

MFT Program Policy on Comprehensive Exams

Policy Availability

This **Policy on Comprehensive Exams** is available to the public through the [MFT Homepage > Accreditation > Policies and Handbook](#).

Policy on Comprehensive Exam I

The Comprehensive Exam I is a program requirement that screens students for personal and academic readiness for enrollment in clinical practica.

Purpose. When the MFT Program confers a degree upon students and they go out into the world to use their skills, the program is, in effect, sending a message to the general public that the student has been deemed sufficiently competent to at least do no harm and, at most, provide ethical, competent systemic therapy. Because of this, the MFT Program has an ethical gatekeeping responsibility to ensure, to the extent possible, that therapists who graduate from this university and this program can work competently with the public. The Comprehensive Exam I is one of the evaluative steps faculty take to ensure that.

Students are screened by the MFT faculty and receive faculty approval in order to register for *MFTH 7600 Practicum in Marriage and Family Therapy*, the clinical part of MFT training and serves as an application to clinical work. Submission of the *Comprehensive Exam I* prompts the faculty screening process. Students write the Comprehensive Exam I during or after the semester in which the student has successfully completed three service learning and outreach experiences, as verifiable by the Clinic Director, and the following six courses: *MFTH 6800 Relational Theory, Practice, & Ethics*; *MFTH 6900 Foundations in MFT*; *MFTH 7101 Family Systems Theories*; *MFTH 7102 Interventions in MFT*; *MFTH 7050 Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice*; *MFTH 7500 Development in the Family System*.

Due dates and directions for writing the Exam I is provided during a Comprehensive Exam I workshop given by the Clinical Coordinator each year to first year students.

Following receipt of the Comprehensive Exam I, the MFT faculty reviews the student's suitability and readiness for clinical training. Eligibility is based on personal and academic readiness. The criteria considered include academic performance (including the degree of engagement in the student's own education and scholarship), professionalism, presentation of self, personal trustworthiness, reliability, and responsibility. If faculty members have concerns, they will schedule a meeting with the student during which the student is given an opportunity to respond to those concerns. If faculty concerns are mitigated during this meeting, the student is permitted to enroll in practicum. If concerns remain, permission to begin practicum is denied. If

the student has enrolled in clinical practicum, he or she will need to withdraw or be administratively removed from the class.

See the Exam itself—***Comprehensive Exam I with Instructions*** for more about the program goal, student learning outcome, and any targets associated with the exam; prerequisites to take the Exam; the purpose of the exam; submission requirements; deadlines; and instructions for writing the Exam.

The Comprehensive Exam I is scored using the ***Comprehensive Exam I Evaluation Rubric***.

Policy on Comprehensive Exam II

The Comprehensive Exam II, a capstone paper, is a required MFT assignment that is written during the second of three consecutive semesters of *MFTH 7600 Practica*. Students are expected to professionally articulate their epistemological orientation to the art and science of change, which includes their understanding of problem formulation and resolution.

The Exam II is part of students' final Practicum II grade. Unlike Practica I and III, which have no written assignments, the Practicum II grade depends on submitting and passing the Comprehensive Exam II. Practica II syllabi will have detailed instructions, due dates, and submission requirements.

Comprehensive Exam II Instructions are included in *MFTH 7600 Practicum* syllabi along with information about the program goals, student learning outcomes, and targets associated with the Exam II, the prerequisites to take the Exam, the purpose of the exam, submission requirements, how to write a “pre-exam” outline, due dates, instructions for writing the Exam, information about how the exam is scored, and the scoring rubric.

Failure to Submit a Comprehensive Exam II

The Comprehensive Exam II is a required capstone paper that is counted toward the Practicum II grade. Failure to submit a Comprehensive Exam II can result in an unsatisfactory (failing) grade for Practicum II. Within 24 hours of a missed due date, students who fail to submit either the outline or the Comprehensive Exam II must submit an email to the faculty clearly indicating the reasons for missing the deadline. The faculty will review the reasons. Only under extenuating circumstances will the faculty accept late submissions. Writing the exam at the last minute, leaving town for non-emergency reasons, or computer breakdowns/losses, etc. will not be considered acceptable reasons. In such cases, the faculty member will deny the late submission, and the student will be required to wait until the following semester to resubmit the Comprehensive Exam II. Students should be aware that submitting the Comprehensive Exam II a semester late may change the anticipated graduation date.

If the reasons for submitting a late CE-II are not accepted by the faculty, or, if he or she fails to submit an Exam before the end of Practicum II, the student will receive an “unsatisfactory” for

This policy addresses Standards V12.5, Eligibility Criterion E: Accuracy and Program Transparency in Policies and Publications and Standard III: Curriculum, KE III-A: Curriculum Alignment and Monitoring. Updated Fall 2025. Scheduled for update Fall 2029 or sooner as necessary.

Practicum II and be required to take an additional semester of practicum. If circumstances warrant, the faculty may begin a Professional Improvement Plan (PIP) with the student.

