



## Fitness-to-Practice Standards and Process

As a Catholic university sponsored by the Sisters of Divine Providence, Our Lady of the Lake University is a community whose members are committed to serving students by ensuring quality innovative learning experiences; fostering spiritual, personal, and professional growth; and preparing students for success and continued service.

In the spirit of the OLLU tradition, counseling students are expected to conduct themselves in an ethical, responsible, and professional manner while fostering their own spiritual and professional growth. The OLLU Counseling Program evaluates each student's growth through the Fitness-to-Practice (FTP) process as an element of students' performance. All counseling students are regularly monitored throughout their matriculation in the program, to ensure students demonstrate appropriate progress towards developing the necessary behaviors, attitudes, and professional competencies to practice as a counselor-in-training (CACREP, 2024). The manner in which a student's progress may be routinely monitored includes consultation during faculty meetings, small group faculty consultation, or faculty consultation with department chair. All students are encouraged to review these standards and seek clarification regarding the FTP policies and procedures when needed.

For successful completion of the program and endorsement from the OLLU Counseling Program for any relevant certifications or licensure, students must demonstrate performance meeting or exceeding program standards in all settings, including classes, advising sessions, practicum/internship sites, and all verbal and written communication. These standards include:

1. Maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better with a grade of 'C' in no more than one course that is to be counted toward the degree. Students may NOT receive a 'C' in any of the following courses: COUN 6315, COUN 8312, COUN 8352, COUN 8390, COUN 8391, COUN 8325, COUN 8375, and COUN 8600.
2. Demonstrate professional fitness-to-practice in their interactions with others as measured by the standards on the *OLLU Counseling Program Fitness-to-Practice Form* (below).
3. Adhere to the codes of ethics of professional associations in counseling and all related national and state licensure and certification boards.

### The FTP Evaluation Process:

The fitness-to-practice evaluation process includes an evaluation by the instructor of record using the *OLLU Counseling Program Fitness-to-Practice Form*. All students are evaluated in the following courses by the instructor of record: COUN 6315, COUN 8312, COUN 8352, COUN 8390, COUN 8391, COUN 8325, COUN 8375, & COUN 8600.

An FTP review may be initiated for any student, at any time, if a faculty member, staff member, or site/field supervisor believes the student has displayed behavior that suggests the student does not possess sufficient competency in one or more FTP criteria. Faculty may also initiate an immediate and unscheduled FTP review at any time for:

- Students who engage in illegal or unethical behaviors,
- Students who present a threat to the well-being of others, or
- Students who violate the OLLU Student Code of Conduct or any other OLLU policies or procedures.

In such cases, depending upon the circumstances, the fitness-to-practice process may result in the student being dismissed from the OLLU Counseling Program without the opportunity for remediation.

Faculty members, staff members, and site/field supervisors may evaluate all students according to the fitness-to-practice standards within the OLLU Counseling Program Fitness-to-Practice Form. Students will have the opportunity to participate and respond at each step of the FTP process.

Performance on the FTP standards will be rated based on the following scales: 'N/A- Not Observed', '3- No Concern', '2- Concerned', or '1- *Highly Concerned*', as described in the *OLLU Counseling Program Fitness-to-Practice Form*. A rating of '3- No Concern' indicates competence achieved. A rating of 'N/A- Not observed' indicates that the evaluator did not have the opportunity to observe the described standard for the student, therefore it does not indicate that competence has or has not been achieved. A rating of '2- Concerned' or '1- *Highly Concerned*' on any of the FTP standards indicates that competence has not been achieved and will initiate the FTP procedures described below in steps 1-3. **If a student receives a rating of '2- Concerned' on their FTP evaluation the FTP process will begin at step 1. If a student receives one or more rating(s) of '1- *Highly Concerned*', or if they have previously received a rating of '2 - Concerned' on an FTP evaluation at any other time throughout their program of study, the FTP process will automatically proceed to step 2. If the FTP process was initiated because the student engaged in illegal or unethical activities, presented a threat to the wellbeing of others, or has violated the OLLU Student Code of Conduct, the FTP process will proceed directly to step 2.**

#### **STEP ONE:**

The student with identified FTP concerns will be contacted to schedule a meeting to review the *OLLU Counseling Program Fitness-to-Practice Evaluation*. The meeting will be held with the issuing faculty member. The student's assigned faculty advisor and the OLLU Counseling Program Fitness-to-Practice Coordinator should be included in all FTP communication with the student and may also be present at the FTP meeting with the student/issuing faculty.

The student has five business/semester days to respond to the request to schedule a meeting. If the student does *not* respond by the close of business on the fifth business/semester day, the matter will proceed to steps 2 or 3 described below.

At the meeting, the issuing faculty will review the *OLLU Counseling Program Fitness-to-Practice Form* with the student and discuss plans for improvement on the standard(s) that competency was not achieved. Within five business/semester days after the meeting, the issuing faculty will provide a copy of the Fitness-to-Practice Form (incorporating any plans for improvement agreed upon at the meeting) to the student for review and signature. The student will have five business/semester days to review, sign, and return the Fitness-to-Practice Form. Failure of the student to sign and/or return the Fitness-to-Practice Form by the close of business on the fifth business/semester day will not impede the process and may be considered during the fitness-to-practice process.

Both the student and issuing faculty may retain copies of the signed OLLU Counseling Program Fitness-to-Practice Form and copies will be placed in the student's academic record/file. At any time during the remediation process, the issuing faculty member may refer the student to a faculty review committee (step 2).

#### **STEP TWO:**

A faculty review committee will be convened if:

- A.** The FTP process was initiated because the student engaged in illegal or unethical activities, presented a threat to the well-being of others, or violated the OLLU Student Code of Conduct or the Handbook of Operating Procedures,
- B.** A student fails to respond to the issuing faculty's request to schedule a meeting to review the OLLU Counseling Program Fitness-to-Practice Form,
- C.** A student fails to show reasonable improvement in the area(s) of concern discussed with the professor of record in step 1 of the FTP process, or
- D.** A student receives more than one '2- *Concerned*' rating on the OLLU Counseling Program Fitness-to-Practice Form during their Program of Study; or the student receives a '1- *Highly Concerned*' rating on any standard at any time.

The faculty review committee will be comprised of three or more faculty members from the OLLU Counseling Program. The faculty review committee may consult with any of the counseling program faculty or supervisors regarding the development of remedial strategies and/or evaluation of the student's fitness for continuation in the Counseling Program.

At the meeting, the faculty review committee will review the *OLLU Counseling Program Fitness-to-Practice Form* with the student and create/review a remediation plan to address the standard(s) in which competency was not achieved. Within five business/semester days after the meeting, the issuing faculty will provide a copy of the Fitness-to-Practice Form and remediation plan (incorporating any changes agreed upon at the meeting) to the student for review and signature. The student will have five business/semester days to review, sign, and return the Fitness-to-Practice Form and remediation plan. Failure of the student to sign and/or return these documents by the close of business on the fifth business/semester day will not impede the process and may be considered during the fitness-to-practice process.

The remediation plan should address, but is not limited to:

1. Specific competency(ies) from the Fitness-to-Practice Standards which require(s) remediation,
2. Specific tasks being required to demonstrate remediation of specified standards,
3. Specific deadline for completion of requirements and timeline of subsequent monitoring/evaluation of progress.

The remediation plan should be time-specific and outcome-focused. Tasks included in remediation plans should be directly related to the specific standard(s) identified as lacking competency for the student in question. Such tasks may consist of, but are not limited to, the following:

- Referral to personal counseling (i.e.- student must participate in weekly counseling sessions for 3 consecutive months prior to being re-enrolled in clinical coursework)
- Increased professional supervision (by site supervisor, faculty supervisor, faculty advisor, etc.)
- Requirement to repeat specified academic coursework
- Attendance at relevant professional seminar(s)
- Special assignment (i.e.- completion of essay addressing importance of specific ethical codes violated)
- Requirement of formal probation or leave of absence for specified period of time

Both the student and issuing faculty may retain copies of the signed *OLLU Counseling Program Fitness-to-Practice Form* and remediation plan and copies will be placed in the student's academic record/file.

The faculty review committee will monitor the student's progress on the remediation plan. If at any time the student is determined not to be making satisfactory progress, the faculty review committee may either modify the remediation plan or dismiss the student from the program.

### **STEP THREE:**

All faculty review committee decisions for a student's dismissal from the OLLU Counseling Program will be forwarded to the Department Chair. The Department Chair will forward the committee's decision to the OLLU Dean of Academics. The student may appeal the committee's decision to the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs. The decision of the Associate Provost is final.

My signature indicates that I have read the Fitness-to-Practice (FTP) Standards & Process Document and understand my responsibilities as a counselor-in-training. If at any time I have questions about the FTP evaluation, I will contact the OLLU Program Director and/or Department Chair.

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**(Printed Name)**

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**(Signature)**

**(Date)**



## Our Lady of the Lake University MAC Program Fitness-to-Practice (FTP) Evaluation Form

Student \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty \_\_\_\_\_

Course Number \_\_\_\_\_

As counselors-in-training, students in the OLLU Master of Arts in Counseling (MAC) Program are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with ethical and professional standards of the counseling profession. In adherence to professional ethics and standards (ACA Code of Ethics, 2014; CACREP Standards, 2024), counseling program faculty assess the disposition and conduct of all MAC Program students to regularly monitor their fitness-to-practice in the field of professional counseling. Routine fitness-to-practice evaluations are completed at designated points within the program. Instructors complete fitness-to-practice evaluations for all students at the conclusion of the following courses: COUN 6315 Professional Orientation & Ethics; COUN 8312 Group Dynamics in Counseling; COUN 8352 Foundational Counseling Skills; COUN 8390 Practicum in Counseling; and all internship courses (COUN 8391, COUN 8325, COUN 8375, COUN 8600).

In addition to these systematic FTP evaluations of all students, an FTP review may be initiated for any student, at any time, if a faculty member, staff member, or field supervisor believes the student has displayed behavior that suggests the student does not possess sufficient competency in one or more of the program's FTP criteria. Faculty may also initiate an immediate FTP review at any time for students who engage in illegal or unethical behaviors, present a threat to the well-being of others, or violate university policies or codes of conduct. Each use of the fitness-to-practice evaluation form, including documentation of any remediation plans, must be placed in the student's file.

**Students should achieve a rating of 'No Concern' or 'Not Observed' on each item of the FTP evaluation. Based on your observations of the student, select the rating that corresponds to your level of concern for each standard:**

**3 = No Concern    2 = Concerned    1 = Highly Concerned    N/A = Not Observed**

### Professionalism

1. The student conducts themselves in a manner consistent with the professional and ethical standards of the counseling profession and OLLU Counseling Program.
2. The student conducts themselves in a manner consistent with Our Lady of the Lake University's core values (community, integrity, trust, service).
3. The student demonstrates a respectful attitude toward peers, professors, and others.
4. The student demonstrates sensitivity to real and ascribed differences in power between them and others.
5. The student demonstrates an understanding of and abides by the legal requirements relevant to counselor training and practice.
6. The student is timely and adheres to course schedules and assignment due dates.
7. The student willingly increases knowledge (and implementation) of effective counseling strategies.
8. The student presents themselves professionally within course discussions and assignments.

**Comments:**

### General Competency

1. The student recognizes the boundaries of their particular competencies and limitations of their expertise.
2. The student takes responsibility for compensating for their deficiencies in a timely manner.
3. The student takes responsibility for assuring client welfare when faced with the boundaries of their expertise.
4. The student provides only those services, and applies only those techniques, for which they are qualified by education, training, supervision, or experience.
5. The student demonstrates basic cognitive, affective, and sensory capacities necessary for working therapeutically with clients and their respective problems.
6. The student demonstrates oral and written language skills consistent with a graduate level education.
7. The student demonstrates the ability to follow directions and complies fully with the directives of faculty and supervisors.

**Comments:**

## Social & Emotional Maturity

1. The student demonstrates appropriate self-control (e.g., anger control, impulse control) in interpersonal relationships with faculty, supervisors, peers, and clients.
2. The student is honest.
3. The student is aware of their own belief systems, values, needs, and limitations and the effect of these on their counseling work.
4. The student demonstrates the ability to receive, integrate, and utilize feedback from peers, instructors, and supervisors.
5. The student exhibits appropriate levels of self-assurance, confidence, and trust in own ability.
6. The student seeks to informally resolve problems/conflicts directly with the individual(s) with whom a problem exists.
7. The student contributes appropriately to classroom and supervisory discussions.

Comments:

## Integrity and Ethical Conduct

1. The student refrains from making statements which are false, misleading, or deceptive.
2. The student avoids improper and potentially harmful dual relationships.
3. The student respects the fundamental rights, dignity, and worth of all people.
4. The student respects the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, and choices regarding self-determination and autonomy.
5. The student respects cultural, individual and role differences, including those of age, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language, and socioeconomic status.
6. The student adheres to the professional standards outlined in the ACA Code of Ethics (2014).

Comments:

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**\*\*\*\*\*The following section is to be filled out for clinical/synchronous classes ONLY\*\*\*\*\***

## Clinical Competency

1. The student understands and accepts the importance of implementing the core conditions of counseling: unconditional positive regard, genuineness, and empathy.
2. The student demonstrates the core conditions of counseling: unconditional positive regard, genuineness, and empathy.
3. The student demonstrates a capacity for understanding the influence of others on their own development (e.g., family of origin).
4. The student demonstrates a willingness and an ability to explore their own emotions, behavior, and cognitions in order to enhance self-awareness and self-knowledge.
5. The student consistently demonstrates excellent interpersonal skills, exhibiting a genuine interest in and appreciation of others, a respect for others, and an ability to interact with others in an appropriate manner.
6. The student demonstrates a potential for working effectively with distressful emotions (their own and the emotions of others).
7. The student presents a professional demeanor and image at field placement sites.
8. The student regularly attends class, is on time for class, and stays for the entire class meeting.
9. In field placements, the student establishes and maintains a regular schedule of attendance and service for the entire semester.

Comments:

Faculty Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_