

M.S. in Counseling: Narrative Discussion

The Pace University graduate program in mental health counseling has been one of the very first in New York State to offer a master's degree leading to licensure in this field. Our program began in 1992 as a 36-credit degree program with 11 students. Since then, we have expanded the original 36-credit program to a 60-credit program and became a license-qualifying degree program in 2005.

The development of our M.S. in Mental Health Counseling program has been guided by careful adherence to the standards of the American Counseling Association through the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Professionals (CACREP) and the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC).

The overarching goal of our program is to prepare students for practice in mental health counseling and, specifically, for licensure as a professional counselors.

The ongoing assessment is based on five key learning outcomes which were drawn from the expectations for counseling programs published by the American Counseling Association. Specifically, these were found in the Professional Identity section of the standards of the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Professionals (CACREP).

These criteria were selected by our departmental faculty on the basis of broadly recognized professional skills in counseling as judged by the faculty.

The selected learning outcomes are:

1. Based on the classic and current professional counseling literature, develop an internally consistent theory of how people develop and change.
2. Apply theoretical constructs to determine the meaning of human issues.
3. Use knowledge of human behavior and counseling theory to generate appropriate counseling goals and modality of treatment.
4. Exhibit a thorough knowledge of ethical standards of professional organizations and credentialing bodies.
5. Formulate counseling strategies to work with clients of diverse populations.

We chose to evaluate the work of students in the two courses that we consider capstone experiences: PSY 674: Integrating Seminar and PSY 675-76: Internship Seminar. Both of these courses contain long papers (40-60 pages) in which the students are expected to integrate their learning through an exposition of their understanding of current theories of counseling and the best practices in the profession.

A sample of papers was randomly chosen for evaluation. Two faculty members rated papers on the degree to which these reached adequate functioning in each of the learning outcome areas.

The first three of the learning outcomes were met on at least an adequate level.

The evaluation results indicated that one of the learning outcome areas has not been met at an adequate level. That outcome is the fourth: "Exhibit a thorough knowledge of ethical standards of professional organizations and credentialing bodies."

We have determined to continue a review of the essential ethics issues to the curriculum of the PSY674. In addition, we will increase discussions of ethics in the PSY694 (Practicum) course.

The fifth learning outcome was met, again, on an adequate level. This outcome is: "Formulate counseling strategies to work with clients of diverse populations." We will further evaluate this learning outcome.

Department **PSYCHOLOGY** *Campus* **PLV** *Program* **M.S. IN MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING**

<i>Learning Outcome</i>	<i>Methodology used to assess learning outcome</i>	<i>Semester when assessment data were collected</i>	<i>Analysis of results</i>	<i>Evaluation of results</i>	<i>Action plans taken based on evaluation</i>
Based on the classic and current professional counseling literature, develop an internally consistent theory of how people develop and change.	Collect a sample of papers from "PSY674: Integrating Seminar" or "PSY675-676: Internship Seminar." Review these work samples & rate each on a 3-point scale: 1 = needs improvement 2 = adequate 3 = exceeds expectations	<u>Fall, 2016</u> (Fall, 2015)	<u>Mean of ratings: 2.95</u> (3.00)	This learning outcome was achieved by almost all of the students in these two "capstone" classes.	None required. Almost all students are able to achieve this outcome.
Apply theoretical constructs to determine the meaning of human issues.	Collect a sample of papers (PSY674 & 675-76). Review the work samples and rate each on the 3-point scale.	<u>Fall, 2016</u> (Fall, 2015)	<u>Mean of ratings: 2.85</u> (2.85)	Learning outcome was achieved by a <u>large majority</u> of the students in these classes.	None required. The students are able to achieve this outcome on an adequate level and some were at the "exceeds expectations" level.
Use knowledge of human behavior and counseling theory to generate appropriate counseling goals and modality of treatment.	Collect a sample of papers (PSY674 & 675-76). Review the work samples and rate each on the 3-point scale.	<u>Fall, 2016</u> (Fall,2015)	<u>Mean of ratings: 2.95</u> (2.90)	This learning outcome was achieved by a <u>large majority</u> of the students in these classes.	None required. The students are able to achieve this outcome on an adequate level and some were at the "exceeds expectations" level.
Exhibit a thorough knowledge of ethical standards of professional organizations and credentialing bodies.	Collect a sample of papers (PSY674 & 675-76). Review the work samples and rate each on the 3-point scale.	<u>Fall, 2016</u> (Fall, 2015)	<u>Mean of ratings:2.35</u> (1.50)	This learning outcome was only achieved by a <u>minority</u> of the students. Curricular change is required in future sections of these two courses.	Further curricular change is required in future sections of PSY 674. An increase in discussions of ethics will be introduced in PSY 694.
Formulate counseling strategies to work with clients of diverse populations.	Collect a sample of papers (PSY674 & 675-76). Review the work samples and rate each on the 3-point scale.	<u>Fall, 2016</u> (Fall,2015)	<u>Mean of rating:2.50</u> (2.45)	This learning outcome was met on an <u>adequate</u> level by the groups in these capstone classes. Further evaluation will be needed.	Students generally met this outcome on an adequate level. Slight improvement is noted. Further evaluation will be needed before curricular changes are effected.