Response to COVID-19:
Program Accommodations and Modifications on Field Experience

Context Description

Due to COVID-19, two entry-level counseling tracks (Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling) and the doctoral program (Counselor Education and Supervision) will be temporarily moved to online teaching for both didactic and clinical courses. Rehabilitation Counseling track is originally an online program.

Given the above context as well as the newest update on COVID-19 and CACREP Standards on 3/18/20, the BCE faculty members worked collaboratively to develop guidelines for transitioning to on-line learning for field classes.

The guidelines are as follows:

• There are no exceptions for less than the minimum required practicum and internship hours: (a) Practicum-100 hours (a minimum direct services of 40 hours), and (b) Internship-600 hours (a minimum direct services of 240 hours).

• For direct service hours, BCE follows what CACREP defines as the direct services “Supervised use of counseling, consultation, or related professional skills with actual clients (can be individuals, couples, families, or groups) for the purpose of fostering social, cognitive, behavioral, and/or affective change. These activities must involve interaction with others and may include: (1) assessment, (2) counseling, (3) psycho-educational activities, and (4) consultation. The following would not be considered direct service: (1) observing others providing counseling or related services, (2) record keeping, (3) administrative duties, (4) clinical and/or administrative supervision.” Furthermore, the use of role plays and simulations are not an appropriate substitute for direct hours.

• If students currently (Starting Spring 2020) in internship previously logged extra hours in practicum they can apply those previously accrued hours toward their current internship requirements. Or, if a student currently in the practicum course logs extra hours, they can apply those towards future internship requirements.

• Should the practicum/internship sites in which students continue their practice switch to various remote approaches (e.g., telehealth services) to continue offering counseling services and supervision, it requires that the chosen sites email Dr. Kimberly Jenkins-Richardson (jenki011@ua.edu) a letter of assurance, which underlies the presence of a protocol to ensure that students are able to ethically apply this remote modality to meet practicum and internship requirements. The specifications in the letter of assurance should be in alignment with the practicum or internship agreement which has been signed by student, site supervisor, and university supervisor. The Coordinator of Practicum and Internship, Dr. Kimberly Jenkins-Richardson, will help save and store these updated forms.

• All practicum and internship related documentations will be uploaded as usual by students to Blackboard and/or VIA LiveText per university supervisors’ instructions.
• Students who plan to submit applications for a professional counselor license and/or certification need to contact the target counseling licensure/certification board and consult on whether or not they accept distance education for purposes of licensure/certification requirements, particularly hours clocked in practicum and/or internship.

• University supervision of all practicum and internship will continue online through Zoom, an online video conference platform, which has a HIPAA compliance version. Meanwhile, students can obtain all practicum and internship related course materials through Blackboard online learning media sponsored by the University. Note that these supervision hours will still count towards students’ overall required practicum/internship hours per CACREP.

• University supervisors will maintain periodic contact with site supervisors of practicum and internship students via electronic tools such as phone or video conferencing during this temporary period of online teaching of all clinical courses.

• Students who are unable to complete practicum requirements at this time, upon return to normal practice may enroll in internship in the same term, based on demonstrated clinical skills, work samples, and dispositions as evidenced by university and site supervisor evaluations. **Note:** Students must successfully complete all practicum requirements prior to commencing with internship.

• Faculty may give students who are unable to complete their practicum or internship hours as a result of COVID-19 related site restrictions or closures an “Incomplete” (i.e., “I”) for Practicum or Internship, contingent on the quality of work students have completed in their clinical courses. For students receiving an “Incomplete,” a grade will be assigned once the student completes the minimum required hours and submits all required documents at their current site or a new placement for Practicum or Internship in the follow-up semester(s).
  
  o **Note:** According to UA policy: Grades of "I" must be removed within 12 months of the end of the term in which they were awarded but prior to the student's graduation or the grade of "I" will be changed to "F." Thus, if due to COVID-19 some students’ grade status of “I” are expected to be remained beyond the above 12-month limit, BCE faculty members need to work with the Graduate School to assist students in getting extensions or exceptions to UA policy on this matter.

• The above guidelines describe the basic process of teaching practicum and internship online during the COVID-19. Given the variety of practicum/internship locations and requirements, each case for the student may need an individualized plan as to how they will complete the minimum hours required for Practicum and Internship. The implementation of this plan will be led by the respective Practicum or Internship Instructors in consultation with the student, and university advisor. The Coordinator of Practicum and Internship, Dr. Kimberly Jenkins-Richardson, will provide overall oversite of plans from all programs within Counselor Education.

**The above accommodations and modifications to field experience will remain in effect until June 30th, 2021 for students currently enrolled in Practicum and Internship.**