

# **Model Training Program in Counseling Psychology**

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*In response to the revision of the American Psychological Association's Guidelines and Principles of Accreditation, the Council of Counseling Psychology Training Programs (CCPTP) and Division 17 formed a Joint Writing Committee to create a document that would present a modal or normative training program for counseling psychology. This article presents the Model Training Program, as endorsed by CCPTP and Division 17.*

In response to criticism of the “checklist” mentality of the former accreditation guidelines, the American Psychological Association's (APA) Committee on Accreditation (COA) undertook a substantial revision of the accreditation process and principles. Effective January 1, 1996, the revised Guidelines and Principles of Accreditation (G&P) follow a model-based approach that allows programs to specify and be evaluated on the approach they take to training professional psychologists. At about the same time, the formation of the Commission for the Recognition of Specialties in Psychology (CRSPP) suggested a need for further clarification of a shared definition of counseling psychology.

The new accreditation guidelines and the creation of CRSPP were joint influences in the development of the Model Training Program (MTP) in

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counseling psychology. When the first drafts of the proposed revised guidelines were circulated for comment in 1994, a gathering of counseling psychology educators (at the annual meeting of the Council of Counseling Psychology Training Programs [CCPTP] conference) expressed concern about the lack of specific content in the new G&P specific to the specialty of counseling psychology. This group, which is composed of the Directors of Training of most of the counseling psychology programs in the United States, agreed that counseling psychology programs had common components that were desirable in the professional training of counseling psychologists and that these qualities should be recognized by the COA and its site visitors. A parallel process was also occurring in Division 17 at the time that was somewhat more focused on the recognition of the specialty, but embedded within the request for status is the specification of model training programs for that specialty. In 1995, a Joint Writing Committee of CCPTP and Division 17 was formed (composed of this article's authors) and was charged with the task of constructing the MTP. The intent of the MTP was thus twofold: first, to give the COA and its site visitors a baseline for programs to be accredited as counseling psychology and (b) to further define counseling psychology training as part of a larger effort to define our specialty for both the profession of psychology and the public through recognition by CRSPP. With respect to the first intent, it was not expected that the MTP interfere with the model-based nature of the new accreditation guidelines—the MTP components are clearly identified as basic competencies, and it is emphasized that programs can create specializations or embellishments that give programs their unique models.

The first substantive draft of the MTP was reviewed by CCPTP at its 1996 Houston meeting, at which Division 17 representatives on the committee and at large were present. Calls for feedback were sent to CCPTP, Division 17, the Association of Psychology Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Internship Centers and the Association for Counseling Center Training Agents through multiple means (e.g., listservs, newsletters). Suggestions from all of these constituencies were considered by the Joint Writing Committee. Two key reviews were (a) the Division 17 Executive Board at its midwinter meeting and (b) CCPTP membership at its annual conference.

Both CCPTP and Division 17 endorsed the MTP in 1997. A copy of the MTP has been received and acknowledged by the current chair of the COA, who indicated that copies have been distributed to all current COA members. With our apologies for its abrupt ending, the remainder of this article presents the MTP as it was endorsed by CCPTP and Division 17.

## INTRODUCTION

In response to the recent changes in the APA G&P, the two major professional organizations of counseling psychology, the CCPTP and the Counseling Psychology Division of the APA (APA Division 17), offer the following MTP for doctoral programs in counseling psychology. The purpose of this document is to elaborate on the APA G&P of Programs in Professional Psychology, with specific reference to the specialty of counseling psychology. Consequently, its organization and structure conforms to that of the APA G&P; however, it is not intended to supplant or depart from the spirit and content of the APA G&P.

This MTP is intended as a general outline of core training in counseling psychology and presents a modal approach to educating counseling psychologists. As an extension of the model curriculum in counseling psychology, programs may develop emphases related to a variety of applications that are relevant to the mission of particular programs. These special emphases may include, but are not limited to, the following: couples and family, health, sports, business and organizations, rehabilitation, children and adolescents, substance abuse, vocational behavior, and career development. In addition, ongoing curricular review and innovation are encouraged.

### DOMAIN A: ELIGIBILITY

As a prerequisite for accreditation, the program's purpose must be within the scope of the accrediting body and must be pursued in an institutional setting appropriate for doctoral education and training of professional psychologists.

1. The program offers doctoral education and training, one goal of which is to prepare students for the science and practice of professional psychology within the specialty field of counseling psychology. Students may be educated for professional activity in a range of settings, such as academic departments in colleges and universities, organized health care in community settings, college and university counseling services, independent practice and professional consultation, business or organizational settings, rehabilitation facilities, hospitals and other health care settings.

2. The program is offered by a university accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting body.

3. The program is aligned with the mission of the academic department, school, college, or university in which it resides. Programs in counseling psychology may be housed in departments of psychology, in departments located within schools or colleges of education, or in two departments from different schools or colleges with joint arrangements for staffing and management of the program. Regardless of the organizational structure and setting, the program must have a critical mass of students, a sufficient number of full-time faculty to implement the program and mentor students, facilities that are adequate to carry out the education and training mission of the program, and a continuing budget that is sufficient to support the program.

4. Program degree requirements include a minimum of 3 full-time academic years of graduate study (or the equivalent) and completion of a 1-year, predoctoral internship.

5. The program gives a high priority to actions that indicate respect for and understanding of cultural and individual diversity (e.g., racial/ethnic/cultural, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical challenge). Evidence of commitment and sensitivity to cultural and individual diversity is reflected in the program's operating policies, its hiring and admissions practices, and its curriculum and field placements.

6. Formal written policies and procedures govern the operation of the program, and such policies are consistent with those of the sponsoring university, as well as with guidelines of the Council of Graduate Schools in the United States that pertain to faculty and student rights, responsibilities, and personal development.

## **DOMAIN B: PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY, OBJECTIVES, AND CURRICULUM PLAN**

The program has a clearly specified philosophy of education and training, compatible with the mission of its sponsor institution, and appropriate to the science and practice of counseling psychology. The program's education and training model and its curriculum plan are consistent with this philosophy.

### **Program Philosophy**

Over the years, counseling psychologists have engaged in thoughtful and ongoing dialogue regarding the qualities that characterize counseling

psychology as a specialty (Rude, Weissberg, & Gazda, 1988; Whiteley, 1984). The study and practice of career development and counseling, attention to issues of cultural and individual diversity, systematic training in interpersonal skills, and the provision of preventive, remedial and educational interventions have historically been employed as prominent descriptors of counseling psychology. The integration of theory, research, and practice has been emphasized since the inception of counseling psychology as a specialty field.

Throughout this dialogue, a consensus has emerged that the field of counseling psychology is best defined by its distinctive philosophical perspective reflected in our model rather than by particular settings or clients served. Gelso and Fretz (1992) proposed unifying themes of counseling psychology, which were embellished by the CCPTP. These philosophical themes are (a) a focus on working within a developmental framework across a wide range of psychological functioning; (b) a focus on assets and strengths, regardless of level of functioning; (c) the inclusion of relatively brief counseling approaches; (d) an emphasis on person-environment interactions, rather than an exclusive focus on either person or environment; (e) an emphasis on prevention, including psycho-educational interventions; (f) emphasis on the educational and vocational lives of individuals; (g) attention to issues of and respect for individual and cultural diversity; and (h) evaluation and improvement through critical thinking and a commitment to the scientific approach.

Attention to life-span development and transitions has traditionally been and remains a critical element in the practice of counseling psychology. Developmental issues are approached from two major perspectives: (a) the need to anticipate typical or normative problems associated with the full range of development in the design of educational and preventive measures and (b) the need to take into account developmental differences in the design and application of counseling psychology interventions for the treatment of adjustment and remedial problems. Understanding of both types of problems requires awareness of the developmental background, predisposing conditions, and critical person-environment interactions that influence behavior.

The broadening of the developmental focus to encompass the entire life span has brought about changes in how counseling psychologists understand the emphases and boundaries of their specialty. Consequently, the focus of research and training has expanded to include a wider range of preventive and remedial applications than was characteristic of counseling psychology in its formative years.

Counseling psychology's developmental and adaptive orientation necessitates an understanding of normal as well as abnormal human development,

from individual, couples, family, group, systems, and organizational perspectives. This developmental framework promotes the integration of theory, research, and practice across the content areas of counseling psychology. Counseling psychology promotes the optimal development of individuals, families, groups, and environmental systems.

Counseling psychology programs adhere to the scientist-professional model of training. This approach emphasizes the integration of science and practice (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1992) and includes the following components: (a) the systematic evaluation and thoughtful analysis of human behavior and experience, (b) the careful application of knowledge thus gained, and (c) the continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of these applications (Meara et al., 1988). An attitude of scholarly inquiry and an appreciation for methodological diversity characterize counseling psychologists who are educated in the scientist-professional model. This scientific process is equally applicable to the activities of the practitioner, consultant, academician, and researcher in counseling psychology.

### **Program Objectives**

1. Education and training in the integration of theory, scientific thinking, research, and professional practice begins in the first year and continues through the final year of the program. Training reflects a developmental or adaptive orientation, consistent with the philosophy of counseling psychology. Curricular emphases include a person-in-context perspective on prevention, remediation, consultation, research, and program intervention.

2. Selection of foundation courses in psychology used to meet accreditation standards support the philosophical orientation of counseling psychology and are designed to develop broad understanding of the core areas of psychology.

3. The program fosters the development of student awareness, skills, and understanding needed in applying the science and practice of counseling psychology with diverse populations.

4. Training and experience in research spans the program of doctoral study. Research, evaluation, and scientific thinking are an integrated part of each student's graduate experience. This integration is reflected by a gradual increase in responsibility for, and complexity of, the research projects with which the student is involved over the course of training.

5. Evaluation research, whether focused on client or program outcomes, is an integral part of the student's educational experience. Ongoing evaluation

of therapeutic interventions is included in all components of professional training and practice.

6. A variety of statistical and research methodologies are recognized in the profession, and the selection and use of these methods are determined by the nature of the question(s) being addressed. These, in turn, are dictated by setting, service rendered, and clientele served. Students are instructed in a broad sample of research methods.

7. In addition to instruction and proficiency in research and statistical methods, students are expected to demonstrate a reflective, critical, and scholarly approach to the theory, research, and practice of counseling psychology.

8. Program faculty model a professional orientation in their instruction and mentoring that is consistent with counseling psychology and with their program's training model.

9. Education and training in supervision is an important component of counseling psychology programs and incorporates an integration of theory, research, and practice.

10. Training in the applications of psychological knowledge to a variety of personal and social problems for diverse populations begins early and spans the program, with practica beginning early and continuing through the internship experience. Practicum and internship experiences include knowledge of and appreciation for innovations in therapeutic practice, as well as for empirically supported treatments that are effective in a variety of settings. Included in this training is a focus on brief or time-limited interventions, as well as preventive programming.

11. Education and training in diagnosis and definition of problems for individuals, couples, families, groups, or organizations emphasizes the strengths and potential of the clients, in addition to their deficiencies and dysfunction. Recognition of the impact of cultural and individual differences (e.g., racial/ethnic/cultural, gender, sexual orientation, age, and physical challenge) on assessment and adjustment is considered critical. Subsequent interventions build on these strengths and potential with particular reference to cultural issues.

12. Career development and workplace issues are important emphases for counseling psychology and are recognized within individual, family, group, and organizational assessment and intervention.

13. Professional, ethical, and legal issues related to research and practice are of continual importance and are emphasized across course work and practica experiences.



## Curriculum

Content in both the core areas of psychology and professional concepts and skills is essential to the practice of counseling psychology. The proposed model curriculum is guided by the current APA G&P and by discussions of competencies important for professional counseling psychologists (Davis, Alcorn, Brooks, & Meara, 1992; Meara et al., 1988). Consistent with the approach of the Accreditation Principles, the model curriculum builds on the generic core set forth by the APA G&P and adds competencies related to research and practice in counseling psychology. Training programs may develop further specialization with respect to content of training, populations addressed, and interventions taught. The ideological and philosophical features of counseling psychology may be addressed in specific courses dedicated to those issues, infused across the curriculum or addressed by other educational experiences. Whenever possible, training experiences are aligned with each student's level of development and training. As students progress through the program, training experiences gradually increase in complexity and are integrated across domains.

The following general curricular areas are proposed as essential to a model program in counseling psychology:

### I. GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY CORE

- A. Biological Bases of Behavior
- B. Cognitive/Affective Bases of Behavior
- C. Social Bases of Behavior
- D. Life-Span Development
- E. Individual Differences
- F. History and Systems of Psychology
- G. Research Methods and Design, Data Analytic Techniques, and Psychometrics

Recognition of the scientific basis of professional psychology entails the inclusion of training in research methodology and data-analytic techniques, broadly defined, in counseling psychology curricula. Educational experiences emphasizing the critical evaluation of theories and interventions in counseling psychology begin early in students' training and continue throughout the program. A variety of research experiences are provided, including course work and applied research training experiences. Students are involved in multiple projects at progressively increasing levels of difficulty and responsibility. Course work in research design and data analysis



includes instruction in basic philosophy of science, with a specific focus on research methods used in counseling psychology. Content in research design includes methodologically diverse approaches to studying human behavior, along with analytic techniques suitable for these designs.

## II. PROFESSIONAL CORE IN COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

*A. Professional issues in counseling psychology.* Because the philosophical perspective of counseling psychology is critical to the identity of its professionals, knowledge of the history and philosophy of counseling psychology is an important component of programs. Students become conversant in the various discussions of professional identity within the specialty as well as the specialty guidelines for the provision of Counseling Psychological Services.

*B. Theories and techniques of counseling psychology.* Competencies in this area include skills and knowledge theories of counseling and psychotherapy (individual, group, family, or systems theory) and the integration of theory, research, and practice in the activities of counseling psychologists. Students demonstrate knowledge about the efficacy of counseling psychology interventions and awareness of and appreciation for empirically supported treatments.

*C. Legal and ethical issues.* Students are presented with current information regarding legal and ethical aspects of the profession. Relevant case studies are used to explore the application of ethical standards and guidelines as they apply to scientific and professional practice. A variety of issues are addressed under this domain, such as research with human subjects, relations with health systems, risk management, malpractice, and licensure.

*D. Individual and cultural diversity.* Counseling psychology's tradition of emphasizing the value of human diversity dictates that significant attention to individual and cultural diversity is evident in course content, practica, and research experiences. Most professional core courses address diversity issues as they apply to course content areas.

*E. Practicum and internship training.* Practicum experiences are sequential in nature, typically beginning with training in basic relationship skills. A predoctoral internship of 1 year full-time or 2 years half-time is required. Practicum and internship training leads to competence in prevention,

remediation, and psycho-education, and also integrates diversity issues in all training experiences.

*F. Psychological assessment, diagnosis, and appraisal.* Course work in assessment includes content in basic psychometrics and advanced courses that deal with the use of assessment instruments and the integration of test and nontest sources of information. Programs in counseling psychology will determine the types of assessment experiences that are consistent with program models and with the adaptive, developmental focus of counseling psychology.

*G. Career development and counseling.* Attention to career development is a fundamental aspect of counseling psychology. Discussions of career development are part of many program experiences and may be intertwined with discussions of program construction, evaluation, and consultation.

*H. Consultation.* Counseling psychologists provide consultation for individuals, groups, and organizations. Training in consultation is consistent with counseling psychology's emphasis on life-span development and on providing preventive and educational interventions.

*I. Program evaluation.* Recognizing the link between science and practice, counseling psychologists view program evaluation as an important component of their training programs. The evaluation of training programs themselves reflects competence in applying program evaluation methods.

*J. Supervision and training.* Counseling psychology has a rich tradition of theory, research, and practice in supervision and training. Counseling psychologists often supervise those who provide direct services rather than provide those services directly.

## DOMAIN C: PROGRAM RESOURCES

The program demonstrates that it has resources of appropriate quality and sufficiency to achieve its educational and training goals and objectives.

### Faculty

1. The program has a core of psychologists who identify with counseling psychology. These psychologists provide leadership for the program, while

functioning as an integral part of the academic unit or units of which the program is an element.

2. The faculty is sufficient in number to meet academic and professional responsibilities associated with the program, and they serve as role models for students in their learning and socialization in the profession of psychology, as well as in the specialty field of counseling psychology. Theoretical perspectives as well as academic and applied experiences of the faculty fit the objectives and goals of a program in counseling psychology. Faculty members demonstrate competence in counseling psychology through indicators such as psychological licensure, research, and publications that are appropriate to the program's objectives and goals, membership or fellowship in Division 17, possession of the specialty diploma in counseling psychology awarded by the American Board of Professional Psychology, and other specialty-related recognitions.

### **Students**

1. The program admits an identifiable body of students who are sufficient in number and diversity to ensure opportunities for meaningful peer interaction, mutual support, and socialization as counseling psychologists.

2. Students admitted to the program are characterized by intellectual and academic ability and ethical character appropriate for doctoral training. Students reflect the program's goals, objectives, and philosophy through their intellectual and professional development.

### **Organization and Support Services**

1. Regardless of how the program is organized within the university, there is evidence in operation of a formal organizational structure that facilitates the achievement of program goals and objectives. Where joint or intercollegiate arrangements exist, a plan identifies the obligations of each unit in the areas of program contributions, access to resources, and participation in admissions and program management.

2. The program possesses and appropriately uses the resources required to achieve its goals and objectives. These resources include financial support for training and education, graduate assistantships, clerical and technical services, materials and equipment, physical facilities, and access to appropriate practicum training facilities.

## **DOMAIN D: CULTURAL AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AND DIVERSITY**

The program recognizes the importance of cultural and individual differences and diversity in the training of psychologists.

1. The specialty of counseling psychology has had a central role in the establishment of diversity as an important domain in professional psychology. Consequently, students in counseling psychology are taught to take a systemic, person-environment approach to understanding the psychological development of the individuals to whom assessment and intervention services are offered. Within such a framework, the interaction of factors such as culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, physical ability, and the unique characteristics of the individual are given special attention. Furthermore, an emphasis is placed on understanding of personal values and belief systems within the framework of the individual's culture.

2. Students and faculty demonstrate sensitivity to social, economic, and political factors that diminish, marginalize, or otherwise limit a client's access to full participation in the society. Counseling psychology training programs promote the development of competencies through which counseling psychologists may assist clients in overcoming barriers to education, employment, and health services. Counseling psychology programs are committed to removing cultural barriers and to offering assistance to those who face discrimination. As one aspect of this sensitivity, counseling psychologists are aware of their own culture and ethnicity as it influences their life and work.

3. Program faculty implement a thoughtful and coherent plan for recruiting a diverse faculty and student body. In addition, counseling psychology integrates concepts related to cultural and individual differences in both science and practice.

## **DOMAIN E: STUDENT-FACULTY RELATIONS**

The program demonstrates that its education, training, and socialization experiences are characterized by mutual respect and courtesy between students and faculty and that it operates in a manner that facilitates students' educational experiences.

1. Interactions among students, faculty, and staff are courteous, reflecting respect for cultural and individual diversity and the highest standards of professional and ethical conduct.

2. Program faculty are accessible to students and provide them with the level of supervision and mentoring needed to complete the program in a timely manner.

3. At the time of admissions and throughout the training sequence, students are kept informed of program and university requirements through written policies. In addition, students receive feedback at least annually on their progress toward becoming counseling psychologists. Feedback includes notations of progress as well as indications of deficits or problems that need corrective attention. In all instances where problems may impede a student's progress, the student is provided with guidance detailing due process procedures, means of remediation where possible, and written feedback regarding the relative success of corrective measures.

### **DOMAIN F: PROGRAM SELF-ASSESSMENT AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT**

The program demonstrates a commitment to excellence through self-study, which assures that its goals and objectives are met, enhances the quality of professional education and training obtained by its students, and contributes to the fulfillment of its sponsor university's mission.

1. The faculty of counseling psychology programs strive to enhance program quality through continuous self-study and by meeting the criteria of relevant academic and professional accrediting organizations. Principal organizations include nationally recognized regional accrediting associations and the APA. Guidelines promulgated by other groups, such as the National Register of Health Service Providers and state licensing boards, may also inform program development.

2. Excellence in training is demonstrated through periodic reviews by the sponsoring university, university governing boards, regional accrediting associations, and the APA. Commitment to excellence in counseling psychology may be demonstrated through a variety of means. Examples of review methods are (a) reviewing program goals and objectives in relation to program and university mission statements, (b) comparing program outcomes to local, regional, and national needs for counseling psychological services, (c) tracking practicum and internship placement of students, and (d) monitoring licensure status and job placements of graduates.

3. Counseling psychology programs monitor education and training outcomes through feedback from affiliated agencies that accept students for practicum and internship placements. In addition, follow-up surveys of graduates and regular feedback from students and faculty comprise important components of the evaluative process. There is evidence through program modifications that evaluative data are being used in program planning and improvement.

### **DOMAIN G: PUBLIC DISCLOSURE**

1. The provision of information to the public regarding a training program in counseling psychology is analogous to the ethical imperative of service providers to inform prospective clients of the nature and parameters of their services. Brochures and other printed materials as well as personal communications represent the program's requirements and characteristics accurately.

2. Descriptions of counseling psychology programs include the following:

- program objectives, goals, and training model;
- requirements for admission and graduation;
- information about faculty, student characteristics, and resources;
- information pertaining to the accreditation status;
- information regarding kinds of research, practicum, and internship experiences available to students;
- policies relating to evaluation and selective retention; and
- places of employment of recent graduates.

### **DOMAIN H: RELATIONSHIP WITH ACCREDITING BODY**

The program demonstrates its commitment to the accreditation process by fulfilling its responsibilities to the accrediting body from which its accredited status is granted.

1. The program abides by the accrediting body's published policies and procedures, including the filing of reports in a timely manner. In addition, the program informs the accrediting body of changes in conditions that may affect the quality of training.

2. To remain current with accreditation procedures and other developments in the field of counseling psychology, program representatives participate in relevant organizations, such as the CCPTP and the APA Division of Counseling Psychology.

3. One or more program representatives complete the training necessary to become a member of the accreditation site-visitor pool.

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