



**TheChicagoSchool**<sup>®</sup>  
of Professional Psychology

## **2014-2015 Program Guidebook**

**M.A. Forensic Psychology**

**NOTE:**

- 1) This guidebook is subject to change. If it does, students will be notified via email and will be provided with the revised version.
- 2) Policies and program information are located in the Student Handbook and Academic Catalog, to access click on the URL:  
<http://catalog.thechicagoschool.edu/>

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## Program Overview

The M.A. Forensic Psychology operates under the framework of the practitioner-scholar model and the National Council of Schools and Programs of Professional Psychology (NCSPP) Core Competency model of training in clinical psychology. These models are predicated on the belief that a competent practitioner must have both a broad knowledge of the scientific and theoretical principles in the clinical practice of psychology and the ability to apply that knowledge to specific clinical situations. The Chicago School of Professional Psychology's M.A. Forensic Psychology program offers two distinct tracks: Professional Counselor Licensure Track in Chicago, LA, and DC; and the Non-Licensure Track online. The Professional Counselor Licensure Track Program incorporates the eight content areas outlined by the National Board of Certified Counselors to prepare those students seeking Professional Counselor licensure and desiring to begin professional practice at the master's level. Furthermore, the program reflects the educational goals and competencies adopted by the National Invitational Conference on Education and Training in Law and Psychology: the Villanova Conference. The curriculum exposes students to the theoretical principles, scientific research, and practice skills of clinical counseling that enable students to apply the science and practice of psychology to issues of law and the legal system and to assume professional responsibilities in a variety of forensic settings. The master's program emphasizes critical thinking, sensitivity to ethical principles, the role of personal values, and cultural diversity and endeavors to be flexible in order to adapt course content to reflect developments in the field. In addition, The Chicago School Forensic Center on the Chicago Campus and the Forensic Training Institute in California offer service-learning opportunities to educate students to become competent and civically engaged forensic mental health practitioners.

The Chicago School of Professional Psychology is committed to preparing professionals for practice in a multicultural and diverse society. In keeping with this commitment, the content of all courses is informed, where appropriate, by knowledge of individual and cultural differences (e.g., age, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status), so that students develop the skills that enable them to provide professional services to individuals of diverse backgrounds. Faculty conveys attitudes respectful of these individual and cultural differences.

## Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this program students will be able to:

### Scholarship:

*Research:* demonstrate an understanding of the research methods in the social and behavioral sciences, the benefits and limitations of research, and the scientific and professional literature relevant to the field of forensic psychology.

### Diversity:

*Diversity:* recognize and respect individual and group differences as well as practice with cultural competence.

### Professional Behavior:

*Ethics:* organize professional activities by ethical and professional codes, standards, and guidelines; statutes, rules, and regulations; and relevant case law.

### Professional Practice:

*Relationship:* develop and maintain effective professional relationships with clients, peers, supervisors, faculty, and other professionals.

*Assessment:* demonstrate fundamental knowledge of psychometric theory, assessment techniques, and forensic literature to evaluate various dimensions of human experience, outcomes of interventions, and psycho-legal issues.

*Intervention:* integrate a basic knowledge of theory, research, and professional literature to guide interventions and promote optimal mental health and well-being

## **Academic Advisor Assignment**

Professional Licensure Track student's Professional Development Group instructor serves as his/her academic advisor throughout their duration in the program. Since some programs are lockstep, students should consult with their advisor prior to taking a course out of sequence.

## **Student Performance Evaluation and Student Review Process**

Once each semester, the department faculty meets to review student progress at a student review meeting. During the student reviews, the student's academic advisor summarizes a student's (advisee) progress in the program to date. Student grades, Student Performance Evaluations (SPE), practica feedback, and Academic Development Plans (if applicable) are a part of the review of the student's progress. Other department faculty can elaborate on their contact with the student, expressing concerns or articulating areas of strength and weaknesses. The student review also involves determining a student's readiness to proceed in the program and any conditions that are necessary to support the student's learning and progression. The student's advisor forwards a copy of the Student Review Process Plan, which provides a student with a current status of their performance in the program to the student within two weeks of the student review meeting.

## **Professional Development Group**

Professional Licensure Track students are required to enroll in Professional Development Group during their first semester in the program. This course orients students to The Chicago School's policies and procedures. Students also explore issues of professional and career development in forensic psychology, as well as develop skills in evaluation and self-reflection. This course must be taken during the first semester of enrollment.

## **Independent Study**

Students may undertake a faculty supervised independent study project (FO651, 652, or 653) in an area not covered by courses in the curriculum. Requests for independent study must be approved by the Department Chair.

## **First Year Capstone (Professional Counselor Licensure Track students only)**

Students in the licensure track are required to pass the first year capstone, which is typically completed during the spring term of the first year, in order to fulfill program requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in Forensic Psychology. It is the responsibility of the Forensic Documentation, Report Writing, and Testifying course instructor to evaluate the first year capstone, which is the paper submitted for the midterm. The objective of the capstone is for the student to demonstrate the ability to write a thorough mental status examination and social history, summarize and synthesize relevant case data, accurately explain and describe mental health symptoms, provide clinically sound diagnostic impressions, accurately assess risk of harm to self and others, and clearly articulate treatment recommendations. A student must pass the first year capstone to be eligible to go on practicum.

## Applied Research Project (Online students only)

Students in the non-licensure track will complete an Applied Research Project (ARP) that integrates and applies program learning to an authentic workplace situation. Each student will work with an ARP instructor who will assist them in the ten half credit courses that are required in the process of working toward the completion of their ARP. Each of these courses will be graded, and are subject to the same retake policy as the other courses in the program.

The Applied Research Project (ARP) is a scholarly comprehensive paper and the major capstone of the Master of Art's program at The Chicago School in the Online Forensic Program, Non-Licensure Track. The ARP is a graduation requirement that students work to complete through the entirety of the program. It is a project that is meant to be a vehicle through which students apply a psychological concept to attend to a problem or fulfill a need in the workplace. The vision is to allow students the opportunity to experience forensic psychology in action by literally linking theory to practice.

### Essentially, the ARP is:

- A research project a student completes, which addresses an area of interest or a problem related to current or past work/professional setting.
- Demonstrates a student's ability to apply forensic psychology theory to a real world situation.
- The ARP courses are designed to facilitate the completion of the ARP. Each ARP course allows a student to complete their project through guided steps and mentorship.
- Students are guided throughout the process by a series of ten half-credit Practice Courses (one each term).

### Concurrent ARP Courses

- FO 685 A & B Professional Proposal
- FO 686 A & B Information Literacy
- FO 687 A & B Applied Research Methodologies
- FO 688 A & B Professional Ethics
- FO 689 A & B Applied Research Project

Completing your ARP contributes to your credibility as a professional in the forensic psychology field. It helps you cultivate an area of expertise. It helps ground you in a problem solving process that includes learning to conduct through literature reviews of professional research. It helps you be grounded in the scientific method, which will help you determine the effectiveness of programs you develop or practices you engage in as a professional.

### Examples of types of projects for analysis

The ARP is NOT a Thesis. The ARP is a research proposal only. Students do not have to complete their project, meaning that they do not send their proposal to the IRB (Institutional Review Board) and actually follow through with their proposal. The ARP is an extended paper whereby students review the literature and come up with an idea that addresses a problem in the field of forensic psychology. Here are some examples:

- Program development
- Workshop/Training Project
- Program evaluation/assessment
- Grant proposal

**Note:** The ARP needs to address real and practical problems that practitioners of Forensic Psychology experience in their work. The problems and solutions that are discussed, evaluated, or developed need to be supported by research in the field. In addition to being practical and empirically supported, ARPs need to be credible and something that practitioners in the field would be receptive to. Lastly, the project would have to be something that a non-licensed professional in the field of forensic psychology could do.

## Practicum

The M.A. Forensic Psychology program is committed to training highly competent and ethical clinicians who will ultimately contribute to the interface of law and psychology. Toward that end, licensure track students are required to complete relevant coursework in combination with clinical training for successful completion of their master's degree. Full-time students traditionally complete their practicum/internship experience during the second year of the academic program. Part-time students work closely with their academic advisors to determine the most appropriate year to complete training requirements. Students must receive and accept an official offer from a prospective practicum site by the end of the first week of classes in the fall semester to complete their training within that academic year.

Forensic practicum/internships are closely supervised educational experiences in which the knowledge, skills, and attitudes developed in the classroom can be directly applied to forensic and/or clinical populations. All sites are approved by the TCSPP Department of Applied Professional Practice (APP) and allow students the opportunity to work with high-risk populations in an array of settings such as prisons, jails, detention centers, police departments, special treatment units, state psychiatric hospitals, substance abuse facilities, and community-based programs for victims and offenders. These formative experiences integrate the science and practice of forensic psychology in real world situations. Through close supervision and mentorship, students begin to develop their professional identities, clarify their professional strengths and weaknesses, and understand their roles as clinicians and/or providers of forensic services to a broad range of populations within a variety of settings.

Licensure track students must accrue a minimum of 700 hours of clinical training over the course of a 9 to 12 month practicum/internship under the supervision of a master's level licensed clinician or psychologist (e.g., LCSW, LCPC, LPCC, LMFT, or licensed psychologist). Students are expected to attend practicum between 16 to 24 hours per week and must participate in one hour of weekly, individual supervision. In addition, students should dedicate at least 40 to 60% of their time on site to direct client contact, which could include a variety of clinical activities such as diagnostic interviewing, individual, group, or family therapy, crisis intervention, intake interviews, and milieu therapy. Students are typically responsible for administrative and case management tasks as well including, but not limited to, victim advocacy, consultation, applied research, and/or court attendance.

Licensure students concurrently enroll in a practicum/internship seminar class, which serves as a forum for peer consultation and support. Students may not transfer credits in lieu of the practicum/internship and seminar, nor may they petition to waive these requirements. The Practicum and Internship Seminars are graded on a Pass/Fail basis. In order to receive a grade of Pass, the student must receive a recommendation to pass the course by both the Seminar Leader and the Site Supervisor. Substandard performance indicated by either the Seminar Leader or the Site Supervisor may result in a Fail grade for the Practicum and/or Internship Seminars. Students who pass the fall Practicum course but do not pass the spring Internship course will be required to repeat both the fall and spring Practicum/Internship courses, including the field placement experience. If a student fails the Forensic Competency Examination (FCE), the student must repeat both the fall and spring Practicum/Internship courses, including the field placement experience. If a student takes a leave of absence, a medical leave, or is dismissed and/or suspended from the program, then all practicum and internship placement activities at the site must cease. If a student on such leave elects to re-enroll, then the student must retake the practicum training sequence coursework.

Exception: CA MAFO program will use the term practicum, excluding "internship" in their policy to best align with CA licensure laws.

Additional information regarding the prerequisites, policies, and evaluation procedures for practicum/internship can be found in the MAFO Practicum/Internship Manual disseminated by APP.

It is required that students obtain verification that clients consent to therapy conducted by the student. If the site permits taping of therapy sessions, the student is required to complete the taping form. Students should complete a non-taping form for those sites that do not permit taping of sessions.

Students are permitted to begin their practicum experience on July 1 and upon completion of all prerequisite course requirements. In cases where the student's training site requires the completion of orientation and/or trainings prior to July 1, those students may begin before the July 1 start date; however, they are not permitted to engage in clinical work. In cases where a site requires students to begin clinical work prior to July 1, students must gain approval on a case by case basis from the Director of APP.

Student who complete all coursework at the end of the spring term but will continue on internship past the end of the summer term are required to register for FO650 in order to remain an active student and be covered by the student liability insurance.

The practicum is an integral component of clinical training. It provides a closely supervised clinical experience in which students use the knowledge obtained in the classroom to understand their clients and to develop skills in assessment, counseling, psychotherapy, and other discipline related areas. As such, the practicum serves to integrate the theoretical and practical aspects of the education of the professional counselor. It allows students to become familiar with professional collaboration and consultation in a clinical setting. All students are required to register for Practicum (3 credits) in the Fall and Internship (3 credits) in the Spring. Students in California complete a second Practicum (3 credits) in the spring instead of an internship.

Complete adherence to ethical standards of the field is required of all students, especially those on practicum. Should a student show unprofessional or unethical behavior, or signs that he or she lacks suitability for the profession, he or she may be dismissed from a training practicum. Dismissal from a practicum is considered extremely serious and will result in automatic referral to the Student Affairs Committee.

## Requirements to Apply

The following prerequisites are required to be eligible for a MAFO practicum:

- 1) A cumulative GPA  $\geq$  3.0
- 2) Approval of program faculty and Director of Training in APP
- 3) A grade of B- or better in prerequisite courses determined by the specific campus, which must be completed prior to beginning practicum/internship

## Forensic Competency Examination (FCE)

Students completing a practicum are required to pass a Forensic Competency Examination (FCE). The FCE consists of a written case conceptualization paper or a program development paper, and an oral defense. The objective of the FCE is for students to demonstrate the ability to apply psychological theory, empirical literature, assessment, and intervention to a case formulation, program proposal, or program project. In addition, the aim of the FCE is for students to demonstrate an understanding of professional practice (e.g., ethical behavior), clinical dynamics (e.g., client/therapist relationship), broader systems (e.g., family, school, community, court, political, other treatment professionals/programs), and areas of diversity and difference (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status) as contextual variables. Each student must successfully pass both the written and oral components of the FCE in order to fulfill the requirements of the Practicum and/or Internship Seminars. The seminar leaders will provide additional information about specific guidelines and requirements in the course syllabus.