MFT Program Policy on Professional Behavior

Policy Availability

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

Professional Behavior Expectations

The MFT Program at Valdosta State University focuses on preparing professionals who respect differences, celebrate diversity, and demonstrate the requisite skills, knowledge, and behaviors expected of a professional working with children, families, and individuals in a variety of settings.

Behavioral and Technological Professional Behavior

The MFT Program maintains expectations in the following areas:

I. professional and personal relationships
II. technology

Professional and Personal Behavior

Professional behavior is essential to training for marriage and family therapists. At Valdosta State University, students are expected to demonstrate attitudes, values, and behaviors throughout their education that align with the MFT Program Diversity Statement, the VSU Student Code of Conduct, and the AAMFT Code of Ethics. Students enrolled in the MFT Program at Valdosta State University are expected to do the following:

1. Exhibit sound and professional judgment by following established university policies when interacting with peers, children, students, parents, clients, or members of the community.
2. Maintain confidentiality of student /client records, correspondence, and conversations.
3. Use emotional, social, and behavioral self-control and self-determination in personal interactions.
4. Demonstrate professional appearance and use appropriate hygiene.
5. Develop and maintain professional relationships with peers, colleagues, professors, site supervisors, clients, and students.
6. Demonstrate respectful attitudes toward the profession, students, parents, clients, colleagues, other educators, and support personnel.
7. Demonstrate ethical behavior as defined by the AAMFT Code of Ethics and by the Student Code of Conduct at Valdosta State University.
8. Exhibit a personal code of conduct that includes honesty, cooperation, and integrity related to any course requirements and interactions with VSU professors, peers, and personnel.
9. Exhibit a collaborative approach that seeks solutions when problems arise with peers, students, clients, faculty, parents, and administration.
10. Demonstrate the ability to work in a professional and respectful manner with diverse individuals.
11. Exhibit competence and professionalism in oral, written, and electronic communications.

This policy addresses Standards V12.5, Eligibility Criterion E: Accuracy and Program Transparency in Policies and Publications and Standard I: Outcome-Based Education Framework and Environmental Support, KE I-C: Plan for Assessing Environmental Supports. Updated Fall 2025. Scheduled for re-update anytime USG or VSU AI Policies change.

Technology

Valdosta State University maintains policies, disciplinary procedures, and a conduct process that govern how student technology policy violations are investigated, adjudicated, and sanctioned. These procedures are part of the broader Student Code of Conduct and related IT policies, and include clear steps for notice, response, hearing, and sanctions.

Valdosta State University's Information Resources Acceptable Use Policy outlines acceptable and unacceptable use of university computing resources. Violating this policy is considered a serious offense.

Misuse of Technology

MFT students accused of technological violations of Valdosta State University policy regarding the professional use of technology may be subject to the appropriate Valdosta State University disciplinary process. Violators may be subject to one or more of the following:

- reprimand (oral or written)
- disciplinary probation
- loss of technology access or other privileges
- suspension or expulsion from the university
- other educational or corrective actions tailored to the violation

Allegations are investigated by the Office of Student Conduct & Title IX (or relevant university unit). The student (respondent) is notified of the alleged misconduct and given an opportunity to respond.

Violators are subject to university disciplinary action consistent with the student and employee handbooks and honor codes. In addition, legal consequences under state/federal law (e.g., Georgia computer protection laws) may apply.

The Student Code of Conduct applies broadly to student behavior, including misuse of university computing systems and networks (e.g., unauthorized access, damaging systems, misuse of accounts). Technology violations are specifically listed under "Appropriate Use of University Computing Equipment, Network, and Facilities."

The Student Code of Conduct provides a formal disciplinary framework that applies when a student has allegedly violated university rules or policies. The procedures emphasize due process, fairness, notice of the case, and the right of the student to respond before sanctions are imposed.

- If the student accepts responsibility, the matter may be resolved informally with appropriate sanctions.
- If responsibility is disputed, the case can be referred to a student disciplinary committee or hearing officer. Students can have hearings where evidence is reviewed and decisions are made about responsibility and sanctions.
- If a violation is found, VSU may impose a range of sanctions depending on the severity and

context, such as:

- For certain technology violations, such as unauthorized file sharing or bandwidth misuse, VSU's non-academic conduct section includes specific progressive sanctions (e.g., temporary suspension of network access) before traditional conduct proceedings are invoked.

MFT Student Reporting Student Misconduct

Complaints or reports of student misconduct should be reported by phone, in person to University Police (229) 333-7816, in person to any housing and residence life staff person to the Office of Student Conduct & Title IX, or by way of the student conduct report form.

Students can report behavior that is deemed an immediate or imminent threat to the physical or psychological welfare or safety of any individual through the Behavior Reporting Form.

Students, staff, and faculty can email questions to vsubit@valdosta.edu.

MFT Faculty Reporting, Investigating, and Resolving Student Misconduct

The MFT Program adheres to VSU policies and procedures on reporting misconduct as set forth in Section II: Reporting Student Misconduct of the Student Code of Conduct.

The MFT Program adheres to VSU policies and procedures on investigating and resolving misconduct as set forth in Section III: Process for Investigating and Resolving Reports of Student Misconduct of the Student Code of Conduct.

The MFT Program faculty report to the University Behavioral Intervention Team any student whose behavior is deemed an immediate or imminent threat to the physical or psychological welfare or safety of any individual. Examples of threats of harm include but are not limited to the following:

- classroom disruption leading to student removal from class
- intoxication/impairment that impacts the learning or work environment
- behaviors presenting as possible psychological issues
- any mention of suicide or other self-injurious activity
- sexual harassment/sexual assault
- writing or discussing violence, weapons, harm to others

Procedures for Investigating and Resolving Disputed Reports of Student Misconduct

The MFT Program adheres to VSU policies and procedures on disputed reports of as set forth in Section II: Reporting Student Misconduct of the Student Code of Conduct.

Noncompliance

The Marriage and Family Therapy Program reserves the right to impose any outcome listed above, including immediate dismissal, on any student who fails to comply with or participate in the procedures prescribed.