



**School of Mental Health
Counseling**

**Student Handbook
Doctor of Philosophy
Mental Health Counseling**

Advanced Clinical Practice and Counselor Education

2026-2027

Belmont University
College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences
School of Mental Health Counseling
Nashville, TN 37212

Introduction:

Welcome to the School of Mental Health Counseling at Belmont University. This Mental Health Counseling Student Handbook for the Doctor of Philosophy in Mental Health Counseling contains information intended to answer questions about the program and describe program procedures. When seeking information, students should also refer to the Bruin Guide, Belmont University Graduate Admissions, and Belmont University Graduate Catalog in addition to this handbook.

While students are expected to adhere to policies in this handbook, the Bruin Guide, and Belmont University Graduate Catalog, know that graduate procedures, course requirements, prerequisites, and other information is subject to change and this handbook does not replace policies found in the Graduate Catalog. Faculty and advisors are available to assist should you have any questions, but this is not a substitute for knowledge of Belmont University policies. It is the student's primary responsibility to understand and follow all policies and procedures.

The Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling degree through the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences at Belmont University is unique among contemporary counseling programs in that it trains future counselor educators and doctoral level practitioners to research the efficacy of and utilize spiritual understandings when working with clients and embracing client resiliency. The program seeks to guide the forming of highly skilled professionals who will act with integrity in the world as agents of the ministries of healing and transformation serving individuals, couples, families, or larger groups and training future counselors to do the same. The program seeks to accomplish this goal through the integration of counseling and educational research, theoretical and educational principles, wisdom, insight, and values of the Church's care of souls tradition. Those entering the doctoral program in counseling will become not only multiculturally competent but also personally spiritually competent and tie practices to efficacious research as they progress through coursework. Because research regarding spiritual values and beliefs is limited in the counseling profession, this program helps students advance both the profession, future teachings in the field, and helps instill the use of both spiritual and traditional research-based practices as methods of assistance.

Program Overview and Details:

The School of Mental Health Counseling, located in the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, prepares professional counselors in four master's level tracks and one doctoral track:

- Clinical Mental Health Counseling
- Marriage, Couples, and Family Counseling
- Clinical Pastoral Therapy
- School Counseling
- Ph.D. in Mental Health Counseling

The Clinical Mental Health Counseling and Marriage, Couples, and Family Counseling tracks have been accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). The School Counseling and Ph.D. tracks are preparing to submit documents for accreditation approval.

Purpose:

Doctoral level counselors work in mental health counseling agencies, research facilities, educational training centers, and universities to assist clients facing a number of mental health issues and/or train a future generation of mental health professionals. The intent of the Ph.D. program is to provide for the increasing need for highly skilled counseling professionals in a manner that will be congruent with Belmont's historic commitments to Christian faith and values.

At the doctoral level, the 61-hour counseling program provides the academic training for counselors to work as faculty in universities or as highly skilled mental health practitioners in settings such as counseling private practices, within community counseling agencies, addiction recovery centers, research agencies, behavioral health agencies, government mental health positions, or research centers. As such, doctoral level students learn advanced skills and research practices beyond those achieved at the master's and basic licensure level and assist families, children, and individuals facing a variety of mental health issues. Students must pass all licensure exams and complete all requirements for state licensure at the master's level before entering or during completion of the doctoral program.

The degree consists of one track and will be offered primarily face-to-face at Belmont University using monthly weekend intensive courses and supplemented with online instruction throughout the term. The degree program is organized to be completed over 3 years.

Prerequisites:

The Ph.D. in Counseling requires the completion of a master's degree from an accredited college or university. For applicants whose master's degree does not satisfy educational requirements for state license in a mental health profession, additional coursework may be required in order that the student is eligible for licensure upon graduation from the Ph.D. program. Depending on deficiencies, this could result in an applicant being required to take up to an additional 21 semester hours of coursework for the Ph.D. degree. Applicants should have a strong academic record with at least a 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) GPA.

Mission:

The School of Mental Health Counseling seeks to train professional counselors who will act ethically as agents of the ministries of healing and transformation through efficacious counseling theory, techniques, skills, and respect for diversity.

Program Design:

The Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling degree is a 61-hour program designed to prepare students to serve as advanced-level counselors and/or counselor educators in mental health practices or universities. Prospective students should be aware that for those who are not already licensed in a mental health discipline, licensure may require additional coursework. Educational requirements for counseling licensure vary from state to state, therefore, students should check their state's requirements against master's level transcripts prior to applying to the Ph.D. degree.

The Ph.D. degree in counseling is a cohort program that requires eight consecutive semesters (including summers). During their first semester, students take foundational courses integrating ethical and multicultural issues with spirituality. During semester 2, students take a supervision course aimed at preparing them to train or mentor a future generation of counselors. Students also take 6 additional semester-credit-hours in their specialty area. The third semester starts with a study of research methods and advanced theories of change.

Over the course of the degree, students are required to complete field experience consisting of 600 clock hours in mental health agencies, universities, research facilities, and other such systems. Students are required to secure their own placement for field experience in consultation with the program director and clinical coordinator. Students will be required to pass a background check and show proof of approved professional liability insurance prior to beginning the field experience component of the program.

The fourth, fifth and sixth semesters focus on higher level research statistics, field experience, and practical counseling courses. At the end of the fifth semester, students select a dissertation committee consisting of at least two faculty in the counseling program and one faculty member from outside the program. During the sixth semester, students must take a 2-day qualifying examination consisting of open-ended responses to each of the eight CACREP areas and specialty areas. Students who pass qualifying examinations may propose their dissertation design to the committee at the end of the sixth semester. Each of these steps culminate during semesters seven and eight as students submit IRBs, conduct research, and complete their dissertations.

Program Objectives:

All mental health counseling students must achieve mastery in the eight CACREP counseling areas. Mastery is assessed through coursework, experiential activities, field experience rating forms, observation, examinations, case studies, as well as on the Core Assessments (Measurement Exams). The following is a list of objectives identified by the faculty that are completed by students in the Mental Health Counseling Program:

Program Objectives for Doctoral Counseling Students

- Apply multicultural counseling and leadership skills and current competencies to advocate within professional organizations, clinical practice, counseling policy/legislation, and professional counseling skills
- Apply knowledge and skills of the roles, ethics, and models of supervision within counseling settings.
- Select and utilize efficacious counseling theories and skills, consultation theories and methods, and advanced techniques in sessions.
- Design, conduct, and disseminate ethical research that demonstrates proficiency in both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to advance the field of clinical mental health counseling.
- Become leaders in counselor education who transmit educational knowledge using ethical and effective instructional practices.
- Engage in caring and nurturing counseling, supervision, and/or teaching relationships with colleagues and students.
- Integrate the ASERVIC Best Practices into counseling, education, supervision, and consultation.

Details of Graduate Study at Belmont University

The College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences

The College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences Office is housed in the McWhorter Building on the second floor. The Dean of the College, Dr. Sharell Pinto, is responsible for administering policies and rules relating to graduate degree programs in the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. For more information, the college phone number is 615-460-6748.

Mental Health Counseling Program

The graduate Mental Health Counseling program is housed in the College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. The Mental Health Counseling Program is directed by Dr. Janet Hicks (Professor and Chair) and Dr. Tom Knowles-Bagwell (Professor and Director of Doctoral Studies and Spiritual Integration) who report to the College Dean. Faculty in the School of Mental Health Counseling develop policies and procedures used within the program.

Expectations of Students

Students are expected to act professionally at all times and strive to improve scores on professional dispositions described later in this Handbook. Further, students must follow the ACA Code of Ethics, AAMFT Code of Ethics, IAMFC Code of Ethics, AAPC Code of Ethics, and other relevant professional codes as well as the Belmont University Code of Conduct. Class attendance, respect of others' cultures, religions, gender, race, and ethnicity is required.

Probation, Suspension, and Dismissal

During faculty meetings throughout the year, counseling faculty discuss and rate student ethical/professional fitness to practice and academic performance. These discussions and ratings

include student dispositions such as professionalism, adherence to ethical codes, and academic achievement. If students fail to maintain a grade point average of 3.0 (on a 4.0 scales), earn a “C” in a required course, or exhibit unsatisfactory academic integrity, professionalism, or ethical behavior, the faculty may suggest probation, suspension, dismissal, or remediation per conditions in this handbook as well as the Belmont Bruin Guide.

It is the counselor or counselor-in-training's responsibility to be aware of signs of impairment, seek assistance for their problems, and notify program supervisors that they cannot provide acceptable services to clients. Counselors and counselors-in-training should seek appropriate professional services to remediate the problem(s) interfering with their ability to provide services.

It is the policy of the School of Mental Health Counseling that if a student has a physical, mental or emotional problem that could potentially harm clients or others, that student will be prohibited from seeing clients until the student has completed a remediation plan. For example, it is the policy of the Mental Health Counseling program that if a student has a documented relapse or a self-reported relapse, they will not see clients until a remediation plan is completed, and the student can provide verified documentation of at least one year of “clean” time. While the student is in treatment, the student’s therapist must report on the student’s progress at specified times.

Student Dispositions:

Admission to the program does not guarantee fitness to remain in the program. Only those students who meet program standards will be allowed to continue in the program. Students pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Mental Health Counseling must meet disposition standards assessed by faculty throughout the program. These standards include demonstration of emotional and mental fitness in their interaction with others as well as conformance with codes of professional counseling associations and of the state of Tennessee. Students who fail to demonstrate fitness or conformance to appropriate codes may be asked to enter into a remediation plan in order to remain in the program. If a remediation plan is developed, students must demonstrate satisfactory remediation prior to being allowed to proceed toward graduation. In rare cases, a student’s ability to practice may exceed remediation, and a recommendation for dismissal from the program is possible. The dispositions rubric can be found at the end of this handbook.

Causes for Dismissal:

Achievement in the School of Mental Health Counseling requires academic success as well as ethical behavior. Counseling requires adherence to codes of ethics, professional attitudes, and work habits. The following list details actions or behaviors considered just cause for immediate dismissal from the School of Mental Health Counseling:

- Violation of Belmont University’s Title IX policies.
- Cheating, plagiarism, giving false information, or altering official records.
- Abuse or disrespect for clients, peers, or faculty.
- Breaches of the rules or codes in the *ACA Code of Ethics*, *AAPC Code of Ethics*, and *Belmont University Student Code of Conduct*.
- Earning a failing grade in Field Experience Courses.

- Willful conduct that may cause injury.
- Harassment, discrimination, non-sexual harassment, or sexual misconduct as defined in the *Belmont Bruin Guide*.

Academic Performance Evaluation:

Because students are expected to maintain a 3.0 average at all times, students earning a grade of C or below in a course must schedule and attend a meeting with their faculty advisor. The faculty advisor then informs the remaining Mental Health Counseling faculty about the content of the meeting. Next, the Mental Health Counseling faculty review and make recommendations concerning the student's status in the program. Students earning a failing grade in a field experience course will be dismissed from the program. Students terminated may file an appeal by following the Belmont University Grade Appeals Procedures. In addition, students failing CACREP standards and/or demonstrating failing performance on CACREP assessments should meet with the course instructor and discuss methods for improvement.

Non-Academic Performance Evaluation:

Should a student exhibit unsatisfactory non-academic performance as listed in the "Causes for Dismissal" in this handbook, the faculty may decide on remediation, reprimand, probation, or dismissal from the program. Students disagreeing with the decision may appeal the decision by following the Student Appeals/Grievance Procedures located in the [Complaint and Grievance Procedures](#) on the Belmont University website.

Faculty discuss student non-academic performance throughout the program and administer the *Student Disposition/Professionalism Rubric* as found at the end of this handbook three times (MHC 6012 (fall year one), MHC 6012 (fall year two), and MHC 6225 Research Seminar) during the program. Performance on this rubric is shared with students. Should low ratings be attained, faculty discuss ways students can improve performance and may place students on a remedial plan if needed. More information on this process is in the next section of this handbook.

Retention Policies and Student Appeals / Grievance Procedures:

The School of Mental Health Counseling offers students the right to a fair hearing. Should students wish to file an appeal, students are responsible for providing the burden of proof. Following are the steps students follow to resolve concerns:

- 1) Student appeals/grievances starting in the School of Mental Health Counseling are first considered informally by program faculty.
- 2) If unresolved, students may file an appeal through the Chair of the School of Mental Health Counseling.
- 3) Formal appeals are allowed only when prejudice, arbitrary, or capricious actions are involved.

Academic Related Appeals:

The School of Mental Health Counseling follows the University policy regarding academic related appeals as follows:

Students have the right to appeal grades directly to the instructor if they believe that an incorrect grade has been assigned for the course. If a grade issue is not resolved after contact with the instructor, the student may appeal in writing to the department chair / associate dean of the college. This must occur by the mid-term point of the next semester. In the written appeal the student must be prepared to demonstrate and document an unusual circumstance that warrants a review of the grade and evidences of the grade s/he believes should have been given by the instructor. All written appeals will be reviewed within one month of receipt and responded to in writing either confirming or changing the posted final grade. A copy of this response will go to the Registrar's Office for the student's record.

Further appeal is through the administrative structure of the college in which the course was taken, with final appeal to the Dean of the College. Any appeal must be in writing and include appropriate documentation to support the student's position that a grade change is warranted.

The final grade is the instructor's posted grade, which may be viewed in the student's grade report online at the close of the term or part-of-term. It is solely the responsibility of the student to check that grades are posted for all courses taken during a semester and note the grade given for each class. All grade appeals must be requested by the mid-term point of the next semester. Unless an active appeal is under review, after the mid-term point of the next semester, neither instructors nor the university will consider a grade change.

Once a final grade has been posted the student may not petition the instructor to do additional work or extra credit to raise the grade awarded. Any grade change as a result of such action will be disallowed.

For grades of IP or I, once the I or IP is replaced (required prior to mid-term of the following semester) by a grade, including a change to F, that becomes the posting date of the final grade. Administrative grades such as W (withdrawal) are handled through the Registrar's Office.

Low ratings on *KPIs* or *Core Assessments* are handled as follows:

Plan to Address Low Scores on KPIs or Core Assessments (Measurements):

As mentioned above, faculty follow the procedures below:

Informal Procedures

1. The program faculty initiate an informal meeting with the student to discuss performance issues (i.e. disposition rubric).
2. A remediation plan is developed by the faculty during a program meeting to address concerns, and the plan is shared with the student as part of the meeting. The faculty member teaching the course monitors student progress toward the remediation plan and meets regularly with the student to ensure plan compliance.
3. The faculty member(s) shares the student's performance issues and seeks consultation from other program faculty during a scheduled program meeting.

4. If the remediation plan is not successfully completed, the student will be asked to attend a formal meeting scheduled with program faculty and formal procedures are implemented as follows.

Formal Procedures

Formal Procedures are used when informal procedures fail to improve concerns or by student request. Following are steps taken when formal procedures are utilized:

1. The faculty member with concerns notifies the student about specific concerns and schedules a meeting with all mental health counseling program faculty, including the dean, to discuss concerns. The student, faculty member, program faculty, and other relevant parties are invited to attend the meeting. Students must be given 2 weeks' notice prior to the scheduled meeting. No party may be represented by an attorney at this meeting.
2. Mental Health Counseling faculty listen to issues from the faculty member and student.
3. After the meeting and within 7 days, faculty determine a plan of action. This plan may involve probation, suspension, dismissal, a remediation plan, or no action. A written remediation plan will be given to students needing this action and compliance is monitored by the concerned faculty member.
4. Follow-up meetings and/or reports will be shared by the concerned faculty member with program faculty at scheduled faculty meetings to ensure student compliance. If students do not comply with program faculty requirements or remediation, they will be dismissed from the program.

Students may file additional appeals regarding final grades as described in the section above.

Non-Academic Appeals and Retention Procedures:

The Mental Health Counseling faculty adhere to the Ethical Standards of the American Counseling Association, International Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, and AAPC when rating students' nonacademic performance. Ratings on the Student Disposition/Professionalism Rubric are also considered. Low ratings on this form or other issues as discussed in this handbook are handled utilizing the following steps as follows:

Informal Procedures:

1. The faculty member(s) initiates a meeting with the student to discuss performance issues.
2. A remediation plan is developed by the faculty member during the meeting above to address concerns, and the plan is shared with the student as part of the meeting. The faculty member monitors student progress toward the remediation plan and meets regularly with the student to ensure plan compliance.
3. The faculty member(s) shares the student's performance issues and seeks consultation from other program faculty during a scheduled program meeting.

4. If the remediation plan is not successfully completed, the student will be asked to attend a meeting scheduled with program faculty and formal procedures are implemented as follows.

Formal Procedures:

Formal Procedures are used when informal procedures fail to improve concerns or by student request. Following are steps taken when formal procedures are utilized:

1. The faculty member with concerns notifies the student about specific concerns and schedules a meeting with all mental health counseling program faculty, including the chair, to discuss concerns. The student, faculty member, program faculty, and other relevant parties are invited to attend the meeting. Students must be given 2 weeks notice prior to the scheduled meeting. No party may be represented by an attorney at this meeting.
2. Mental Health Counseling faculty listen to issues from the faculty member and student.
3. After the meeting and within 7 days, faculty determine a plan of action. This plan may involve probation, suspension, dismissal, a remediation plan, or no action. A written remediation plan will be given to students needing this action and compliance is monitored by the concerned faculty member.
4. Follow-up meetings and/or reports will be shared by the concerned faculty member with program faculty at scheduled faculty meetings to ensure student compliance. If students do not comply with program faculty requirements or remediation, they will be dismissed from the program.

Mental Health Counseling Program Requirements:

Admission and Program Information

Admission to the PhD program in Counseling, regardless of specialization, requires completion of a master's degree in counseling (minimum 60 SCH beyond the bachelor's degree). If students have not completed a master's degree in counseling and have not completed all coursework needed to comply with state licensure requirements when admitted into the program, they must complete the missing courses and be eligible for licensure by the completion of the Ph.D. program. Students must maintain a 3.0 GPA to maintain enrollment in the program. Students must pass all coursework, a qualifying examination, and dissertation/oral examination within time limits described below to graduate.

Application Review:

Students should submit applications to the Office of Admissions as early in the year as possible. Failure to submit all of the admissions materials to the Mental Health Counseling program early may result in the student being delayed for admission up to a year.

Technology Resources and Competence:

Students must be able to create and use email, Internet searches, Microsoft Word, and other Belmont University platforms, such as Canvas, to complete the program. While our program is

primarily face-to-face, students may be able to view grades, register for classes, and complete assignments through Microsoft Word, Canvas, or other platforms. Refer to the Belmont University AI policies for more information on AI use in the program.

Credentialing / Endorsement

Several types of credentialing are available after graduating with a master's degree (MAMHC). Students must attain an internship or full licensure before practicing in the field. Only students who have completed all course requirements in the program, graduated with a master's degree in mental health counseling, and were previously admitted into the School of Mental Health Counseling will be eligible for licensure endorsement. Faculty will only credential students for licensure or certification in areas for which the student is trained and meets requirements. Certification credentialing is also available through the National Board for Certified Counselors, the American Association for Marriage & Family Therapists, or the College of Pastoral Supervision & Psychotherapy. Certification does not equal licensure and does not grant a person permission to engage in clinical practice within the state. More information about certification is available through NBCC, AAMFT, IAMFC, CPSP, or from the mental health counseling faculty.

Types of Licensure:

By state law, all persons practicing as professional counselors, marriage and family therapists, clinical pastoral therapists, and/or who practice counseling independently must be licensed. Those earning a master's degree in Mental Health Counseling from Belmont University have met the first of many steps needed to attain this state licensure. It is important to note that state licensure is a separate process from that of attaining your master's degree and requires additional criteria. For example, Tennessee also requires that additional examinations be taken, and that post-master's level supervision be attained through a state qualified supervisor. Since state licensure is handled through the state and not through Belmont University, students are advised to seek licensure information through the Tennessee Department of Health's Counseling Licensure Board. State licensure boards have the ability to change policies, laws, review procedures and protocols, and requirements without notice. Applying early and with faculty assistance is recommended. The university cannot guarantee licensure if board changes are made after you graduate.

Credentialing and Employment Recommendations:

Occasionally, students ask professors to serve as references for future employment and credentialing. These requests must be in writing to avoid FERPA violations. The faculty only recommend candidates for licensure if they meet or exceed all state or credentialing agency requirements.

Registration

The schedule of classes for the semester can be located on ClassFinder. Following a review of the classes listed in ClassFinder, students should schedule an appointment with their faculty advisor if help is needed in determining which courses to take for the next semester. After advising, students may log into the MyBelmont portal when Graduate Registration opens and register for their classes.

Although advisors know about registration, it is the student's responsibility to become informed and adhere to registration and other graduate policies and procedures. A student's registration will be cancelled if payment of fees is not made by university designated deadlines. It is important that the student carefully follows registration payment procedures.

Class Registration:

The Belmont University Office of the Registrar website offers information to help students understand drop/add procedures and deadlines.

Advising and Degree Plan:

Upon enrollment in the Mental Health Counseling program, students are assigned a faculty advisor. The student is responsible for initiating meetings with the advisor prior to registration each semester. Each student is personally responsible for completing all academic requirements established by the University and submitting the degree plan.

Commitment to Civility

Belmont University values integrity, collaboration, and humility. Faculty, staff and students are committed to promoting a caring, Christian environment that supports transformational learning, academic integrity, open communication and personal and professional growth among the diverse members of our academic community. We respect the civil expression of divergent perspectives.

Civility is the art of treating others, as well as ourselves, with respect, dignity, and care. Civility is apparent when we are sensitive to the impact our communications, practices and behaviors have on others, and when we acknowledge each person's self-worth and unique contributions to the community.

As members of the Mental Health Counseling program, we are committed to learning and practicing in ways that allow everyone to develop their full potential to lead lives of meaning and purpose. The following are examples of how we create and sustain civility.

- Support the autonomy and just treatment of self and others by facilitating an open, respectful and caring environment.
- Accept responsibility and accountability for one's own behavior when interacting with students, faculty, and staff.
- Respect and protect the rights and property of others.
- Speak and behave in a way that does not disrupt or interfere with others' learning or work.

- Model personal and academic integrity and expect it from others.
- Demonstrate respect for others by actively discouraging prejudice, bias, bigotry, violence, coercion or intimidation against any member of the academic community.
- Demonstrate a willingness to listen and to hear the perspectives of others.
- Explore controversial issues through open dialogue and respectful deliberation.
- Respect freedom of expression while recognizing that such tolerance does not require agreement with expressed ideas.
- Engage institutional resources and persons to resolve conflict when necessary.

We will not tolerate disrespectful or abusive speech or language in any form of communication including electronic, oral, verbal or non-verbal. Each community member is responsible for fostering a safe and supportive learning and work environment. This responsibility can include asking others to stop disrespectful or abusive speech and/or disruptive behavior. Collectively, faculty, staff and students in the School of Mental Health Counseling are responsible for ensuring a safe and supportive learning and work environment.

Professional Associations

Students are encouraged to seek membership in the professional association corresponding to their specialty track.

- American Counseling Association: www.counseling.org
- International Association of Marriage & Family Counselors <http://www.iamfconline.org/>
- American Association of Pastoral Counselors: www.aapc.org/

State Associations:

- Tennessee Counseling Association <http://www.tncounselors.org/>

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Policies

The School of Mental Health Counseling cares about diversity, equity, inclusion, and accommodation of students. As future mental health counselors, students in this program are taught to respect each other's differences and help one another to best serve diverse clients in the future. We celebrate diversity in our student body and expect students to be respectful of others at all times.

Non-Discrimination Statement:

Belmont University is a Christ-centered community. The University faculty, administration, and staff uphold Jesus as the Christ and as the measure for all things. As a community seeking to uphold Christian standards of morality, ethics, and conduct, Belmont University holds high

expectations of each person who chooses to join the community. In compliance with federal law, including provisions of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973/the Americans with Disabilities Act, Belmont University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, military service, or sexual orientation in its administration of education policies, programs, or activities; its admissions policies; or employment. Consistent with applicable civil rights law, the University primarily hires employees of the Christian faith who are committed to support the mission of the University.*

**In accordance with accrediting standards for its professional education programs in law and medicine, the University does not apply religious criteria in hiring employees within those programs. All employees hired by the University, regardless of religious faith, shall be committed to support Belmont's Christ-centered, student-focused mission.*

Americans with Disabilities Act:

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, The Office of Accessibility Services coordinates reasonable accommodations for all students needing assistance at Belmont University. If you need to request accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact your faculty privately to discuss your specific needs and contact the Office of Accessibility Services in the Student Affairs office at 615-460-6407. Their office is located in the Beaman Student Life Center, Suite 200.

Personal Counseling Services:

Counseling is available to all students. Students may schedule an appointment through their Health Portal on MyBelmont or call 615-460-6856. Walk in emergency services are 9am-3pm, Monday – Friday in Gabhart 218. All students also have access to 24/7 services through TimelyCare.

Graduation

Students completing all university and program requirements in the Mental Health Counseling program may apply for graduation and participate in the campus-wide graduation ceremony held in May and December each year. It is the student's responsibility to file graduation forms and pay fees by university designated deadlines. Information regarding graduation is available from the registrar's office and our school. Failure to complete the appropriate requirement or forms within the specified deadlines will result in the student being unable to graduate during that semester.

Professional Dispositions:

Students are graded on professional dispositions as described in the rubric at the end of this handbook. Students failing dispositions must follow the remediation plans discussed previously in this handbook.

Graduate Faculty

Professor Name:	Title:	Research Interests:
Dr. Janet Hicks	Department Chair and Professor	Child and Adolescent Counseling, School Counseling, Family Counseling, Career Counseling, Aggression
Dr. Tom Knowles-Bagwell,	Professor and Director of Doctoral Studies and Spiritual Integration	Pastoral Theological Method, Psychoanalytic Theory and Therapy, Clinical Supervision, Nature and Treatment of Addictions
Dr. Stephan Berry	Associate Professor	School Crisis Management, Trauma-Informed Schools, Creative Counseling Techniques
Dr. Layla Bonner	Associate Professor	African American mental health, Relationships, Family Wellness, Racial Trauma, Implicit Bias, Grief, Counselor Education
Dr. Amanda Grieme-Bradley	Associate Professor	Counselor Development, Clinical Supervisor Well-Being, Healthy Family Functioning
Dr. Olivia Bentley	Assistant Professor	Women, under-researched groups, substance use, co-occurring disorders, trauma-informed care, counselor education
Dr. Jenel Cassidy	Assistant Professor	ADHD and Childhood Trauma Exposure & Responses; Juror and Court Officials' Stress & Moral Injury; "Religious Trauma Syndrome"; Post-traumatic Growth
Dr. Mason Hale	Assistant Professor	Attachment to God, disaster response counseling, suicide prevention and intervention, thanatology, counselor education and supervision
Dr. Terri Tilford	Assistant Professor	Integration of AI and Mental Health, Wellness & Selfcare, Type 1 Diabetes, their Caregivers, and Mental Well-Being, College Student Mental Health and the Impact on Student Retention and Student Success
Dr. Mitchell Waters	Assistant Professor	The Intersection of Spirituality and Traumatic Stress, Spiritual and Religious Diversity in Counseling, Post-Traumatic Growth and Religious Abuse
Dr. Jon McKinnon	Lecturer	Intellectual Disabilities, Spiritual Formation and Integration in Counseling, Recovery for Experiences in Homelessness

Course Matriculation Requirements
Advanced Clinical Practice and Counselor Education (Ph.D)
61hr Plan of Study

Fall Year One

MHC 6005 - Spiritually in the Clinical Encounter (3hrs)
MHC 6006 - Spiritual Traditions in Global Perspective (3hrs)
MHC 6012 - Seminar: Advanced Clinical Practice (2hrs)
MHC 6895 - Dissertation Research (1hr)

Spring Year One

MHC 6011 - Teaching, Writing, and Publishing in the Counseling Field (3hrs)
MHC 6012 - Seminar: Advanced Clinical Practice (2hrs)
MHC 6013 - Spiritual Development and Religious Experience (3hrs)
MHC 6014 - Clinical Supervision: Theories and Practice (3hrs)

Summer Year One

MHC 6007 - Advanced Theories of Change (3hrs)
MHC 6012 - Seminar: Advanced Clinical Practice (2hrs)
MHC 6018 - Qualitative Inquiry (3hrs)
MHC 6895 - Dissertation Research (1hr)

Fall Year Two

MHC 6008 - Advanced Psychometrics and Assessment (3hrs)
MHC 6012 - Seminar: Advanced Clinical Practice (2hrs)
MHC 6019 - Quantitative Statistical Analysis (3hrs)
MHC 6895 - Dissertation Research Methods (1hr)

Spring Year Two

MHC 6012 - Seminar: Advanced Clinical Practice (2hrs)
MHC 6015 - Mental Health Care in Contemporary Society (3hrs)
MHC 6120 - Advanced Quantitative Analysis & Mixed Methods (3hrs)

Summer Year Two

MHC 6016 - Advanced Group Therapy: Theories & Practice (3hrs)
MHC 6220 - Advanced Qualitative Inquiry (3hrs)
MHC 6225 - Research Seminar (3hrs)

Fall Year Three

MHC 6999 - Dissertation (3hrs)

Spring Year Three

MHC 6999 - Dissertation (3hrs)

Course Matriculation Requirements

Dissertation Policies, Candidacy, and Time Limits

As soon as the course of study for an applicant has been determined, an advisory committee of at least three members of the graduate faculty will be appointed by the Dean on the recommendation of the Program Director. This committee will meet as often as necessary with the applicant and will direct their work at all stages. Either the chair or the co-chair of a student's committee must be graduate faculty and be a member of the mental health counseling program faculty. Emeritus or retired faculty as well as other qualified individuals from outside of the university may serve as external members on the student's committee but may not serve as chair; no more than one external member may serve on a committee. External members must be approved by the Dean and Program Director after careful review of their qualifications.

Faculty in the doctoral program conduct a formal review of their students' progress at least once each year. Any student not making satisfactory progress may be placed on probation and given conditions to meet to stay in the program. Continued unsatisfactory progress in any area of a student's work will be cause for dismissal from the program by the Dean of the College.

Time Limit:

All requirements for the doctoral degree must be completed within a period of seven consecutive calendar years from admission to candidacy, whichever comes first. Graduate credit for coursework taken more than seven calendar years old at the time of the final oral examination may not be used to satisfy degree requirements. Absent an extension, the student may be permitted to retake the qualifying examination, and, upon passing that examination, be readmitted to candidacy by the Graduate Faculty for some period not to exceed four years. Final corrected copies of the dissertation must be received in the program no later than one year after the final examination. Failure to complete this step will result in the degree not being awarded.

Admission to Candidacy:

Authority for admitting an applicant to candidacy for a doctor's degree is vested in the Graduate Faculty and College Dean. Upon receipt of a recommendation from the student's advisory committee, the Dean or his representative will submit it to the Graduate Faculty for approval. By written communication, the Dean or his representative will transmit the results of the graduate faculty's action to the applicant, to the chairperson of the advisory committee, and to the director of the department. A student must be admitted to candidacy for the doctorate at least four months prior to the proposed graduation date.

Qualifying Exam:

The examination requires a synthesis and application of knowledge acquired during the course of study for the doctoral degree; consequently, satisfactory performance in coursework does not

necessarily guarantee successful performance on the qualifying examination. A student is eligible to stand for this examination after passing all required coursework (excluding dissertation) and receiving approval from the advisory committee chair. Students must pass the qualifying examination within 1 year of completing coursework. The advisory committee prepares and conducts the qualifying examination alone or in conjunction with other graduate faculty as determined by the College Dean or his representative. An applicant who does not pass the qualifying examination may be permitted to repeat it once after a time lapse of at least two months and not more than 12 months from the date of the unsatisfactory examination. Failure to pass the qualifying examination within the specified time will result in dismissal from the program irrespective of performance in other aspects of doctoral study.

Dissertation:

The dissertation must demonstrate a mastery of the techniques of research, a thorough understanding of the subject matter and its background, and a high degree of skill in organizing and presenting the materials. Students must propose their topic/study to the committee a minimum of 4 months prior to the defense/final examination.

Final Examination:

A final public oral examination, usually over the general field of the dissertation, is required of every candidate for the doctorate and must be held when school is in session and faculty are on duty. The oral examination must be scheduled by the student and the advisory committee after the committee has read the completed dissertation and prior to the defense deadline during the semester of graduation. Students should present their dissertation to all committee members at least three weeks before the defense date. All members of the committee participate fully in the examination and cast a vote of pass/fail after the oral examination.

Student Dispositions Rubric
Belmont University
Mental Health Counseling
Student Disposition/Professionalism Rubric

Student Name:

Date:

Subskill	Unacceptable 1	Poor 2	Adequate 3	Good 4	Excellent 5
<i>Attendance and Punctuality</i>	Often misses class and/or is late to over half of classes	Occasionally misses and/or is late to class 25%-50% of time	Attends almost all classes and/or is late under 25% of the time	Rarely misses or is late to class 5% of time or less	Never misses or late to class
<i>Multicultural Sensitivity</i>	Makes racial, ethnic, religious, or sexual jokes or comments; displays inappropriate prejudice even after remediation.	Shows lack of acceptance of others even after remediation.	Aware of biases and diligently working on skills to overcome them.	Aware of biases, is implementing skills to overcome biases, and learning about social justice.	Working to help others in society through appropriate social justice advocacy.
<i>Professionalism & Attentiveness</i>	Usually ignores or disrupts instructor, classmates, other professionals, and clients; usually inattentive and distracted	Often ignores or disrupts instructor, classmates, other professionals, and clients; often inattentive and distracted	Usually listens to instructor, classmates, other professionals and clients; usually attentive and free from distractions	Almost always listens responsively to instructor, classmates, other professionals, and clients; almost always attentive and free from distractions	Always listens very responsively to instructor, classmates, other professionals, and clients; always attentive and free from distractions
<i>Cooperation</i>	Does not contribute or sabotages team efforts.	Contributes little to team efforts.	Contributes adequately to team efforts.	Contributes to a high degree to team efforts.	Contributions to team efforts are beyond what is expected.
<i>Respect of others/Environment</i>	Usually creates poor morale by being negative and may even	Often creates poor morale by being negative; gossips about others	Usually achieves a balance of being cooperative;	Almost always achieves a balance of being cooperative in	Always conveys cooperation and leadership that enhances

	spread rumors about others		demonstrates the courage of one's convictions	ways that enhance the class	the class; promotes the well-being of others
<i>Professional Dress</i>	More often than not dress is unprofessional considering the setting.	Often dress is unprofessional considering the setting.	On most occasions, dress is professional considering the setting.	Dress is typically professional considering the setting.	Dress is well-thought out considering the context or setting and always appropriate.
<i>Ability to Handle Stress</i>	Stress affects levels of professionalism and/or emotional intelligence	Often stress affects levels of professionalism and/or emotional intelligence	Usually handles stress in a professional and emotionally intelligent manner	Almost always handles stress in a professional and emotionally intelligent manner	Always handles stress in a professional and emotionally intelligent manner
<i>Wellness</i>	Unable to manage personal care leading to unethical or unprofessional behaviors	Lack of self-care often affects professionalism and/or emotional intelligence	Usually incorporates wellness such that professionalism and emotional intelligence are present	Almost always incorporates wellness such that professionalism and emotional intelligence are present	Always incorporates wellness such that professionalism and emotional intelligence are present
<i>Demonstrates Boundaries</i>	Student shows no regard for instructor and classmate boundaries, stepping out of the student role; unethical behavior	Student shows disregard to instructor and classmate boundaries, becomes involved in issues outside the scope of their role; does not make appointments when needed or does not show up / cancel as needed; unethical behaviors at times	The student reports issues that are appropriate but does not try to solve problems for others; the student stays in their student role; Ethical codes are followed. Appointments are made, attended, or rescheduled if needed.	The student almost always maintains professional boundaries, consults ethical codes, and resolves issues with faculty and site supervisors. The student makes and keeps appointments as needed. The student almost always maintains boundaries with classmates.	The student always maintains professional boundaries, consults ethical codes, and resolves issues with faculty and site supervisors. The student makes and keeps appointments as needed. The student always maintains boundaries with classmates.

<i>Ability to Receive Constructive Feedback</i>	Constructive feedback affects the student's levels of professionalism and/or emotional intelligence.	Constructive feedback often affects the student's levels of professionalism and/or emotional intelligence.	Constructive feedback is usually handled with appropriate levels of professionalism and/or emotional intelligence.	Constructive feedback is almost always handled with appropriate levels of professionalism and/or emotional intelligence.	Always handles constructive feedback in a professional and emotionally intelligent manner.
Mean Score					

Instructor: _____

Course: _____

Student Signature: _____

Instructor Signature: _____

Handbook Signature Page

I, _____, hereby certify that I have read and understand the information presented in this Student Handbook for Ph.D. in Mental Health Counseling.

(Signature)

(Date)

Appendix

Academic Policies	https://catalog.belmont.edu/content.php?catoid=20&navoid=1131
Admissions and Aid	https://www.belmont.edu/admissions/graduate-professional/
Bruin Guide	https://www.belmont.edu/community-accountability/bruin-guide.html
Belmont Tech and AI Policies	https://www.belmont.edu/data/resources/2025-feb-belmont-ai-policy.pdf https://www.belmont.edu/lits/policies/
Complaints and Grievances	https://www.belmont.edu/notices/inst-and-financial-aid/complaints.html
Graduate Catalog	https://catalog.belmont.edu/preview_entity.phpcatoid=20&ent_oid=858&returnto=1127
TN Licensing	https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/health-professional-boards/pcmft-board.html