient the students to these processes.

30. Are internship placements paid?

- A few of the placements are paid internships; however, the vast majority are not paid. These experiences include supervision feedback and mentoring. The internships occur on-site and accompanies the EDC 480 Internship course, allowing students to build expertise under supervision of both site-supervisor and the university supervisor, pulling on the expertise of both.

OTHER ITEMS (Scholarships/Financial Aid, Research Opportunities, Doctoral Programs, Etc.)

31. Are there scholarships available?

- There are a small, limited number of program and college-specific scholarships for which students of our program are eligible to apply once they are active students. The amounts and awards vary by year and are usually merit based.
- In addition, there are a limited number of general and mental health-related graduate scholarships available through various organizations, but students would be responsible for their own pursuit of these opportunities. CACREP accreditation will bring possible additional options for scholarships within the larger national organizations, which is part of why we are excited for this programmatic accreditation.
- The National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) offers scholarships available for those in CACREP accredited program. Our chapter of Chi Sigma Iota often holds a yearly seminar on this topic for our students. In addition, HCAI offers scholarships in California for those in clinical tracks leading to licensure.
- Furthermore, there are additional student loan forgiveness programs aimed at those working in community mental health programs in low-coverage areas.
- While in the program, our team continuously updates students regarding new information to known scholarship, grant, & loan forgiveness programs.
- The program is also eligible for financial aid and student loan programs. For more information, contact the [Sacramento State Financial Aid Office](#)

32. Will there be opportunities for research?

- YES! Although it is not required, if you are interested you will have the opportunity to work with faculty on research once you are accepted.

33. Are there graduate or teaching assistantships available?

- Our campus does offer Graduate Assistantships (GA) and Instructional Student Aids (ISA), however the Graduate and Professional Studies in Education department and our program do not often get many of these campus assistantship opportunities as they are funded by the campus and college.
- Our program does, however, occasionally have graduate assistant positions. However, these positions do not open frequently. These positions and other various campus positions are available for student applicants via the Sac State Handshake website which handles all student employment. Many of our students work on campus through other student positions.

34. Will there be opportunities to participate in local, regional, national, or international professional organizations?

- YES! Our faculty are involved in leadership in local, national, and international organizations and actively involved in both research and presentation of research in professional organizations such as: The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP); The National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC); The European Branch of the American Counseling Association (EB-ACA); The American Counseling Association (ACA); California Association for Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT); The Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) and its regional branch, the Western Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (WACES,) to name a few. Look through faculty profiles for leadership and research interests.

35. Do you have a Counseling doctorate?

- We have put forth a proposal for a doctorate in Counselor Education and Supervision (CES). The CSU Chancellors Office, with the passing of AB656, has an approved route for accepting doctoral proposals for which we are awaiting approval from our campus to move a proposal forward. We are hopeful it will come to fruition soon.