

Counseling Psychology Competency Examination (CPCE)

Candidate Handbook

 ARGOSY UNIVERSITY.
San Francisco Bay Area
Department of Counseling Psychology, Training Office

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For More Information

All questions about examination scheduling and content should be directed to:

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Purpose

This handbook serves as your notice of eligibility and is designed to provide you with general information regarding the Counseling Psychology Competency Examination (CPCE) processes and content.

Overview

Students in the MA in Counseling Psychology/Marriage & Family Therapy Program at Argosy University, San Francisco Bay Area (AUSFBA) are required to successfully complete a comprehensive examination, entitled the Counseling Psychology Competency Examination (CPCE). The CPCE process is managed by the Counseling Psychology Training Office (CPTO) and reviewed by the Counseling Psychology program chair. Students must pass the CPCE prior to graduation within the maximum time allotted to complete the program. The material covered by the CPCE reflects program coursework required of students in the program. The examination tests students' knowledge and application of course material. At this time, students are not charged a fee to take the CPCE.

Prerequisites

To be able to sit for the CPCE, students must meet the following criteria (these criteria parallel eligibility for Practicum):

- Successful completion of the following courses with at least a B- in each course:
 - PC 6005 Maladaptive Behavior & Psychopathology
 - PC 6010 Professionalization Group
 - PC 6025 Human Development & Learning
 - PC 6104 Counseling Skills I
 - PC 6230 Theories in Counseling Families & Individuals
 - PC 6300 Professional & Ethical Issues
 - PC 6320 Domestic Violence & Spousal Abuse
 - PC 6330 Child Abuse Assessment & Reporting
 - PC 6700 Couple & Family Counseling
- Students must have an overall GPA ≥ 3.0 and be in good standing.

Examination Format

The CPCE constitutes the current version of the comprehensive examination for the MA in Counseling Psychology / Marriage & Family Therapy Program at AUSFBA. The CPCE is a computer-based, objective-assessment comprised of 100 multiple choice questions across three sections, each with 2 domains (noted in parentheses; percentage [%] of questions from each respective section also noted): Clinical Evaluation and Crisis (Clinical Evaluation [22%] and Crisis [14%]), Treatment Planning (Treatment Planning [14%] and Treatment [17%]), and Ethics

and Law (Ethics [16%] and Law [17%]). Although sections of the CPCE reflect those from the California Board of Behavioral Science's Marriage and Family Therapist Standard Written Examination, questions included in the CPCE are specific to the material taught in the required courses of the Counseling Psychology / Marriage & Family Therapy Program at AUSFBA. Each question on the CPCE has been reviewed and selected by the Counseling Psychology faculty for its relevance to course material and importance toward assessing competency in each respective section. Students are given two(2) hours to complete the examination. The format of the comprehensive is subject to change at the discretion of the Counseling Psychology faculty.

Scheduling Procedures

To register to take the CPCE, students must complete the CPCE Readiness Petition (see p. 10) and submit it to the Counseling Psychology Training Office (CPTO), either the Director or Assistant Director of Counseling Psychology Training, at least one week prior to the date of the examination. Completed CPCE Readiness Petition forms are reviewed for eligibility by the CPTO. The CPTO then sends an e-mail confirming or disconfirming approval to sit for the CPCE, with a reply requested. If confirming, another e-mail is sent offering the student 2 examination dates. Last, the student's preference is confirmed via e-mail.

When the CPCE is Offered

The CPCE is offered each semester (fall, spring, and summer) on two (2) consecutive days, typically a Friday and Saturday, both at 9am. Examination dates are set near the 10th week of each 15-week semester. A remediation date is also scheduled each semester, typically three weeks following the examination dates. The examination dates and remediation day for the CPCE are finalized at the beginning of each semester. Efforts are made to notify students once dates are set, including sending a CPCE Information Flyer via e-mail. However, it is the individual student's responsibility to know the exam dates, exam procedures, as well as when she/he is eligible to take the exam. The examination and the remediation are both held in the AUSFBA computer lab (unless notified otherwise).

Missed Appointments, Re-Examinations, and Emergency Closings

If you miss your appointment, you will not be able to take the examination as scheduled. Further, you will forfeit your examination if you arrive after the examination start time.

Candidates who miss their examination or do not pass (see next section for additional information) are eligible to re-take the CPCE, beginning the following semester. Students are required to re-submit a CPCE Readiness Petition form to the CPTO. An e-mail notice confirming your eligibility for re-examination will be sent upon receiving the completed Readiness Petition form.

In the event that severe weather or another emergency forces the closure/cancellation of the scheduled examination date, your examination will be rescheduled. The CPTO will attempt to contact you in this situation. Every effort will be made to reschedule your examination at a convenient time as soon as possible.

Information Meetings

Prior to the CPCE examination dates, an open information meeting is held to provide students with information about CPCE preparation and procedures, as well as to ask questions about the exam. This meeting is typically scheduled during the first month of each semester. Supplemental materials pertaining to the examination are available at the meeting and efforts are made to distribute them to students. These materials include the CPCE Candidate Handbook, CPCE information meeting PowerPoint presentation, and a table linking CPCE sections to corresponding program courses.

Special Accommodations Available

AUSFBA and the Department of Counseling Psychology recognize their responsibilities under the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act and the California Fair Employment and Housing Act by providing testing accommodations or auxiliary aids or services for candidates who substantiate the need due to a physical or mental disability or qualified medical condition. Students who need special accommodations during the examination are required to submit a request in writing at the time of the CPCE Readiness Petition and provide any necessary documentation with the request. The CPTO will also consult with Student Services in the case there is existing documentation in the student's file that can assist with the accommodations request. Accommodations will not be provided at the examination unless prior approval by the CPTO and Student Services has been granted.

Reporting to the Examination Site

The CPCE is held at the AUSFBA computer lab. Examination dates and times are scheduled at the beginning of each semester (fall, spring, and summer). Candidates are expected to arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled start of the examination and have their student portal login information with them in order to access the Internet. Candidates will be required to sign in and sign out of the examination.

Important Information About Taking the CPCE

The temperature in the AUSFBA computer lab is maintained at a moderate level. Candidates are advised to layer clothing. Acceptable layered clothing includes lightweight shirts, sweaters, and pullovers without pockets. These items must be worn upon check-in and during your initial seating for the examination.

The CPCE proctor will notify candidates during the examination of remaining time at the following minute increments: 60, 30, 15, 5, and 1.

Candidates are provided with scratch paper and are permitted to write notes during the examination. However, candidates are required to submit their scratch paper to the proctor at the end of their examination.

Only one(1) candidate will be allowed to take a restroom break at a time. Candidates are required to sign out when leaving and returning. If a candidate's restroom break takes longer than 10 (ten) minutes, a proctor will check on the candidate and will notify the CPTO of the occurrence.

The following items are not permitted on the desktop in the AUSFBA computer lab:

- Cellular telephones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), recording devices, cameras, pagers, purses, notebooks, notebook computers, reference or reading material, music players, radios, electronic games, calculators, or briefcases.
- Personal items including watches, backpacks, wallets, food, drinks, and good-luck items.
- Hats, baseball caps, or visors (with the exception of religious apparel), coats, shawls, hooded clothing, heavy jackets or overcoats.

During the check-in process, all candidates will be asked if they possess any prohibited items. If prohibited items are found during check-in, candidates shall return these items to the floor, their vehicle, or other place of safekeeping. Neither AUSFBA, nor the Department of Counseling Psychology, shall be responsible for the items. Any candidate possessing the prohibited items on their desktop during the examination shall have his or her test results invalidated, and the CPTO will be notified.

Taking the CPCE by Computer

Taking the CPCE by computer is simple. You do not need any computer experience or typing skills. You will use fewer keys than you use on a touch-tone telephone. The CPCE is administered via the Association for Advanced Training in the Behavioral Sciences' (AATBS) Web site (www.aatbs.com). Before starting the examination, an introductory tutorial to the computer, keyboard, and logging in will be provided by the examination proctor. The time spent on this tutorial, up to 15 minutes, DOES NOT count as part of the examination time.

Grading and Reporting Results

The CPCE is administered and data are tabulated via the Association for Advanced Training in the Behavioral Sciences' Web site (www.aatbs.com). The three sections of the CPCE are each scored separately. Members of the CPTO review and interpret results. Sections are graded on a High Pass / Pass / No Pass basis. Students are notified of their final results (High Pass / Pass / No Pass) via email approximately one week following the exam. Results are documented, placed in students' CPTO files, and communicated to Student Services. Students who receive a No Pass for one or more sections are informed about the opportunity to remediate and are encouraged to meet with a member of the CPTO who will advise the student of specific areas of weakness and possible strategies to prepare for remediation. Students are allowed to retake No Pass sections twice within the maximum time allotted for program completion. A student who receives a No Pass three times on any section will be reviewed by the Student Professional Development Committee. A student who fails any section of the CPCE four times will be recommended for dismissal from the program.

Study Materials

The CPCE information contained in this handbook is the official standard for the material that will be covered in the examination. It is important for candidates to review their course materials while consulting the following supporting documents: CPCE Information PowerPoint and CPCE Domains and Associated MACP Coursework table. Should the examination plan or format change, ample notice will be provided, and updates will be announced electronically to students.

Candidates are encouraged to trust in and use their graduate education, experience, and judgment as a basis for responding to the examination items. Examination preparation courses are not necessary for success in the examination, and are not a substitute for education and

experience. Students may wish to consult the AATBS Web site (www.aatbs.com) to become familiar with the online format of the examination.

It is unethical for previous candidates to provide information regarding examination content to current candidates.

Objective of the Department of Counseling Psychology at AUSFBA

The Counseling Psychology Department at AUSFBA is dedicated to maintaining educational standards that ensure professional standards of competency for all MACP students. Candidates are tested with regard to their knowledge and professional skills, as well as the ability to make judgments about appropriate techniques and methods as applicable to the graduate training in the MA in Counseling Psychology/Marriage & Family Therapy Program at AUSFBA.

CPCE Plan and Examination Development

The development of an examination program begins with an examination of core curriculum in the MA in Counseling Psychology/Marriage & Family Therapy Program at AUSFBA. This analysis is a method for identifying the knowledge, skills, and abilities taught to students during core classes. Faculty in the Department of Counseling Psychology at AUSFBA have selected questions from item pools available through AATBS. The CPCE consists of 3 sections, each with 2 domains (noted in parentheses): Clinical Evaluation and Crisis (Clinical Evaluation and Crisis), Treatment Planning (Treatment Planning and Treatment), and Ethics and Law (Ethics and Law). The CPCE is developed and maintained by the CPTO. The CPTO staff consists of Counseling Psychology faculty members who are trained to develop and analyze competency examinations.

Establishing the Passing Standards

The CPCE measures knowledge and skills required to graduate from the MA in Counseling Psychology/Marriage & Family Therapy Program at AUSFBA, and represents a standard of performance that the CPTO agrees is the minimum acceptable level for graduation.

To establish High Pass / Pass / No Pass standards for each version of the CPCE, a criterion-referenced passing score methodology is used. The intent of this methodology is to differentiate between a qualified and unqualified MACP student. The passing score is based on minimum competence criterion that are defined in terms of expected MACP student competency.

During a criterion-referenced passing score procedure, the CPTO staff consider other factors that would contribute to minimum acceptable competence such as prerequisite qualifications (e.g., education, training, and experience) and the difficulty of the issues addressed in each multiple choice item.

Because each version of the examination varies in difficulty, an important advantage of this methodology is that the passing score can be modified to reflect subtle differences in difficulty from one examination to another, providing safeguards to the candidate and the Department of Counseling Psychology at AUSFBA. A new examination version is implemented a minimum of 2(two) times per year to maintain examination security and the integrity of the competency process.

CPCE Sections Outline

- Clinical Evaluation and Crisis
 - Clinical Evaluation
 - Initial assessment
 - Additional assessment
 - Referrals
 - Diagnosis
 - Crisis
 - Assessment
 - Evaluation
 - Management
- Treatment Planning
 - Treatment Planning
 - Goals
 - Clinical factors
 - Theoretical orientation
 - Treatment
 - Therapeutic relationship
 - Interventions
- Ethics and Law
 - Ethics
 - Informed consent
 - Therapeutic boundaries
 - Management of ethical issues
 - Law
 - Confidentiality and privilege

- Exceptions
- Professional conduct

Note: for more detailed information regarding examination content you may wish to consult pages 10-18 of the California Board of Behavioral Science's, Marriage and Family Therapist Standard Written Examination Candidate Handbook, which is located at:
http://www.bbs.ca.gov/pdf/publications/mft_swhbk.pdf

CPCE READINESS PETITION

Please indicate your intentions regarding the Counseling Psychology Competency Examination (CPCE) by submitting this form to the Director of Training or the Assistant Director of Training. Requests for accommodations in taking the CPCE must be submitted in writing along with this form.

Student: _____ **Argosy Student ID #:** _____

Phone #: _____ **Argosy email:** _____

Semester & year you entered the MACP program: _____

I am applying to take the CPCE in the (circle one): *Fall / Spring / Summer*

This will be my (circle one): *Initial Examination / Re-Examination*

I have (or expect to have) successfully completed all of the following requirements by the time I take the CPCE: *(You must have earned at least a B- in each course and have an overall GPA ≥ 3.0)*

- PC 6700 Couples & Family Counseling
- PC 6320 Domestic Violence & Spousal Abuse
- PC 6230 Theories in Counseling Families & Individuals
- PC 6330 Child Abuse Assessment & Reporting
- PC 6104 Counseling Skills I
- PC 6025 Human Development & Learning
- PC 6005 Maladaptive Behavior & Psychopathology
- PC 6300 Professional & Ethical Issues
- PC 6010 Professionalization Group

Student Signature _____

Date _____

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For Office Use Only:

- This document, along with a transcript, has been reviewed by the Training Office and this student meets the CPCE required coursework eligibility requirements.
- This document, along with a transcript, has been reviewed by the Training Office and this student is missing the following CPCE required coursework: _____

Signature _____
(Signature of Training Director or Assistant Training Director)

Date _____