MFT Program Policy on MFT Student Professionalism

Policy Availability

The **Policy on MFT Student Professionalism** is available to the public via the MFT Homepage > Accreditation > Policies and Handbook.

Purpose

The Valdosta State University Marriage and Family Therapy Program maintains a commitment to professional excellence, ethical integrity, and respect for diversity. Students are expected to embody these principles throughout their academic and clinical training, ensuring that their professional behavior reflects the values and ethical commitments of the field of Marriage and Family Therapy.

The mission of the Marriage and Family Therapy Program at Valdosta State University is to prepare professionals who respect difference, celebrate diversity, and demonstrate the skills, knowledge, and behaviors expected of ethical practitioners working with individuals, couples, and families in a variety of professional settings.

Adhering to the core values established by the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), the program seeks to prepare students who:

- believe in the family as a fundamental unit of society
- embrace diversity and value all people
- support life-long learning and diverse scholarship
- exemplify integrity and ethical behavior in all professional roles

The program emphasizes that professional behavior is a vital component of professional preparation and practice. Students are expected to demonstrate attitudes, values, and conduct consistent with the ethical and professional standards of the field throughout their academic and clinical training.

Professional Competencies and Ethical Foundations

The AAMFT Core Competencies identify the professional skills and dispositions necessary for effective work with individuals and families. These include:

- Integrity and Ethical Conduct
- Professional Competence and Responsibility
- Respect for Diversity and Inclusion
- Confidentiality and Privacy
- Avoidance of Conflicts of Interest

In addition, the AAMFT Code of Ethics and all applicable state regulations provide the framework for ethical decision-making and professional practice. Students are required to understand and adhere to these standards at all times.

Upon acceptance into the Marriage and Family Therapy Program, students will be made aware of this policy and their ongoing access to the AAMFT Code of Ethics and the AAMFT Core Competencies. This policy outlines the expectations for professional behavior within academic, clinical, and community settings.

Expectations for Professional Behavior

Students enrolled in the Marriage and Family Therapy Program at Valdosta State University are expected to:

1. **Demonstrate Professional Judgment**
   Follow established university and program policies when interacting with peers, faculty, supervisors, clients, and members of the community.

2. **Maintain Confidentiality**
   Protect the privacy of all client, peer, and faculty information, including records, correspondence, and conversations, in accordance with the AAMFT Code of Ethics and legal standards set forth by Georgia rules and laws.

3. **Exhibit Emotional Maturity and Self-Control**
   Use self-awareness, emotional regulation, and professional composure in all personal and professional interactions.

4. **Demonstrate Professional Appearance and Conduct**
   Maintain appropriate dress, hygiene, and demeanor that reflect professional standards.

5. **Build and Maintain Professional Relationships**
   Engage respectfully and collaboratively with peers, faculty, supervisors, and clients. Demonstrate the ability to receive and integrate feedback constructively.

6. **Respect Diversity**
   Exhibit cultural humility and respect for all persons regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability, socioeconomic background, or worldview.

7. **Adhere to Ethical Standards**
   Demonstrate behavior consistent with the **AAMFT Code of Ethics**, **AAMFT Core Competencies**, and the **Valdosta State University Student Code of Conduct**.

8. **Demonstrate Academic and Professional Integrity**
   Exhibit honesty, cooperation, and integrity in all coursework, research, and professional interactions. Academic dishonesty, plagiarism, or falsification of records are prohibited.

9. **Practice Collaboration and Problem-Solving**
   Approach conflicts or challenges with a collaborative spirit, seeking solutions through professional communication and teamwork.

10. **Exhibit Professional Communication Skills**

Demonstrate clarity, respect, and professionalism in all written, verbal, and electronic communications.

Accountability and Conduct Procedures

Students are required to abide by all university policies and procedures, including the VSU Student Code of Conduct. Violations of this policy or of the AAMFT Code of Ethics will be reviewed by the MFT Program faculty. Depending on the nature of the concern, students may be required to do one or more of the following:

- Meet with their academic advisor or the MFT Program Director
- Participate in a professional development remediation plan
- Engage in the university's formal disciplinary process.

Students with unresolved conduct or academic integrity issues may be ineligible to:

- remain in the program
- graduate
- sit for comprehensive examinations