UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

School Counselling Student Handbook

For Students Beginning the Program in Summer 2027

Welcome to the School Counselling Program at the University of Alberta. This Handbook describes our program and explains the procedures for successful completion. It is expected that all students in our program will keep this Handbook as their major reference source. As a student it is your responsibility to ensure that you have a copy of the Handbook from the year in which you entered the program, as requirements for completion of your degree are governed by the regulations in operation for the year in which you are admitted.

1. PROGRAM MANDATE

The University of Alberta Master's Program in School Counselling aims to prepare trainees to implement individual, group, and class/school-based interventions to: (a) promote students' personal and social development, (b) enhance students' academic achievement, (c) facilitate students' career decision-making, (d) engage in school-based crisis management, (e) coordinate linkages between families, the school and the community, and (f) identify students at risk for program development or referral purposes.

2. PROGRAM HISTORY & DESCRIPTION

2.1 Program Inception

In the Spring of 1992, the Faculty of Education began to offer a School Counselling Master's Program. This program was intended to be responsive to the needs of teachers who wished to pursue graduate level training in counselling. Since there continues to be a chronic shortage of counsellors with appropriate post-graduate training to meet the demands of Alberta schools, the Counselling Psychology Faculty Members developed this program so that it would be available to working professionals through alternate delivery methods.

2.2 Program Eligibility

This program is specifically designed to support the professional development of teachers working in Edmonton and area schools (or schools in other regions that are within commuting distance to Edmonton) to take on school counsellor roles. The program is for teachers who are already employed full-time within these school systems and who have their principal's or school board's support in obtaining practicum experience as a counsellor trainee within their school/district.

Admission to the program is based on applicants meeting the entrance requirements of the Faculty of Graduate and Post Doctoral Studies at the University of Alberta, as well as those of the Faculty of Education and the School Counselling Master's Program.

Minimum admission requirements are:

- A four-year undergraduate degree in education from a recognized institution

- A minimum GPA of 3.0/4.0 or 6.5/9.0 on the most recent 60 credits of coursework completed

- Strong letters of reference from people who are very familiar with the applicant's personal and interpersonal skills and the quality of work the individual has done in the school context, such as school principals, supervisors, or school consultants

- A letter from the school principal or school board indicating their commitment to supporting the applicant's professional development by guaranteeing the applicant a practicum placement as a counsellor-trainee for one school day per week during the 2nd year of the program, as well as the corresponding amount of time out from teaching responsibilities to engage in the practicum

- A letter from the practicum supervisor the applicant has secured for this school counselling placement guaranteeing supervisory support in the second year of the applicant's program – the supervisor must have a Master's degree in School Counselling, Counselling Psychology, School Psychology, or Clinical Child Psychology, and be working in a school setting.

In alignment with local school division regulations (e.g., Edmonton Public Schools AP 406) and post-secondary placement policies established under Section 33(1)(d) of the Alberta Education Act, host school authorities require all practicum candidates to undergo screening prior to entering schools. Consequently, students in the School Counselling program are required to provide a clear and current Police Information Check (including a Vulnerable Sector Check) to ensure candidates remain eligible to complete required practicums in the field. **Students are responsible for having a Police Information Check completed prior to July 1st, 2027 so they can proceed in the program. Students should submit the Police Check document to their program advisor and also email it to the graduate administrator Marsha Boyd at the essgrad1@ualberta.ca email address. Students failing to submit a clear and current Police Information Check will be unable to register in the practicum course and will consequently be required to withdraw from the program.** See Requirement for Police Information Checks for more information on the general requirements concerning Police Information Checks and the fees associated with them. Individuals can apply for a criminal record check as well as a vulnerable sector check electronically via the Edmonton Police Service website."

Important Notice: Alberta Intervention Record Check (IRC) Requirement

In addition to your Police Information Check (with Vulnerable Sector Search), please note that a clear current Alberta Intervention Record Check (IRC) is required by Edmonton Catholic Schools Division and several other regional partner divisions for M.Ed. School Counselling practicums.

- What it is: A search through Alberta Children's Services to confirm no file history exists regarding child protection matters.

- Cost & Timeline: The IRC is free of charge, but processing takes 4 to 8 weeks.
- Next Steps: Please request your IRC at the same time you apply for your police check to prevent delays.

The Intervention Records Check Results document should also be submitted to your program advisor by no later than July 1st, 2027 and also emailed to the graduate administrator Marsha Boyd at the following email address: essgrad1@ualberta.ca

2.3 Program Delivery

The program is designed to enable teachers to continue working in the school system while they pursue their Master's degree. Therefore, it is a part-time degree program with course instruction occurring every alternate Saturday during the months of September to April, followed by 6 consecutive weeks of course instruction each year on-site at the University during the summer months when school is out. Upon gaining admission to the program, students start the program in the summer term.

The program is a 36 credit hour course-based Master's program. All practica and other educational experiences are specifically oriented towards the training of school counsellors. The curriculum is organized so that it can be completed over a 26-month period. Typically, 15 or more students are admitted to the program every two years, and these students proceed through the 2 year program together as a cohort. The cohort training-format increases group support and enhances the learning of class members through exposure to their colleagues' school-based experiences.

3. REQUIRED COURSES

Students must complete 33 course credits, and a 3 credit Capping Project. The *3 after a course indicates that the course is worth 3 credits, and a *6 indicates a full year or 6 credit course.

The courses in the School Counselling Master's Program at the University of Alberta include:

- Educational Psychology 501 (*3) Introduction to Methods of Educational Research
- Educational Psychology 526 (*3) Career Counselling Theory and Practice
- Educational Psychology 532 (*3) Systems of Counselling
- Educational Psychology 535 (*3) Learning and Human Development
- Educational Psychology 536 (*3) Ethical and Professional Issues in Psychological Practice
- Educational Psychology 537 (*3) Basic Skills, Issues and Attitudes in School Counselling
- Educational Psychology 544 (*3) Principles of Psychological Testing & Assessment

- Educational Psychology 548 (*3) Group-Based School Counselling
- Educational Psychology 550 (*6) School Counselling Practicum (Full Year)
- Educational Psychology 551 (*3) Counselling Children & Adolescents
- Educational Psychology 903 (*3) School Counselling Master's Program Capping Project

4. PRACTICUM REQUIREMENTS IN YEAR 2 OF THE PROGRAM

4.1 Expectations of the School Counsellor Trainee

The practicum student is expected to be involved in counselling activities with students for one full school day per week during the duration of the practicum. At least 3 hours of the designated practicum school day each week needs to focus on the counsellor trainee providing individual counselling to students in the school. It would also be beneficial if the trainee could be involved in group counselling and vocational counselling and consultation. The group and vocational counselling components are required components in school counsellor placements in junior high and high school settings. Other school counsellor activities that the counsellor trainee can engage in during their one practicum day per week include but are not limited to: conducting student, teacher, and school needs assessments, collaborating with teachers and parents in developing school-related programming, offering workshops, facilitating in-class activities to promote academic or social development, etc., depending on school needs and whether time permits.
Besides writing case notes for student files, the counsellor trainee is required to keep a detailed log and diary of all of the specific counselling-related activities engaged in each week of the entire practicum year. This log should include the number of students seen for individual counselling, the key presenting problems/issues addressed (e.g., depression, identity issues, family problems, etc.), career or other types of assessment, group counselling, and specific other school-based activities undertaken. Counsellor trainees are required to bring this log to individual supervision sessions with their practicum supervisor, as well as to group supervision sessions that occur as part of their practicum course at the university.

4.2 Expectations of Practicum Supervisors

Supervisors are expected to guide the counsellor trainee in conducting counselling sessions and related school-based activities, with a requirement of providing at least one hour of individual supervision per week focusing on both the counsellor trainee's cases and work, as well as personal development process as a counsellor.

Supervisors will be asked to submit an interim progress report on the trainee's performance in counselling and related school-based activities in December, followed by a final evaluation in April.

4.3 Planning for Possible Salary Deductions

Some school boards may reduce the salaries of teachers taking one day a week away from their teaching duties to pursue a counselling practicum during the 2nd year of their Master's program. Each School Counselling Master's student needs to inquire with their principal and school board about how practicum commitments in the 2nd year of the program may affect their teaching income.

If you are a teacher working with EPSB or another school board that reduces the salary of students during their practicum year, you need to further inquire with your specific school board about any educational or professional development funding programs that may be able to support your practicum training and your pursuit of a Master's Degree in School Counselling and the deadlines for applying for such funding. Some school boards have programs in place that can financially support you in paying your tuition costs and compensate you for lost salary during the practicum year. School Counselling students should be inquiring about and applying for any existing funding programs during the first year of their programs to be considered for financial assistance during their practicum in the second year.

5. PROJECT AND CAPPING EXERCISE IN SCHOOL COUNSELLING

The Project and Capping Exercise is a requirement for all students in the Master's program in School Counselling. Students typically register for and complete the course requirement in the Spring Session of their final year.

The project relates to the practice of School Counselling, representing an integration of theory and practice in the School Counselling field. Completing the project provides students with an opportunity to integrate theory, research, practice, and self-reflection about their intersectional identities and multifaceted roles as school counsellors.

6. FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POST-DOCTORAL STUDIES ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENT

All students enrolled in Master's programs at the University of Alberta are automatically registered in INTD 710 (interdisciplinary studies 710) in their first semester of study in their graduate programs. This online course includes mandatory training modules that all students must complete which address ethics in research and practice, academic integrity, and university policies. Students in our program must also complete EDPY 501 during their program, which is one of the required program courses in research methods, to fulfill their ethics and academic integrity requirement.

7. PROVINCIAL SCHOOL COUNSELLING POLICIES

Since 1981, Alberta Education has articulated its recognition of the need for school-based counselling services and made a commitment to ensuring that all schools make provisions for offering counselling as part of their on-site programs. Policy 1.6.3: Guidance and Counselling in the K-12 Policy Regulations (Alberta Education, 2003) states "School

boards should make guidance and counselling services available to all students from Early Childhood Services (ECS) through grade 12 as an integral part of school programs and services". In this policy statement, school counsellors are identified as qualified teachers who have acquired professional counselling training to enable them to expand their skills in identifying and responding to student needs across 3 key domains: (a) educational, (b) personal/social, and (c) career development.

According to Policy 1.6.3 (Alberta Education, 2003), School Counselling "includes a variety of group oriented activities designed to enhance students' attitudes and values and refers to an individualized, small-group, or class process that assists with specific personal/social issues and difficulties, and educational or career issues. Counselling services may be developmental, preventative, or crisis-oriented" (p.2). The policy further explains the pivotal role of counsellors in:

- Developing individualized educational plans for students based on their teaching experiences
- Assisting with curriculum development
- Coordinating community services for school students, and
- Acting as a liaison between parents, students, and teachers.

The Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) has a Council for School Counsellors who advocates for the profession of counselling within the school system and monitors its implementation.

Similarly, Ministries of Education in other Canadian provinces and the provincial School Counselling Associations for B.C., Ontario, Manitoba, Newfoundland, and Quebec have acknowledged the important role that school counsellors play at various stages of students' progression through the school system from the early childhood period until high school completion. They have also identified the multiple necessary skill sets and roles of school counsellors in the current Canadian context, which our University of Alberta School Counselling Program aims to develop in counsellor trainees.

8. DEVELOPING A PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AS A SCHOOL COUNSELLOR

Students are encouraged to join professional associations that represent the profession of school counselling at the provincial and national levels to keep informed of developments in the field and to benefit from the support and ideas associated with a professional network. Membership in professional associations also facilitates an awareness of appropriate ethical behavior and the professional responsibilities of school counsellors.

In Alberta, the ATA Council for School Counsellors is the main association representing school counsellors. At the national level, the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy

Association (CCPA) includes various types of counsellors, including school counsellors, in its mandate. The websites for these organizations can be obtained through a google search.

9.DISCIPLINE AND PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

9.1 Program Expectations

The master's program in school counselling at the University of Alberta endorses the Code of Ethics, Code of Conduct, and guidelines of the College of Alberta Psychologists, the Canadian Psychological Association, and the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association.

The program takes very seriously any allegations of unprofessional or unethical student conduct. Allegations will be investigated by the Graduate Coordinator overseeing all the Counselling Graduate Programs in the Faculty of Education, and will be taken into account in making decisions related to a student's continuation in the program.

9.2 Ethical Dilemmas

Because the program would rather have students deal with an ethical dilemma or problem before it leads to an ethical complaint, students in the program who find themselves in an ethical dilemma are encouraged to consult with program faculty.

9.3. Dismissal from the Program

School counselling involves working with clients and is therefore based upon a combination of effective interpersonal skills, helping skills, ethical behavior, and ensuring the safety of students, parents, families and all school personnel served by school counsellors in their practicum roles. Students who are found to be unsuitable for working with clients will be asked to withdraw from the program.

10. SCHOOL COUNSELLING PROGRAM FACULTY

The school counselling program faculty consists of individuals with a counselling, school and clinical child psychology, or special education background, as well as faculty members who are certified teachers, to match the focus and objectives of the program. Instructors who are currently teaching in the School Counselling Program or who have previously taught in this program include:

Dr. Rebecca Hudson Breen, Certified Teacher, Registered Psychologist, and Associate Professor of Counselling Psychology at the University of Alberta

Dr. Noorfarah Merali, Registered Psychologist, Associate Professor of Counselling Psychology at the University of Alberta

Dr. Denise Larsen, Certified Teacher, Registered Psychologist, Professor of Counselling Psychology at the University of Alberta, and Associate Dean of Research for the Faculty of Education

Dr. Phillip Sevigny, Registered Psychologist, Associate Professor of School and Clinical Child Psychology and Counselling Psychology at the University of Alberta

Dr. Sophie Yohani, Certified Teacher, Registered Psychologist, Professor of Counselling Psychology at the University of Alberta

11. UNIVERSITY AND PROGRAM COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION AND ACCESS, COMMUNITY & BELONGING

The University of Alberta respectfully acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 Territory, traditional lands of the First Nations and Metis People. In Collaboration with Indigenous Elders, community leaders and Indigenous faculty members, as well the University's Vice Provost for Indigenous Initiatives, Dr. Florence Glanfield, the University released its Indigenous Strategic Plan in summer 2022. Entitled: Braiding Past, Present and Future, the plan outlines several action steps the institution plans to take towards reconciliation, as well as honouring Indigenous ways knowing, with a related accountability framework. The strategic plan can be accessed at the following link:

https://www.ualberta.ca/indigenous/strategic-plan/index.html

The University of Alberta has a long history of work in support of equity, diversity, and inclusivity (EDI) in programming, services, teaching and learning, scholarship, and advocacy. In February 2019, the University formalized its firm commitment to EDI by releasing its EDI Strategic Plan and related accountability framework. As outlined in the plan (which can be accessed in full at: https://www.ualberta.ca/equity-diversity-inclusivity/media-library/edi/edl-strategic-plan-final_feb2019.pdf):

> The University of Alberta is committed to cultivating an institutional culture that values, supports, and promotes equity, human rights, respect, and accountability among faculty, staff, and students. In our inclusive community, we encourage and support individual and collaborative efforts to identify and address inequities, and we welcome and enable contributions of all voices as we engage with diverse ideas, knowledges, and perspectives in the pursuit of inclusive excellence for the public good.
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> The University of Alberta will work to achieve an accessible, equitable, and inclusive community of students, faculty, and staff that supports our learning environment shaped by curiosity, rigorous inquiry, and evidence-based decision making, respect, and a culture of human rights. We are committed to achieving equitable access and opportunities in admissions, employment, retention, and advancement; and to a working, learning, and living

> environment free from discrimination, bullying, and harassment. It is only through such a commitment that the University of Alberta can reach our larger vision of being a space that actively fosters intellectual curiosity, rigorous inquiry, and ingenuity. We envision—and will cultivate—a community that recognizes equity and diversity as fundamental to achieving inclusive excellence in learning, teaching, research, service, and community engagement.
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> We acknowledge this commitment requires identifying and addressing formal and informal obstacles, barriers, and biases that limit equitable access and opportunities, as well as intentionally pursuing and implementing system-wide equity initiatives to embed diversity in all university structures, programs, policies, and practices, as well as in our visual and text identities. Determined to influence those formal and informal structures and mechanisms that limit access and opportunities, we will use principles of fairness and evidence-based policies and practices to support decision-making; collect and analyze diversity data; establish equity goals, targets, and benchmarks; and develop and implement policies. Recognizing that achieving EDI goals requires responsible and accountable leadership at all levels of the university, we will regularly evaluate and report on progress toward achieving an equitable and inclusive university.

More recently, the University of Alberta has integrated the two strategic plans above into a new strategic plan called Changing the Story, in which there is a clear focus on enhancing accessibility, a sense of community, and a sense of belonging for all people, which can be accessed at the following link: https://www.ualberta.ca/en/access-community-belonging/strategic-actions/report-to-community.html

Counselling Faculty Members in the Faculty of Education at University of Alberta have also been continually working together towards improving our responsiveness to issues related to diversity and human rights across all our Master's and Ph.D Programs. We have hired more faculty members from diverse groups over the past several years, and work hard to incorporate content related to all forms of diversity throughout our courses and practicum training, so our program graduates are well equipped to provide culturally responsive and safe services to the students, teachers, parents, families and communities they serve in their professional roles.

12. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SCHOOL COUNSELLORS AND REGISTERED PSYCHOLOGISTS

The School Counselling Master's Program at the University of Alberta *does not* train students to become Registered Psychologists.

There are fundamental differences between the professional activities of Registered Psychologists and the professional activities of School Counsellors, and programs aiming

to train each type of professional have different admission criteria and core course work. Registered Counselling Psychologists are mental health service providers who receive years of generalist training that prepares them to work with a number of client groups (children, adolescents, adults, the elderly), across counselling modalities (individual work, marriage/family counselling, group work), with a wide range of presenting problems across a variety of settings (e.g., hospitals, mental health clinics, university counseling centres, private practices, family counselling centres, sexual assault centres, etc.). Therefore, applicants for the Counselling Psychology Master's program are selected based on the substantial background knowledge and course credits in various areas of psychology that the College of Alberta Psychologists expects people applying to become Registered Psychologists to demonstrate, as well as based on various types of relevant counselling-related experiences across different contexts.

The School Counselling Master's Program is specifically designed to prepare trainees to undertake school counselling roles in elementary, junior high, or high school settings. These roles involve administering Level B tests, such as some academic achievement tests, providing individual and career counselling and consultation, engaging in crisis management and support, developing school programs, and acting as a liaison between teachers, parents, and students. The program provides excellent training for people wanting to continue their work in the school system. Students entering the School Counselling Program are not selected based on previous psychology course work background and the courses in this program do not provide the type of assessment and intervention training that people applying to become Registered Psychologists need to obtain for their broader roles.

APPENDIX A

STUDENT CHECKLIST OF SCHOOL COUNSELLING PROGRAM PROCESSES & REQUIREMENTS

Upon Admission**:**

❑ Plan to attend the School Counselling Program Orientation scheduled for the month of May to meet your fellow students and to obtain all information related to program registration, program requirements, and program planning. Any questions you have will also be answered in the Orientation.

❑ After the Orientation, register in your courses on the U of A's online Beartracks System in accordance with your Graduate Student Plan of Study Form stating the specific courses you have registered in and the term you are taking them. Sign off on the form and send it to Marsha at the essgrad1@ualberta.ca email address so this form can be retained in your program electronic student file.

Year 1 – July to April:

❑ In fall/winter, begin inquiring about possible funding for your second year of the program from your school board or employer to compensate for any potential reduction in salary during your practicum. Complete and submit the required application materials to your school board/employer.

❑ By mid-May to the beginning of June of the end of your first year in the program, you must have confirmed your specific practicum placement and practicum supervisor for the 2nd year of your program with your school principal or school board practicum coordinator.

❑ By spring, register in your courses for the second year of the program through the U of A online Beartracks System. Obtain your Graduate Student Plan of Study Form from the Graduate Student Services Administrator and add in the specific courses you have registered in and the term you are taking them. Then submit this form to essgrad1@ualberta.ca to be signed off by your School Counselling Master's Program Advisor, and retained in your electronic student file for the program records.

Year 2 – July to July:

❑ Begin your practicum in September and continue taking courses at the university.

❑ Ensure that you check with University regulations regarding convocation procedures and about any forms you have to complete to be able to convocate once you have met your master's degree requirements.

APPENDIX B

EVALUATION AND APPEAL POLICIES

General Evaluation Information

The policies and procedures used to evaluate students follow guidelines established by the Faculty of Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies at the University of Alberta. Formal evaluation involves awarding grades, although this is often amplified and elaborated by suggestions, comments and other verbal feedback. Students are graded from A+ through F in most courses. A C+ is the minimum grade required to pass at the graduate level.

In practicum courses, counselling supervisors provide a written evaluation of the student's performance. These form one aspect of the overall evaluation. Supervisors discuss these directly with students before submitting them to the course instructor.

Grievance Procedures

Student grievances of an academic nature may arise. Graduate students are advised to first to approach the instructor or supervisor concerned; in most cases, this individual can provide a satisfactory explanation. If the matter is not resolved, students are advised to see the Graduate Coordinator overseeing all the Counselling Programs in the Faculty of Education.

The Faculty of Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies manual outlines the process and options for graduate students with grievances: https://www.ualberta.ca/graduate-studies/about/graduate-program-manual/section-9-disputes-and-resolutions/9-2-academic-grievances-and-appeals.html.