

Assessment Cycle 2023-2024

Program: Counseling MA (533)

College: Education and Human Development

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Northwestern Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

Gallaspy College of Education and Human Development Mission. The Gallaspy Family College of Education and Human Development is committed to working collaboratively to acquire, create, and disseminate knowledge to Northwestern students through transformational, high-impact experiential learning practices, research, and service. Through the School of Education and Departments of Health and Human Performance, Military Science, Psychology, and Social Work, the College produces knowledgeable, inspired, and innovative graduates ready for lifelong learning who contribute to the communities in which they reside and professions they serve. Additionally, the GCEHD is dedicated to the communities served by the Marie Shaw Dunn Child Development Center, NSU Elementary Laboratory School, NSU Middle Laboratory School, and the NSU Child and Family Network to assist children and their families related to learning and development.

Counseling (COUN) Program Mission Statement: The mission of the Counseling Program at Northwestern State University is to prepare candidates with the knowledge, skills, and practices to become caring, competent, reflective counselors within a dynamic and multicultural society. A key aim of the program faculty is to approach their pedagogy with intellectual vigor and enhance their students' preparation through quality research, scholarship, and service. The instructional efforts of program faculty are committed to ensuring a seamless integration of theory into practice.

Methodology: The assessment process for the program is as follows:

- (1) Data from assessments provide results on candidate knowledge, skills, and dispositions as appropriate for professional education programs.
- (2) Annually, program faculty and stakeholders review data to make data-driven, curricular decisions. COUN faculty determine what changes will be made.
- (3) The NSU Counseling Program is fully accredited by the Council for Accreditation Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) through October 31, 2023. The program was accredited under the 2009 Standards and has now fully implemented the 2016 Standards. This accreditation is about quality assurance and the promotion of

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continuous improvement of programs. While there are aspirational elements included in the CACREP Standards, the Standards clearly delineate the program components that must be in place in order for a program to be accredited. The accredited status of our program assures the public that the program has gone through an extensive, multi-level external review process ensuring these critical quality-related components are in place. In addition, as a CACREP accredited program, we are committed to ongoing reporting and continuous and systematic program evaluation to identify strengths and weaknesses and to make data-informed program modifications for improvement over time.

Student Learning Outcomes

SLO 1

Course Map: Core CACREP Courses

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Demonstrate discipline-specific content knowledge (SPA #1)	Demonstrate a knowledge of core CACREP content areas as evidenced by earning an "Acceptable" score or higher on the MC and oral comprehensive exams.

Measure 1.1. (Direct – Knowledge, Skills)

SLO 1 is assessed through a multiple-choice comprehensive exam/oral comprehensive exam in the last semester of the program. The assessment instrument evaluates student knowledge using a 160-question multiple choice exam and a 45-minute oral exam, and the benchmark performance is that 80% of students will score at the Acceptable level (70%) or higher.

Finding: In AC 2023-2024 the target was met.

Analysis:

In AC 2022-2023, the target was met.

Fifteen students completed the Comprehensive Exam in the 22-23 AY. Of the 15, 12 candidates scored 70% or higher; 3 scored below 70% but still within the passing range. The scores in the core areas are as follows: Multicultural (16.9/20), Counseling Skills (16.6/20), Career Counseling (16.1/20), Group Counseling (15.7/20), Theories (15.6/20), Human Growth & Development (15.6/20), Analysis of the Individual (14.6/20), and Research (14.3/20). The changes made during the 22-23 AY had a direct impact on the comprehensive exam scores within the area of Group Counseling.

Based on analysis of the AC 2022-2023 data, faculty focused on improving students' scores in Group Counseling. The lower scores in Analysis and Research followed the national trend for counselors on the National Counselor Exam. The quantitative nature of those courses do

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not typically come naturally for those who lean toward being more verbal, such as counselors. However, the previous downward trend in Group Counseling scores was of concern. The following actions were taken in the 2023-2024 AC: (1) a new text was selected which better aligned with CACREP Standards, and (2) COUN 5580, the Group Course, continued in a face-to-face format.

As a result of these changes, in 2023-2024 the target was met. Six students completed the Comprehensive Exam in the 23-24 AY. Of the six, five candidates scored 70% or higher; one scored below 70% but still within the passing range. The scores in the core areas are as follows: Multicultural (15.8/20), Counseling Skills (17.3/20), Career Counseling (15/20), Group Counseling (14.1/20), Theories (13.8/20), Human Growth & Development (16.6/20), Analysis of the Individual (12.5/20), and Research (13.1/20). The changes made during the past two academic years had a direct impact on the comprehensive exam scores within the area of Group Counseling when compared with scores from prior years.

Decision or Recommendation.

In AC 2023-2024 the target was met.

Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2023-2024 data, in AC 2024-2025 faculty will focus on improving students' scores in Theories of Counseling (COUN 5530). Faculty will incorporate a National Counselor Exam testing module specific to counseling theories. These changes will improve students' knowledge within the core areas identified by CACREP, specifically in connecting counseling theory with practice, thereby continuing the cycle of continuous improvement.

SLO 2

Course Map: Field Experience Courses (COUN 5550, 5570)

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Apply discipline-specific content knowledge in professional practice (SPA #2)	The Individual Counseling Evaluation Form will be used in COUN 5550 and 5570. This aligns with the Key Performance Indicators for the 2016 CACREP standards below. CMHC 3.b. techniques and interventions for prevention and treatment of a broad range of mental health issues SC 3.h. skills to critically examine the connections between social, familial, emotional, and behavior problems and academic achievement

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Measure: 2.1. (Direct – Knowledge, Skills)

SLO 2 is assessed through the Individual Counseling Evaluation Form in COUN 5550 and 5570. This aligns with the program's Key Performance Indicators for the 2016 CACREP Standards, which are concentration specific for Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) and School Counseling (SC): (1) CMHC 3.b. techniques and interventions for prevention and treatment of a broad range of mental health issues and (2) SC 3.h. skills to critically examine the connections between social, familial, emotional, and behavior problems and academic achievement.

Finding: In AC 2023-2024 the target was met.

Analysis:

In AC 2022-2023, the target was met.

In AC 2022-2023, faculty placed additional emphasis on training for telehealth counseling. This continued the multi-year roll out, with the goal being that all students have three hours of telehealth training prior to enrolling in any field experience course. This was accomplished through embedding a three-hour telehealth counseling into COUN 6500, the Ethics course students must have prior to enrollment in field experiences. A mandatory quiz was designed and required in order to track students' learning. Six students were enrolled in COUN 5550 during AC 22-23. The average score on the evaluation was 4.47/5. Scores ranged from 4.3 to 4.6. The changes made during the 22-23 AY had a direct impact on students' abilities to utilize counseling techniques and interventions, especially in relation to teletherapy.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results, the faculty continued implementing these changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. This was a multi-year process. COUN 6500 is only offered once per year and averages around 10 students for each offering; COUN 5550 averages around 10 students per year as well; therefore, more data was needed prior to determining if additional changes are required.

As a result of these multi-year changes, in AC 2023-2024 the target was met. Ten students were enrolled in COUN 5550/5570 during AC 23-24. The average score on the evaluation was 4.49/5. Scores ranged from 4.3 to 4.8. The changes made during the 23-24 AY directly impacted students' abilities to utilize counseling techniques and interventions, especially in teletherapy.

Decision or Recommendation.

In AC 2023-2024 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, in AC 2024-2025 faculty will incorporate a National Counselor Exam testing module specific to counseling skills, techniques and interventions. These changes will improve students' knowledge within the core areas

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identified by CACREP, specifically in prevention and treatment of mental health issues, thereby continuing the cycle of continuous improvement.

SLO 3

Course Map: COUN 6500

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Model professional behaviors and characteristics (SPA #3)	Know ethical standards of professional counseling organizations and credentialing bodies, and applications of ethical and legal considerations in professional counseling (2016 CACREP Standard 1.i.).

Measure: 3.1. (Direct – Skills, Dispositions)

The SLO is assessed through the COUN 6500 Research Paper.

Finding: In AC 2023-2024 the target was met.

Analysis:

In AC 2022-2023, the target was met.

Mean scores for the COUN 6500 Research Paper were calculated to analyze the data for the Summer of 23. One hundred percent of students (n=12) earned a mean score of Acceptable (80% or above) or Target (90% or above) on the Research Paper.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results, faculty continued implementing the rubric changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. COUN 6500 is only offered once per year, so multiple years of data was needed to determine if changes were effective.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2023-2024 the target was met. Mean scores for the COUN 6500 Research Paper were calculated to analyze the data for the Summer of 23. One hundred percent of students (n=12) earned a mean score of Acceptable (80% or above) or Target (90% or above) on the Research Paper. The assignment change had a direct impact on the student's ability to model professional behaviors and reference specific ethical standards.

Decision or Recommendation.

In AC 2023-2024 the target was met.

Based on information gathered from analysis of the AC 2023-2024 data, in AC 2024-2025 faculty will incorporate a National Counselor Exam testing module specific to

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ethical issues to enhance student learning. These changes will improve the student's ability to know ethical standards of professional counseling organizations and credentialing bodies, and applications of ethical and legal considerations in professional counseling, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

SLO 4

Course Map: COUN 5000 and 5610

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Exhibit creative thinking that yields engaging ideas, processes, materials, and experiences appropriate for the discipline (SPA #3)	Demonstrate appropriate essential interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization skills (2016 CACREP 5.g.).
Exhibit creative thinking that yields engaging ideas, processes, materials, and experiences appropriate for the discipline (SPA #3)	Articulate the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual's views of others (2016 CACREP 2.d.).

Measure: 4.1. (Direct – Knowledge, Skills)

Finding: In AC 2023-2024 the target was met.

Analysis:

In AC 2022-2023, the target was met.

SLO #4 was assessed in COUN 5610 through the Class Journal/Portfolio, also a KPI assignment for the program under the 2016 CACREP Standards. This assignment is a compilation of the students' work throughout the semester regarding specific prompts designed for students to reflect in-depth on their attitudes, beliefs, experiences and then to articulate how that impacts their work with clients. The benchmark performance is that 80% of students will score at the Acceptable level or higher. This standard was met in the Spring 23. Sixteen students were enrolled in COUN 5610. Of the 16 students, 100% earned a designation of Acceptable or Target on the Class Journal/Portfolio.

Faculty also assessed SLO 4 in COUN 5000 through a 45-minute counseling session that students facilitated in the role of the counselor, which was also a KPI assignment for the program under the 2016 CACREP Standards. A session transcription identifying skills used, case conceptualization, and an essential skills rating form was completed as part of the assignment as well. The benchmark performance was that 80% of students will score at the Acceptable level or higher. In the Fall of 2022, 15 students were enrolled in COUN 5000. Fourteen students completed all portions of this Key

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Performance Indicator. Of the 14 students, 100% earned a designation of Acceptable or Target on the assignment. The remaining student did not submit the work by the due date and received a zero on the assignment.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 data, feedback from students, and site supervisors, faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. In AC 2023-2024, faculty again offered an 8-week Counseling Skills (COUN 5000) course that met twice weekly. This was scheduled as a hybrid A-term course. As part of this offering there was an increased emphasis on case notes as part of the case conceptualization skills. An additional lecture on clinical case notes and collaborative documentation was incorporated into COUN 5000 in order to introduce students to different methods of taking client notes. For the Class Journal/Portfolio in COUN 5610, previous changes to the assignment/rubric continues to be implemented. The multiple-choice comprehensive exam scores for the Multicultural Counseling core area have risen over the past two years; it was the second highest core area score for 22-23 and 23-24.

As a result of these changes, in 2023-2024 the target was met. Seventeen students were enrolled in COUN 5610 in the Spring of 2024. Of the 16 students who submitted the assignment, 100% earned a designation of Acceptable or Target on the Class Journal/Portfolio. One student did not submit the work by the due date and received an incomplete (due to medical reasons) on the assignment and in the course. In the Fall of 2023, 16 students were enrolled in COUN 5000. Fifteen students completed all portions of this Key Performance Indicator. Of the 15 students, 100% earned a designation of Acceptable or Target on the assignment. The remaining students did not submit the work by the due date and received a zero or incomplete on the assignment.

The course changes detailed above had a direct impact on the student's ability to articulate the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual's views of others, and students were able to demonstrate appropriate essential interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization skills.

Decision or Recommendation.

In AC 2023-2024 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the results the faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2024-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement. Another module on clinical case notes and collaborative documentation will be incorporated into COUN 5000 in order to introduce students to different methods of taking client notes. For the Class Journal/Portfolio in COUN 5610, a professional development will be added that will enhance students' learning and will add to the depth of their Journal/Portfolio.

Faculty believe the new changes and continuing the implementation of previous changes will improve students' ability to articulate the impact of heritage, attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences on an individual's views of others and to demonstrate appropriate essential interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization skills, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

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SLO 5

Course Map: COUN 5560 and COUN 5550/5570

Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome
Make responsible decisions and problem- solve, using data to inform actions when appropriate (SPA #5)	Demonstrate appropriate essential interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization skills (2016 CACREP 5.g.).
Make responsible decisions and problem- solve, using data to inform actions when appropriate (SPA #5)	Know the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession, including how to critique research to inform counseling practice (2016 CACREP 8.a.)

Measure: 5.1. (Direct – Knowledge, Skills)

Finding: In AC 2023-2024 the target was met.

Analysis:

In AC 2022-2023, the target was met.

Faculty assessed SLO 5 (2016 CACREP 7.e.) in COUN 5560 through the Case Conceptualization Presentation, a KPI assignment for the program under the 2016 Standards. In this assignment students (1) Identified the presenting problem, (2) Assessed and interpreted client's strengths and needs, recognizing uniqueness in cultures, languages, values, backgrounds, and abilities, (3) Detailed appropriate comprehensive assessment interventions to assist in diagnosis and treatment planning, with an awareness of cultural bias, (4) Detailed treatment plan that includes a behavioral definition, 5-axis diagnosis, goals, objectives, past interventions used, theoretical approach used, multicultural considerations, and family systems considerations; differentiate between diagnosis and developmental appropriate reactions during trauma-causing events, (5) Included progress notes, (6) Documented consultation with collaborating professionals to discuss the differential diagnosis, (7) Videotaped session and summarize intervention. Intervention must be based upon documented research findings. Sources must be cited. If applicable, provide appropriate counseling strategies when working with clients with addiction and co-occurring disorders; if not detail appropriate strategies that could be used, (8) Summarized future plans based upon research findings. Sources must be cited. (9) Identified appropriate referrals and/or community resources and the procedures utilized for making those referrals. For the Personal Reflection Component students were asked to (1) Discuss personal limitations in working with the client and the nature of the supervision received, (2) Discuss the legal and ethical issues related to the work with the client, (3) Discuss personal awareness of the issues presented related to diversity

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and how multicultural competencies were met. Data for this SLO is collected for COUN students each Spring and Fall semester.

Faculty assessed SLO 5 (2016 CACREP 8.a.) in COUN 5550/COUN 5570 through Research Article Critique/Presentation, a Key Performance Indicator assignment for the program under the 2016 Standards. For this assignment students were asked to critique a set of articles using specific guidelines. They also discussed the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession.

In AC 2022-2023 no students were enrolled in COUN 5570; six students were enrolled in COUN 5550. Of those six, 100% earned a score of 90% or higher on the Research Article Critique/Presentation. Fifteen students were enrolled in COUN 5560 during AY 2022- 2023 and 100% earned a score of 80% or higher from their site supervisors.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results the faculty implemented the following to drive the cycle of improvement. Faculty provides an additional lecture on clinical case notes/conceptualization and collaborative documentation in COUN 5000 and monitored previous changes in order to collect a larger data set. Data for the Research Article Critique/Presentation continued to be collected to gain a larger data set (n = 6); previous changes continued to be implemented.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2023-2024 the target was met. In COUN 5570, five students were enrolled. Three students scored 90% or higher; one student scored 84% and one at 73%. Therefore 80% of students scored 80% or higher. In COUN 5550, five students were enrolled. Four students scored 90% or higher; one student scored 89% and one at 88%. Therefore 80% of students scored 80% or higher. In COUN 5560, thirteen students were enrolled. All students scored 90% or higher on the Case Conceptualization Presentation.

Collectively these changes improved the students' ability to demonstrate appropriate essential interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization skills and their ability to know the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession, including how to critique research to inform counseling practice, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

Decision or Recommendation.

In AC 2023-2024 the target was met.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results the faculty will implement the following to drive the cycle of improvement in AC 2024-2025: Faculty will incorporate a National Counselor Exam testing module specific to counseling research. These changes will improve students' knowledge within the core areas identified by CACREP, specifically in articulating the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession, including how to critique research to inform counseling practice.

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Comprehensive Summary of Key Evidence of Improvements Based on Analysis of Results:

Program faculty examined the evidence and results of data analysis from AC 2022-2023 and took the following steps to continue to improve student learning in AC 2023-2024:

- For SLO #1 the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. COUN 5580, Group Counseling, continued to be offered in a face-to-face format. Additionally, renewed focus was placed on Human Growth and Development. Emphasis was placed on applying the theories to real life scenarios in order for students to make meaning of the information they were learning. This was accomplished through integrating observations and interviews into discussion forum assignments. These changes improved students' knowledge within the core areas identified by CACREP, specifically in connecting human growth and development theories with practice, thereby continuing the cycle of continuous improvement.
- For SLO #2 faculty continued placing additional emphasis on training for telehealth counseling. This continued the multi-year roll out, with the goal being that all students have three hours of telehealth training prior to enrolling in any field experience course. This was accomplished through embedding a three-hour telehealth counseling into COUN 6500, the Ethics course students must have prior to enrollment in field experiences. A mandatory quiz was designed to track students' learning.
- For SLO #3 faculty continued implementing the rubric changes that went into effect in 2021-2022 to drive the cycle of improvement. The assignment change had a direct impact on the student's ability to model professional behaviors and reference specific ethical standards. This was a multi-year process because faculty are examining low numbers.
- For SLO #4 faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2023-2024 to drive the cycle of improvement. An additional lecture on clinical case notes and collaborative documentation was incorporated into COUN 5000 in order to introduce students to different methods of taking client notes. For the Class Journal/Portfolio in COUN 5610, previous changes to the assignment/rubric continued to be implemented.
- For SLO #5 the faculty implemented the following to drive the cycle of improvement. Faculty provided an additional lecture on clinical case notes/conceptualization and collaborative documentation in COUN 5000 and monitored previous changes in order to collect a larger data set. Data for the Research Article Critique/Presentation continued to be collected to gain a larger data set; previous changes continued to be implemented. Collectively these changes improved the students' ability to demonstrate appropriate essential interviewing, counseling, and case conceptualization skills and their ability to know the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession, including how to critique research to inform counseling practice, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.

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Plan of Action for Moving Forward:

- For SLO #1, in AC 2024-2025 faculty will focus on improving students' scores in Theories of Counseling (COUN 5530). Faculty will incorporate a National Counselor Exam testing module specific to counseling theories. These changes will improve students' knowledge within the core areas identified by CACREP, specifically in connecting counseling theory with practice, thereby continuing the cycle of continuous improvement.
- For SLO #2, in AC 2024-2025 faculty will incorporate a National Counselor Exam testing module specific to counseling skills, techniques and interventions. These changes will improve students' knowledge within the core areas identified by CACREP, specifically in prevention and treatment of mental health issues, thereby continuing the cycle of continuous improvement.
- For SLO #3, in AC 2024-2025 faculty will incorporate a National Counselor Exam testing module specific to ethical issues to enhance student learning. These changes will improve the student's ability to know ethical standards of professional counseling organizations and credentialing bodies, and applications of ethical and legal considerations in professional counseling, thereby continuing to push the cycle of improvement forward.
- For SLO #4, in AC 2024-2025 another module on clinical case notes and collaborative documentation will be incorporated into COUN 5000 in order to introduce students to different methods of taking client notes. For the Class Journal/Portfolio in COUN 5610, a professional development will be added that will enhance students' learning and will add to the depth of their Journal/Portfolio.
- For SLO #5, in AC 2024-2025 faculty will incorporate a National Counselor Exam testing module specific to counseling research. These changes will improve students' knowledge within the core areas identified by CACREP, specifically in articulating the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession, including how to critique research to inform counseling practice.