

## MFT Program Policy on Student Advising

### Policy Availability

The **Policy on Student Advising** is available to the public via the [MFT Homepage > Accreditation > Policies and Handbook](#).

### MFT Program Advising

Academic advising for MFT students is intended to provide necessary tools and information to MFT students, allowing them to meet institutional and degree requirements as well as take responsibility for developing educational and career plans compatible with their personal goals. Thus, it is the policy of the VSU MFT Program that all newly admitted MFT students . . . .

1. are assigned an MFT faculty advisor.
2. are emailed an *Admission Information Letter* giving the name and email of each student's MFT faculty advisor after the faculty receive the prospective student's letter of intent to begin the program. A copy of the *Admission Information Letter* is saved in the student's permanent file.
3. work with their MFT faculty advisor to develop an individualized *Plan of Study* which is subject to the approval of the advisor.
4. will have access to accurate advising information, which will be published on the MFT Program website.
5. will be surveyed on a yearly basis about their academic advising experience. These surveys will accrue data about students' perceptions concerning the quality and effectiveness of the MFT advising process. This data will be aggregated and disseminated to relevant communities of interest.

An assessment of the MFT program advising process and policy is a part of the regular program review process; the MFT advising policy and procedures will be assessed and reviewed every 3<sup>rd</sup> year.

### Goals and Responsibilities of MFT Academic Advisors

1. Help advisees understand the requirements of their program and plan appropriately to meet those requirements.
2. Assist students in choosing educational and career objectives commensurate with their interests and abilities.
3. Answer questions raised by students and make them aware of the possible short- and long-range consequences of their academic choices.
4. Help advisees correctly prepare paperwork necessary to meet program requirements, such as course substitutions, waivers, the [Application for Graduation](#), and the *MFT Graduation Checklist* (see your advisor for this form).
5. Be a source of information regarding policies and procedures of the MFT Program and the University.
6. Be a source for ongoing dialogue concerning academic goals, career, and related life issues.
7. Maintain a permanent student file (either electronic or hard copy) for each student. At

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minimum, each file will include the following:

- a. Application packet
- b. Prospective Student Evaluation
- c. Welcome to the MFT Program email sent by faculty interviewer denoting admission status (i.e., regular or probationary).
- d. Student's Letter of Intent and Acceptance of Diversity Statement (an email from the student documenting their intent to begin the program and their affirmation of having read and their willingness to abide by, the program's diversity statement).
- e. Admission Information Letter
- f. Comprehensive Exam I
- g. Comprehensive Exam I Evaluation Rubric
- h. Comprehensive Exam II
- i. Comprehensive Exam II Evaluation Rubric
- j. Graduation Checklist
- k. Post graduate transcript showing conferral of MFT degree

### Responsibilities of Students

To be successful, the advising process must include the thoughtful participation of students, who must assume the following responsibilities:

- Know the requirements for completing the program, graduation, and other university requirements published on the MFT Program and university websites and/or the university catalog.
- Work with an MFT advisor to develop a curriculum plan that will allow the student to stay on track for their planned graduation, recognizing other responsibilities the student might have such as family, work, and religious obligations.
- Contact the assigned advisor when concerns arise. These might include earned deficiency points, course substitutions, changes to the student's Plan of Study (example: dropping a course(s), concerns about grades.
- If you decide to leave the program, whether permanently or for a semester or more, you are strongly encouraged to contact your advisor. For example, if you leave the program after taking one or two practica, your absence from the program resets the clock, so that when you return, you will be required to re-take one or two practica, so that you have three contiguous practica.
- Accept ultimate responsibility for selection of classes that incorporate personal decisions as well as the academic advice given by the advisor.
- Evaluate the MFT advising process and individual academic advisors by completing an advising survey.

### MFT Advising Process

1. Once a student has been accepted for admission and following receipt of the student's Letter of Intent to enter the program, the program director will email the *Admission Information*

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*Letter*, which gives the name and email of the student’s MFT faculty advisor and relays that the advisor will contact the student before the start of the Fall semester. A copy of the *Admission Information Letter* is printed and included in the student’s permanent file.

2. Prior to the start of each new incoming fall class, faculty advisors will contact their advisees, inform them of the advising process and class registration.
3. Next, the advisor assists students in creating a *Plan of Study* that best suits their needs.
4. Once the student has created the plan of study—using the “*Your Plan of Study*” form the advisor will approve the plan and lift the student’s advising flag, allowing the student to register for classes.

### Email Alerts/Reminders

**Withdrawal.** Each semester, just before the mid-term, a version of this email is sent to students reminding them of withdrawal dates:

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Dear Students,

Midterm is closely approaching, which means the deadline to withdraw from full-term classes is also near. **The last date to withdraw from full-term classes is October xx, 20xx.**

Below is the VSU withdrawal policy, or you can view the [Withdrawal Policy](#) for more information:

- Students may withdraw from courses following the drop/add period until approximately one week after midterm by completing the online withdrawal process on BANNER. A grade of "W" will appear in the student's official records if the student has withdrawn five or fewer times per the **Limited Withdrawal Policy**. For the sixth and each subsequent withdrawal that counts under this policy, students will receive a grade of “WF.”
- However, a student may not exercise this right to withdraw to avoid sanction for **academic dishonesty**. Instructors may assign a “W” on the proof roll for students not attending class. It is the responsibility of the student to complete the withdrawal process. A withdrawal is official when it is received and processed by the Office of the Registrar.

Please set up a meeting with your advisor as soon as possible if you are unsure of whether you should withdraw from a course.

Warm regards,

MFT Advisor

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**Registration.** Advisors also send out an email around mid-term of the Fall semester, reminding students of Spring and Summer registration. Here is an example of such an email:

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Dear Students,

The time for **Spring & Summer 20xx** registration is getting close—**November xx**.

There will be no formal advising for this semester’s registration. However, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me to make an appointment. Please email ASAP to schedule a meeting as I will be recruiting this week and not in the office Wednesday and Thursday but can do some team meetings on these days.

Each of you have a *Plan of Study* on file, along with your own copy of this form. Assuming no changes are being made, your advisor has reviewed your plan, and you have been deemed eligible for registration.

If you would like to make changes to your plan, especially if you are considering adjusting your plan to better meet your needs, please schedule a meeting with me. Additionally, if you have already adjusted your plan and did not meet me, please request a meeting prior to this semester’s registration to ensure you graduate as planned.

Just a reminder: It is the responsibility of each student to register for the proper coursework, take the appropriate pre-requisites, and meet all graduation requirements.

#### **Prior to registration...**

- Check your registration status by going to your account on the web and clicking the “Check Your Registration Status” option. Please check your status well before advising opens.
- If you have holds on your account, I am unable to lift your advising flag until those holds have been completed. It can take a day or two to resolve problems, so please do not wait until the last minute to check and take care of the holds.
- I will be lifting everyone's Flag on **Friday, October xx**.
- Remember to give your advisor time to lift this flag so you can register.

**Waitlist note:** Although you may see that VSU has a “waitlist,” this feature **does not work** for MFT courses. While it may add you to a waitlist, the software will never move you into the course once the enrollment number changes. As a result, do NOT put yourself on a waitlist. Instead, email your advisor, and let her know that you cannot get into a course.

The **Schedule of Classes** is available online. You may also log into Banner or Visual Schedule Builder (VSB) through your MyVSU to view the course offerings.

Please note that the **Schedule of Classes** currently posted changes **often** as we move toward the

start of each new semester.

**Registration for spring and summer 2025 begins October 27th. Specific registration information and the Registration Guide will be forthcoming.**

*Just a reminder, it is the responsibility of each student to register for the proper coursework, take the appropriate pre-requisites, and meet all graduation requirements."*

***Prior to registration***

*Check your registration status by going to your account on the web and clicking the "Check Your Registration Status" option. Please check your status well before advising opens*

*If you have a hold on your account, we will be unable to lift your advising flag until those holds have been completed. It can take a day or two to resolve problems, so please do not wait until the last minute to check.*

*Once the electronic advising flag has been lifted from everyone's account an email will be sent out.*

***Connect with Your MFT Advisors***

*Students are encouraged to contact their advisor for the following:*

- *Whenever they are considering making changes to their plan of study or whenever they have questions about the order and availability of coursework. **It is the responsibility of each student to register for the proper coursework, take the appropriate pre-requisites, and meet all graduation requirements.***
- *Prior to dropping or adding a course.*
- *If students are having difficulties or have concerns about their performance in class(es), they are advised to meet with the course professor and their assigned advisor prior to the midterm to discuss whether a course(s) should be dropped.*

**Graduation.** When students are at least two semesters from their anticipated graduation date, advisors contact students and advise them that to graduate, they must complete the **MFT Graduation Checklist** (see your advisor for this form) and the [Application for Graduation](#).

Advisors send out an email with instructions to apply for graduation around the start of Spring semester. Here is an example of such an email:

Dear MFT Students, if you expect to graduate in **Summer 20xx**, then this email is for you.

To graduate, each student must complete a MFT Checklist and a Graduation Application. First, you need to complete the MFT Graduate Checklist. Attached, you will find directions for how to complete this form.

After the Graduation Checklist is complete, you will complete; your advisor will send the Graduation Application link to you.

I would suggest reading the directions first (see attached). You will also find attached to this email a Graduation Checklist Templates to help you visualize how the MFT Graduation Checklist should be completed. Please also review this form before you START this process.

The MFT Graduation Checklist needs to be completed by **February xx**. Once I have received your checklist, I will send the Graduation application link which should be completed soon after.

Any delay in completing these forms and the other requirements listed on the graduation checklist can delay graduating on time.

Sincerely,  
MFT Advisors

### MFT Advising

Academic advising for MFT students is intended to provide necessary tools and information to MFT students, allowing them to meet institutional and degree requirements as well as take responsibility for developing educational and career plans compatible with their personal goals.

### Before Registering for Classes

Most students in the MFT program follow a two-year course of study; however, students are allowed up to seven years to complete the degree. Regardless of the speed with which students complete the program, they must consider their academic goals, personal and future plans, and life circumstances as well as the [MFT Program Course requirements](#) and, in collaboration with their advisor, create a *Plan of Study*. Once the *Plan of Study* has been created, both the student and the advisor will sign the plan. The advisor will retain the original for inclusion in the student's permanent file, and the student will keep a copy. Once this is accomplished, the student's advising flag will be lifted, at which point the student is free to register for classes.

### Registering for Classes

Generally, registration is open for a one-month window at mid-semester and reopens again a week prior to the first day of classes. Check the electronic message board (EMB) at FamilyWorks and/or see the [VSU Academic Calendar](#) for specific registration dates. Prior to open registration periods, advisors will lift students' advising flags, which allows them to register for classes. If your advisor has not received a revised *Plan of Study* and a note or email describing the changes and the reason for them, your advisor will assume that your last approved advising plan is in force.

- [How to register for classes](#)
- [When to Register for Classes \(registration dates are listed in the VSU Academic Calendar\)](#)
- [Where to Register for Classes \(Banner\)](#)
- View the [Schedule of Classes](#)

### If You Make Changes to the *Plan of Study*

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Students are expected to meet with their faculty advisor whenever they are considering making changes to their *Plan of Study* or have questions about the order and availability of coursework. Prior to making changes to a *Plan of Study*, students must provide advisors with the following:

- A revised copy of the *Plan of Study* form
- A brief note or email explaining the proposed change(s) and how the change(s) may impact your date of graduation.

Keep your *Plan of Study* up-to-date! When there is more demand for a course than space or enrollment limits allow, students with outdated advising plans will be removed from the course in question. **It is the responsibility of each student to register for the proper coursework, take the appropriate pre-requisites, and meet all graduation requirements.**

### Dropping or Adding Classes

Drop/Add Time Limits – Students may drop and add courses during the official drop/add period, which is usually the first week of classes. Students can drop classes as withdrawal/passing until the midterm; after that, withdraw/fail is the only option.

### Withdrawing from a Class

**Dropping** a course and **withdrawing** from a course are different. **Make sure you know how they differ**, particularly as it concerns your **continued financial aid eligibility**. Prior to dropping or withdrawing from a course, students are expected to talk with academic advisor and strongly encouraged to speak with someone in Financial Aid about any consequences that might occur as a result of dropping a course or withdrawing from the program.

Further, students should be aware that *MFTH 7600 Practicum* must be taken as three contiguous semesters of clinical practice. Students must remain continuously enrolled in *MFTH 7600 Practicum* across three consecutive semesters for one calendar year (for example, Summer-Fall-Spring or Fall-Spring-Summer). Should a student take a semester with no practicum, *the clock resets so that they* will have to begin the consecutive sequence all over the next time they enroll in practicum.

### Dismissal from the program

If dismissed from the program, a student must sit out for two semesters before re-applying for re-admission. Re-admission is not guaranteed, and prior to academic performance and/or conduct in the program will be considered. If re-admitted, the student must re-take only courses with deficiencies until the number of deficiency points is less than or equal to two. If the contiguous 3 semesters of practica were interrupted, the student is required to take the 3 semesters over again, so that they are continuous. A student cannot take a class more than twice or apply for re-admission more than once. The academic program reserves the right to place specific conditions and contingencies on any offer of readmission.

### **Exit Interview is Required Before Leaving the MFT Program**

Students who leave the MFT Program for any reason (i.e., academic dismissal, ethical violation, medical illness, deficiency points, personal reasons, etc.), are required to meet with a faculty

member, advisor, Program Director, or Clinical Coordinator for an exit interview. The interviewer will write up a brief narrative summary of the interview and place it in the student's permanent file.

### Talk to Your Professor and/or Your Advisor

At or before midterm, students should evaluate whether they want to continue in a class(es) in which you are having difficulty. Unlike undergraduate classes, graduate classes may not have pre-midterm assignments or exams that help you gauge your progress. To help you decide whether you should remain in one or more of your classes, ask yourself questions such as these: Do I feel comfortable with the material, and do I believe I am gaining mastery over the concepts? Can I reasonably get all of the work done by the end of the semester?

If you are having difficulties or if you are concerned about your performance in a class, you should meet with the professor and your advisor prior to the midterm to discuss whether you should drop or withdraw from the course.

If you do decide to drop or add a course, you must see your advisor and re-read the section on changing your advising plan.

### How To Do the Program in More Than 2 Years (3 or 4 Years)

If you plan to go through the program more slowly than 2 years, contact your faculty advisor and schedule a meeting prior to MFT New Student Orientation, which occurs the first week of August. The two of you will put your heads together and, based on your needs, hammer out a *Plan of Study* that meets graduation requirements and your personal circumstances and goals.

### Graduation

For information on the graduation process, advising, and paperwork, see the [Application for Graduation](#) page. Students who do not fall into the typical two-year course schedule must meet with their advisor **at least two semesters prior** to the anticipated date of graduation to complete the proper graduation forms.

### Application for Graduation/Graduation Checklist

**At least two semesters before** their projected graduation date, students are required to fill out the *MFT Graduation Checklist* and an [Application for Degree](#) and submit them to the Registrar's Office. The [Application for Degree](#) alerts the Registrar's Office that you are planning to graduate in two semesters, so the Registrar begins comparing your *MFT Graduation Checklist* of completed courses to the published list of [MFT Course Requirements](#). Students graduate once all requirements have been met. Thus, for the next two semesters, you will update the [Application for Degree](#) form as you complete the remaining two semesters. Here are the steps:

#### Steps to Applying for Graduation

- You will receive an email from the program with your MFT graduation checklist. **Before you complete this form**, print out your unofficial transcripts or download them to your electronic device to ensure you correctly complete your graduation checklist.
- Once you complete the MFT graduation checklist, email this back to your advisor.

- Your Advisor will send you an email indicating your MFT Graduation Checklist has been approved, and you can complete the online [Graduation Application for Degree](#).
- **Complete by February**, otherwise, this may cause delays in being able to walk in May, receiving your degree in July, and receiving your diploma.
- Make yourself a copy of all forms once they are signed.
- After your Graduation Application has been approved, request a Walk Early from Registrar.
- Once the Walk Early form has been approved, send the confirmation to your advisor
- Pay the \$50 graduation fee and receive a receipt sent to the email address you provided.

**Note:** It takes a great deal of time to review, complete, and sign your forms. Submit these to the MFT faculty advisor as early as possible.

VSU does not host a Summer Graduation. If you would like to “walk” early during the Spring graduation ceremony, then you must request to participate in the Spring graduation by completing the Walk Early Request form with Registrar. This form must be completed at least one month prior to the Spring graduation ceremony date. However, please note that this form cannot be completed until you have received confirmation from the Office of the Registrar that you have successfully applied for graduation.

Keep in mind that because you are filing forms with the Registrar’s office at least two semesters before you graduate, you will not yet have taken some courses listed on the ***MFT Graduation Checklist***. **Submit the form to the Registrar anyway** and **as soon as possible**. After you complete the remaining courses, the MFT Clinical Coordinator will sign off on them, and an updated copy is resubmitted to the Registrar’s office.

**Important Note:** The Office of the Registrar will not allow anyone with an incomplete MFT Graduation Checklist or Graduation Application to graduate. This means, submitting your Case Load Form, accruing 500 hours of client contact and 100 Supervision hours, passing Comprehensive Exam I & II, and completing the Exit Survey. *Do not delay*. The Office of the Registrar has hundreds of applications to review, the longer you wait to submit your application, the longer it will take for Office of the Registrar to review your application. If your materials have not been processed because they are incomplete or you are late submitting them, your graduation may be deferred, your transcripts may be delayed and/or your degree may not be conferred until the following semester.

### Required Exit Interview Before Leaving the MFT Program

For the purposes of program assessment and improvement, students who leave the MFT Program for any reason (i.e., academic dismissal, ethical violation, medical illness, deficiency points, personal reasons, etc.), are required to meet with a faculty member, advisor, Program Director, or Clinical Coordinator for an exit interview. The interviewer will write a brief narrative summary of the interview and place it in the student’s permanent file. Suggested questions for the exit interview are as follows:

1. **Can you share what led to your decision to leave the program?** (If the reason is not known). A

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direct question to open up the conversation and understand the main reason.

2. **Were there specific academic challenges or personal difficulties that contributed to your decision?** To assess whether external or internal factors were at play.
3. **Did you find the course material or workload manageable? If not, what aspects were most challenging? Did you find the course material or workload manageable? If not, what aspects were most challenging?** This can provide insight into whether the program's demands were overwhelming.
4. **Was there a particular moment or event that made you reconsider continuing with the program?** Understanding specific turning points can be key to identifying program weaknesses or personal struggles.
5. **Do you feel the program adequately prepared you for the demands of Marriage and Family Therapy?** This helps evaluate the program's effectiveness in preparing students.
6. **Was there any specific aspect of the MFT curriculum or training that you didn't connect with or didn't enjoy?** Identifying elements of the program that may not resonate with students can be helpful for program development.
7. **Were there any personal circumstances that made it difficult to continue your studies (e.g., family issues, health concerns, financial challenges)?** Personal issues often impact academic progress and understanding these can provide a more complete picture.
8. **Did you feel supported by faculty and staff during your time in the program?** Assessing the role of mentorship and support within the program
9. **Were there any resources or accommodations that you felt were lacking or unavailable to you?** This can highlight gaps in student services, like academic advising, mental health support, or tutoring.
10. **Did you have difficulty balancing your personal life with the demands of the program?** To explore issues of work-life balance and how the program might be more flexible or supportive.
11. **Did you experience any feelings of isolation or disconnection from your peers or the larger MFT community?** Exploring the sense of belonging or community within the program.
12. **Were there aspects of the MFT profession itself that you came to realize were not a good fit for you?** This helps understand if the student's reasons are based on personal career alignment with the field.
13. **Did the program align with your expectations of what Marriage and Family Therapy training would be like?** This question can uncover any misconceptions about the program or field that

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may have led to their decision to leave?

14. **Were there specific skills or concepts that you felt were not adequately addressed in the curriculum?** This can provide useful feedback about areas for program improvement.
15. **Did you experience any difficulties in the practicum or internship portion of the program?** Practicum experiences are often a pivotal part of training and can be sources of both challenge and growth.
16. **Did you encounter any issues related to the program's pacing, structure, or flexibility?** To understand whether the program's format was a barrier to success.
17. **How did you find the feedback and evaluation process throughout your time in the program?** Assessing how constructive or supportive the feedback was from instructors.
18. **If you had to do things differently, what changes would you have made in how you approached the program?** Reflective feedback that could be insightful for both the student and program directors.
19. **Would you recommend this program to others considering MFT? Why or why not?** A direct question about the student's overall experience with the program.
20. **Is there anything we could have done differently to support you or help you succeed in the program?** A closing question that opens the door for constructive criticism and actionable suggestions.

These questions may help provide a more nuanced view of why a student left the program, which can help both improve the program and offer some closure for the student themselves.

#### **Related Policy**

See Policy on Exit Interviewing