Marriage & Family Therapy Program Handbook 2023-2024

College of Biblical Studies
Department of Marriage & Family Studies
1850 Teague Blvd
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WELCOME

Welcome to Abilene Christian University and to the Marriage and Family Therapy program. The University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and the MFT program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE). You are part of a group of people selected through prayer and careful consideration, and we are glad you are here. For the next two years, you will be challenged academically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. You will learn new ways of viewing relationships and new ideas about how to create change within relationship patterns, and you will grow as a person and in your own relationships.

Your academic and clinical experiences will be significant. Academically, your journey will be guided by official policy as determined by the University. Clinically, your journey will be guided by the Department of Marriage and Family Studies and the Marriage and Family Therapy program and their policies under the umbrella of the University. You will be given the opportunity to earn 500+ hours of client contact and 100+ hours of supervision within the context of the 24 months of the program. The program equips you for the profession of Marriage and Family Therapy, as our training program is a Marriage and Family Therapy Training program. Thus, the emphasis will be upon relational-systemic-interactional-contextual approaches to therapy and supervision.

The program also will emphasize the importance of working from a multicultural perspective and will also highlight the importance of the AAMFT Code of Ethics and ethical behavior in your development as a therapist. These are areas we are very serious in emphasizing during your time in the program.

This Handbook is designed to be an aide to you through the next two years. It will provide much of the information necessary to complete your journey successfully. It does not, however, supersede any official University documents or policies. It is your responsibility to be familiar with all the University and Graduate School policies and procedures.

The electronic form of this Handbook will allow us to make changes as the year progresses. When situations arise that are not addressed in this manual, consult with a professor, supervisor, or the Chair.

Blessings to you as you join us in this ministry of helping hurting people. God will use you as his instrument while you are here.

Lisa Merchant

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Director, Marriage and Family Therapy Program
Chair, Department of Marriage and Family Studies

Mission Statement

The mission of Abilene Christian University is to educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world.

The mission of the Department of Marriage and Family Studies is to equip students to strengthen family relationships and solve personal and relational problems through child and family services or therapeutic intervention while cultivating Christian leadership and character in each student. The graduate program in Marriage and Family Therapy accomplishes this mission through:

- Introducing students to a broad range of therapeutic models;
- Providing an exceptional clinical training experience;
- Exploring Christian principles related to the practice of Marriage and Family Therapy
- Encouraging students to cultivate their own spiritual beliefs and worldviews;
- Equipping students to work with diverse and marginalized communities;
- Encouraging development of professional identity and leadership; and
- Creating a culture of research.

Program Goals & Student Learning Outcomes

In alignment with our mission and COAMFTE standards, the program has set the following goals. Student Learning Outcomes measure our progress on these goals.

Program Goal 1: Knowledge & Practice
Students will demonstrate knowledge essential to practice as a Marriage and Family Therapist.

1.1 Students will demonstrate proficient knowledge of systemic thinking.
Measure #1: 80% of students will score Competent or Proficient on the **Knowledge** portion of the **Faculty Comprehensive Evaluation** in Internship IV (benchmark) with a target of 90%.

Measure #2: 80% of students will 80% of students will average 3 or better on parts I, II, and IV of the Content Section of the **Theory of Change** rubric that is part of the **Comprehensive Exam** on their first try (benchmark) with a target of 90%.

1.2 Students will be able to practice from a systemic perspective.
Measure #1: 80% of students will score Competent or Proficient on all domains in the **Clinical Skills** portion of the **Faculty Comprehensive Evaluation** in Internship IV (benchmark) with a target of 90%.

Measure #2: 70% of students will pass three of the first four domains (domains 1, 2, 3, and 4) of the **AMFTRB practice exam** (benchmark) with a target of 90% passing all four domains.

Program Goal 2: Diversity
Graduates will work sensitively with people of diverse cultures, races, ethnicities, religions, sexualities, gender identities, abilities, classes, and other marginalized and underserved groups.

2.1 Students will demonstrate the ability to examine their own biases and stereotypes and engage diverse, minority, and marginalized groups.

Measure #1: 80% of students will average 92% or better on the **Cultural Plunge + Reflection Paper** assignments in Cultural Diversity (benchmark) with a target of 90% of students averaging 92%.

Measure #2: 80% of students will score at least 92% on the **Cultural Genogram** in Cultural Diversity (benchmark) with a target of 90% of students scoring 92%.

Program Goal 3: Ethics
Graduates will practice ethically in accordance with AAMFT Code of Ethics and state and national rules and laws.

Student Learning Outcomes

3.1 Students will adhere to professional and legal standards in clinical decision making and crisis management.

Measure #1: 80% of students who take the **AMFTRB practice exam** will score a passing grade on **Domain 6**: Maintaining Legal, Ethical and Professional Standards (benchmark) with 90% passing as the target.

Measure #2: 80% of students who take the **AMFTRB practice exam** will score a passing grade on **Domain 5**: Crisis Management (benchmark) with 90% passing as the target.

Measure #3: 80% of students will score Competent or Proficient on the **Ethical Practice** portion of the **Comprehensive Faculty Evaluation** in Internship IV (benchmark) with a target of 100%.

Program Goal 4: Research and Evidence Informed Practice
Graduates will be able to read, apply, and conduct research to be informed users and conductors of research and to improve client services.

4.1 Students will be able to develop, design, and implement a research project based on analysis of extant literature.

Measure #1: 80% of students will score at least 84% on the **Research Proposal Rubric** in Research Methods (benchmark) with a target of 80% of students scoring at least 92%.

Measure #2: 80% of students will score proficient on either the **Research Project rubric of the Thesis rubric** (benchmark) with a target of 90% of students scoring proficient.

Program Goal 5: Integration of Faith
Graduates will practice therapy in ways that are consistent with both their therapy model and their spiritual beliefs or worldview and in ways that respect clients' spiritual beliefs or worldview.

5.1 Students will be able to draw from both secular and spiritual sources to develop an integrated theory of therapy.

Measure #1: 80% of students scoring 84% or better on **the final paper** in BIBM 696 (benchmark) with a target of 90%.

Measure #2: 80% of students will score a 3 or better on **Part III in the Content section** of the Theory of Change paper that is part of the **Comprehensive Exam** (benchmark) with a target of 90%.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Degree Plan

The degree plan for the Marriage and Family Therapy program is included in Table 1 and Table 2 below. This plan may change as the Commission on the Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) makes revisions.

Use this copy to keep track of the courses you have taken. Record the semester and the year. Any transferred courses must be approved in advance by the Department Chair. An official transcript from the other universities must be sent to the Graduate School. The document requesting that a transfer course be considered is available from the Administrative Coordinator of the department.

The degree plan is the official agreement between the student, department, and University. These courses must be taken before a degree will be awarded. Any changes must be approved by the Department Chair and a written change order given to the Graduate School.

Students may choose one elective. Students wishing to pursue doctoral work are encouraged to choose Statistics in the Spring of their first year. Students may also take Group Counseling through the Psychology Department in the Spring of their first year or another elective approved by the Program Director.

The degree plan includes 3 months of clinical observation in Pre-Internship and 20 months of clinical practice in Internship I to Internship IV.

Non-Thesis Track Degree Plan

Course Number	Course Name	Professor
Year One, Fall		
BMFT 639	Family Theory	Hall
BMFT 610	Couples Therapy	Etheredge
BMFT 601	Pre-Internship	Mendez-Pounds
BMFT 641	Family Therapy I	Merchant
Year One, Spring		
BMFT 602	Internship I	Mendez-Pounds
BMFT 645	Systemic Diagnosis and Assessment	TBD
BMFT 615	Research Methods in MFT	Merchant
	Elective	
Year One, Summer		
BMFT 662	Family Life Cycle	TBD
BMFT 643	Professional Ethics & the Law	Mendez-Pounds
Year Two, Fall		
BMFT 661	Family Therapy II	Merchant
BMFT 665	Family Therapy across the Life Cycle	Trujillo
BMFT 634	Cultural Diversity	Mendez-Pounds
BMFT 603	Internship II	Faculty
Year Two, Spring		
BMFT 651	Sex Therapy	TBD
BMFT 661	Addictive Disorders	Mendez-Pounds
BMFT 668	Contemporary Issues	Merchant
BMFT 604	Internship III	Faculty
Year Two, Summer		
BIBM 696	Integration of Therapy and Theological Reflection	Harmon & Merchant
BMFT 605	Internship IV	Faculty

Thesis Track Degree Plan

Course Number	Course Name	Professor
Year One, Fall		
BMFT 639	Family Theory	Hall
BMFT 610	Couples Therapy	Etheredge
BMFT 601	Pre-Internship	Mendez-Pounds
BMFT 641	Family Therapy I	Merchant
Year One, Spring		
BMFT 602	Internship I	Mendez-Pounds
BMFT 645	Systemic Diagnosis and Assessment	TBD
BMFT 615	Research Methods in MFT	Merchant
	Elective	
Year One, Summer		
BMFT 662	Family Life Cycle	TBD
BMFT 643	Professional Ethics & the Law	Mendez-Pounds
Year Two, Fall		
BMFT 661	Family Therapy II	Merchant
BMFT 665	Family Therapy across the Life Cycle	Trujillo
BMFT 634	Cultural Diversity	Mendez-Pounds
BMFT 699	Thesis	Faculty
BMFT 603	Internship II	Faculty
Year Two, Spring		
BMFT 651	Sex Therapy	TBD
BMFT 661	Addictive Disorders	Mendez-Pounds
BMFT 668	Contemporary Issues	Merchant
BMFT 699	Thesis	Faculty
BMFT 604	Internship III	Faculty
Year Two, Summer		
BIBM 696	Integration of Therapy and Theological Reflection	Harmon & Merchant
BMFT 605	Internship IV	Faculty

Department Writing Style

The Department follows the *APA Publication Manual 7th Edition* for all written papers. The student is responsible for purchasing an APA Manual (7th Edition) and learning the necessary sections.

Grading

Grades are calculated on an 8-point scale as follows:

A = 92 or higher
B = 84 to 91.9
C = 76 to 83.9
D = 68 to 75.9
F = 67.9 or below

According to the Graduate Handbook, GPA may not fall below a 3.0 to graduate and courses with a grade of a D or below must be re-taken. See the Graduate Handbook for more information.

Graduation Policy

Students must meet the academic and clinical requirements outlined in this handbook to graduate. Thesis track students will also have to meet the requirements in the Thesis Handbook and Thesis Syllabus to graduate. Students must also meet all required university requirements for graduation. Although many students participate in the graduation ceremony at the end of the Spring Semester in the second year in the program, students are not yet graduates of the program until they complete the requirements of graduation and the degree is conferred. For most students this will be at the end of their second summer semester in the program. For a few who do not complete all requirements in that window, it may be longer.

Group Research Projects

The MFT faculty are committed to creating a culture of research within the program. As such, students are required to participate in a research project beginning in the spring of their first year. Students may apply to the thesis track or complete a group research project. The research project is conducted in conjunction with BMFT 615: Research Methods in MFT and is advised by an MFT faculty mentor (non-MFT faculty may be asked to advise the project with the permission of the Program Director). The student group may choose a topic of interest to them, or students may choose to join faculty in ongoing research.

Research topics must:

- Have a direct link to the field of marriage and family therapy
- Have a systemic focus
- Should attempt to fill a gap in the marriage and family therapy literature

The research process should proceed according to the following steps:

1. Students will register for BMFT 615: Research Methods in MFT during the spring semester of their first year. In this course, each student will write a research proposal as part of their grade in the course.
2. Based on the proposals that have been written, students will self-select to participate as a small

group in carrying out one of the proposals to completion.

3. Students choose a faculty advisor within the MFT program or seek permission from the Department Chair if they wish to have an advisor in another academic department on campus.
4. The group should meet with their faculty advisor to determine the specific research questions and methods. Abstracts for conference submissions should be developed with the faculty advisor's input.
5. Students are required to submit their research project for presentation at the annual conference of the Texas Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (TAMFT). Abstract submissions are typically due in Summer or Fall. If the group wishes to submit their research to another conference in addition to TAMFT (e.g., AAMFT, CAPS, etc.), they are encouraged to do so.
6. Students are required to submit an application to ACU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to the start of data collection. Students should go to www.acu.edu/academics/orsp/institutional.html for the application.

Thesis Track

The MFT thesis-track prepares students for doctoral research by requiring students to design and complete a research project including formulating a research question based on extant literature, designing and proposing the project, soliciting Institution Review Board approval, conducting the research, and articulating the research process, results, and implications in the thesis paper. Student will write a research proposal in BMFT 615: Research Methods which they will submit as part of their thesis application to the faculty in the spring of the first year. Faculty will determine thesis advisors, though students may request an advisor in their application. Faculty will select thesis students based on availability of advisors, availability of scholarship funds, quality of student writing, relevance of the research topic, and feasibility of research methods.

Students apply for thesis in the spring of their first year and are encouraged to begin writing their prospectus and IRB application in the summer. Prospectus and IRB are due in the fall of the second year and the final thesis defense in scheduled for mid-Spring. Students will enroll in 3 hours of BMFT 699: Thesis in the fall and spring on their second year. To participate in May commencement and be considered for Thesis of the Year, students must follow the Spring Defense deadlines listed on the Graduate School website.

Students must follow all the thesis guidelines listed on the Graduate School website and in the BMFT 699: Thesis syllabus.

Student Evaluation Process

Faculty formally evaluate student's progress toward becoming a competent therapist prior to entering Internship I and then at the end of each semester thereafter. Full-time students enter Internship I in the Spring of their first year. The initial evaluation includes the Internships Entrance Exam and feedback on clinical skills. Thereafter the internship supervisor provides feedback using the *Faculty Comprehensive Evaluation Form*, which faculty, supervisors, and staff complete together in a meeting near the end of the semester.

Internship Entrance Exam

Prior to seeing clients in Internship, students must pass the Internship Entrance Exam. This exam ensures that students understand the foundational theories of systemic thinking and possess basic counseling skills. The exam consists of a 20-minute oral exam and a 10-minute mock therapy demonstration. Students will submit the demonstration in Pre-Internship and the Pre-Internship faculty will evaluate it using the rubric in Canvas. Faculty will schedule the oral exam between Dead Day and the end of the first week of the Spring semester. Students who pass both parts of the Internship Entrance Exam will be approved to start co-therapy in Spring I; students may re-take either or both parts of the Internship Entrance Exam once. Students unable to pass the Internship Entrance Exam may a) proceed into internship with conditions to be address/remediated, b) postpone admission into internship until conditions are addressed/remediated, or c) students may be dismissed from the program. The competencies students are expected to demonstrate include:

Competency	**Developmental Competency Component**	**Measure**
Explain key components of systems theory	Knowledge	Oral Exam
Identify relationship and therapeutic process	Practice	Oral Exam
Articulate a basic theory of change	Knowledge	Oral Exam
Demonstrate basic counseling skills such as listening, reflecting, summarizing, and empathizing	Practice	7th Dyad Video

Faculty Comprehensive Evaluation

At the end of each semester beginning in the spring of the first year, students are evaluated by faculty, staff, and supervisors using the Faculty Comprehensive Evaluation form, which informs their Internship II, III, and IV grade. Categories of evaluation include theoretical knowledge, intake skills, ongoing clinical skills, ethical practice, clinic requirements, cultural sensitivity, professionalism, interpersonal skills, and personal stability. See the BMFT 603, 604, and 605 syllabus for a copy of the evaluation.

Comprehensive Exam

The purpose of the Comprehensive Examination is to assess the student's knowledge of clinical portions of master's level study. There are three portions to the comprehensive examination: 1) a theory of change paper, 2) a clinical presentation, and 3) the AMFTRB practice exam. Students must pass all three portions of the Comprehensive Examination to graduate from the program. As indicated in our Student Learning Outcomes and rubrics, the Comprehensive Examination measures learning as it relates to the following Developmental Competency Components: knowledge, practice, diversity, and ethics.

AMFTRB Practice Exam

Students will take the AMFTRB practice exam before May 31st and submit their score report to the Program Director. Students should only take the exam once before May 31st. To pass the exam, students must pass three of Domains 1 to 4. Students who only pass one or two knowledge domains must meet the Program Director to discuss how to prepare for the exam. Students may then re-take the exam once before the Case Study Presentation is due. Students who pass will be able to opt out of the Case Study Presentation. The AMFTRB practice exam costs around $60.

Theory of Change Paper

Students will write a 20- to 25-page theory of change paper. The paper should be professional and represent the student's best work. The paper should answer the question "how does change happen" by describing and integrating the student's foundational, theoretical, and theological, spiritual, or philosophical understanding of change. The paper should reflect the students personal understanding of change as supported by scholarly literature with 20+ references. Paper should adhere to the 7th edition of the APA style manual and include headings and subheadings. Students may use first-person. The paper should include the following sections:

- Introduction with thesis statement
- Foundational understanding a change: Student selects and describes the foundational aspects of change that most inform their personal theory of change, e.g., General Systems Theory, cybernetics, multigenerational systems perspective, common factors, first- and second-order change, postmodernism, social constructionism…
- Theoretical understanding of change: Student selects at least two models from which they predominately work and describes the model's assumptions, mechanism of change, and role of the therapist.
- Philosophical/theological/spiritual understanding of change: Students explains how they understand change from a spiritual, theological, or philosophical standpoint. This section should include at least two references in addition to sacred texts such as the Bible, the Qur'an, the Talmud, the Vedas, the Book of Mormon, and the like.
- Integrated theory of change: Student selects and describes the assessments and interventions that most inform their work with brief examples of application (e.g., questions they have asked, interventions they have implemented). This section is divided into three subsections: 1) Assessment and Engagement, 2) Interventions, and 3) Termination. Furthermore, this section should describe a process of change that draws from the student's foundational, theoretical, and philosophical/theological/spiritual understanding of change with each area being represented in some way. Integration should be clearly evident and the student should resolve any discrepancies between their foundational, theoretical, and philosophical/theological/spiritual understanding of change
- Conclusion

In addition to the above content, students will also be graded on the professionalism of their paper. See the rubric below for grading criteria. Students must average at least a 3.0 in each section to pass without re-writes.

Case Study Presentation

The student must also prepare a 30-minute clinical presentation during which time he or she will present a case study including video clips from a relational client system that has been seen in the Marriage and Family Institute. The presentation should begin with a **brief** description of your integrated theory of change. The majority of the presentation should focus on the case study with the following points being addressed:

- Briefly describe the client system, including your initial assessment. Include relevant data from the intake/assessment packet.
- Describe your conceptualization/systemic hypothesis of the case. This should be informed by your integrated theory of change (**Hint:** Use the conceptual language of the theories you are using to describe the source of dysfunction in the client system.)
- Discuss the relevant ethical and legal issues.
- Identify and describe the relevant diversity issues.
- Using the DSM-5, state your diagnostic impressions for each of the members of the system. Discuss the basis for your diagnoses.
- Discuss all referrals you made and any consultations you engaged in, including your supervision consultations.
- Describe the stages of therapy and the interventions you used based on your integrated theory of change.
- Describe the progress of the case over time.
- Assess how the case reflects your theory of therapy. Evaluate the quality of your therapy with this case. Reflect on the personal journey that has drawn you to the two theories you have chosen to integrate.

The clips should illustrate the stages of the student's particular model of therapy in a relational system. The full-time faculty will serve as the committee for MFT students and will be responsible for grading the paper as well as the presentation, but the presentation will be open to all students in the Marriage and Family Therapy program. The faculty will determine an average grade for the presentation based on the rubrics below. For both the paper and the presentation, an average grade of 3 or above is a pass. An average grade of 2-2.99 is a pass with reservations and will include an additional writing assignment. Any score below a 1.99 is a fail.

The date for the Examination must be at least 4 weeks before graduation and will be set each summer for the next year. A sign-up sheet of presentation times will be posted. Level 3 attire is required for the presentation.

Students who are out of sequence should plan on taking the Comprehensive Examination in the last semester of their program, but prior to the Graduate School deadline for Comprehensive Examinations. Students in the prescribed sequencing will take the exam at the announced time.

It is anticipated that most students will pass the examination on the first attempt. Some students may be required to do further study or write additional material. If a student fails the examination a second time, the faculty may choose to assess an academic or clinical penalty upon the student before he/she is allowed to take the examination for the third time. Failure to pass the examination can lead to dismissal from the program. A student has the right to appeal the decision of the comprehensive examination committee through procedures described in the Graduate Catalogue.

Exemplary papers written by former students are available for your reference the MFI Intake Forms Google Folder.

Rubric: Comprehensive Examination Theory of Change Paper

1 = Fails to meet minimum expectations

2 = Meets some but not all expectations
3 = Meets expectations
4 = Exceeds expectations

Expectation	Score
Content	
I. Foundational Aspects of Change ● Student selects foundational aspects of change that inform their overall theory of change (e.g., systems theory, common factors, first- and second-order change, postmodernism, social constructionism…) ● Student accurately describes foundational aspects of change	
II. Theoretical Considerations ● Student selects 2+ models that largely inform their clinical work ● Student demonstrates understanding of the assumptions of the models including how change happens and the role of the therapist in facilitating change	
III. Philosophical/theological/spiritual considerations of change ● Student describes how change happens from their philosophical, theological, or spiritual worldview	
IV. Integrated Theory of Change ● Student describes the assessment, intervention, and termination stages ● Student describes a process of change that draws from their foundational, theoretical, and philosophical/theological/spiritual understanding of change with each area being represented in some way—integration is clearly articulated ● Student selects and describes the assessments, interventions, and other activities that most inform their work ● Student describes indicators of progress and readiness for termination that are consistent with their models ● Student resolves any discrepancies between their foundational, theoretical, and world view philosophical/theological/spiritual understanding of change ● Student demonstrates application with brief examples (e.g., questions asked or intervention executed). If long examples are used, at least one should be from a couple or family.	
Professionalism	
Sources ● Student references 20+ scholarly sources ● Student predominately uses primary sources APA ● Student adheres to APA 7th edition Writing ● Writing is free of spelling and grammar mistakes ● Paper is organized and structured with use of headings and transition statements and includes an introduction with a thesis statement and a conclusion	

• Writing is clear, active, and concise; sentence structure varies; appropriate word choices	

Rubric: Comprehensive Examination Presentation

1 = Fails to meet minimum expectations
2 = Meets some but not all expectations
3 = Meets expectations
4 = Exceeds expectations

Expectation	Rating
1. Provides a clear description of the integrated theory of change	
2. Provides an adequate description of the client system including assessment Considerations	
3. Demonstrates understanding of relevant ethical and legal issues	
4. Ability to identify and describe relevant diversity issues	
5. Possesses the ability to diagnose clients according to the DSM-5	
6. Demonstrates clinical judgment in making referrals and seeking consultation	
7. Provides a clear description of the stages of therapy and the interventions used based on the integrated theory of change and describes the progress of the case over time	

First and Second Year Survey

Each student will be given the opportunity to evaluate the program in a formal manner. Your responses will be anonymous. The Department Coordinator will send you a survey link. Second-year students must complete the survey prior to submitting their Theory of Therapy paper and attach a copy of the "Thank You" page that concludes the survey with your paper submission. Papers will not be graded without a copy of the thank you page.

Student Therapy

Being an effective marriage and family therapist often requires us to examine our own histories and work through our own issues. As such, the program requires students to complete 4-6 hours of therapy as a client before the end of the spring semester in the first year. This is can also be a valuable learning experience as a recipient of therapy. The program will attempt to connect students with a pro bono therapist for the 4-6 sessions. If students continue therapy beyond the 4-6 sessions, they are responsible for any fees. Faculty encourages students to make good use of this time. After the 4-6 sessions are complete, the therapist will send the Department Coordinator and Program Director a letter stating the sessions were done. Students will also have opportunity to rate their therapy experience.

Clinical Requirements

Hours Requirements

To graduate, students must complete 500 practice hours. At least 400 hours must be DIRECT hours, which is defined as a therapeutic meeting between an intern and client occurring in a face-to-face setting, either physically in the same location or mediated by technology. Up to 100 hours may be INDIRECT which includes observations, role plays, and other similar activities. Of the 400 DIRECT hours, at least 180 must be RELATIONAL, which COAMFTE (2020) defines as services delivered to "two or more individuals conjointly, who share an ongoing relationship beyond that which occurs in the therapeutic experience" (p 41). Examples of relational hours include session with couples, families, roommates, friends, community supports, and groups in which the members have an ongoing relationship outside the therapy hour. Per COAMFTE, reflecting team counts as a direct hour for students who interact with the client as either the therapist or as a reflector. Interns who observe without reflecting must count that session as an indirect hour. All interns are required to see clients in our on site clinic, the Marriagd and Family Institute. An intern may complete no more than 200 hours of direct client contact at their off-site internship. Direct client contact may consist of individual, couple, family, and group sessions. Procedures for students who fail to meet this requirement are discussed on page 28. Practice hours are accrued as follows:

- Pre-Internship, fall semester of first year – First year interns will observe 50 hours of relational therapy and 10 hours of supervision in the Marriage and Family Institute. Interns will document their observations as part of the Pre-Internship class. The 50 observation hours must be completed before the intern will be permitted to see clients in co-therapy. These are INDIRECT hours.
- Internship I, spring and summer semester of first year – In January, first year interns will begin seeing relational clients with a second-year co-therapist. First year interns will begin being assigned their own clients at the beginning of the summer semester and, if available, begin seeing client at an externship. First-year students will be assigned another second-year co-therapist for the summer.
- Internships II, fall of second year—Interns will see client at MFI and their externship without a co-therapist
- Internship III-IV, spring and summer of second year—Interns will join a Reflecting Team to acquire INDIRECT hours and will be assigned a first-year co-therapist for their new relational clients.

Tracking and Reporting Hours

Students must track and report their direct, indirect (observation), and supervision hours.

Tracking Hours Fall 1

First year students will track their indirect (observation) hours through TA by creating a client named "observation." After observing a therapy session, students will create an appointment for each session of observation and then will chart the appointment using either a HIPPA note or a Quick Note in accordance with their Pre-Internship syllabus. When charting the appointment, students will select the CPT code "OBSV."

Tracking Hours All Other Semesters

All direct hours acquired at the MFI will be tracked through TA and the completion of case notes. When students write case notes, they will select the CPT code that matches the session's constellation (individual, relational, or combination) and length. Direct hours acquired at an externship may be tracked through TA or through the Externship Hours Log.

Supervision hours acquired at both the MFI and at externship sites are tracked on the Supervision & Hours Log.

Weekly Reporting:

Each week by Monday at noon, students will report their cumulative direct/indirect hours and their weekly supervision hours. To calculate their direct/indirect hours, students will run a CPT report in TA and sum it with the hours on their Externship Hours Log (if using). Students should only reference the TA report and/or their Externship Hours log when recording the hours as these are the official tracking mediums. Students only need to complete the log once a week on Monday. Students are reporting on the hours acquired the previous week.

Students must bring their Supervision & Hours log to supervision each week and the supervisor must electronically sign the log using their name or initials. In Texas, LMFT Associates must have their supervisor sign their supervision log each week; thus, this policy is also designed to help prepare you for supervision procedures after graduation.

Semester Reporting

At the end of every semester, students will meet with the Department Coordinator to officially report their hours. By the date on the Intern Calendar, students will ensure that the hours reported on their Supervision & Hours Log is consistent with their TA report and Externship Hours Log. They will also make sure that all the colored boxes are complete and accurate.

After the due date in the Intern Calendar, the Department Coordinator will then run a report in TA and verify the accuracy of the hours on the Supervision & Hours Log. After confirming the hours, the Department Coordinator will meet with students as needed to fix errors or remind students of hours and supervision minimum requirements.

A copy of this policy is also in the MFI Clinic Manual for your convenience.

Supervision Requirements

The program utilizes relational/systemic supervision, which COAMFTE defines as "the practice of developing the clinical competencies and professional growth of the student as a supervisee, consistent with the relational/systemic philosophy, ethics, and practices of the marriage and family therapy profession" (2020, p. 42). Interns must receive at least 100 hours of supervision throughout the course of the program, 50 of which must consist of observable data (video or live) and 50 of which must be individual (one or two interns). To help students stay on track, students must acquire a minimum of 30 hours of supervision in the fall and spring and 25 hours in the summer of their first year and 18 in the summer of their second year. Each semester they must acquire a minimum of 10 hours of observational supervision at MFI with 5 of the hours including them as the therapist. Students must attend individual and group supervision every week even if they have met the minimum requirements and must attend supervision between semesters.

Students may count supervision provided by their externship only if the supervisor is AAMFT Approved and the student has permission from the Program Director. Supervision provided at the externship will count toward the 100 required hours, but not toward the other minimums.

Individual supervision is defined as one or two supervisees receiving supervision. Group supervision is defined as three to eight supervisees receiving supervision. Two supervisees in the therapy room (co-therapy) may receive individual live supervision credit. Others behind the mirror will receive individual live supervision credit if no more than two are observing. Three to eight supervisees behind the mirror constitute group for those observing while those in the therapy room will receive individual supervision.

Supervisees will receive supervision in three settings: 1) one hour each of individual and group with the Internship supervisor assigned by the Department Chair each semester, 2) live supervision on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays as part of the reflecting team protocol, and 3) when a case demands time and attention outside of regularly scheduled supervision. Students may also count supervision provided by an AAMFT Approved Supervisor at their Externship site if they have approval of the Program Director.

If an intern must miss supervision due to illness, vacation, or another reason, the need to note on their supervision log why they missed. If a supervisor misses supervision, the supervisor should notify the Clinic Supervisor and Program Director, identify a back-up supervisor for urgent and emergent issues, and make arrangements to make-up the missed sessions if needed. The Clinic Director (and Program Director in their absence) are available for emergency supervision.

Supervision should be conducted weekly, face-to-face at the Marriage and Family Institute (or externship site) but may be conducted occasionally at the supervisor's private office. Circumstances may necessitate supervision via telehealth, in which case interns and supervisors should follow the MFI's telehealth policies and state and federal guidelines for telehealth. Tele-supervision should only be used in urgent circumstances and not as a substitution for face-to-face supervision. Students or supervisors who are not physically well enough to attend face-to-face supervision should cancel rather than attend virtually.

Supervisor Requirements

To be an Internship Supervisor, full or adjunct faculty must be either AAMFT Approved Supervisors or AAMFT Supervisor Candidates. To be an externship supervisor, the supervisor must be an AAMFT Approved Supervisor.

Reflecting Team Supervision Hours

It is the responsibility of the reflecting team members to negotiate with the nightly supervisor to do a live supervision on a given evening. The team should inform their supervisor of their scheduled clients so the supervisor can plan to provide at least one hour of supervision for every five hours completed by the reflecting team.

Externship Hours and Supervision

Internship Supervisors are responsible for hours obtained at externship sites unless the student is receiving weekly supervision from an AAMFT Approved Supervisor at the site. The Program Director serves as the liaison with off-site placements and is responsible for dealing with administrative and/or structural issues that occur at the sites. Interns should speak with the Program Director and their supervisors for guidance if disputes arise at their sites. If an intern is receiving more client contact hours than can be covered through regular supervision, it is his/her responsibility to discuss this with the Clinical Director and to secure additional supervision.

Completing Hours

For various reasons, students may have difficulty completing their 500 hours of client contact within the advertised two years of the program. In the event an intern does not complete his/her hours by the day of graduation, the following procedure must be followed:

- The student must inform the Department Chair, in writing, of his or her intention to complete the required hours. This should happen no later than July 15th.
- The student may continue to see his or her existing clients and receive supervision in the MFI until the start of the fall semester. However, he or she will not receive new intakes after the date of August graduation.
- After the fall semester begins, the student must obtain an AAMFT-Approved supervisor and a site at which to complete the hours. This information must be approved by the Department Chair prior to obtaining hours at the site. If the supervisor requires payment, it is the intern’s responsibility to do so.
- The intern must complete all necessary reports for the Department Academic Coordinator upon completion of the hours. Consequently, hours reports must be submitted to the Department Academic Coordinator by the end of the fall reporting period in order to graduate in December.
- The student will receive a grade of IP in Internship V. Provided the intern completes his/her hours in time for December graduation, this grade will be changed. If, however, the student does not complete his/her hours by the end of the fall semester, s/he will have to register and pay tuition for another semester of internship.

Program Policies & Procedures

Academic Integrity (Plagiarism) and Authenticity of Work

Plagiarism will not be tolerated within the program. Each syllabus contains a statement about plagiarism and confirmed cases of plagiarism within the program will follow both the course policies of the instructor and the university policies related to plagiarism. Instructors may use Turnitin.com to assess for the authenticity of student work and may submit any assignment suspected of being plagiarized to Turnitin.com or successor programs the university opts to use to assess for authenticity. The University's policy on plagiarism can be found here.

ACU Student Code of Conduct

The ACU Student Code of Conduct policy is found in the ACU Student Handbook, which students are strongly encouraged to review. It is summarized here for your convenience:

> Within the context of ACU's mission and its determination to be Christ-centered, students are expected to develop and maintain a high standard of personal and behavioral values. At its core, this expectation is based on loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and loving your neighbor as yourself. Standards of conduct include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Respect for ACU's longstanding tradition of honesty, moral and ethical integrity, and open inquiry.
2. Respect for the right and necessity of ACU to develop and maintain a Christian atmosphere conducive to academic study and personal growth.
3. Respect for the personal worth, dignity and rights of others.
4. Respect for the diverse backgrounds, personalities, convictions and spiritual traditions of students, staff and faculty who comprise the ACU community.
5. Respect for local, state and federal laws and ordinances.
6. Respect for the discipline, policy, procedures and authority established by ACU for the systematic management of university activities, the well-being of the members of the university community, and the integrity of the institution.
7. Regard for the nature of a moral community by embracing the need to lovingly confront and hold accountable members of the ACU community whose conduct falls outside the boundaries of Christian behavior, university policy, state and federal laws.

Admissions Requirements

The complete admission's policy is found in the ACU Catalog, but is summarized here for your convenience:

1. A completed application for admission with a nonrefundable application fee;

2. An official transcript(s) in English (or translated to English) of all previous colleges attended. The transcript must indicate an earned bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university or equivalent;
3. A cumulative undergraduate GPA of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale;
4. Three letters of recommendation;
5. A written purpose statement declaring why the applicant wishes to study marriage and family therapy at ACU and what he or she plans to do professionally upon graduation;
6. Completion of a psychosocial history;
7. Interview with faculty.

When all required materials are received, the application will be reviewed by the MFT faculty. Students are admitted once a year and begin their program of study in the fall semester. Application deadlines are set annually.

No specific undergraduate major is essential for admission. Applicants are encouraged to have undergraduate credit in subjects that embrace human development, family relations, theology, sociology, psychology, and statistics.

Applicants without adequate preparation may be accepted upon the condition that they register for additional courses deemed necessary by the graduate advisor.

A student who does not meet all of the admission requirements may be considered for admission, if space is available. At the discretion of the department chair, such a student may be placed on academic probation during the first semester.

Complaint, Grievance, & Request Policy for Students

Program faculty want to be responsive to student's complaints, concerns, and requests, and we value student input. Sometimes students may not want to express their concerns because they do not like conflict, do not want to get others in trouble, or they are afraid of the consequences. However, expressing concerns in a healthy, respectful, and mature manner can actually benefit all parties. As such, students are encouraged to address issues directly when possible. For example, if students would like clarity around an assignment or grading policy, we recommend they send an email, talk to the professor, or bring it up in class. If bringing up concerns directly does not resolve the issue or if students are unwilling to address the issue directly, then we encourage students to make a report using one of the methods below. The report should include as much detail as possible (names, dates, quotes, action, et cetera) and the desired intervention/resolution, and the report should be timely. The more detail we have, the better we can respond. Although faculty will attempt to inform the student when the issue has been addressed, in some cases this may not be possible.

Students have several ways of lodging complaints depending on the issue:

MFI Technology and Supply Complaints

Report technology issues (cameras or printers not working) or depleted supplies (markers, Kleenex, hand sanitizer…) by emailing the Administrative Coordinator (ddm23b@acu.edu) or reporting it in Staff Meeting or a Supervisors Meeting.

MFI Therapist Issues

Report concerns about unprofessional conduct by a fellow therapist (out of dress code, late to sessions, not booking rooms, etc.) to the Clinic Director via email, text, or face-to-face. We prefer that the person who witnessed the unprofessional conduct be the one to report it, but if the witness is unable or unwilling to report, then the report may come through the Student Representative. The Clinic Director may take the complaint to the Program Director if complaints are repetitive or egregious.

General Cohort Requests

For issues that can be resolved quickly or that involve the majority of the cohort, students can lodge an informal complaint in either the monthly Staff Meeting or through the student representative in the monthly Supervisors Meeting. Examples might include a request for additional resources, a change in the Comprehensive Exam date, a suggestion for a new policy or procedure, or a recommendation for a training, or widespread clinic concerns. Students are welcome to lodge these as formal complaints as well.

Formal Requests and Complaints

For issues that need investigation, that are particular to a student, faculty, supervisor, or staff member, that are sensitive, or that are grievous, students should file a formal complaint in writing with the Program Director. Examples include:

- Harassment or offensive behavior by a student, faculty member, supervisor, or staff
- Ethical violations
- Cheating or plagiarism
- Complaints against faculty, supervisors, staff, or externship sites
- Ongoing issues between students and others that students have been unable to resolve on their own

Although the student may include as much or as little information in their complaint, detailing the complaint and suggesting a resolution is most helpful. Complaints can be anonymous and may be filed on paper or via email. Should the student not be satisfied with the outcome, they may appeal in writing directly to the Dean of the College of Biblical Studies since presently one person is both the Program Director and Department Chair. The next appeal is to the Dean of the Graduate School and then to the Provost of the University. Complaints involving the Program Director can be taken directly to the Dean of the College of Biblical Studies.

First and Second Year Survey

Students also have opportunity to rate various aspect of the program and share compliments and concerns in the annual First- and Second-Year Surveys. These surveys are anonymous and are sent in the summer. Second Years are required to complete the survey. Students sometimes report significant issues in the survey. While this is acceptable, faculty can be more responsive if issues are brought to us using one of the processes above.

Faculty-to-Student and Supervisor-to-Student Ratios

COAMFTE requires programs to set faculty-to-student and supervisor-to-student ratios. The Program follows the COAMFTE-recommended faculty-to-student ratio or 1:15 and the State of Texas supervisor-to-student ratio of 1:8. However, because 1:8 can be taxing, the Program Director strives to keep the ratio at 1:6. With cohorts between 8 and 12 students, this means two supervisors are needed in the fall and three to four are needed in the spring and summer.

Graduate School Policies

Knowing the Graduate School policies and interacting with the Graduate School is the sole responsibility of the student. The Program Director must be consulted for all degree plan and course scheduling issues, but the policies and procedures of the Graduate School must be followed and coordinated with them. Please review the online Graduate Catalog for information on graduate school policies, financial assistance, grade policies (e.g., GPA required for graduation, incompletes, academic probation, etc.), and preparing for graduation. Should there be a discrepancy between any of the polices herein and the Graduate School, the Gradate School's policy prevails.

Non-Discrimination Policy

The University's non-discrimination policy says:

> Abilene Christian University complies with all applicable federal and state non-discrimination laws and does not engage in prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, nationality or ethnic origin, gender, age or disability in admissions decisions, financial aid and provision of student services, programs and activities. As a private educational institution, however, ACU reserves the right to deny admission to any applicant whose academic preparation, character or personal conduct is determined to be inconsistent with the purposes and objectives of the university.

The non-discrimination policy of the program is:

> Abilene Christian University's MFT Program welcomes students and clients who are diverse in race, ethnicity, age, sex, gender expression and identity, sexual orientation, relationship status, socioeconomic status, ability, health, religion and spiritual beliefs or affiliation, national origin, or immigration status. This is true in regard to the recruitment, admission, codes of conduct, hiring, retention, and dismissal decisions related to the program. ACU students are expected to abide by ACU's Code of Conduct.

Abilene Christian University is affiliated with the Churches of Christ and faculty and supervisors are hired who are a missional fit with the university's mission. Faculty and supervisors are aware of this requirement and it plays a role in hiring and retention decisions of faculty and supervisors employed by the university.

Recruitment of Students

The ACU MFT program works with the university admissions office to recruit students from multidisciplinary backgrounds. We are intentional in recruiting students from diverse backgrounds in accordance with the ACU non-discrimination policy on admission. We also seek to admit at least one student to each cohort who is fluent in both the Spanish and English languages, since our on-campus clinic often serves clients whose first language is Spanish.

Regulatory Transparency

To ensure that students are aware of the various regulatory requirements across jurisdictions, students will electronically sign a statement of understanding when they submit their application packet. This statement will include: 1) a general explanation of the licensure process, 2) acknowledgement that the process varies across jurisdictions, and 3) a link to the AMFTRB website or other resource for contacting state/provincial regulatory boards. The statement will also note that ACU's MFT program meets the academic requirements for the State of Texas.

Remediation and Dismissal

Occasionally faculty will identify a need for student remediation, such as when a student underperforms in coursework or the clinic, commits repeated or grievous ethical violations, refuses to follow academic or clinic policies, admits to a substance use or mental health issue, or is the subject of a formal complaint. In these instances, the Program will follow existing Graduate School and University policies and may require the student to complete remedial actions, such as a writing assignment, counseling, substance use treatment, suspension from Internship, suspension from the program, a probationary period, faculty mentoring, or a reduced grade in Internship. All the steps in the remediation process will become part of the student's permanent record.

Students who continue to violate the policies, procedures, and standards of professional practice may be dismissed from the program.

Retention of Students

The MMFT program reviews the progress of each student at the end of the semester Faculty/Supervisor meeting which occurs toward the end of the Fall, Spring, and Summer semesters. Academic, clinical, and interactional considerations, along with adherence to program and clinic policies and procedures are reviewed in this meeting and given as feedback on the faculty/staff evaluation. This is part of the program's effort to facilitate the success and retention of MFT program students in ways that are consistent with the university mission and anti- discrimination policy, and student conduct policy. We also utilize academic support services when needed, along with academic advising, and encourage students to bring concerns as they arise so that we can better meet student needs.

Safety, Respect, and Inclusion

The MFT program's definition of safety and policy on creating a safe climate in the classroom is:

> Safety is the ability to express self without fear of reprisal. Within the classroom and clinic, faculty and students will not discriminate based on students' race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, gender identity, religion, national origin, political view, immigration status, or worldview. Safety does not include freedom from discomfort, as students grow through challenging experiences, which may cause discomfort.

Technology Requirements for the Classroom and Clinic

Each faculty member will establish and include in their syllabus a technology policy for their courses. Students are expected to have basic computer skills. While not required, it is strongly encouraged that each student obtain a laptop to use during the program. Computers are available in the Marriage and Family Institute for clinical work and in the library for papers and class projects.

Students are also responsible for ensuring that they handle clinical information in a secure way. For this reason, student-therapists shall not use their ACU email to contact clients because our email is part of the larger ACU email system, but instead should use TherapyAppointment (TA). Additionally, student-therapists are responsible for doing their electronic record entries in a place in which others might not see the information and are responsible for ensuring that in observing cases or reviewing video that doors to the observation areas are closed and the sound mufflers are turned on to protect privacy. Additionally, student-therapists will be required to follow the Standard VI guidelines of the AAMFT Code of Ethics in using technology related to clinical material as well as state and federal HIPAA standards.

Technology Training

Faculty will train students in Therapy Appointment (TA) and the MFI camera system in Pre-Internship and Internship I. Instructions can also be found in the MFI Manual. Training for telehealth will happen at the TAS Training in January of your first year. Texas requires that licensees seeing clients via telehealth complete 2 hours of CEUs each reporting period. Students must complete this training before seeing clients via telehealth. Regardless of modality, students are expected to follow state, federal, and ethical guidelines related to technology and client privacy. These standards will be reviewed throughout the curriculum and in the TAS training.

There is support in the library for learning about how to use technology more resourcefully and Team 55 in the library is available to assist with personal computer issues. Students must adhere to the University's Responsible Use of University Technology Resources policy as well as the other policies found on that page. The program is committed to ensuring that program faculty, staff, supervisors, and students are aware of training opportunities in technologies that support our program. Faculty and Supervisor should also utilize these resources for their technology training needs.

Running and Screaming from the Building Policy

Although faculty generally recommends almost stoic control of one's emotions, faculty also recognizes that there are times it is entirely appropriate to run screaming from the building. These times include: a bear attack, sharknados, the apocalypse, Taylor Swift in the Quad, and finishing your thesis. Using the formal complaint and request policy, students may petition for other exceptions.

Program Assessment Plan

To promote collaboration, responsiveness, and excellence, the program engages in annual assessment according to the tables below. Survey The Program Director is responsible for collecting, reviewing, assimilating, and presenting data.

Sufficiency

COAMFT requires accredited programs to define and measure sufficiency. The program measures sufficiency of resources, faculty, supervision, the Program Director, the Clinic Director, and safety through a variety of surveys. Elements measured are considered sufficient when at least 70% of responders rate element as "sufficient" or "exceeding."

Mechanisms and Timeline

Target	Mechanism	Timeline	Close the Loop
Program Goals	First & Second Year Surveys	Summer	Email or Meeting with Students
	COI Survey	Summer	Email to COIs
	Alumni Survey	January	Email to Alumni
Student Learning Outcomes	Varies	Summer	Summer Supervisor's Meeting or Pre-Session
Graduate Achievement	Alumni Survey	Winter	Summer Supervisor's Meeting or Pre-Session
Student Support Services	First & Second Year Surveys	Summer	Email or Meeting with Students
Teaching/Learning	First & Second Year Surveys	Summer	Email or Meeting with Students
	Course Evaluations	Each Semester	Annual Review
Fiscal/Physical Resources	First & Second Year Surveys	Summer	Email or Meeting with Students
Technological Resources	First & Second Year Surveys	Summer	Email or Meeting with Students
Climate and Safety	First & Second Year Surveys	Summer	Email or Meeting with Students
	Program Director Survey	Summer	Email to External COIs and Pre-Session

Program Director	First & Second Year Surveys	Summer	Email or Meeting with Students
	Program Director Survey	Summer	Email to COIs and Pre-Session
Clinic Director	First & Second Year Surveys	Summer	Email or Meeting with Students
Supervisor Sufficiency	Course Evaluations	Each Semester	Email
	First & Second Year Surveys	Summer	Email or Meeting with Students

Survey Descriptions

Assessment	Population	Data Collection Strategy	Analysis & Review
First & Second Year Surveys	First & Second Year Students	Multiple choice and short answer anonymous survey via Google Forms	Faculty, staff, supervisors, and student representatives review at pre-session (or earlier) and brainstorm ideas for improving underperforming areas. Emailed to Deans for review.
Alumni Survey	Graduates for the last 3 years	Multiple choice and short answer survey via Google Forms	Data is collected in winter for COAMFTE Annual Report and analyzed and reviewed at pre-session (or earlier) by faculty, staff, supervisors, and student representatives and ideas are brainstormed for improving underperforming areas.
COI Survey	Licensure, internship, and site supervisors, doctoral faculty, and employers	Multiple choice and short answer anonymous survey via Google Forms	Faculty, staff, supervisors, and student representatives review at pre-session (or earlier) and brainstorm ideas for improving underperforming areas.
Program Director Survey	Faculty, staff, supervisors, deans	Multiple choice and short answer anonymous survey via Google Forms	Program Director and deans review and brainstorm ideas for improving underperforming areas. Emailed to Deans for review.
Course Evaluations	Current students	University-initiated anonymous multiple choice and short answer survey	Program Director reviews each semester and reviews with individual faculty each summer or more frequently as needed.

Post-Graduation Information

Alumni Survey

We want to know about your post-graduation successes so that we can assess the program effectiveness and adjust as necessary. As such we will send you an Alumni Survey for three years post-graduation that will collect the following information:

1. If you have or have not passes the AMFTRB exam
2. Your licensure status
3. Your employment status
4. Your perception of the MFT Program and how well it prepares graduates for careers as MFTs.
5. We will also ask your permission to speak with your employer/supervisor for feedback about the program's strengths and weaknesses in preparing people for the workplace and/or include a link for you to send to your employer/supervisor/graduate advisor.

Additionally, the program may look at directory information published by licensure boards and the AAMFT membership list to ascertain the licensure status and AAMFT membership of our graduates.

Licensure in Texas

As a COAMFTE-accredited program, our program meets the academic and experience requirements for licensure in Texas. The basic steps to get licensed in Texas are below. A more detailed version is in the MFI Intake Forms folder in Google Drive. The Program Director will review the steps for getting licensed in Texas in the spring of students' second year. Students are strongly encouraged to visit the AMFTRB website to review the content of the licensure exam and review their licensure roadmap. Information about licensure in Texas can be found on the BHEC website.

Step 1: Get permission to take the AMFTRB exam by completing the "LMFT Online Initial" application through BHEC. If you plan to pursue licensure elsewhere, apply through that state's licensure board. You must take the exam in the state you plan to be licensed in. Although you can transfer your scores, it is very expensive. The application fee for your license is $159.

Step 2: Using the code emailed to you by BHEC, complete the exam application and pay the exam fee ($365) at ptcny.com. Then using the ID and authorization code sent to you by ptcny, schedule your exam date with Prometric. Students usually take the exam in July.

Step 3: Study, study, study and then rock socks on the exam!

Step 4: Finish your licensure application.

Step 5: Wait. You cannot practice therapy until you have your license.

Step 6: Once you have your license, go live the dream, accrue hours, and be an awesome, effective, ethical, and diversity-respecting therapist! Also, get liability insurance if you go into practice on your own. And get CEUs!

Step 7: Once you have the required hours, apply for full licensure, and keep changing the world! Or, if you are working in a soul-sucking agency (which occasionally happens), then quit your job and go do what you want!

Licensure in Other States (Portability of Degree)

Although the program meets the academic and clinical requirements for licensure as a Marriage and Family Therapist in Texas, it may not meet the academic and clinical requirements of other states. AMFTRB maintains a list of and links to regulatory board in other states and jurisdictions (https://amftrb.org/state-requirements). Prior to beginning your studies at ACU, we strongly recommend you review the academic and clinical requirements for your preferred state. Dr. Merchant is available to help you determine if our program meets other states' requirements.

Insurance

Graduates going into private practice should purchase liability insurance and those working for an agency should strongly consider it. Annual costs depend on the amount of coverage and the insurance company. AAMFT members often purchase through CPH & Associates because they get a discount. In making future choices about insurance coverage, you are encouraged to select an "occurrence policy" rather than a "claims made" policy. The following hotlink will explain the differences: http://www.hpso.com/individuals/professional-liability/claims-made-occurrence

TAMFT/AAMFT

Upon graduation, students will need to transfer from student to associate status with TAMFT and AAMFT.

This & That

Additional Costs

In addition to tuition, there are additional costs associated with the program including:

- TAMFT Membership—estimated $50 annually
- TAMFT Conference and Day at the Dome— $500 for conference fees, hotel, lodging, and food. Limited funding may be available through the University. Volunteering for the conference may reduce fees.
- TAMFT Poster-printing fee--$60 to $120. Cost depends on size, ink usage, and whether it must be mounted. Creative mounting is encouraged to save cost.
- Books—$500+ per semester
- AMFTRB Practice Exam— around $60
- Exam Prep—$150-$300, optional
- Graduate Banquet, optional—$15 first year, free second year
- Additional, optional workshops—estimated $100-$1000
- Parking Permit—$50
- Assessment & Treatment Across the Life Cycle Course Fee: $25

In addition to program costs, there are costs associated with licensure that students might pay while enrolled in the program including the initial licensure fee ($159 in Texas) and the AMFTRB licensure exam ($365). These costs are subject to change so students are encouraged to visit the BHEC and AMFTRB websites to verify them.

Students are required to join the Texas Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (TAMFT) both years in the program and to attend the TAMFT annual conference Day at the Dome. We encourage students to join other professional organizations in the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapists (AAMFT) and the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR). Failing to join TAMFT or attend the TAMFT conference/Day at the Dome can result in a reduced Internship or Pre-Internship grade.

Students are required to take the AMFTRB practice exam as part of their Comprehensive Exam. During the summer, students are encouraged to enroll in an exam prep course.

Class Representatives

In the Fall semester, each class will select a representative for the year. The class representative helps represent students in the governance of the program. Following is a list of duties of the class representative.

First Year Class Representative:

- Attends monthly MFT staff and supervisor meetings and serves as liaison between 1st year students and faculty and staff in these meetings. The program views this as a way the students exercise their voice in the governance of the program, including voicing student concerns/complaints. These concerns and complaint are then discussed by the faculty-supervisors to help facilitate a resolution Note: From time-to-time the class representative will be asked to attend other meetings in which input is needed.

- Works with the MFI Administrative Coordinator to communicate desk coverage needs during the Christmas and Spring Break holidays or upon short notice for such reasons as illness, medical appointments, etc.
- Covers the desk and/or makes arrangements with peers for desk coverage if the person assigned to the desk does not show for desk duty.
- Assists Graduate Assistants with set-up for meetings and special events.
- Brings to the faculty all non-academic issues/concerns on behalf of the 1st year class. Academic issues/concerns should be addressed with the faculty individually or with the Chair of the department.
- Works with 2nd year class representative to coordinate a Q&A panel made up of current students for the Prospective Student Interview weekend.
- Works with the Administrative Coordinator of the department to provide transportation for prospective students (i.e. pick up from the Abilene airport and bring to campus and then back to airport for departure).
- Offers a brief, 5-7 minute message from the first year class to the graduating cohort at the annual Graduation Celebration.

Second Year Class Representative:

- Attends monthly MFT staff and supervisor meetings and serves as liaison between 2nd year students and faculty and staff in these meetings. The program views this as a way the students exercise their voice in the governance of the program, including voicing student concerns/complaints. These concerns and complaints are then discussed by the faculty-supervisors to help facilitate a resolution. From time-to-time the class representative will be asked to attend other meetings in which input is needed.
- Assists Graduate Assistants with set-up for meetings and special events.
- Brings to the faculty all non-academic issues/concerns on behalf of the 2nd year class. Academic issues should be addressed with the faculty individually or with the Chair of the department.
- Works with the MFI Administrative Coordinator to cover the desk when the 1st year students are in class. Will also arrange desk coverage in emergency situations when the 1st year class cannot be available for regular desk coverage.
- Works with the 1st year class representative to coordinate a Q&A panel made up of current students for the Prospective Student Interview weekend.
- Works with the Administrative Coordinator of the department to provide transportation for prospective students (i.e. pick up from the Abilene airport and bring to the campus and then back to the airport for departure).
- Offers a brief, 5-7 minute message to his/her colleagues in the graduating cohort at the annual Graduation Celebration.

Department Calendar

The Department maintains a Google calendar titled MFI Intern Calendar. Please accept your invitation to the calendar and refer to it for important dates and meetings throughout the year. The table below includes important dates and clinic closures. In addition to these events, the Department hosts a monthly, mandatory Intern Meeting on the first Tuesday from 1:00 to 2:00 PM. Failing to attend the

Intern Meeting may reduce your Internship or Pre-Internship grade. See Intern Calendar for dates. The Department also holds a monthly Supervisors Meeting on the 3rd Tuesday from 11:30 AM to 12:45 PM, which the Class Representative attends. If students have concerns they want addressed in the meeting, they need to make them known prior to the meeting.

Holiday or Conference	Dates	Class?	MFI Open or Closed ?
Labor Day	September 4	No	Closed
Summit	October 11-13	Determined by faculty	Open
Fall Break	October 21	No	Closed
AAMFT, Online	October 25-27	Determined by faculty	Open
NCFR, Orlando	November 8-11	Determined by faculty	Open
EMDR/Mindfulness WS	November 10-11	N/A	Open
Thanksgiving	November 22 – 24	No	Closed
Winter Break	December 25 – January 1	N/A	Closed
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	January 15	No	Closed
EMDR Training	Feb. 23-25, March 8-10	N/A	Open
TAMFT, San Antonio	April 11-13	No	Closed
Spring Break (M-Th)	March 11 – 14	No	Open
Spring Break (F)	March 15	N/A	Closed
Good Friday	March 29	N/A	Closed
Memorial Day	May 27	N/A	Closed
Juneteenth	June 19	N/A	Closed
Independence Day	July 4	N/A	Closed

Graduate Assistantships/Student Workers

In the spring semester of each year, MFT students are eligible to apply for graduate assistantships within the department. Students will be notified of the application due date. Each full-time faculty member will select her or his own GA and selections will be named by the end of the spring semester. Graduate assistants' tasks will vary depending on the needs of the faculty but will include:

- Setting up meetings and special events
- Working with the department administrative coordinator to assist with prospective student interview housing and meals
- Transporting the ACU/MFI display to the TAMFT conference
- May include working the MFI front desk

Resource Room

Students are encouraged to use the Resource Room to supplement their academic and clinical pursuits. Materials in the resource room are to be used in the resource room. If you wish to make a copy of the material, you must do so in the MFI reception office. Copies should be paid for at the time they are made (8¢ per copy). Department majors have priority access to the resource materials. Supervision sessions and faculty meetings have priority use of the room. You may reserve the Resource Room through the Department Coordinator.

Student Awards

Faculty select three or four students for recognition each year. Awards are described below.

Outstanding First Year

Awarded to a first-year student who demonstrates excellence academically, clinically, and collegially. Examples of excellence include maintaining an above average GPA, submitting their best work in a timely manner, working well with clinic staff and colleagues, volunteering for extra duties, and displaying resiliency in the face of personal or clinical challenges.

Outstanding Second Year

Awarded to the second-year student who demonstrates excellence academically, clinically, and collegially. Examples of excellence include maintaining an above average GPA, submitting their best work in a timely manner, working well with clinic staff and colleagues, volunteering for extra duties, and displaying resiliency in the face of personal or clinical challenges.

Spirit of the Counselor

Awarded to the second-year student who best embodies what it means to be a therapist as exemplified through a commitment to their clients, to clinical excellence, to ethical practice, and to respect for diversity. This student should display unconditional positive regard, care, and concern for their clients and be able to see their clients' strengths and potential. The student's practice should be well-grounded in systemic thinking with an above average skill set. This student should follow the AAMFT Code of Ethics and Texas rules and statutes and should display a willingness to examine their biases to provide the best services to all their clients.

Up off the Mat Award

Awarded to a student who displayed clinical and academic excellence despite unusual or extraordinary circumstances.

Program Diversity

COAMFTE requires the program to provide and publish a description of diversity within the program each year. The MFT program defines diversity as the representation of diverse, minority or marginalized races, ethnicities, religions, classes, genders and sexualities.

Faculty Diversity 2023-2024 Academic Year

- Two Caucasian core faculty (1 Hispanic and 1 non-Hispanic)
- Two Caucasian and one African-American adjunct faculty (1 Hispanic and 2 non-Hispanic)
- Five female core and adjunct faculty, no male core or adjunct faculty
- Five Christian core and adjunct faculty members representing several Protestant denominations
- Adjuncts for spring and summer are TBA

Non-Faculty Supervisors 2023-2024 Academic Year

- Three male and two female supervisors
- Five Caucasian supervisors (one Hispanic)
- Five Christian supervisors representing Churches of Christ and Presbyterian churches

Student Diversity 2023-2024 Academic Year

- Five male and 20 female students
- Three Asian, 3 African American/Black, 1 Hispanic Caucasian, and 17 non-Hispanic Caucasian

All About the Faculty

Core Faculty Bios

Lisa Merchant, PhD, LMFT is the Director of the Marriage and Family Therapy program and Chair of the Department of Marriage and Family Studies. She is an AAMFT Clinical Fellow and is an AAMFT Approved Supervisor. She is a graduate of the MMFT program at ACU and completed her PhD in MFT at Texas Tech. Dr. Merchant is a seasoned clinician and currently directs a BIPP program in Abilene. Her research is focused in the area of domestic violence and she loves fish tacos.

Joanna Mendez-Pounds, PhD, LMFT-S is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Marriage and Family Studies and is the Clinic Director of the Marriage and Family Institute. She earned her masters and doctorate in Marriage and Family Therapy from Texas Tech University. She has worked extensively with child victims of sexual assault and her research interests include Dreamer and immigrant families. She is an AAMFT Supervisor.

Faculty Roles

Sometimes it is difficult for students to know who to see when there are concerns about the program or the clinic. This brief description is designed to help students know where to direct their questions. Dr. Merchant is the Department Chair and Program Director and she oversees all aspects of the MFT Program and the undergraduate Child and Family Studies program. She is responsible for the budget, academics, and COAMFTE accreditation, and oversees the faculty, staff, and supervisors. Ultimately, she is responsible for overseeing the operations of the MFT program and the MFI. She is tasked with the responsibility of maintaining the program's quality and also tasked with enhancing the program as needed. Academic and program concerns (curriculum, hours requirements, program requirements, COAMFTE requirements, faculty, staff, physical resources…) should be brought to Dr. Merchant. Dr. Merchant works on a 12-month contract.

Dr. Mendez-Pounds as the Clinical Director oversees the day-to-day functioning of the Marriage and Family Institute. Dr. Mendez-Pounds does the hands-on management and sets the policies and procedures of the Marriage and Family Institute (i.e., dress code, vacation requests, client record keeping, intake procedures, etc). Dr. Mendez-Pounds is the first person to contact if your supervisor is not available, except on the on-call evenings when a faculty member is in the clinic (Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday). She is also the custodian of records and records requests should go through her. Dr. Mendez-Pounds works on a 12-month contract.

As a rule of thumb, if the concern is related to topics in the Handbook, address it with Dr. Merchant; if it is related to topics in the MFI Manual, address it with Dr. Mendez-Pounds. If you are still unsure who to address it to or if there seems to be overlap, address it with either faculty member and they will direct you.

Supervisors are responsible for overseeing your clinical work at MFI and at your externship site. They will assist you in conceptualizing cases, creating treatment plans, making diagnoses, designing interventions, making referrals, managing your caseload, and responding to crisis situations. They will also lock your case notes and assist you with file management. Finally, supervisors will sign off on your vacation request forms and sign letters to clients or other sources.

Supporting the Mission

The faculty of the MFT program at ACU support the mission of ACU, the mission of the program, and the mission of the MFI. Every faculty member is expected to be a missional fit for the university's mission, as a Christian university. Each full-time faculty member in the program establishes goals each year in teaching, scholarship, and service. Students have an opportunity to evaluate the instruction in courses provided by faculty and also have an opportunity to evaluate their Internship supervisors at the end of each semester. Faculty are dedicated to strong teaching, as this is an important component of helping students achieve the student learning outcomes that are connected to the six program goals. Each faculty member engages in research and also serve as mentors for student research projects and thesis committee members, which is part of the program's dedication to a culture of research. Faculty service to the university, community, profession, and the church all create opportunities for them to use their experience and talents to enhance the lives of others. These service activities also often enhance their abilities to serve as better teachers, supervisors, and research mentors in the program. Core faculty and supervisors are required to be clinically active, and to maintain MFT licensure, AAMFT Membership, and to be AAMFT Approved Supervisors or AAMFT Approved Supervision candidates. They must also teach and supervise from a predominately systemic perspective. When possible, adjuncts must also meet these requirements.

Achievement Table

Below is the official template that programs should use to disclose their program’s COAMFTE Student Achievement Criteria Data in accordance with the Accreditation Standards Version 12. Programs are required to publish data on all of the required Student Achievement Criteria set by the Commission per cohort on an annual basis on the landing page of their program's website. The information must be clearly labeled and identifiable on the program's home page and provide all of the required information.

COAMFTE Student Achievement Criteria Data for Abilene Christian University Accredited: August 1, 1983 Advertised Program Length*: 24 months						
Cohort Year Students Entered Program*	**# of Students in Program**	**Advertised Graduation Rate (%)****	**Maximum Graduation Rate (%)*****		**Job Placement Rate (%)******	**National Exam Pass Rate (%)*******
	FT	**FT**			**FT**	**FT**
2012-2013	21	90			100	100
2013-2014	23	96			95	100
2014-2015	19	84			100	100
2015-2016	18	89			100	94
2016-2017	18	94			100	64
2017-2018	14	100			100	88
2018-2019	12	67			83	100
2019-2020	14	86			100	100
2020-2021	11	In process			In process	In process
2021-2022	11	In process			In process	In process

FT=Full-time
PT=Part-time
*Programs are only required to provide data on the past 10 years/cohort or since the program was initial accredited, whichever is shorter.
** Programs should report graduation rates for program’s Advertised Length of Completion which is how long the program is designed to complete as written.
***Programs can enter graduation rates for program’s Maximum Length of Completion which is the maximum allowable time in which a student could finish the program
**** Masters and Doctoral programs are required to provide this information. Job Placement Rates by cohort is defined as the percentage of graduates from the cohort year listed that are employed utilizing skills learned in the COAMFTE accredited program. Job Placement rates are calculated using the following data:

- # of graduates that reported their employment status to the program
- # of graduates, who entered in the year listed, that are employed utilizing skills learned in the COAMFTE accredited program

***** Master programs are required to provide this information. Doctoral and Post-Degree programs are encouraged to share this with the public. For Master’s programs only, COAMFTE has established a benchmark of 70% pass rate for each cohort. Programs in California can use the California Law and Ethics exam for MFTs to meet this requirement.