

Handbook

Master of Counselling 2026



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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 in your profession.

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

Warm regards

Dr Denis O'Hara

Program Lead

Master of Counselling

1. 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/>

2. School Office

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

Phone: (07) 3365 2068

Email: nmsw@uq.edu.au

The School Administration Office is on Level 3 of the Chamberlain Building (Building 35). Office hours are 9am - 5pm Monday to Friday. Doors to the building are open by Security at 7am and locked by Security around 10.00pm during teaching weeks.

3. Useful University Websites

1. **mySI-net:** <https://www.sinet.uq.edu.au>
mySI-net allows you to enrol, change your courses, and obtain studies reports.
2. **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.
3. **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.
4. **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.

4. 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

Student Central
Building 42 (near Staff House Road)
St Lucia Campus

Phone: 1300 275 870 (8:30am-5pm)

Email: ss@uq.edu.au

Web: <https://my.uq.edu.au/contact/student-central>

5. 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: (07) 3365 1704

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

6. 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.

7. Program Structure

The program structure for fulltime students from 2026 is offered below:

Year	Semester 1	Semester 2
Enrolment for Year 1 16 units	COUN7001 Interpersonal Skills in Counselling 1 (2 units) COUN7002 Theories of Counselling (2 units) COUN7005 Counselling and Mental Health (2 units) HLTH7315 Advancing Research Inquiry (2 units)	COUN7006 Advanced Interpersonal Skills (2 units) COUN7012 Counselling Children and Young People (2 units) COUN7016 Ethics and Professional Practice Issues in Counselling (2 units) SWSP7267 Family Therapies Traditions: Basic Concepts and Skills (2 units)
Enrolment for Year 2 16 units	COUN7021 Counselling Field Placement (2 units this semester)*Year-long course COUN7004 Relationship Counselling (2 units) COUN7025 Trauma Therapy: Theory and Practice (2 units) COUN7014 Understanding and Caring for Those Affected by Loss (2 units)	COUN7021 Counselling Field Placement (2 units this semester)*Year-long course COUN7027 Group Process for Recovery and Behaviour Change (2 units) COUN7026 Counselling Approaches and Mental Health Practice (2 units) HLTH7317 Research Methods (2 units)
32 Total Units		

8. 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:

- AskUs - UQ library
- Student Central – Building 42, St Lucia

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!

9. 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.

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.

9.1 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.

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.

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

10. University Academic Calendar

The University has set important dates for 2026. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are familiar with these important dates so as to avoid incurring late penalties.

Please follow the link to the UQ important dates: <https://about.uq.edu.au/academic-calendar>

The Academic Calendar for 2026 can be viewed at: <https://about.uq.edu.au/sites/default/files/2024-12/academic-calendar.pdf>

11. 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.

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 above-mentioned 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>

12. 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>

13. Information about assessment

13.1 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://policies.uq.edu.au/document/view-current.php?id=134>

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.

13.2 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>.

14. Assessments Submission

14.1 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 Learn.UQ (Blackboard) using the Echo360. 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.

14.2 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.

14.3 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](#). 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](#).

14.3.1 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.

14.3.2 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.

14.4 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.

14.5 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.

15. General Principles

15.1 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

15.2 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>

16. 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.

17. 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 complete eight pre-requisite first year courses:

- COUN7001
- COUN7002
- COUN7005
- COUN7006
- COUN7012
- HLTH7315
- 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). For students commencing the Program in 2026 and therefore undertaking placement from 2027, a minimum of 80 hours client contact and 20 hours of formal supervision must be gained 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 or continue placement over the break. Students need to keep the needs of their clients in mind when negotiating breaks. The recommended break is 2-4 weeks leave from placement in June/July.

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:

1. **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

2. **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.

The Master of Counselling program is accredited with the Psychotherapy & Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) and the Australian Counselling Association (ACA) accreditation standards. The Practice 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.

18. Practice in Workplace Policy

18.1 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 practice 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 organisation, 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 supervisor who is not the student's line manager or usual supervisor.

In addition, the following points need to be addressed:

- That the Manager of the Practice 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 Practice Education staff very early in the pre-placement process.

18.2 Practice Education Staff

Position	Staff	Email	Phone
Manager, Practice Education Team (Social Work & Counselling)	Claire Turner	claire.turner@uq.edu.au	(07) 3346 7312
Principal Practice Educator (Counselling)	Gus Hamilton	gus.hamilton@uq.edu.au	(07) 3443 3552
COUN7021 Course Coordinator	Dr Jim Schirmer	j.schirmer@uq.edu.au	(07) 3346 7026

19. 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 Practice Education Team in NMSW and the MCouns Principal Practice Educator (Placement Coordinator).

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 four agency preferences from a list of placement agencies provided by the Placement Coordinator. Students are also able to nominate 'new' agencies not on the list and placement possibilities at those agencies will be investigated by the Placement Coordinator. 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.

19.1 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 Practice Education Manual. The manual can be found on the School website and is updated in January each year for the following year's placement.

19.2 Practice 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.

19.3 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 and go to the counselling tab. Students in the Master of Counselling Program generally do not need immunisations to attend placement, as they are not placed in medical settings. Students may need to provide evidence of a COVID-19 Vaccination or Flu Vaccination if placed in an aged care residential facility or some other settings.

19.4 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 Coordinator at the time of the Pre-Placement Workshop of any potential issues that could arise in any potential security checks.

19.5 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 online. You will need a CRN from the Queensland Department of Transport. Please see the [Prepare for Placement](#) website for details and processes. 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.

19.6 Criminal History Check

During field placements students may have access to service users' personal files or records. Some agencies, including Anglicare, Uniting Care 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.

19.7 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 website 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.

19.8 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.

20. Competency Interviews

20.1 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 in the following section.

20.2 Criteria for Competency

Competency will be determined according to the following criteria:

- Displaying organizational skills in terms of preparation for the interview
- Displaying basic 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

20.3 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.

20.4 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.

21. Supporting Students Fitness to Study Policy

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 study** which includes **fit to practise**.

The **Supporting Students Fitness to Study Policy** is designed primarily as protection for all from practice that may be harmful to clients, colleagues, co-workers and/or the student alike. As the policy covers the whole of students' study experience, this also include placement experience.

21.1 What does it mean being 'Fit to Study while on Placement'?

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 acknowledges the importance of assessing students' fitness to study which includes placement activity. The policy states:

The University therefore recognises that there are additional factors, inclusive of vulnerable members of the general public and external environments not directly under the University's control, that need to be considered when assessing a fitness to study concern for students who are in a program that includes a placement activity, including work integrated learning and work experience. (Section 2.13 Policy)

Being fit to study (and practise) is considered in terms of a range of factors that are outlined in the policy and include:

1. Students must demonstrate appropriate standards of conduct and behaviour, and be able to undertake the requirements of their program. They must demonstrate the necessary knowledge, skills and attributes expected of a student at the respective stage of their program.
2. Students enrolled in programs or courses may have concerns raised about their fitness to study in situations where they:
 - Demonstrate performance that is not consistent with the established standards; and/or
 - Show disregard for, or are unable to comply with, the rules, regulations or standards for the institution; and/or
 - Display an impairment or health condition that cannot be accommodated through a reasonable adjustment.
 - Remediation and rehabilitation of unacceptable behaviours will be balanced with the need to prevent harm to the student and to protect the public and the broader community.
 - If a student's behaviour, or factors related to their condition, poses a serious concern for the welfare of others, is unreasonably disruptive to the community in which they are learning, or results in an inability to meet the requirements of a program, the University may require that the student's studies be interrupted or, in cases where remediation is impracticable, discontinued. (Policy 2:80-11)

21.2 Who can report Fitness to Study (and 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.

21.3 What happens if Fitness to Study (and Practise) concerns are noted with regards to a particular student?

If a Fitness to Study related to a placement 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.

21.4 What outcomes may occur with Fitness to Study concerns?

In terms of investigation and outcomes, Fitness to Study concerns related to placement can be categorised as:

- **Level 0.** These concerns are considered temporary, one-off or infrequent, minor and able to be remediated short-term. If an issue is deemed to be Level 0, the student will be supported with supervision/supportive care/education/training to remediate issues.
- **Level 1.** These are considered frequent, accidental, or unintentional, moderate in nature and likely 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, serious in nature and with significant impact, 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
- **Level 3.** In addition to Level 2, an interruption longer than 12 months is required to address the circumstances, remediation is unlikely or impractical, and reasonable adjustments cannot be accommodated. In this case, the concern will be referred to the Fitness to Study Review Committee for a hearing and decision on the outcome.

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 for Practise policy.

The University has the right to inform subsequent placement supervisors/organizations of previous Fitness to Study 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 Study decision and outcome can be appealed by students within 28 days of the notice of the outcome.

Full details of the Fitness to practise policy and Procedures can be found at <https://policies.uq.edu.au/document/view-current.php?id=141#major2>

21.5 Students At-Risk Guidelines

As discussed above, Fitness to Study 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 Study 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 Study Policy as outlined in [Supporting Students' Fitness to Study Policy](#).

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 At-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.

Guidelines for Students where Placements are Deemed at Risk relevant to you as a student are detailed for you below:

- Where concerns regarding your fitness to study as to placement are identified, the following process shall ensue:
 1. The originator of the concern in conjunction with the student's supervisor (if not the supervisor) 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. In the situation of a growing concern over time, the originator may note incidents on various *Cause for Concern Report* forms to provide an evidential record of growing concerns at the time that he or she decides that the reporting of the concerns as per Step 2 is necessary. A record including the outcomes of any discussion about the incident should be made on the *Cause for Concern Report form*. Where possible and reasonable, the student may provide their written comments to the report and sign the form also.
 2. If the concerns have not been resolved in Step 1, the Supervisor will contact the Placement Coordinator and the COUN7021 Course Coordinator and/or Program Lead of the Master of Counselling Program. Together they will discuss the concerns to understand and identify the criteria on which the risk is being identified in terms of quality and severity and determine the potential for remediation.
 - 2.1. Should the issue be deemed as one that is *likely to be remediated in the short term*, the student will be asked to meet with the Placement Coordinator, Course Coordinator and/or Program Lead, to discuss the concerns raised and agree to a remediation strategy, to be outlined in a Practice Learning Plan. Examples of remediation may include intensive training which will be detailed in the learning plan. Agreed timelines and identified measurable goals will also be detailed within the learning plan. If remediation goals have been satisfactorily met, within agreed timelines, the issue is deemed to be resolved. If concerns still exist, the student will be referred to the Program Lead and/or Practice Education Manager to assess the appropriateness for continuation of placement, as detailed in Step 3.

Should the issue be deemed as one that is *unlikely to be remediated in the short term*, the student will be referred to the Program Lead and/or Practice Education Manager to assess the appropriateness for continuation of placement. Fitness to study will also be discussed with the student. The Program Lead/Practice Education Manager will use the available evidence to determine the likelihood of the student's capacity to meet the placement requirements within the placement period. If it is determined that the student is unlikely to meet the placement requirements within the placement period, this process may result in the termination of placement.

22. 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.

22.1 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.

22.2 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>.

22.3 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.

22.4 Why do some students plagiarise?

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.

22.5 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.

23. References

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

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