

Handbook

Master of Counselling 2024



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Welcome

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Master of Counselling (MCouns) program at The University of Queensland, Australia. I sincerely hope that you will find your time with us rewarding, challenging but also highly meaningful and enjoyable. The Master of Counselling program was established in 2003 and has over the years of its existence grown to encompass a rich program that offers students both diversity and knowledge. However, we in the Program realise that what we offer is only one aspect of what will mould an effective counsellor. The key element is what you as students bring to your experience in this program. We encourage you to bring the richness and uniqueness of who you are to what you learn and make the journey through your studies one that will matter not only to you but also to the many people for whom you will care for in your profession.

Staff of the program look forward to the time in which we will both learn from and both teach each other.

Warm regards

Dr Denis O'Hara

Program Lead

Master of Counselling

About the Master of Counselling Program

The Master of Counselling Program (MCouns) is a two-year equivalent postgraduate program jointly owned and run by the School of Nursing Midwifery and Social Work (NMSW) and the School of Psychology. The program prepares students to become accredited counsellors in Australia through the Australian Counselling Association (ACA) and the Psychotherapists and Counsellors Federation of Australia (PACFA). It also allows graduates to seek entry on to the Australian Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (ARCAP).

Basic information about the Master of Counselling can be found at:

<https://future-students.uq.edu.au/study/program/Master-of-Counselling-5333>

Information about Professional bodies and membership of such can be found at:

Australian Counselling Association (ACA)

<http://www.theaca.net.au/>

Psychotherapists and Counsellors Federation of Australia (PACFA)

<http://www.pacfa.org.au/>

Australian Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (ARCAP)

<https://www.arcapregister.com.au/>

School Office

For most enquiries you can contact the School of NMSW that administers the MCouns program –

Telephone: 3365 2068

Email: nmsw@uq.edu.au



The School Administration Office is on Level 3 of the Chamberlain Building (Building 35). Office hours are 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday. Doors to the building are open by Security at 7am and locked by Security around 10.00pm during teaching weeks.

Useful University Websites

mySInet - <https://www.sinet.uq.edu.au>

mySI-net allows you to enrol, change your courses, and obtain studies reports.

Programs and Courses - <https://my.uq.edu.au/programs-courses/index.html>

Program and Courses is searchable and can be used to find information about all programs and courses at The University of Queensland. Particular attention should be paid to the Program Rules for your program.

my.UQ <https://my.uq.edu.au/>

This website contains essential information for students and is searchable. Look here if you are looking for information on managing your program, including enrolling, timetables, assessment, policies and rules, IT matters, social events, managing your details, student support, graduation, maps, parking and transport and lots more. You also access your email and calendar through my.UQ. **It is through my.UQ that you can undertake important tasks such as apply for extensions for assessment.**

Blackboard sites for each course in which you are enrolled can be accessed through **my.UQ** <https://my.uq.edu.au/> by logging in and going to 'LearnUQ'

Alternatively you can access through : <https://elearning.uq.edu.au/user/login>

On Blackboard you will find information about all courses, lecture notes, and will find Turnitin sites where you can submit your assessment pieces including any video recordings.

UQ Student Services

Staff at Student Services are committed to assisting students while at UQ.

Student Services can provide free and confidential assistance in the following areas:

- Careers Counselling & Development
- Disability Program
- Student Budget and Finances
- Graduate Employment
- International Student Support
- Learning Assistance
- Counselling
- Workshops and Seminars

For further information contact:

Student Services
Relaxation Block,
21D Student Union Complex (opposite the Main Refectory)
St Lucia Campus

Telephone: +61 7 3365 1704
Facsimile: +61 7 3365 1702
Email: ss@uq.edu.au
Web: www.uq.edu.au/student-services

Disability Policy

Any student with a disability who may require alternative academic arrangements in the Program is encouraged to seek advice at the commencement of the semester from a Disability Adviser at Student Services.

Phone: 3365 1704
Website: <http://www.uq.edu.au/student-services/disability>

Foundational principles and approaches of the Mcouns

A number of foundational principles and approaches form the basis of the Master of Counselling program. These shared foundations and approaches within the Master of Counselling are:

- **The Mcouns is a professional practice program**
The Mcouns first priority is to develop competent and respectful professionals who are able to practice effectively as counsellors. Hence all students in the program develop foundational knowledge and competencies in all areas of practice as required for a counsellor. These include interpersonal skills, ethical practice, a scientist-practitioner approach, and evidence-based assessment and intervention.

- **Counselling as both Individual and within context**
 In being offered through Schools that are related but which also bring their distinct contributions to the study of counselling, the MCouns program is able to link the individual approach more emphasised in Psychology, the social contextual, systemic and human rights approaches of Social Work, and the recognition of mental health within health and well-being as recognised by Nursing. This allows the program to consider the broad and integrative approach to very specific issues such as trauma, domestic violence, children's issues, family interactions or diagnosed disorders.
- **Respecting and upholding of the importance of the therapeutic relationship, the person of the therapist and other common factors to counselling**
 The strong evidence that exists for the centrality of the therapeutic relationship, the person of the therapist and other common factors to the effectiveness of counselling means that these common factors are an integral part of the program and are considered a vital core foundation on which other knowledge and skills in counselling are developed.
- **Importance of self-reflection and self-awareness**
 The evidence for the central role of the person of the counsellor in effective therapy has led to a recognition in the MCouns of the importance of encouraging self-awareness and self-care among students as well as reflection in practice.
- **Integrative approaches in theory, practice and research**
 Evidence points to the fact that many different theories and interventions are effective in the support of the wellbeing of individuals, groups and communities. Complex problems require a broad consideration of a person's experience which is best served by adopting an integrative approach to theory, practice and research. While the program develops skills in a number of approaches, the MCouns also seeks to consider how analysis and synthesis of different approaches within an integrative approach can best meet the diverse needs of individuals. In this approach there is also a broad view and strong link between theory, assessment and intervention.
- **Holistic**
 The MCouns emphasises a holistic approach to the needs of people for whom we care. The program encourages consideration of the interactions of many different aspects of a person's life within their difficulties and hence encourages consideration of varied approaches to care.
- **Person-driven and responsive**
 The identification of the needs and provision of care are centrally located within the person of the client, group or community. Ascertaining these needs from the perspective of the client, and designing collaborative approaches to care are central to the approach of the MCouns. The approach is seen as dynamic, being responsive to the changing needs of the client.
- **Strengths-based approach**
 While the MCouns recognises and educates and trains practitioners in the knowledge, assessment and intervention for difficult problems, it also recognises the importance of the client and community strengths to care for people facing mental health concerns.
- **Interprofessional respect and building of interprofessional relationships**
 In recognising that the well-being of each individual is influenced by many factors (biological, psychological, social, spiritual), the MCouns program encourages the emerging practitioner to understand the work of, respect fully, and work cooperatively and innovatively with, different professionals in various disciplines and sectors such as welfare, health, education and justice.
- **Recognition of skills and knowledge across the spectrum of needs from prevention, promotion and early intervention to interventions with complex problems**
 The MCouns recognises that health and wellbeing evolve across the lifespan and are commonly related to pressures within a person's past and present life. Further, it is understood that many difficulties people face may not constitute a mental disorder and that people may or may not seek assistance at many stages in the development of a problem. Hence, the MCouns program values approaches to care that emphasise promotion, prevention, and early intervention, as well as treatment. As a result, skills are encouraged that would enhance care from community-based psychosocial support to more specific formal intervention approaches.

Program Structure

The program structure for fulltime students from 2018 is offered below:

Year 1, Semester 1

Course Code	Units	Course Title
COUN7001	2	Interpersonal Skills in Counselling 1
COUN7002	2	Theories of Counselling
COUN7005	2	Counselling and Mental Health
COUN7014	2	Understanding and Caring for Those Affected by Loss

Year 1, Semester 2

Course Code	Units	Course Title
COUN7006	2	Advanced Interpersonal Skills
COUN7012	2	Counselling Children and Young People
COUN7016	2	Ethics and Professional Practice Issues in Counselling
SWSP7267	2	Family Therapies Traditions: Basic Concepts and Skills

Year 2, Semester 1

Course Code	Units	Course Title
COUN7004	2	Relationship Counselling
COUN7019	2	Counselling for Crisis and Violence
COUN7021	4	Counselling Practicum
HLTH7315	4	Advancing Research Inquiry

Year 2, Semester 2

Course Code	Units	Course Title
COUN7015	2	Counselling for Health and Capacity Challenges
COUN7021	4	Counselling Practicum
HLTH7317	4	Research Methods
#2 from electives list		

Electives

Course Code	Units	Course Title
EDUC7001	2	On the Edge: Identifying and Assisting Students at Risk

EDUC7009	2	Career Guidance: Counselling for Life Planning
HPRM7004	2	Introduction to Substance Use & Misuse
HPRM7005	2	Assessment & Interventions for Substance Misuse
PSYC8017	2	Public Health Psychology
PSYC8291	2	Applied Gerontology
PUBH7003	2	Qualitative Research: Public Health Applications
PUBH7620	2	Social Perspectives in Public Health

Or #2 of elective courses approved by the Program Lead

Enrolling on-line using mySinet

It is YOUR responsibility, as a student, to **enrol yourself** in courses on-line via mySinet for each semester of your relevant program by the due date. You are also responsible for any withdrawal from courses or changes to your enrolment. Students who do not have access to a computer may utilise the following facilities:

- Any UQ library
- Student Centre – St Lucia



Important!

If you are still experiencing difficulties enrolling in your courses via mySinet, telephone 3365 6000 or email help@its.uq.edu.au or visit your Student Centre **as soon as possible**.

Failure to advise the University of your difficulties with enrolment will mean that your enrolment will be delayed and you will be charged administrative fees for late enrolment!

Personal Details

It is YOUR responsibility, as a student, to ensure that you complete **all** personal details in mySI-net prior to enrolling in courses. Failure to complete the requested details will prevent you from enrolling in your courses. **It is YOUR responsibility** to ensure that all personal details are kept up-to-date during your enrolment at The University of Queensland.

Student Email Address

- When you receive your username and password that allows you to enrol, you will automatically receive a Student Email address.
- **Your student email address will be the address used by The University of Queensland for any email correspondence to you.** Please ensure that you check this email address regularly!

- Students also have access to free internet time through my.UQ – so make sure you use your entitlements!

Important!

Please ensure that you keep your personal details (e.g. change of address, and telephone numbers, etc.) up to date on mySI-net. The University will use details listed in mySI-net for all correspondence. It is vital that students understand that the University or your School or Course Coordinator will ONLY use your UQ student email address to correspond with you. We will NOT use a personal email address. It is the student's responsibility to monitor and respond to all correspondence from the university, and therefore it is assumed that students check their student email regularly and ensure that the Inbox is cleared so that messages are able to be accepted. An email being rejected as the mailbox is 'Over Quota' will not be accepted as a legitimate reason for failure to comply or to have not received important information.

The University has set important dates for 2024. **It is YOUR responsibility** to ensure that you are familiar with these important dates so as to avoid incurring late penalties.

Please see the following pages for some of the important dates you should be aware of.

The Academic Calendar for 2024 can be viewed at:

<https://asd.uq.edu.au/files/4050/2024%20Academic%20Calendar.pdf>

Withdrawal from a Course

You are able to withdraw **yourself** from a course via mySI-net up to census date each semester without incurring financial penalty. If you don't withdraw from the course, non-completion is shown as a failure in your record. A number of failed courses can see you excluded from further study in the program. If you withdraw before the census date, that course will not be counted toward exclusion and you can obtain a refund of fees.

Important!

Census dates for each semester for withdrawal without academic or financial liability are:
Semester 1 – 31 March
Semester 2 – 31 August



You will still be able to withdraw from your program up to 4 weeks after census date (see dates below) via mySI-net:



**Academic Census dates for withdrawal
without academic liability but with
financial liability:**

Semester 1 – 30 April

Semester 2 – 30 September

If you withdraw from a course between 1-30 April (Semester 1) or 1-30 September (Semester 2) you **will not** receive an academic penalty; however, **you will be financially liable**. This means that if you wish to re-enrol in these courses at a later date you will need to pay the relevant fees again.

If you withdraw after the abovementioned period, due to extenuating circumstance, you may apply to have the academic penalty and/or financial liability removed. This will require supporting documentation.

Information on the policies around withdrawal can be found here: <https://my.uq.edu.au/information-and-services/manage-my-program/uq-policies-and-rules>

Credit for Previous Work

Some students seeking entry to the MCouns will be seeking credit for individual **postgraduate** level courses or awards completed previously in other awards or institutions.

If you wish to seek credit for previous postgraduate work in the areas to be covered in your MCouns studies, you need to submit a certified copy of your academic record from the tertiary institution/s in which you studied (other than UQ) plus **very detailed** information of the courses that you have previously undertaken that you wish to receive credit for. As the MCouns is a postgraduate program, only credit for other postgraduate courses will be considered.

See the following link for more details:

<https://my.uq.edu.au/node/316/6#6>

The Credit or Exemption for previous studies form can be found at:

<https://future-students.uq.edu.au/apply/credit-and-exemptions>

Information about assessment

Assessment Policies

The University of Queensland's policy on assessment supports criterion-based assessment whereby students' grades are determined by the standard of work in terms of meeting a number of criteria determined to represent the requirements for a particular course. Therefore, student work is judged according to a pre-determined standard of task completion rather than by comparing it to the work of other students undertaking the same course.

Information on exams and assessment can be found on my.UQ, see: <https://my.uq.edu.au/services/exams-and-assessment> with the full policy being at <https://ppl.app.uq.edu.au/content/3.10-curricula-and-assessment>.

Specifics about assessment policies in a particular course are given in the course profile for each course. The course profiles for courses in the MCouns also provide the detailed criteria against which students will be assessed for each piece of assessment.

NMSW Assessment Policies

The School of Nursing Midwifery and Social Work that administers the Master of Counselling Program has developed a set of assessment policies for postgraduate students. The Master of Counselling program works within these requirements. It is vital students read these guidelines in full that can be found on <https://nmsw.uq.edu.au/assessment>.

Assessments Submission

Submitting Assignments to Turnitin

All assessment tasks other than non-text based assessment pieces must be lodged online through the course's Blackboard site (e.g. via Turnitin). Video recordings that are part of your assessment can also be submitted on Blackboard using the UQ Kaltra system. Assessments must be submitted by the due date and time which according to NMSW policy will be 13:00 (1pm) of the due date. Your course profile will have more details.

Hard copy submission

Only non-text based assessment pieces such as counselling aids may be submitted in person as directed by the course coordinator and course profile. These items need to be accompanied by an 'Assessment Cover Sheet' and are to be submitted in the 'Assignment Deposit' box on Level 3 of the Chamberlain Building no later than 1pm on the due date. In some cases such as for the children's aid the item may be too large for the submission box. In such cases please hand in at the NMSW Reception desk on Level 3 of the Chamberlain Building before 1pm.

Mailed non-text based assessment must be 'postmarked' and mailed on or before 1pm on the date that the assessment is due.

Late Submission of assessment

If you wish to apply for an extension to your assessment due date, you can do so online on [my.UQ](https://my.uq.edu.au).

Either a medical certificate or documentation to support the exceptional circumstances must be submitted as part to the application. A student's declaration or personal statement on the application form is not sufficient evidence of exceptional circumstances. An extension made on medical grounds will be for the number of days for which the medical certificate indicates the student was unwell and will not exceed 14 days.

The application must be submitted **before** the assessment is due, or if for medical reasons as soon as possible. Extension requests are submitted online via my.UQ before 1pm on the due date. Requests are not submitted to the course coordinator directly. Information about applying for an extension can be found at [my.UQ – Applying for an assessment extension](https://my.uq.edu.au).

Outcome of application

Extension requests are generally processed within 2 working days. Students can see the outcome of their application by logging in to my.UQ.

Penalties for late submission

Assessments submitted late will have 10% of the mark available deducted per day (including weekends and public holidays). Work submitted more than seven days after the due date without an approved extension will not receive a mark. NB. This penalty percentage does not apply to pass/fail assessment.

Students on a Student Access Plan (SAP) with a clause on extension requests being accepted by the Course Coordinator must still adhere to the extensions request policy outlined. If medical

certificates/supporting documentation have already been supplied centrally to Student Services, students may outline their current situation in a note attached to the application, with reference to the access plan.

Re-marking

The University has clear guidelines in relation to the re-marking of assessment pieces (see <https://ppl.app.uq.edu.au/content/3.10.02-assessment#Procedures>).

These include:

- The remark will replace the original mark in the calculation of the final grade which could result in the grade going up, down, or remaining the same as the original grade.
- The student has sought and received feedback about their performance on the assessment from the tutor/marker concerned.
- The student, after receiving feedback, provides in writing a substantial case to show how the mark awarded does not reflect their performance with respect to the published assessment criteria for that assessment.

Course

Students are normally required to complete and submit all pieces of assessment to pass a course. If this is not the case, such will be made clear in the course profile.

General Principles

Assignment Suggestions

Unless otherwise specified by the course coordinator, the following guidelines in presenting assignments should be followed:

- All assignments are to be typed using double line spacing
- There should be a 5cm left hand margin
- Font size should be at least 12 font and in an easily read font that is not too decorative (e.g., Times Roman, Arial, Calibri, Tahoma, Verdana)
- Page numbers must be used

Grammar

The use of correct grammar and spelling is considered to be an essential aspect of each piece of written assessment and is one of the assessment criteria. It is acceptable (and expected) that markers will make comment on grammar and spelling, where necessary, throughout students' work.

It is also recognized that for many students English is a second language and so writing in English can be challenging. It is still important that students use correct English in their assessment. UQ Student Services offer academic and English support for students. Information on such can be found at:

<https://uqcollege.uq.edu.au/student-support/international-student-support/english-support-for-uq-students>

Attendance and Participation

Attendance at lectures is a highly important expectation as part your enrolment in the MCouns. The MCouns is a professional program preparing students for professional practice as counsellors. Counselling involves very personal professional face-to-face interactions between the counsellor and clients. As skills and personal development are an integral part of the development of a counsellor and these are best nurtured in

a face-to-face environment, attendance at lectures and tutorials is vital. Becoming a professional counsellor goes beyond an academic knowledge of the profession to developing the skills of being a counsellor. Developing skills involves interaction with lecturers, classmates and clients. Hence physically being present at lectures and tutorials is vital to development as a counsellor. As such attendance at lectures and tutorials is considered necessary and required rather than voluntary.

Whilst students are adults who must take responsibility for their own learning, the benefits to be gained from attending are indisputable and students are encouraged to participate in their own learning. However, students also face many competing demands in their lives (most notably, work and family commitments) and these can lead to attendance at classes being given a lower priority at times. Without attendance, it is difficult to justify the attainment of learning objectives and, for this reason, the importance of attending is paramount. In fact, we believe that students will themselves recognise the importance of interaction with other students, tutors, guest lecturers and course coordinators.

It is therefore **anticipated and highly encouraged** that students will attend all lectures and tutorial sessions. If you are unable to attend for a very specific legitimate reason, please inform your course coordinator of your non-attendance.

Practicum Requirements

Postgraduate programs such as the Master of Counselling that provide professional standing have a particular requirement for practicum.

The Practicum course COUN7021 is a year-long 4-unit course. Entry to the Practicum course is restricted with students who have successfully completed eight pre-requisite first year courses:

- COUN7001
- COUN7002
- COUN7005
- COUN7006
- COUN7012
- COUN7014
- COUN7016
- SWSP7267

Students are able to complete more than these courses before going to placement; but these courses constitute a minimum requirement.

In addition, to ensure a base level of current competence in counselling, a student must have completed and received a pass in the Core Competency Interview assessment within the six months prior to commencing placement in COUN7021. This assessment item is completed in COUN7006, and so students who complete this course in the semester prior to commencing placement will be deemed to have met this hurdle requirement. Where students have completed COUN7006 more than six months before enrolling in COUN7021, the student must complete a Competency Interview as a hurdle requirement within their requirements for their enrolment in COUN7021. More details on the competency interviews can be found below.

The Master of Counselling placement is a yearlong placement completed over two consecutive semesters (students enrol in the placement course, COUN7021). Students must complete a minimum of 182 hours attendance each semester, typically two days per week, seven hours per day for two 13 week semesters (minimum of 364 hours over the year). Students must gain a minimum of 60 hours client contact and 15 hours of formal supervision over the year, i.e. one hour of supervision for every four hours client contact.

The placement usually runs from late February until the end of October, corresponding with the university semester dates, though students can negotiate a mutually agreeable early start date with an agency, in liaison with the Placement Officer. Students negotiate with agencies to observe UQ's mid-year break (2-7

weeks in June/July) or continue placement over the break. Students need to keep the needs of their clients in mind when negotiating breaks.

Students are required to undertake a number of tasks as outlined in the UQ Master of Counselling Field Education Manual. Examples of activities (**adapted from the PACFA Training Standards, 2022**) include:

Client Contact: *real life person-to-person contact with the client*

A client may be an individual, a couple, a family or a group. Clients must have no pre-existing, personal or professional relationship with the counsellor. Client contact involves a range of experiences of the trainee working directly with clients where there are no dual relationships between the client and trainee:

- One to One; Couples; Family or Group counselling
- Co-therapy (as an active participant, up to a maximum of 50 hours)
- Facilitation of client group workshops
- Crisis response/follow-up
- Psychological first aid
- Informal counselling/support
- Supervising clients whilst they perform a task
- Supervising child contact
- Home visits/outreach
- Assessments

Note that the following forms of 'remote' counselling can only count towards hours after an initial 40 hours of direct face to face client contact has been achieved:

- Telephone counselling
- Skype counselling
- Online counselling
- Email counselling

Clinical Supervision: *activities that directly support client work*

The process of clinical supervision is an opportunity for supervisees to present relevant material regarding their clinical practice via case discussion, recordings of client sessions, role plays etc, allowing a space for reflective review by the supervisee and feedback by the supervisor. Examples include:

- One to one supervision
- Group supervision (up to 12 members for the first 20 hours whilst in training, then up to 6 members)
- Observation of counselling
- Formal case presentation
- De-briefing about client issues
- Case consultation/formulation/discussion
- Case presentation at UQ workshops/courses
- Role plays, practice sessions

Note that **peer** supervision does not count unless practitioners have at least 5 years clinical experience.

Students also complete a small research project throughout the year (to be negotiated with the agency and the COUN7021 Course Coordinator). Students can only conduct research or gather data after they have developed an appropriate ethics protocol and have approval from the relevant ethics committee/authority as set out in the host organisation's policy manual.

The Master of Counselling program is accredited with the Psychotherapy & Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) and the Australian Counselling Association (ACA) accreditation standards. The Field Education program is set up in accordance with PACFA and ACA accreditation standards.

The School has developed a policy concerning the location of placements for individuals. The policy takes into account the expectations of PACFA and ACA. The policy is outlined in the follow section.

Practice in Workplace Policy

Guidelines for Placement in Current Workplace

Some students enquire about completing their placement in an agency where they are currently employed. The School's policy in deciding about such requests includes the following points:

The student would be required to move out of their current position, preferably to another location, and to use the placement to be involved in a different area of the agency's work.

The agency needs to recognize that the field educator, and NOT the student, is responsible for the student's work on placement.

Generally, the student should not be asked to do more than half of a normal workload. When a placement is undertaken in a student's place of work, a written agreement signed by the organization, university and student will be completed. This will include:

- Agreement that the employee is in a student role whilst on placement and that they are able to meet the educational requirements, principles and policies set out in the PACFA and ACA Accreditation Standards.
- Allocation of learning experiences not involving the student's routine work responsibilities.
- Protected time whilst on placement that is separate from the duties carried out at work and includes time to complete reading, reflective learning and assessment activities related to the placement.
- Wherever practicable, provision of a field educator who is not the student's line manager or usual supervisor.

In addition, the following points need to be addressed:

That the Manager of Field Education has the right to exercise a discretionary judgment on the suitability of the proposed placement in terms of meeting the educational requirements of the course.

That the rights of other students who may be interested in a placement in this agency must be respected. That is, a request for placement in a place of employment may be turned down if it is seen as denying other students access to an established placement.

That only one such request will be considered for a student. Generally, this School seeks to support student efforts to complete their courses and recognises the financial challenges such study may represent. At the same time, it has a responsibility to ensure that the educational opportunities made available are of a reasonable quality, and that the rights of all students are safeguarded.

If any student has any queries about the impact of this policy on their particular circumstances, they are advised to seek clarification with Field Education staff very early in the pre-placement process.

Field Education Staff

Position	Staff	Email	Phone
Principal Practice Educator	Claire Turner	claire.turner@uq.edu.au	3346 7312
MCouns Placement Officer	Ms Naomi Hansar	n.hansar@uq.edu.au	3365 2741
COUN7021 Course Coordinator	Mr Jim Schirmer	j.schirmer@uq.edu.au	3346 7026

Placement Process

In the semester prior to placement, students attend a pre-placement orientation workshop where they learn about pre-placement processes. Students do not arrange their own placements. This is organized through the Field Education Unit in NMSW and the MCouns placement officer.

Each student fills in a placement questionnaire where they outline:

- the knowledge and skills they wish to develop in placement
- their areas of interest including practice methods and fields
- their geographical area and mode of transport
- any special skills and/or needs

Students are allocated to placement opportunities on the basis of their training needs and suitability rather than simply student preferences or practical constraints. However, staff try to consider student preferences and recognized needs in their allocations. To this end, students are asked to nominate three agency preferences from a list of placement agencies provided by the Placement Officer. Students are also able to nominate 'new' agencies not on the list and placement possibilities at those agencies will be investigated by the Placement Officer. It should be noted that while students are matched to available placement agencies according to their identified interests and skills as well as agency requirements, specific placement agencies or contexts cannot be guaranteed. Students attend an interview at one or more agencies before final allocation of placements is confirmed.

Placement Curricula

Detailed course guidelines, including assessment requirements, and the policy with regard to extensions in the placement course (COUN7021) are outlined in the COUN7021 course profile and in the Master of Counselling Field Education Manual. The manual can be found on the School website and is updated in July/August each year for the following year's placement.

Field Education webpage

Students are requested to regularly check information on the School website: <https://nmsw.uq.edu.au>

Information about placement can be found via the **Practice Placements** under the *Current Students* tab on the home page of the School website.

Immunisations

For the most up to date information regarding current university and placement provider requirements for immunisations, please refer to our [Prepare for Placement](#) website.

Under the counselling tab, you will find information regarding current recommendations on providing an up to date [Student Immunisation Record](#) through the provision of a [Form A](#) and a [Tuberculosis Risk Assessment Form](#). There is also information on [COVID-19 Vaccinations and Flu Vaccinations](#).

The Student Immunisation Record should be completed in consultation with a Registered Medical Practitioner and can be completed in Australia or in a student's home country.

Please ensure that you read this information carefully, adhering to any requirements. Due to the time taken to arrange an immunisation record, it is recommended that students begin this process as soon as they are aware it is a provider requirement for their placement. Further information about immunisations will be provided in the first year of the program.

Field Placements Security Checks

There are government legislative requirements in relation to people working with children under the age of 18 years in field placement. In addition, some government departments and organisations will require a student to complete a police security check before the placement can commence. It is very important for a student to inform the Placement Officer at the time of the Pre-Placement Workshop of any potential issues that could arise in any potential security checks.

Working with Children

All students, before going on placement, are required to consent to the working with children check completed by the Blue Card Services, Public Safety Business Agency. This check is an investigation into whether a person has a criminal history that will affect their suitability to work with children. Students need to apply for a Blue Card **prior** to going on placement. The Blue Card application (or authorisation if the student already has a Blue Card) is made through reception at the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work. There is no charge by Blue Card Services as students are engaged in unpaid placements as part of a university program. If approved, the student will be issued with a Blue Card containing the student's name, Blue Card number and expiry date. This card is transferrable to other types of child-related work or volunteering. For further information see the website: <http://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au>.

Because of the time it takes for the Blue Card to be issued by Blue Card Services, arrangements will generally be made for the School to submit applications for the Blue Card during the second semester of the first year of the program.

Note: it is an offence for a student to provide false or misleading information to Blue Card Services or to sign an application for a Blue Card if they are a disqualified person.

Criminal History Check

During field placements students may have access to service users' personal files or records. Some agencies, including Centrelink, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, and Corrective Services require students to provide details of any criminal offences and will request permission for a security check to be undertaken and completed prior to the commencement of placement.

Field Placements with Queensland Health

Students who undertake a placement with Queensland Department of Health will be required to review orientation information on the department's web site at <http://publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/student-deed-documentation> and provide confirmation to the School that they have read the information. Queensland Health also has a requirement that a student will have been vaccinated against Hepatitis B. Note that Master of Counselling placements with Queensland Health are rare.

Competency in Practice

Students will be assessed formatively during their practicum and where a lack of competence exists, students will be informed and a program of remediation designed that is agreed by the student, supervisor and university liaison staff member. Formal documentation of the areas of a lack of competence and remediation must be held by the course coordinator.

Competent practicum performance will be assessed summatively at the conclusion of the practicum. Failure to provide evidence of competence in key designated skills criteria will constitute a failure in the practicum requirements and hence the practicum course. The practicum course also requires other assessable work in the form of the research component. However, even if the other requirements of the Practicum are passed, a student will not be able to pass a practicum course without a pass in the competence requirement of the practicum.

Competency Interviews

The Competency Interviews: What are they?

The Competency Interviews are an integral process to ensure that students in the Master of Counselling Program are achieving a satisfactory level of competence to commence placement. Students undertake this process as part of their assessment in the courses COUN7001 and COUN7006, and these assessments typically occur in the first exam week of the corresponding semester to each of these courses. As described above, students need to complete and pass the more advanced Competency Interview associated with COUN7006 in the six months prior to commencing placement. Thus, it is recommended that students complete COUN7006 in the semester immediately before they are due to commence placement, in order to meet this requirement.

The format of the Competency Interview involves the student undertaking an observed and assessed counselling session with a role-played “client”. During these interviews students will be able to show the skills and knowledge that they have developed during their first year of the Master of Counselling Program.

This reflective process will determine whether a student has sufficient counselling skills and ability to participate in the practicum COUN7021. It is vital for students to understand they will not be able to be offered a Practicum placement position unless, and until such time as the student meets the standards required in the competency interviews. To meet this requirement a student must pass the course COUN7006 in which the passing of the competency interview is a necessary requirement (a hurdle requirement). COUN7006 cannot be undertaken unless the student receives a pass in the Competency Interview in COUN7001.

Detailed criteria with respect to what is required in the counselling within the Competency Interviews are provided in the course profiles; however, they are discussed below.

Criteria for Competency:

Competency will be determined according the following criteria:

- Displaying organizational skills in terms of preparation for the interview
- Displaying basis communication and counselling skills such as attending, reflection, questioning, paraphrasing and summarizing
- Ability to build rapport and alliance with a client
- Ability to draw information from the client from a number of domains including the cognitive and emotional.
- Evidence of an ability to reflect accurately on the quality and veracity of the content of the interview
- Ability to reflect on the process of counselling that is occurring
- Ability to generate hypotheses and consider potential approaches to future work with the client
- Ability to relate the process of the interview to theoretical underpinnings
- Ability to articulate theoretical framework

- Ability to reflect on personal counselling strengths and weaknesses
- Ability to formulate possible approaches to remediation of weaknesses or difficulties

The Purpose of the Interview

As much as we are aware that students may feel pressured and be concerned by the idea of a competency interview, it ought to be considered as an opportunity for students to demonstrate their newly gained skills, experience direct and instant feedback on their work and gain insight into their progress toward becoming a professional counsellor.

Further, in acknowledging the time, effort and energy that Placement Supervisors give to our students and the desire to respect clients and offer the best care possible to clients, it is imperative that we ensure student counsellors have an acceptable level of competency prior to commencing their first placement.

What is required?

- You will be expected to undertake a 25-30 minute counselling session/interview with an informed volunteer.
- You will undertake this counselling session which will be recorded.
- At the same time the interview will be being viewed by one or two academic or clinical professional staff who will act as a reflective team for you. Sometimes, a field supervisor and/or tutor may join the reflective team.
- For most students you will counsel your 'client' for about 25-30 minutes before you will conclude the session and then meet with the reflective team/assessors to discuss your sessions.
- In some situations the student may be able to show optimum skills in their interview with some support/input/encouragement during the interview. In such cases, approximately half-way through the session the student will be invited to leave his or her 'client' for a few minutes to talk with your reflective team. At this time you will be able to talk to the team about the approach you are taking and its rationale. You will also receive feedback and suggestions re process and content from the reflective team that you can then seek to consider in the second half of your interview. A really important part of this process involves the ability to implement the strategies or processes offered by the reflective team and/or justify the approach you have taken.
- Following the interview you will meet with staff to discuss the entire interview. During this time your strengths will be recognized and any aspects of your counselling that needs to be worked on to improve your preparation for Placement will be suggested. You will also be expected to provide your own insights with respect to what occurred during the session and relate it to the theory and skills that you have learned in your program to this point. You will be able to suggest hypotheses from the story presented and on that basis make suggestions for future work with this 'client'.
- It is anticipated that as a result you will then be able to work on any areas of difficulty for you prior to going to Placement. It is expected that the student and the reflective team will discuss a plan to deal with any remediation of skills prior to going on to Placement.
- If the reflective team determine that your counselling practice is not of a level deemed competent, you will be required to undertake the remediation requirements, and undertake a second competency counselling session. Failure at this second attempt would mean a failure of the courses COUN7001 or COUN7006 and so an inability to proceed to placement.

Fitness for Practise

The University of Queensland (UQ) through the Master of Counselling program has a responsibility to our professional organizations and more importantly, to the people in the community for whom we care, to graduate practitioners who have skills, behaviours and attitudes that equip them to work responsibly, competently and respectfully as counsellors within Australia. As such we are charged with the responsibility to ensure that students are **fit to practise**.

The **PPL 3.30.14 Fitness to Practise Policy and Procedures** are designed primarily as protection for all from practice that may be harmful to clients, colleagues, co-workers and/or the student alike.

What does it mean being 'Fit to Practise'?

A student needs to show that he or she is able to meet the standards that are expected of a person who is fit to work as a counsellor. The UQ policy states that the policy and procedures has been developed to:

guide the management of cases where a student undertaking a program that has a practical placement component has exhibited behaviour that has given cause for concern as to their Fitness to Practise in that program. (Section 1.4 Policy)

Being fit to practise is considered in terms of a range of factors that according to the policy include:

- a) Engaging *in conduct outside the bounds of that considered acceptable or worthy of the membership of the profession (conduct)*; and/or
- b) Demonstrating *performance that is not consistent with the profession's established standards (performance)*; and/or
- c) Exhibiting *disregard for, or are unable to meet, the rules, regulations or standards for practising as a member of the profession or for undertaking professional practise with a professional practise provider (compliance)*; and/or
- d) Displaying *a disability or health condition that impairs their capacity to practise as required by the profession (disability or health)*. (Section 4.3 Policy)

Who can report Fitness to Practise concerns?

There may be a number of sources who may report concerns about a student's fitness to practise. These are known as stakeholders, both internal and external. They may include, but are not necessarily limited to: placement supervisors, university placement officers, academic staff, professional staff, clients via a supervisor, or other students via university staff.

What happens if Fitness to Practise concerns are noted with regards to a particular student?

If a Fitness to Practise incident or series of behaviours are reported, it is normally done so in writing.

The concern is directed to the Head of School who assigns an Investigating Officer to review the concern through seeking input from all relevant sources and gaining all relevant documentation. The affected student will be given an opportunity to respond to the Investigating Officer. In the situation of a serious issue, the placement may be suspended during the investigation.

Students have the right to have any concerns about them dealt with promptly, to be informed of such proceedings, and to be able to respond to such concerns.

What outcomes may occur with Fitness to Practise concerns?

In terms of investigation and outcomes, Fitness to Practise concerns can be categorised as:

- **Developmental Intervention.** These concerns are considered temporary, one-off or infrequent, minor and able to be remediated short-term. If an issue is deemed to be developmental, the student will be supported with supervision/supportive care/education/training to remediate issues.
- **Level 1.** These are considered frequent, accidental, thoughtless or unintentional, minor and able to be remediated short-term. If a Level 1 concern is determined, various outcomes may occur from no further action taken to a written warning to assessment implications or support referrals.

- **Level 2.** These are considered permanent, persistent, repeated or escalating, clear in intent, serious and unlikely to be remediated short-term. If a Level 2 concern is noted, outcomes may involve such measures as imposing conditions on the student, refusal to allow enrolment in further placements or assessment penalties. (Section 8.2 Procedure)

If a complaint is considered as one of misconduct, the case will be investigated in accordance with the [Student integrity and Misconduct Policy and Procedures \(PPL3.60.4\)](#) and ceases to be looked at under Fitness to Practise policy.

The University has the right to inform subsequent placement supervisors/organizations of previous Fitness to Practise concerns for a student. This would be done as a means of ensuring students who may be struggling in their practice gain any necessary support/supervision to ensure the students remain fit to practise and/or to protect the needs of vulnerable clients and staff of the placement organization.

A Fitness to Practise decision and outcome can be appealed by students within 20 working days of the notice of the outcome.

Full details of the Fitness to practise policy and Procedures can be found at <https://ppl.app.uq.edu.au/content/3.30.14-fitness-practise>

Students at Risk Guidelines

As discussed above, Fitness to Practise procedures have been put in place to support students, clients and supervisors in ensuring students become safe practitioners who exhibit professional behaviours that are considered appropriate both at the University and while on practical placements.

As the spirit of the Fitness to Practise policy is to balance remediation and rehabilitation of unacceptable practise, it is important to ensure the early identification of issues which may lead to concerns and implement intervention strategies (remediation) to assist you as students to attain acceptable standards in all aspects of your practice. It is hoped that through early identification, referral of students for Fitness to Practise and the ensuing repercussions can be averted.

As a result the Master of Counselling program has developed processes to provide a clear intermediate stage for addressing student difficulties in practicum before engaging The University of Queensland Fitness to Practice policy as outlined in Policy 3.30.14 Fitness to Practise <http://ppl.app.uq.edu.au/content/3.30.14-fitness-practise>.

Specifically, these guidelines are utilised when your supervisor or academic/professional staff determines that you may be at risk of failing an assessment component of a placement, including but not limited to: a mid or end-point evaluation on placement, or when significant and repeated issues have been raised about your performance on placement. The Risk Guidelines may also be considered and implemented if a student shows behaviours/attitudes of concern to professional counselling practice in other courses of the MCouns program besides the placement course. These guidelines seek to address issues of competence and concerns relating to client and public safety. Where possible, academic performance will be managed using the relevant University Rules and Policies

Student at Risk Guidelines relevant to you as a student are detailed for you below:

Where concerns regarding your fitness to practice are identified, the following process shall ensue:

1. The originator(s) of the concern in conjunction with your supervisor if you are on placement (if not your supervisor him or herself) will complete a *Cause for Concern Report*. This form is designed to provide an opportunity to clearly identify the nature of the concern and the details surrounding this. The originator of the concern is encouraged to discuss his or her concerns directly with you where appropriate at the time of the issue arising. Where possible and reasonable, you may provide your written comments to the report and sign the form also.

2. If the concerns have not been resolved in Step 1 and you are on placement, the supervisor will contact the Placement Officer and outline his or her concerns regarding your performance and ability to pass the relevant evaluation. If the originator of the complaint is not your supervisor, then the concerns may be discussed with your current supervisor if relevant to your current placement.
3. If a placement issues, the Placement Officer and Supervisor will then meet with the COUN7021 Course Coordinator and/or the Program Lead of the Master of Counselling Program to discuss the concerns and specify the criteria on which the risk is being identified in terms of quality and severity and determine the potential for remediation. If the issue(s) of concern relate to other aspects of the program, the originator of the complaint will meet with the Course Coordinator and/or the Program Lead of the Master of Counselling Program to discuss the concerns.
4. Following this meeting in Step 3, the Placement Officer and the Course Coordinator and/or the Program Lead (as relevant to the concerns) will meet with you to discuss the concerns raised and agree to a remediation strategy. Examples of remediation may include intensive training as identified and specified. The remediation plan should also detail how it will be agreed that you have met the remediation requirements identified as well as a time line for remediation processes and review.
5. At an agreed upon date for review, the remediation plan will be reviewed by relevant parties. If remediation goals have been satisfactorily met, the issue is deemed to be resolved. If concerns still exist, then the Course Coordinator and/or the Program Lead will initiate the procedures of Fitness to Practice Policy of The University of Queensland.

Plagiarism and Collusion

Unpleasant aspects associated with writing an academic paper are the issues of plagiarism and collusion. There can be some confusion for students as to what constitutes plagiarism and collusion. Hence some clarification of the concepts and an outlining of the policies on plagiarism and collusion from The University of Queensland may be useful to students.

It is the University's task to encourage ethical scholarship and to inform students and staff about the institutional standards of academic behaviour expected of them in learning, teaching and research. Students have a responsibility to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity in their work.

What is collusion?

Close paraphrasing of another student's assignment is considered as **collusion**. The University considers that collusion has occurred when the essence of arguments made in two assignments is virtually identical in content, and also often in sequence. Students who lend other students drafts of their assignments may unintentionally be found guilty of collusion even when they are not aware that their assignment has been used as the basis of another's assignment. Hence more general discussions among students regarding approaches to assignments is preferable to the sharing of detailed plans.

What is plagiarism?

The University has adopted the following definition of plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the act of misrepresenting as one's own original work the ideas, interpretations, words or creative works of another either intentionally or unintentionally. These include published and unpublished documents, designs, music, sounds, images, photographs, computer codes and ideas gained through working in a group. These ideas, interpretations, words or works may be found in print and/or electronic media.

More specifically, Harris (2002) notes some specific ways students may plagiarize:

- They download a free research paper.
- They buy a paper from a commercial paper mill.
- They copy an article from the web or an online or electronic database.
- They copy a paper from a local source such as a student who has previously done the course. (This would be more likely the means of plagiarizing in the MCOUNS program than downloading from web sites.)
- They cut and paste to create a paper from different sources.
- They place in formal quotations marks or indentations less than all the words copied. They make the rest of the quote look like their own words. They can fake ('make-up') a quotation, citation or reference article.

The following are examples of plagiarism where appropriate acknowledgement or referencing of the author or source does not occur:

- Direct copying of paragraphs, sentences, a single sentence or significant parts of a sentence;
- Direct copying of paragraphs, sentences, a single sentence or significant parts of a sentence with an end reference but without quotation marks around the copied text;
- Copying ideas, concepts, research results, computer codes, statistical tables, designs, images, sounds or text or any combination of these;
- Paraphrasing, summarising or simply rearranging another person's words, ideas, etc without changing the basic structure and/or meaning of the text;
- Offering an idea or interpretation that is not one's own without identifying whose idea or interpretation it is;
- A 'cut and paste' of statements from multiple sources;
- Presenting as independent, work done in collaboration with others;
- Copying or adapting another student's original work into a submitted assessment item.

You are encouraged to read the UQ Academic Integrity and Misconduct policy <https://ppl.app.uq.edu.au/content/3.60.04-student-integrity-and-misconduct> which makes a comprehensive statement about the University's approach to misconduct including plagiarism, the consequences and the principles associated with preventing plagiarism.

You will be required to complete the Student Integrity Module as a hurdle requirement of one of your first courses COUN7002. You will complete the Module and provide evidence of its completion on the COUN7002 website. You can find the Integrity Module at <https://www.uq.edu.au/integrity/> Student Services at UQ offer many valuable workshops that assist in undertaking assessment. Throughout the year Student Services offers a workshop titled *Referencing well and avoiding plagiarism*. This is valuable guide for students to help avoid plagiarism. Details can be found at <https://studenthub.uq.edu.au/students/Events/detail/2146948>.

What is so wrong with plagiarism anyway?

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and will be severely penalised. But why is this so?

Put in its easiest terms, plagiarism is wrong because it is stealing. While we commonly associate stealing with the taking of goods or money, plagiarism is the stealing of another person's ideas, words or images. We would all be horrified if we came home one day and found all the possessions we had worked so hard for had been stolen. In a similar way, people work hard to produce original ideas, assignments and written and electronic material. The person or group who produced these ideas and materials deserve to get any accolades for them. Hence it is distressing to see your ideas or materials being passed off by another as his or her own and seeing another undeservedly gaining credit for presenting your ideas. Hence plagiarism is distressing and is wrong.

Policies against plagiarism are there to protect each of us against someone gaining credit for work that we or others may have produced. It is one of the few ways that academics protect their less tangible but very valuable 'possessions' of their ideas. Hence policies on plagiarism should really be seen by students as

trying to protect the 'common good', rather than being seen solely as just punitive. Therefore students should feel that what may appear as rather harsh sounding policies are in fact there to protect their interests. Plagiarism is first and foremost a moral and ethical issue and one of fairness that is close to the hearts of most of us.

Why do some students plagiarize?

Robert Harris (2002) argues that there are a number of reasons that student plagiarize:

- A student is relatively lazy and is looking for the shortest way to complete a program.
- A student feels so overwhelmed by his or her workload that he or she panics and tries to find a way to short-cut the process and still 'pass'.
- A student may have experienced such severe personal issues during a semester that he or she may have neglected his or her work. Hence he or she runs out of time for submitting an assignment.
- A student may have poor time management and planning skills. He or she may have procrastinated or not realized just what a large time commitment is involved in writing an academic paper.
- A student may fear that his or her writing ability is inadequate and fears failing as a result.
- A student may enjoy the 'thrill' of rule breaking.

Plagiarism is often a consequence of a failure to adopt proper academic standards. It does acknowledge that there will be instances when a student unintentionally fails to cite sources or to do so adequately. If you are still not sure after reading this section what is meant by plagiarism, please contact your course coordinator and have him or her explain it to you in greater depth.

What measures are used to help prevent plagiarism in the School?

There are a number of ways students can avoid plagiarism:

- Submit only work which is your own, or which properly acknowledges the ideas or words of others
- Avoid lending original work to others for any reason
- Be clear about assessment conditions for assessment items
- Be clear about what is appropriate referencing and assessment practice in counselling.

To assist you to avoid plagiarism and to also assist your writing, we have developed a handout **Some Tips on Writing Essays at a Postgraduate Level** that you can access on the MCouns Community website. If you follow through with writing your essays in this way it is very unlikely that you will even inadvertently plagiarize. It is vital that if you feel that you are getting into strife with your work or that you feel inadequate in your writing that you make contact with your course coordinator and seek help **early** in your course.

All assessment/assignment materials that students submit within UQ are submitted through Turnitin, which has the capacity to compare the essay against many different databases, websites and previous assignments. Each essay is given a *Similarity* score that students can see. If you have a high Similarity score on submission, it is vital you examine how this was determined and ensure that you have not plagiarised any of your work.

References

Harris, R. (2002) "Anti-Plagiarism Strategies for Research Papers", Version Date: March 7, 2002
<http://www.virtualsalt.com/antiplag.htm>



Contact details

School of Nursing, Midwifery & Social Work

T +61 7 3365 2068

E nmsw@uq.edu.au

W nmsw.uq.edu.au

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