OFFICIAL PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:
MASTER OF ARTS IN PSYCHOLOGY,
DESIGNED TO LEAD TOWARD THE MFT LICENSE
AND ALSO FOR THE LPCC LICENSE
Revised, May 2012

FOR STUDENTS ENROLLING ON OR AFTER AUGUST 1, 2012
OR OTHERS COMPLETING GRADUATE STUDY
AFTER DECEMBER 31, 2018

A State Approved option for meeting the State of California's academic requirements for the Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) License and also for practice as a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC). . .

Legal Considerations and Licensing Matters

This program is approved by the State of California, and is designed primarily to educate those who wish to prepare for licensure as a Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) in the State of California. In addition, the coursework is also designed to meet the State of California’s academic requirements to become a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC). Those students not interested in obtaining the LPCC license do not have to pursue studies in the areas of Career Development and Group Counseling, and they do
not have to pursue the additional 5 units of Individually Designed Advanced Studies, although it is strongly recommended that they do so anyway.

The Western Institute for Social Research offers a combination of individualized study and classroom-based instruction based on information from the State of California's Board of Behavioral Science Examiners about the academic requirements of the Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) License, as well as for the requirements to become a Licensed Professional Counselor. **WISR's Master of Arts in Psychology option leading toward the MFT license is an integrated program primarily designed to train Marriage and Family Therapists in California, and it meets the educational requirements specified in California Business and Professions Code Sections 4980.36. For those wishing to pursue the LPCC license, WISR MA in Psychology option leading toward the LPCC license as well as the MFT license meets the requirements specified in California Business and Professions Code Section 4999.33.**

All students entering WISR are required to contact the Board of Behavioral Sciences Examiners, or go to their website, in order to obtain their own copy of the “Statutes and Regulations Relation to the Practice of Professional Clinical Counseling, Marriage and Family Therapy, Educational Psychology, Clinical Social Work.” Students are also expected to keep abreast of the changing details regarding the various exam and practice requirements for the MFT license, as well as the new and emerging regulations regarding the recently created LPCC license. By their third month in the program, students will be expected to discuss and ask questions of faculty about the content of these laws and regulations. Students will not be approved for a practicum until faculty are satisfied that the student understands the essential material contained in this document. Students should contact:

**BOARD OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE EXAMINERS**  
1625 N Market Blvd., Suite S-200  
Sacramento, CA 95834  
(916) 574-7830  
Website Address: [http://www.bbs.ca.gov](http://www.bbs.ca.gov)

Keeping up to date with changes in laws: Since the laws and regulations are constantly changing, students are encouraged to keep up to date by joining the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT). The student membership rate is inexpensive, and CAMFT is an excellent source of information and will answer questions asked by members by phone and fax. CAMFT also publishes a bimonthly journal, *The California Therapist*, which provides a lot of information about legal and ethical issues, as well as practical matters pertaining to professional practice. Students may review back issues of this journal in WISR's library. You may contact:

CAMFT: 7901 Raytheon Road  
San Diego, CA 92111-1606  
(856) 29-CAMFT (292-2638)  
[www.camft.org/](http://www.camft.org/)  
[www.counselingcalifornia.com](http://www.counselingcalifornia.com)

Prerequisites for Licensing: The State has a number of important prerequisites for licensing, in addition to obtaining a Master's degree that meets the State's academic requirements. It is important for prospective students to understand these requirements
before embarking on an MFT program. Each prospective student should review all of the State regulations, but here are highlights of the main requirements. WISR faculty will be happy to answer questions you may have about these, and if you enroll you will be expected to familiarize yourself with the laws during the first couple of months of enrollment. Before you can be approved as ready to begin a practicum (six months or more into the program), faculty will expect you to know the important details in State laws and regulations pertaining to MFT preparation and practice.

Here are highlights of licensing requirements:

1. 3,000 hours of supervised MFT experience are required, but no more than 750 hours may be obtained prior to receiving the Master’s degree. No hours may be obtained until a student has completed 12 semester units and passed WISR's practicum readiness assessment by faculty.

2. Students may obtain credit toward the 3,000 hours as soon as they are enrolled in an approved program by engaging in their own personal therapy with a licensed MFT, LCSW, Clinical Psychologist or MD Psychiatrist. Students may get up to 100 hours of credit for personal therapy, and each hour counts triple toward the 3,000 hours. Furthermore, WISR strongly encourages all MFT students to undergo individual, marital or conjoint family or group counseling, or psychotherapy.

3. The State does a criminal background check on all applicants for the MFT license. "The Board shall not issue a registration or license to any person who has been convicted of any crime in the United States that involves the sexual abuse of children or who has been ordered to register as a mentally disordered sex offender . . ."

4. To obtain the license, one must pass an initial written exam and a subsequent written clinical vignette exam which has replaced the oral exam.

Prospective students who are considering moving to another state should investigate the licensing requirements of that state to determine whether or not that state has "reciprocity" with California. That is, if you obtain a California MFT license, will you be able to meet the licensing requirements of the state you move to with little difficulty, or will it involve doing a lot of additional work, schooling and/or training? CAMFT has information about the licensing requirements in other states.

Prospective students who are interested in learning about the performance of students who enroll at WISR, with the intention of obtaining the MFT license should read the "School Performance Fact Sheet for Alumni of the MFT Program,” which accompanies this informative handout on the WISR MFT Program.

Similarly, those students who wish to also obtain licensing as a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor should investigate and stay informed about the State of California’s latest decisions about exam, practice and supervision requirements for the LPCC license. And, as is the case with the MFT licensing, prospective students who are considering moving to another state should investigate whether or not that state has “reciprocity” with California, regarding the LPCC license.

WISR offers faculty and curriculum resources to help each student fulfill academic requirements toward MFT licensure, but each student is expected to take responsibility to monitor her or his own progress toward licensure and to be in compliance with State requirements. WISR faculty are eager to help students identify and clarify questions they may need to ask of the BBS.
**Program Overview**

**Combination of Individualized Study and Classroom Instruction**

Each student's degree program is structured around her or his individual interests *and* around the core subject matter areas (see below) necessary to prepare for the MFT licensing examination and for competent, successful professional practice. Faculty members support, guide and supervise each student's work in individual meetings and seminar sessions.

**Required Seminar Participation**

There are typically 8 hours of classroom instruction each month, usually composed of two Saturdays, from 10 am to 2 pm.

**Participation in the equivalent of 24 months of Saturday sessions is required of WISR MFT students.** The sessions focus on theories and methods of marriage, family and child therapy and professional counseling and practicum issues, including discussions of articles and books or of ideas from faculty or student presentations; observations and analyses of books or of ideas from and role-playing therapeutic interventions. Among the topics included are human sexuality, professional faculty or student presentations; observations and analyses of videotapes of expert therapists; law and ethics, cross-cultural and community mental health methods and issues, child abuse assessment and reporting, alcoholism and substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, aging and long-term care (10 hours required), crisis and trauma counseling, assessment and appraisal, and spousal and partner abuse . As part of the classroom instruction, faculty and students sometimes bring in cases for discussion.

**Seminar Participation Option by TeleConference for Students at a Distance**

As a new option, the required seminars are now always available by telephone conference call, supplemented by web-based online sharing of documents and notes in real-time. Students who live too far from our Berkeley site to travel here twice per month may call into a phone conference line that will be connected with a speaker phone in our seminar room. Students and faculty on site at WISR and those students on their phone line, off site, will be able to interact and discuss issues, ideas and questions with one another. At a future date, some sharing by video conference may be also available from time to time. Students living outside the area are expected to attend some seminars on site two or more times per year, in order to further develop their collegial relationships with faculty and fellow students.

**Supplemental Seminars and Study Groups**

MFT students are also eligible to participate in the optional, regularly held interdisciplinary seminars open to all students. Most of these are held for a couple hours on weekday evenings two times per month, but there are also occasional study groups and additional, optional Saturday seminars. There is a major All School Gathering two Saturdays per year, and an
Annual two-day conference in the late summer. Students are strongly encouraged to attend these events because they provide excellent opportunities to connect and learn with other faculty and with students in all WISR’s degree programs.

**Program Length**

By State requirement, this program now requires over 60 semester units of study, and therefore students enrolling after August 1, 2012 should expect to spend at least two and a half years working on their Master’s degree that meets the State’s academic requirements for the MFT license. Many students will find that three years is a more realistic and comfortable length of time to do their academic studies, and some students may choose to take longer. WISR’s approach is to encourage and enable students to be thorough in their academic studies—and then, the time spent working on the Master’s degree enables our alumni to be well-prepared for their post-Master’s internship, eventual licensing exams and ultimately, their professional practice as licensed MFTs. Those wishing to also qualify for the LPCC license can take advantage of WISR’s comprehensive, integrated program and meet the academic requirements for the LPCC by

**Individualized Study Options and Personalized Support and Guidance from Faculty**

Students typically meet face to face or by phone with a faculty advisor once every two weeks for one hour. Faculty help each student to identify readings and to pursue research papers in topics of personal interest in each of the required subject matter areas (see list below). Faculty encourage students to explore specializations of strong personal interest and help them to select meaningful topics and methods for research projects in specific subjects. They help students to contact sources of data, give detailed verbal and written comments on student papers, discuss insights and problems encountered by students during their practica, and give students qualitative evaluations of their work. This process helps students to become more fully aware of their intellectual strengths, of what they already know and can do, as well as what they still need to learn to meet their own professional and personal goals. To support this dynamically structured approach to learning, faculty make themselves very accessible to students. Students are encouraged to call faculty between face-to-face individual advising sessions, and to meet more than twice per month when necessary.

WISR's approach to helping students meet MFT requirements is more flexible and more supportive than more conventional, pre-packaged programs, and students are expected to be more engaged and motivated to learn. For example: (1) Students must be able and willing to write and re-write drafts of papers, and to discuss those drafts intensively with faculty members and fellow students, so as to become deeply engaged in the material they are studying. (2) WISR's small, specialized library contains books, journals, article reprints, video and audio tapes, and bibliographies in all of the core subject matter areas of MFT study, and faculty give students specific suggestions on how to use these materials. WISR's ongoing library acquisitions have created a special section of specific books on MFT related topics, most of which have been published in the last five years. These books are available for check out for seven days. WISR also has a reimbursement policy for those students who want to participate in the UC Berkeley library system. Indeed, students must also be ready, with faculty help, to make use of the world-class research libraries available at local public universities, in identifying
and seeking out relevant books and articles; (3) Students are expected to be in regular, open communication with faculty advisors about their learning experiences; for example, making and discussing critical analyses of their practica experiences, so as to learn from their mistakes and the problems they encounter.
Core Subject Matter Areas

Through faculty assisted individualized study and through participation in classes, students are expected to demonstrate foundational knowledge in each of the areas listed below.

In each area, the student is helped and expected to become familiar with the readings which provide a foundational understanding and overview of the field. Students are to investigate and write one major paper in each of the core areas (including three papers for the three areas within “Theories and Methods of Marriage and Family Therapy and Professional Counseling.” The investigations and the production of a paper in each area also afford each student opportunities to explore and develop an area or areas of specialization. Two papers are required as part of the student's practicum. Through the thesis and through the various papers written for the above courses, students are encouraged to develop one or several emphases and specializations that address one or more of the unique, complex and important array of human problems, symptoms and needs of those Californians served by MFTs and LPCCs. In conjunction with participation in the required seminars, students are sometimes required to write short, but substantial, papers. Students will also present these papers periodically in class.

The following three areas of study are required of LPCC students, and recommended but not required of MFT students: Individually Designed Advanced Studies, Career Development and Group Counseling.

Programmatic Themes

The following overarching concerns and themes are consistent with WISR’s educational philosophy and State-mandated programmatic emphases: 1) Study of MFT principles, and especially a concern with the application of knowledge to real world practice, recovery-oriented care, and methods of service delivery in recovery-oriented practice environments, 2) counseling preparation that is multiculturally oriented, cross-culturally informed, and concerned with the impact of poverty, social injustice and societally created stress on individuals and families, 3) development of innovative and progressive approaches by each student, along with ample opportunity to develop areas of expert specialization reflective of each individual student’s concerns, 4) an individualized program of learning that provides for self-awareness, nurturance and development of the personal qualities required for expert and sensitive professional practice, and 5) exposure to and experience with those in need of mental health services, to better understand the needs for appropriate mental health services and counseling strategies, in line with WISR’s long-standing emphasis on learning and using participatory action-research methods in order to develop one’s knowledge and expertise.

Awarding of Academic Credit in Each of the Core Subject Matter Areas

WISR faculty award academic credit to students based on the quantity of seminar work and independent study performed by the student in each area. The amount of readings, investigation, writing, and seminar participation in each area reflects the scope and depth of the student’s studies in that area as interpreted by WISR faculty in enabling students both to meet Board of Behavioral Sciences requirements and to prepare for competent and skilled professional practice. Credit is assigned by the core faculty person who has supervised the student's work in the particular area. For each of the required areas of study, a minimum number of semester units is indicated, as well as the amount more typically achieved by WISR students in each area. A total of 60 semester units are required for graduation, although almost all students will obtain more than 60 semester units in the process of covering the required content.
areas, and no more than six may be transferred units.

Theories and Methods of Marriage and Family Therapy and Professional Counseling: 15 units [I: Introduction to Theories and Methods of Marriage and Family Therapy and Professional Counseling, 5 units; II: Contemporary Family Dynamics and Issues, 5 units; III: Advanced Counseling and Psychotherapeutic Theories and Methods, 5 units].

Human Development: 4 semester units minimum.
Human Sexuality: 3 semester units minimum.
Psychopathology and Diagnostic Principles: 3 semester units minimum.
Cross-Cultural Counseling: 3 semester units minimum, 4 units typically.
Professional Ethics and Law: 3 semester units minimum.
Research Methodology: 4 semester units minimum.
Supervised Practicum: 6 semester units minimum, sometimes more, when there is substantially more than 306 hours of supervised practicum.
Addictions Counseling: 3 semester units minimum, includes Alcoholism and Substance Abuse.
Child Abuse Assessment and Reporting and Spousal/Partner Abuse: Included as part of Theories and Methods of MFT.
Aging and Long-Term Care: 1 semester unit minimum (including required 10 hours of seminar participation).
Psychopharmacology: 3 units minimum.
Psychological Testing and Therapeutic Appraisal and Assessment: 3 semester units minimum.
Case Management, Advocacy and Collaborative Treatment: 3 semester units minimum.
Crisis and Trauma Counseling: 3 semester units minimum.

Career Development: 3 semester units minimum. [required for LPCC students, recommended but not required for MFT students]
Group Counseling: 3 semester units minimum. [required for LPCC students, recommended but not required for MFT students]

Theories of Social Analysis and Change: 2 semester units minimum, typically 4 units (this is a WISR requirement not a BBS requirement).

Advanced Studies to develop knowledge of specific treatment issues and special populations:
Individually Designed Advanced Studies: 5 semester units minimum[required for LPCC students, recommended but not required for MFT students]
Advanced Study of Cross-Cultural/Multicultural Counseling and Needs/Issues with Special Populations: 4 units minimum
Thesis: 6 units minimum, sometimes more.

Content in Core Subject Matter Areas

Human Biological, Psychological and Social Development
Study of developmental theories, events, and issues covering the entire life-span from infancy to old age, including parent-child relations, child development and adolescence, and various phases, crises, and transitions to adulthood. Emphasis is on critical examination of a range of theories, such as those of Freud, Erikson, Piaget, Mahler, Kohlberg and others. Study of normal and abnormal behavior and an understanding of developmental crises, disability, psychopathology and situational and environmental factors that affect both normal and abnormal behavior. This involves a study of developmental influences on and consequences of individual circumstances--interpersonal relationships, and family dynamics, as
well as the larger social context—from infancy to old age, including:

- The effects of developmental issues on individuals, couples, and family relationships.
- The psychological, psychotherapeutic, and health implications of developmental issues and their effects.
- Aging and its biological, social, cognitive, and psychological aspects.
- A variety of cultural understandings of human development.
- The understanding of human behavior within the social context of socioeconomic status and other contextual issues affecting social position.
- The understanding of human behavior within the social context of a representative variety of the cultures found within California.
- The understanding of the impact that personal and social insecurity, social stress, low educational levels, inadequate housing, and malnutrition have on human development.

Human Sexuality

A study of personal and interpersonal dimensions of sexual experiences and behavior, including such topics as anatomy and physiology of human sexuality, normal and abnormal sexual behavior, sexual dysfunction and its causes and treatment, psychosexual development, sociocultural and family influences on sexuality, sexual orientation and identity, and sexual counseling. Includes a minimum of 10 hours of seminar participation in the study of human sexuality. Human sexuality, including the study of physiological, psychological, and social cultural variables associated with sexual behavior and gender identity, and the assessment and treatment of psychosexual dysfunction.

Theories and Methods of Marriage and Family Therapy and Professional Counseling

I. Introduction to Theories and Methods of Marriage and Family Therapy and Professional Counseling, including methods of marriage, family and child counseling. Study of major theories and a consideration of such varied schools of thought as psychodynamics, humanistic, behavioral, and system theories. Study of theories, principles, and methods of a variety of psychotherapeutic orientations directly related to marriage and family therapy and marital and family systems approaches to treatment and how these theories can be applied therapeutically with individuals, couples, families, adults, including elder adults, children, adolescents, and groups to improve, restore, or maintain healthy relationships. Included in the study of counseling and psychotherapeutic techniques is an orientation to recovery-oriented practice and environments and wellness and prevention, selection of appropriate counseling interventions, models of counseling suggested by current professional practices and research, the development of a personal model of counseling, interdisciplinary responses to crises, emergencies and disasters, and the many considerations involved in conducting professional counseling practice in a multicultural society.

II. Contemporary Family Dynamics and Issues.

Study of the sociocultural context of the family; problems, issues, and circumstances affecting the family as a unit; relations among its members; and strategies for effectively intervening in family dynamics to build on strengths, solve problems, or minimize the problems’ impact. Students will become familiar with the broad range of issues and matters that may arise within marriage, family and couples relationships, and within a variety of California cultures, including:

- Child and adult abuse assessment and reporting (To obtain an overview of clinical skills developed by practitioners who have treated abused children and adults, offenders, and adult survivors who were abused as children; statutes, issues for professionals, indictors and
assessment of child and adult abuse, resources/agencies, prevention, statistics on incidence of abuse, publication about abuse, issues pertaining to reporting, developmental theories and issues, evaluation and treatment of offenders, and self-help efforts by adult survivors. Includes study of the methods for preventing child and adult abuse).

- Spousal or partner abuse assessment, detection, intervention strategies, and same-gender abuse dynamics.
- Cultural factors relevant to abuse of partners and family members.
- Childbirth, child rearing, parenting, and stepparenting.
- Marriage, divorce, and blended families.
- Long-term care.
- End of life and grief.
- Poverty and deprivation.
- Financial and social stress.
- Effects of trauma.

And, among all these, study of the psychological, psychotherapeutic, community, and health implications of these matters and life events.

III. Advanced Counseling and Psychotherapeutic Theories and Methods, including the use of counseling constructs, assessment and treatment planning, clinical interventions, therapeutic relationships, psychopathology, advanced recovery-oriented care and service in recovery-oriented practice environments, and other clinical topics. Study of treatment methods and issues for such special populations as in working with clients affected by HIV and AIDS.

Aging and Long-Term Care

Study of aging in contemporary society, elder abuse, long-term care, intergenerational relations, and the biological, social and psychological aspects of aging, including the assessment and reporting of, as well as treatment related to, elder and dependent adult abuse and neglect. Study in this area requires at least 10 hours of seminar participation.

Psychopathology and Diagnostic Principles

Study of the diagnosis, assessment, prognosis and treatment of mental disorders. This includes a study of the characteristics and dynamics associated with various pathologies, ranging from neurotic styles found among "normal," functioning adults to severe disorders--an examination of different systems of diagnosis, including the current edition of the DSM, and the strategies of treatment associated with these various diagnoses. Study of evidence-based practices and promising mental health practices from peer reviewed literature, as well as study of differential diagnosis, the impact of co-occurring substance abuse disorders or medical psychological disorders, established diagnostic criteria for mental or emotional disorders, the role of diagnosis in recovery-oriented care, and the treatment modalities and placement criteria within the continuum of care.
Cross-Cultural Counseling

Study of the importance of cultural, racial, ethnic, and subgroup values and beliefs, and how they affect individuals, interpersonal relations, family life, and the therapeutic process. An examination of the wide range of ethnic backgrounds and the cultural mores and values common in California, including the general values and diversity within each of the following groups: African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, Native Americans, whites of European ancestry, and people who identify themselves as bi-racial or bicultural. Study of multicultural development and cross-cultural interaction, including experiences of race, ethnicity, class, spirituality and/or religion, sexual orientation, gender, and disability and their incorporation into the psychotherapeutic process. Study of multicultural counseling theories and techniques, including counselors’ roles in developing cultural self-awareness and cultural competency and sensitivity, identity development, promoting cultural social justice, individual and community strategies for working with and advocating for diverse populations, and counselors’ roles in eliminating biases and prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination. This includes the study of human behavior within the social context of socioeconomic status and other contextual issues affecting social position and an understanding of the effects of socioeconomic status on treatment and available resources.

Advanced Study of Cross-Cultural/Multicultural Counseling and Needs/Issue with Special Populations

Further, advanced study of the complexities of the topics initially addressed in “Cross-Cultural Counseling” (above). Includes in-depth, advanced study of specific needs and treatment issues involved in working with one or more special populations.

Psychological Testing and Therapeutic Appraisal and Assessment

Study of theories and applications of commonly used psychological tests for family and individual assessments. Covers cognitive and personality testing as well as looking at specific tests related to assessing for depression, anxiety and other DSM IV axis 1 and 2 disorders. Also, the study of statistical significance in psychological testing, and the uses and limitations of such tests. Includes basic concepts of standardized and non-standardized testing and other assessment techniques, norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessment, social and cultural factors related to assessment and evaluation of individuals and groups, and ethical strategies for selecting, administering, and interpreting assessment instruments and techniques in counseling. In addition, the study of assessment and appraisal of client needs, including but not limited to the client’s strengths and available resources, and also their family, social/contextual and personal challenges. Furthermore, students receive guidance in studying assessment and appraisal “across the curriculum”—that is, for example, by studying how “assessment and appraisal” is practiced and used in such areas as alcoholism and substance abuse, cross-cultural counseling, and human development.
Crisis and Trauma Counseling

Examination of types of trauma and crisis—resulting from such varied causes as natural disasters, social upheaval and unrest, car accidents, interpersonal violence, secondary trauma (e.g., observation of trauma), loss of home or loved ones, among others. Theories and methods of immediate, mid-term and longterm interventions. Includes crisis theory, multidisciplinary responses to crises and therapeutic responses to trauma. Assessment strategies for clients in crisis and principles for intervention for individuals with mental or emotional disorders during times of crisis, emergency or disaster. Specifically, the study of somatic, physiological, and neurological dynamics, as well as cognitive, emotional and behavioral considerations—and the interrelations of all these. The role of multidisciplinary assessment and treatment, and strategies for helping trauma survivors to identify and access their own individual, and community, sources of strength and resilience, in order to cope with adversity, trauma, threats, tragedy, or other stresses. Consideration of the impact of trauma and crises on entire families, communities and societies, and the role of larger scale interventions. Examination of complications from multiple traumas and/or traumas experienced by people with pre-existing emotional challenges and conditions. Study of resilience, including the personal and community qualities that enable persons to cope with adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or other stresses.

Career Development

Career development theories and techniques, including career development decision-making models and interrelationships between work, family and other life roles and factors. Includes study of the role of multicultural issues in career development, what is a career, points where people seek career counseling, and issues involved in successfully providing career counseling. This area of study is recommended but not required for students not pursuing the LPCC license.

Group Counseling

Group counseling theories and techniques, including principles of group dynamics, group process components, developmental stage theories, therapeutic factors of group work, group leadership styles and approaches, pertinent research and literature, group counseling methods and evaluation of effectiveness. Includes history of group psychotherapy, creating successful therapy groups, therapeutic factors and mechanisms, selection of clients, preparation and pre-group training, group development and process, therapist interventions, reducing adverse outcomes and the ethical practice of group psychotherapy, concurrent therapies, and termination of group psychotherapy. This area of study is recommended but not required for students not pursuing the LPCC license.

Addictions Counseling

Study of theories and research on addiction and abuse of a variety of substances, including alcohol, prescriptions and illegal drugs, as well as such process addictions as the internet and gambling. Study of co-occurring disorders and major approaches to identification, evaluation,
treatment and prevention of substance abuse and addiction, legal and medial aspects of substance abuse, populations at risk, the role of support persons that compound or support addiction, as well as support systems and community resources offering screening, assessment, treatment, and followup for the affected person and family. Special consideration is given to recovery oriented care and methods of service delivery in recovery-oriented practice environments.

**Individually Designed Advanced Studies**

The student designs, with faculty guidance, further advanced studies in the treatment issues and needs involved in working with special populations and/or in working with clients (including families or groups) with special needs and who face special challenges. *This area of study is recommended but not required for students not pursuing the LPCC license.*

**Professional Ethics and Law**

Study of legal and ethical issues and standards involved in the professional practice of marriage and family therapy in California, in particular, and in the field of mental health and professional counseling in general. This includes an examination of ethics and laws that regulate and delineate the profession’s scope of practice; therapeutic and practical considerations involved in legal and ethical practice as a licensed MFT; licensing law and process in California, study of the broader legal trends and ethical debates in the health, mental health, and human service professions; ethical and legal issues bearing on counselor-client relationships (e.g., scope of practice, counselor-client privilege, confidentiality, treatment of minors with or without parental consent, and when a client may be dangerous to self or others); and issues arising out of the counselor’s sense of self and personal values, in relation to professional ethics and law. Includes the study of regulatory laws and functions and relationships with other human service providers, and of strategies for collaboration and advocacy processes needed to address institutional and social barriers that impede access, equity and success for clients, as well as the study of differences in legal and ethical standards for different types of work settings.

**Case Management, Advocacy and Collaborative Treatment**

Study of case management, systems of care for the severely mentally ill, public and private services and supports available for the severely mentally ill, community resources for persons with mental illness and for victims of abuse, disaster and trauma response, advocacy for the severely mentally ill, and collaborative treatment. Study of the role of case management, advocacy and collaborative treatment in providing recovery-oriented care and service in recovery-oriented practice environments.

**Supervised Practicum in Applied Psychotherapeutic Techniques**

This involves supervised work by the student in the assessment, diagnosis, prognosis and
treatment of premarital, couple, family, and child relationships, within the scope of practice of a marriage and family therapy trainee. Students also discuss and critically reflect on issues, challenges and insights arising out of their practicum: 1) in seminars, which regularly allocate time to teach about and reflect on clinical cases, 2) in individual advising sessions with WISR faculty, and 3) in the two papers they write on their practicum experience. In the practicum and in the reflective papers, students learn about applied psychotherapeutic techniques, assessment, diagnosis, prognosis, treatment, issues of development, adjustment and maladjustment, health and wellness promotion, professional writing (including documentation of services, treatment plans and progress notes), how to find and use resources, and other counseling interventions. Students are encouraged to seek out a practicum that will give them experience in working with low-income and multicultural populations. Through the practicum experience, students are expected to give great attention to developing those personal qualities that are intimately related to the counseling situation, including integrity, sensitivity, flexibility, insight, compassion and personal presence. For more details see also the section on “Practicum or Traineeship” below.

**Psychopharmacology**

Study of the use of psychotrophic medications in the treatment of various psychological disorders. Examination of the role of the psychotherapist and psychotherapy in the use of such medications. Study of the biological bases of behavior, basic classifications, indications and contraindications of commonly prescribed psychopharmacological medications so that appropriate referrals can be made for medication evaluations and so that the side effects of those medications can be identified. Study of specific medications that are used in the treatment of psychiatric disorders, including antidepressants, mood stabilizers, antiobsessional, antipsychotic and antianxiety drugs, and how they are used in conjunction with psychotherapy, as well as the abuses of drugs in each category.

**Research Methodology**

A study of research design and methods, including such topics as logic of design, scientific paradigms and epistemology, ethical issues in research, strategies for reviewing, using and critiquing literature in psychology and related fields, and methods of data collection and analysis. Study of the use of research to inform practice, and the use of practice to build knowledge and contribute to research, including uses and limitations of statistical analyses. Special emphasis is put on qualitative and action-oriented research methods, including participant observation, interviewing, needs assessments and program evaluation. Study and use of participatory action-research methods in building knowledge, evidence/experience-based expertise, and empathy—and in understanding of needs, of clients, and their families and communities. This includes meeting with and having informing dialogue with mental health consumers, their families and others in the community, in order to better understand their experience of mental illness, life challenges, treatment, recovery, and attainment of well-being. This includes the use of these research methods in the conduct of one’s thesis.
**Other Academic Requirements**

**Theories of Social Analysis and Change**

Study of several theories/perspectives on social change, and analysis of the strengths and limitations of these ideas as they pertain to some of the issues and problems of special concern to the student in his or her planned areas of professional practice.

**Thesis**

An in-depth study of a topic of special interest to the student, and one which may have significance for others, involving a review of the literature and some original data collected by the student. Through the thesis and through the various papers written for the above courses, students are encouraged to develop one or several emphases and specializations that address one or more of the unique, complex and important array of human problems, symptoms and needs of those Californians served by MFTs.

**MFT students should also consult the general WISR catalog for information about:**

**WISR’s core requirement that all students study Theories of Social Analysis and Change,**

**the requirement that all Master’s students do a Master’s thesis,**

**and the evaluation process conducted by the Graduation Review Board.**
**Assessment of Student Performance**

All students are involved in a comprehensive evaluation process. These evaluation sessions will be given at three stages of the student’s program.

1. After six months or the completion of 12 semester units (usually, 3 areas of study and 3 major papers), in order to assess the student's readiness for participation in the practicum.

2. Approximately at the mid-point of the student's Master's program.

3. When the student has completed all the requirements except for the thesis.

The evaluation sessions will be conducted by two core faculty, at least one of whom will be a licensed MFT, and in the latter two instances, by a peer as well. The evaluation will be constructive in nature and will serve to direct the student to strengthen weak areas and support growth in positive areas.

Ongoing evaluation will be provided by faculty assessment of student performance through regular meetings and dialogue with students about their work in progress, participation in seminars and learning in their practicum. Students are expected to demonstrate their familiarity with and understanding of each of the core MFT subject matter areas by: (1) pursuing and discussing with a faculty advisor readings which cover both the student's major interests in that area and a balanced selection of topics important to learning about the area; and (2) writing a paper that demonstrates the student's ability to critically discuss some important theoretical and/or practical issues arising in that area, in relation to one of the student's special interests.

The student will also be evaluated in his or her practicum as well (see practicum contract). Student learning in each practicum is also assessed by oral and written evaluations, including a final written evaluation submitted by a professional in the field who has supervised the student's work.
Practicum or Traineeship

Minimum Requirements for the Practicum

The practicum shall include a minimum of 306 hours of face-to-face experience counseling individuals, couples, families or groups WISR requires this to obtain the necessary 6 semester units of practicum credit. Currently, State law provides that MFT students cannot get credit for more than 750 hours of counseling and supervision as pre-Master’s trainees. One could, however, get credit for as much as 1300 hours by combining 750 hours of counseling experience and supervision, with 300 hours for personal psychotherapy received, and up to 250 hours for professional workshops, seminars and conferences. Under the State guidelines, WISR has developed a supervised fieldwork agreement that must be signed by student, the field work agency and a WISR faculty person, before the practicum begins. This contract spells out in detail the responsibilities of all parties, in accordance with the California Business and Professions Code.

The student must be participating in WISR seminars to discuss and learn about practicum issues while pursuing their practicum. The practicum shall provide training in all of the following areas: (1) Applied use of theory and psychotherapeutic techniques. (2) Assessment, diagnosis, and prognosis. (3) Treatment of individuals and premarital, couple, family, and child relationships, including trauma and abuse, dysfunctions, healthy functioning, health promotion, illness prevention, and working with families. (4) Professional writing, including documentation of services, treatment plans, and progress notes. (5) How to connect people with resources that deliver the quality of services and support needed in the community. Furthermore, students are encouraged to use the practicum to gain marriage and family therapy experience in low-income and multicultural mental health settings.

Practica

WISR faculty work with the training sites and the student in placement and evaluation. The law states that a “trainee” is a person who is unlicensed and is currently enrolled in a master’s or doctor’s degree program, as specified in Section 4980.40 of the California Business and Professions Code. This is also a person who has completed the equivalent of one semester of graduate level (12 semester units) coursework in the field. (At WISR, this is defined as six months of seminar participation and the completion of 12 semester units of work in the core areas.) Students are also encouraged to seriously consider pursuing practica in two distinctly different settings, in order to enhance and broaden their experience. In addition, students are strongly encouraged to pursue their own personal therapy, to further develop those personal qualities and depth of self-awareness that will enable them to become effective therapists.