

MFT Program Goals, SLO's, Targets, and Benchmarks

VSU Mission

Student Mission. To provide a diverse student population with an inspired education, a safe learning environment, a nurturing community, and a wealth of experience that assists students in molding their futures in a creative, conscious, and caring fashion while preparing them to be lifelong learners who will meet the needs of a changing global society.

University Mission. To operate the university with a focus toward human, environmental, and financial sustainability while increasing value to our local, regional, national, and international stakeholders. To expand opportunities for our students, employees, and varied community members by promoting social justice and service learning.

Regional Mission. To provide our region and our home with the resources and support necessary to develop and sustain a higher quality of living, greater economic and community development, and inspired innovation that nurtures and respects our diverse population and beautiful environment while promoting academic outreach, public and private entrepreneurship, and collaboration with all regional entities.

MFT Program Mission

In concert with the Valdosta State University mission and its embrace of service learning, safety, respect, community collaboration, creativity, social justice, and sustainability, the mission of the Marriage and Family Therapy Program is to provide students with in-depth knowledge and understanding of the interconnected, interrelated, and systemic nature of the world, particularly as these pertain to the formation and resolution of human problems. This systems theoretical knowledge-base forms the epistemological foundation upon which students acquire an MFT identity and develop the clinical skills necessary to therapeutic practice that is ethical, grounded in research, multi-culturally competent, and readies students for employment in a variety of mental health settings with a diverse range of clients.

MFT Program Goals

Program Goal 1. Diversity The program will demonstrate that graduates consider ethnicity, race, gender, socioeconomic status, and culture in clinical work.

Program Goal 2. Knowledge

The program will demonstrate that graduates have a master's level understanding of systems theory, relational/contextual thinking, and the ability to apply a systems/relational orientation to the assessment and treatment of clients.

Program Goal 3. Practice

The program will demonstrate that graduates have the clinical competencies and personal qualities necessary to gain employment in a variety of mental health settings.

Program Goal 4. Professional MFT Identity

The program will demonstrate graduate readiness to assume the identity of a professional Marriage and Family Therapist

Program Goal 5. Research

The program will demonstrate student understanding of the way research shapes and informs the clinical practice of family therapy.

Program Goal 6. Ethics

The program will demonstrate that graduates understand and apply a systemic ethic and the AAMFT Code of Ethics to clinical work.

These program goals, set by VSU's MFT program, are informed by the Professional Marriage and Family Therapy Principles (PMFTPs) established by COAMFTE, which include the following:

- AMFTRB Examination Domains, Task Statements, and Knowledge Statements
- AMFTRB Guidelines
- AMFT Core Competencies
- AAMFT Code of Ethics
- State of Georgia MFT Licensure Rules and Laws

MFT Student Learning Outcomes

SLO 1. Practice from a multi-culturally sensitive lens.

SLO 2. Practice from a systemic lens.

SLO 3. Be prepared to obtain entry-level employment in mental health settings.

SLO 4. Claim the professional identity of a Marriage and Family Therapist

SLO 5. Recognize the way research informs the field of Family Therapy.

SLO 6. Practice informed by ethics.

Alignment Between PGs, SLOs, Benchmarks and Assessment Mechanisms

The Valdosta State University mission, the MFT program mission, the MFT Program Goals (PGs), and the program's Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) are directly linked to one another. The PGs, designed to align the program and university missions, evaluate the program in the areas of diversity, knowledge, practice, MFT identity, research, and ethics. Each PG has several SLOs, which are assessed by designated assessment mechanisms (sometimes called "assessment measures," these course requirements—exams, papers, projects, etc.). The assessment mechanisms help the MFT program determine whether established benchmarks and SLOs have been met. In this way, the program can study the data and determine where and what kind of improvements can be made.

PGs, SLOs, Benchmarks, Assessment Mechanisms, and Targets

Program Goal 1. Diversity

The program will demonstrate that graduates consider ethnicity, race, gender, socioeconomic status, and culture in clinical work.

SLO 1: Practice from a multi-culturally¹ sensitive lens

Benchmarks & Assessment Mechanisms

1. 80% of students will earn a minimum score of 70% on the Privilege Project in *MFTH 7050 Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice*.
2. 80% of students will earn a minimum score of 70% on the Public Conversations Project Reflection Paper in *MFTH 6900: Foundations of Family Therapy*.
3. 80% of students will earn a minimum average score of 3 across three continuous semesters on diversity items (2, 29, and 53) and (4, 31, 55) of the *Practicum Evaluation* in *MFTH 7600 Practicum*.

Target: Program will demonstrate that 100% of students have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to consider ethnicity, race, gender, socioeconomic status, and culture in clinical work.

Program Goal 2. Knowledge

The program will demonstrate that graduates have a master's level understanding of systems theory, relational/contextual thinking, and the ability to apply a systems/relational orientation to the assessment and treatment of clients.

SLO 2: Practice from a systemic lens

Benchmarks & Assessment Mechanisms

1. 80% of students will earn a minimum score of 70% on the *Systems Theory paper* in *MFTH 6800 Relational Theory, Practice, and Ethics*.
2. 80% of students will earn a minimum score of 70% on the Midterm Exam (test on MFT models) in *MFTH 7101 Family Systems Theories*.
3. 80% of students will earn a minimum score of 70% on the Clinical Case Presentation (evaluated through genogram, systemic hypothesis, and content/process distinction) in *MFTH 7601 Treatment Issues in MFT*.
4. 80% of students will earn a minimum average score of 3 for items (5, 32, 56), (6, 33, 57), and (7, 34, 58) concerning clinical systemic thinking on the *Practicum Evaluation* used in *MFTH 7600: Practicum in MFT*.

Target: Program will demonstrate that 100% of students graduate with a master's level understanding of systems theory, relational/contextual thinking, and the ability to apply a systems/relational orientation to the assessment and treatment of clients.

¹For us, the term "multi-culture" embraces a wide range of diversity concerns and issues, including but not limited to religion and spirituality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and affiliation, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, family history, physical ability, immigration status, nationality.

Program Goal 3. Practice

The program will demonstrate that students possess the clinical competencies and personal qualities necessary to gain employment in a variety of mental health settings.

SLO 3: Obtain entry-level employment in mental health settings

Benchmarks & Assessment Mechanisms

1. 80% of students will earn a minimum grade of 70% on the *Giving up the Ghost Assignment* pertaining to client referrals and collaboration with allied health professionals in *MFTH 7601 Treatment Issues in MFT*.
2. 80% of students will earn a minimum score of 70% on the *Case Study paper* in *MFTH 7602: Couples and Sex Therapy*.
3. 80% of students will earn a minimum score of 70% on the *Encountering Difference Project* in *MFTH 7500: Development in the Family System*.
4. 80% of students will earn a minimum score of 70% on the Comprehensive Exam I
5. 80% of students will earn a minimum score of 3 for items 28, 51, 62 concerning independent work on the *Practicum Evaluation* used in *MFTH 7600: Practicum in MFT*.

Target: Program will demonstrate that 100% of students graduate with the clinical competencies and personal qualities necessary to gain employment in a variety of mental health settings.

Program Goal 4. Professional MFT Identity

The program will demonstrate readiness to assume the identity of a professional Marriage and Family Therapist

SLO 4: Students will claim the professional identity of a Marriage and Family Therapist

Benchmarks & Assessment Mechanisms

1. 80% of students will respond with a 5 or greater on the SLO survey question concerning MFT Identity.
2. 80% of students will earn a minimum of 80% on the *Personal Epistemology & Change paper* in *MFTH 7102: Interventions in MFT*.
3. 80% of students will earn a minimum average score of 3 for items 17, 42, 65 and items 18, 43, and 66, concerning professional identity on the *Practicum Evaluation* used in *MFTH 7600: Practicum in MFT*.
4. 80% of students will earn a minimum score of 70% on the Comprehensive Exam II.

Target: Program will demonstrate that 100% of graduates are ready to assume the identity of a professional Marriage and Family Therapist

Program Goal 5. Research

The program will demonstrate students' understanding of the way research shapes and informs the clinical practice of family therapy.

SLO 5: Recognize the ways research informs relational family therapy treatment

Benchmarks & Assessment Mechanisms

1. 80% of students will earn a minimum of 70% on the *Qualitative Research Project* in *MFTH 7200: Research in MFT*.

2. 80% of students will earn a minimum 70% on the *Diagnosis and Disorder Group Presentation* in *MFTH 7400 Psychopathology & Psychopharmacology in MFT*.
3. 80% of students will earn a minimum score of 3 on their narrative response to the Comprehensive Exam II question concerning the ways research shapes the field of family therapy. (p. 5, item 5, SLO 5).

Target: Program will demonstrate that 100% of graduates recognize the ways research shapes and informs the clinical practice of family therapy.

Program Goal 6. Ethics

The program will demonstrate that graduates understand and apply systemic ethics and the AAMFT Code of Ethics to clinical work.

SLO 6: Practice informed by ethics

Benchmarks & Assessment Mechanisms

1. 80% of students will earn a minimum score of 70% on the exam question concerning systemic ethics in *MFTH 6800 Relational Theory, Practice, and Ethics*.
2. 80% of students will earn a minimum of 70% on the *Professional Ethics Portfolio* in *MFTH 7350 Legal Issues in MFT*.
3. 80% of students will earn a minimum average score of 3 for practice items 27, 50, 74 concerning a systemic ethic on the *Practicum Evaluation* used in *MFTH 7600: Practicum in MFT*.
4. 80% of students will earn a minimum of 80% on the *Ethical Scenarios Group Project* in *MFTH 7880: Professional Ethics Seminar*.

Target: Program will demonstrate that 100% of graduates understand and apply systemic ethics and the AAMFT Code of Ethics in their clinical work.

Putting It All Together:

Accreditation, PGs, SLO's, Benchmarks, and Assessment Mechanisms

Outcome-Based Education Framework

The above description of the program and university missions, program goals, and outcomes is a description of an outcome-based (OBE) education. As defined by COAMFTE (p. 48, Accreditation Standards, Version 12.0), an OBE is:

a framework where the focus is on the assessment of program outcomes (empirical measures of student achievement at the student and program level) rather than on the assessment of inputs (such as coursework and resources available to students). The primary focus of assessment is evaluating a program's goals and outcomes based solely on specific measures of student competency.

In other words, rather than going through a book, chapter-by-chapter, the program has established goals (PGs) linked to an action, a student learning outcome (SLO), which is operationalized using assessment measures and benchmarks.

Thinking inductively, from the specific up to the general, here is how it all comes together. Here is how the program's mission, PGs, SLO's, benchmarks, assessment mechanisms, and accreditation intertwine, shape, and inform each other:

Every course has assessment mechanisms (specific course requirement such as exams, papers, or projects), some of which are earmarked as benchmarks. Benchmarks indicate minimum assignment score and student performance percentages. Benchmarks are linked to SLOs, and each SLO is paired with a PG.

So, thinking linearly, read from #1 at the bottom of this page up to #5. Then look at the visual map, below:

5. When the program achieves its SLO and PGs, it has taken steps toward successful maintenance of its accreditation credential.
4. As all the benchmarks associated with an SLO are met and the SLO is said to have been achieved, then the program can say that the program goal (PG) associated with the SLO has been achieved. PGs address six broad areas, five of which are required for accreditation: Diversity, Knowledge, Practice, MFT Identity (not COAMFTE required), Research, and Ethics.
3. When aggregated benchmark data indicates that benchmark criteria have been met, the program can say that it has successfully taught what the course claims to teach. This means that the program is able to say that it has fulfilled a part of a student learning outcome (SLO). We say only "part of an SLO is fulfilled" because each SLO has three to five benchmarks. All benchmarks associated with an SLO must be met in order to say that the SLO has been successfully achieved.
2. With the successful completion of each assessment measure, you pass course milestones, called benchmarks. A benchmark, for example, might be something like this: "At least 80% of students in the class will get 70% or better on a 5-point exam question about systemic ethics." When you and your classmates collectively produce a score of 70% or better, then we can say that benchmark has been met.
1. Every course in the MFT curriculum has short-term course objectives. An objective in a certain class, for example, might be that students are able to recognize the difference between Structural family therapy and Narrative family therapy. To test whether you have learned this, your professor asks you to complete certain assessment measures (an exam, a paper, a project, a presentation, etc.).

This is a visual map of the circular relationships between assessment mechanisms, benchmarks, SLOs, PGs, and accreditation described above.

