Theory

Competence

Justice

2016 – 2017

Forensic Psychology

Handbook

Knowledge

Skill
Welcome and Overview

Welcome to the UHV Master’s Program in Forensic at University of Houston Victoria (UHV) in the School of Arts and Sciences. The Psychology Department at UHV has been offering educational, informational, and cultural opportunities to students from a number of South Texas counties.

This handbook contains policies specific to the Master’s program in Forensic Psychology that supplement those found in course syllabi, the UHV Catalog, and the UHV Student Handbook ([http://www.uhv.edu/handbook/](http://www.uhv.edu/handbook/)). Please become very familiar with this handbook. Students are responsible for using the Handbook as a resource when questions arise and as a guide to academic and nonacademic policies and procedures.

The information in this handbook is updated annually. PLEASE NOTE: This handbook applies to students who are beginning their education in Forensic Psychology in the FALL 2016 semester. If you are a student who began the program BEFORE Fall 2016, you should reference the 2015 – 2016 Forensic Psychology Handbook for your degree requirements.

Changes may also be made throughout the academic year. If a change occurs, an announcement will be posted on the psychology website located on the Arts and Sciences webpage; students will also be notified via e-mail.

Congratulations on your decision to advance your education. The faculty and staff are here to help you reach your goal!
# Table of Contents

- Welcome and Overview ....................................................................................................................... 2
- University of Houston-Victoria Forensic Psychology Mission Statement ........................................ 5
- Goals/Objectives ................................................................................................................................. 5
- Forensic Psychology Foundational and Functional Competencies .................................................. 5
- Curriculum Requirements ................................................................................................................. 6
- Academic Standards for Forensic Psychology Graduate Students ................................................ 6
- Advisement and Orientation ............................................................................................................... 7
- Recommended Schedule & Degree Plan ............................................................................................ 7
- Year One-Fall ................................................................................................................................... 8
- Year One-Spring ............................................................................................................................... 8
- Year One-Summer ............................................................................................................................ 8
- Year Two-Fall .................................................................................................................................. 8
- Year Two-Spring .............................................................................................................................. 8
- Year Two-Summer ............................................................................................................................ 8
- Comprehensive Exam ........................................................................................................................ 9
- Practicum .......................................................................................................................................... 9
- Change of Program ........................................................................................................................... 10
- Failure to Meet Program Requirements ........................................................................................... 10
- Probation and Remediation Steps* .................................................................................................. 10
- Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) Regulations ...................................................................... 12
- National Counseling Examination .................................................................................................... 13
- Post-Degree Supervision of Professional Activity: ......................................................................... 13
- Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors-New License Requirements (LPC): .... 13
- Licensed Psychological Associate (LPA) Requirements .................................................................. 14
- Other Credential Opportunities ......................................................................................................... 14
University of Houston-Victoria Forensic Psychology Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide comprehensive education and training relevant to the application of psychological theory, knowledge, skills, and competencies to the civil and criminal justice systems. Our emphasis is on developing strong clinical skills, and the preparation of our students to enter the job market eligible for licenses as both Licensed Psychological Associates (LPA) and as Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC). The program also conforms to basic master’s level training and licensing requirements in counseling for most states. Our students will have the skills to engage in assessment and counseling in a variety of forensic settings such as prisons, juvenile detention facilities, child protective agencies, and private forensic practice groups.

Goals/Objectives

The primary goals of the Forensic Psychology Program are:

- To prepare students for entry into the mental health profession with forensic populations.
- To provide students with a coordinated program of study that complies with the Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors requirements for the Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) credential and the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists’ requirements for the Licensed Psychological Associate’s (LPA) credential.
- To provide students with didactic coursework, exploration of cultural diversity issues in mental health, ethical considerations, and practical field experiences through the practicum requirement.
- To provide students with curricular opportunities for self-enhancement, critical thinking, and professional development throughout their graduate school experience, which may include participation in the Psychology Colloquium Series and faculty research projects to enrich their classroom experiences.

Forensic Psychology Foundational and Functional Competencies

The student’s overall professional development and training is based upon a foundation of knowledge and clinical application of functional skills. The Foundation of your knowledge will be gained through the program’s core courses that will cover career development, ethics, cultural diversity, life-span development, psychotherapy theories, and specific forensic issues. Your Functional Skills will be addressed through other core courses which cover cognitive assessment, personality assessment, assessments particular to the forensic setting, psychotherapy techniques, and clinical applications of your skills through practica. Students enrolled in this program are expected to pursue a plan of study to assure increased professional competence and breadth of knowledge in the field of Forensic psychology.

In keeping with the program’s goals, the program endorses the concept of preparing our students in a number of professional foundational and functional competencies.
The foundational competencies include:
1) reflective practice;
2) scientific mindedness;
3) interpersonal relations and conduct;
4) individual-cultural diversity; and
5) ethical-legal standards.

The functional competencies include:
1) assessment-diagnosis;
2) case formulation/presentation;
3) intervention;
4) research/evaluation; and
5) application of supervision/ learning/ advising.

Curriculum Requirements
Please note that the curriculum of this program has changed. Previously, the program involved 60 hours. Recent changes in state licensure led this program to a 63-hour course of education and training. If you were admitted in or after 2016, you are in a 63-hour program. If you were admitted in 2015 or later, your program was 60 hours long. Please be aware of your degree plan requirements. You are responsible for knowing the requirements of your program.

The Master of Arts in Forensic Psychology is a 63-hour planned program of study designed to train mental health professionals for work in public and private agencies. The Forensic Psychology Program offers graduate education by providing a curriculum that blends didactic coursework and practical field experience. The program curriculum exceeds the academic requirements necessary for the Texas Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) credential and the Texas Licensed Psychological Associate (LPA) credential. The program provides students with a foundation in counseling theory, life-span development, career and vocational counseling, multiculturalism, ethics, psychotherapy techniques, group therapy, family therapy, and assessment techniques. In addition, a culminating field placement is provided in an effort to incorporate classroom work with hands on experiences.

Each student must complete 54 hours of required coursework to meet the concentration in Forensic Psychology requirement. This foundation supports the knowledge, skill, and understanding developed through concentrated study in the area of Counseling and Forensic Psychology. For the practical application of coursework, students are required to complete 9 hours of Psychology Practicum field experience prior to graduation. The clinical experiences provide an opportunity to assess the professional growth and development of the forensic psychology student prior to graduation from the program.

Academic Standards for Forensic Psychology Graduate Students
All Forensic Psychology Students are required to maintain a minimum cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of at least 3.0 (B) over all graduate courses attempted at UH-Victoria, regardless of whether the courses are counted toward degree requirements. In addition, Graduate Students must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 on all courses that appear on the student’s degree plan, including transferred courses. In addition, No more than two courses with earned C’s may be applied toward graduate degree plan requirements. No credit toward a graduate degree is allowed for courses in which grades of D or F are earned, although the grades are included in the grade point average. The Director of Forensic Psychology will review student GPA at the end of every semester session to ensure the GPA requirement is being met.

In the event a student’s semester or cumulative GPA is lower than 3.0, the student will be notified in writing that he or she is placed on academic probation for the semester. The student will be required to meet with their faculty advisor to identify any potential problems and sign a
remediation plan. If the student’s GPA is not raised by the subsequent semester or designated date on remediation plan, the student will be in jeopardy of dismissal from the Forensic Psychology Program. Certain graduate courses may be graded as S (satisfactory), U (unsatisfactory) and I (incomplete). Such grades will not be considered in computing grade point average.

**Advisement and Orientation**

One of the most important people in your graduate education is your *Forensic Psychology Program Faculty Advisor* or major professor. Your advisor is your advocate and confidant. Your advisor recommends and approves your degree plan, monitors your progress, approves course selection, helps you in securing practicum and internship placements, and recommends students for graduation. The Director of the Forensic Psychology Graduate Program will serve as the faculty academic advisor for all forensic psychology graduate students. As soon as possible after admission to the Forensic Psychology program, but no later than during the first semester of work, you should contact your assigned advisor to develop a Degree Plan for the Forensic Psychology Master's Degree.

After the student's degree plan is signed by the advisor and department head and approved by the Graduate School, the student is expected to follow it as the basis for all subsequent enrollments. The degree plan is the primary advisement tool. It is completed early in the student’s program, usually in the first semester and provides the listing of courses needed for graduation. The student is responsible for keeping the degree plan updated and for bringing the plan to advisement sessions.

At the beginning of each academic year, all newly admitted and currently admitted graduate students will be invited to attend a *Mandatory* Psychology Graduate Studies orientation conducted by the UHV Psychology Faculty. During orientation, students will receive information regarding curriculum and program requirements, and will be introduced to the Psychology faculty members. All students are strongly encouraged to attend. If a student is unable to attend, he/she is required to contact his/her advisor to obtain important program information.

For further information regarding degree plans or course scheduling, please contact Dr. Paul Hamilton at HamiltonP@uhv.edu.

**Recommended Schedule & Degree Plan**

The Forensic Psychology Program Degree Plan can be found on the [Forensic Psychology Web Page](#).

Please be aware that courses often have previous courses as prerequisites. This means that a course in the spring or summer may require a course from the fall. If you plan to take a part-time load, please consult with your program director to discuss prioritizing courses.

If you were admitted to the Forensic Psychology Program BEFORE 2016, please refer back to the handbook or catalog from which you entered the program. Your required coursework will be outlined in that handbook.

The following information is a suggested program schedule for the Forensic Psychology program based on *Fall Full Admission to the Forensic Psychology Program*:
**Year One-Fall**
PSYC 6321 Psychopathology I
PSYC 6333 Ethics and Practice of Psychology
PSYC 6334 Theories and Issues in Psychotherapy
PSYC 6336 Intellectual Assessment

**Year One-Spring**
PSYC 6332 Advanced Social Psychology
PSYC 6335 Techniques of Psychotherapy
PSYC 6337 Personality Assessment
PSYC 6343 Advanced Forensic Psychology

**Year One-Summer**
PSYC 6331 Multicultural Psychology
PSYC 6338 Group Psychotherapy
PSYC 6327 Assessment for Forensic Psychology

**Year Two-Fall**
PSYC 6304 Practicum in Forensic Psychology
PSYC 6326 Advanced Research Methods
PSYC 6330 Life-span Developmental Psychology
PSYC 6339 Theory and Techniques of Family Therapy

**Year Two-Spring**
PSYC 6304 Practicum in Forensic Psychology
PSYC 6322 Psychopathology II
PSYC 6350 Addictions Counseling

Students should plan to take their Comprehensive Examination this semester.

**Year Two-Summer**
PSYC 6304 Practicum in Forensic Psychology
PSYC 6319 Vocational Psychology and Career Counseling
PSYC 6351 Crisis Counseling

*Please note that most courses are only offered one time a year. If you plan to attend on a part-time basis, then you should carefully look at the UHV catalog to determine which courses have pre-requisites, and what those pre-requisites are. For example if you do not take PSYC 6336, Intellectual Assessment in the Fall of your first year, you will not be able to take PSYC 6337 Personality Assessment until the Spring semester of your second year, and this would, in turn, delay when you would be eligible for PSYC 6304 Practicum in Forensic Psychology.*
Comprehensive Exam

Forensic Psychology Comprehensive exams are offered during the Spring Semester. The Forensic Psychology Comprehensive exam has 220 items, 20 selected from each of the ten core classes and PSYC 6343 Professional Practices in Forensic Psychology. The exam is taken using the online platform called Learn 9. Exam items are randomly selected from a pool of items and then randomly ordered for each student. Students will have three hours to complete the exam. The exam will be taken as a proctored online exam in the Academic Center at UHV. Students with a minimum of 24 credit hours and who have completed the 10 core courses plus PSYC 6343 are eligible to take the exam. The Director of Forensic Psychology will send students a letter of notification before applications are due. If you believe you are eligible to take the exam, you should submit your application before the due date to your Director for confirmation and approval.

Each exam item is worth one point. All students are required to obtain a minimum of 154 points (equivalent to 70%) or better out of 220 points in order to pass the exam. For example, a score of 153 items correct (equivalent to 69.6%) does not meet the minimum score to pass the comprehensive exam. A student who fails the exam twice must complete remediation work specified by the Psychology Graduate Faculty before regaining eligibility to re-take the exam. The remediation work is designed to increase the student’s proficiencies in areas of weakness. The remediation plan may also include the requirement that the student retake one or more courses.

As a reminder, the courses covered by the Comprehensive Exam are:

- PSYC 6321 Advanced Abnormal Psychology
- PSYC 6326 Advanced Research Methods
- PSYC 6330 Life-Span Developmental Psychology
- PSYC 6331 Multicultural Psychotherapy
- PSYC 6332 Advanced Social Psychology
- PSYC 6333 Ethics and Practice of Psychology
- PSYC 6334 Theories and Issues in Psychotherapy
- PSYC 6335 Techniques in Psychotherapy
- PSYC 6336 Intellectual Assessment
- PSYC 6337 Personality Assessment
- PSYC 6343 Professional Practices in Forensic Psychology

Practicum

At the beginning of the second year of the degree program (after the completion of approximately 20-24 credit hours, typically Fall of Year 2, students should enroll in PSYC 6304 Practicum in Forensic Psychology.

There are several requirements that you must meet before you will be allowed to enter your first practicum. These include that you must have passed your final project for Personality Assessment and for Techniques in Psychotherapy. In addition, you must take and pass with a B or better the following courses:

- PSYC 6321 Psychopathology I
Enrollment in PSYC 6304 requires approval by your Faculty Advisor and the Course Instructor. You will have to submit an application for practicum for every semester you intend to enroll in the practicum course. You are required to take this course three times, for a total of nine hours. An announcement regarding Practicum Applications availability will be sent via UHV email to all Forensic Psychology students. You should apply for Practicum the semester prior to your desired practicum start date. Detailed information on practicum may be found in the Practicum Handbook, which may be found on the Forensic Psychology Web Page.

**Change of Program**

Forensic Psychology Graduate Students requesting to change to another graduate program within the Psychology department must be in good academic standing, satisfy all “Incomplete grades” in the Forensic Psychology program, and should complete the Graduate Action form or click this link for direct access to The Form. Repeated switching between programs is strongly discouraged as it often delays your desired completion date and disrupts the continuity of your professional skill development.

Any student wishing to complete degree requirements for two Psychology Graduate programs must fully complete one program before applying for a second Psychology graduate degree program. As a UHV alumnus, you are only allowed to transfer up to 50% your previous programs courses to the new program’s degree plan if you are accepted.

**Failure to Meet Program Requirements**

All students should expect to receive constructive or corrective feedback about their performance -- from their advisors, other faculty, other supervisors, and from their peers -- at various points during their graduate student career, and students are expected to demonstrate both openness to self-examination and diligence in addressing and improving upon their weaknesses when such constructive feedback is received.

Serious concerns about student performance within the Forensic Psychology Program are rare. However, when serious concerns do arise and/or students fail to comply with program requirements, policies, and procedures, this is handled on a case-by-case basis, generally following the template described below. Student evaluation reflects an individualized process that considers each person's strengths and weaknesses and offers prescriptions to remedy serious concerns, and in some cases students may receive written notice of an identified concern that must be addressed and the manner in which it is to be addressed, without being formally placed on probation.

**Probation and Remediation Steps**

Being placed on probation indicates a very serious faculty concern about a student's performance. Students are placed on probation (as opposed to being terminated from the program), when in the opinion of the faculty, it is likely that the student will be able to address the difficulty that lead to the probation, if appropriate remediation is provided. Students can be placed on probation for
behavioral and/or academic reasons. Once the faculty has determined that a serious concern about a student’s performance exists, the following steps are generally taken:

1. The Forensic Psychology Director will notify the student, in writing, that the student is on probation within the program. Additionally, the student will be requested to make an appointment with the advisor to discuss the issues involved.

2. The advisor will meet with the student and inform the student of the identified problem areas noted by the faculty.

3. The student and advisor will develop a written plan for remediation of the student's behavior. This plan will:
   A. Behaviorally define the student's problem areas
   B. Identify the expected behavior patterns/goals and/or academic goals
   C. Specify methods that will be used to reach these goals, which may include personal counseling, self-structured behavioral change, additional academic course work or practica, additional supervision, or other remedies as appropriate
   D. Specify how goal attainment and competence in the problem area will be demonstrated
   E. Set a date for reevaluation of the student's progress and competence.

4. This plan will be submitted to the program faculty for review, possible modification, and approval.

5. If the plan has been modified by the program faculty, the advisor and the student will meet to review the modified plan.

6. A copy of the approved plan will be provided to the student and a copy will be retained in the student's file. Both copies of the plan will be signed and dated by the student and the advisor.

7. Near the date for reevaluation, the student will present to the advisor any available documentation of progress in the identified problem areas and completion of the remediation plan.

8. At or near the date for reevaluation, the student's progress will be reviewed by the program faculty at a regularly scheduled faculty meeting, and the faculty will make one of the following recommendations:
   A. **Continuation in the program**: The identified concerns no longer present a significant problem and the student is no longer on probation within the program.
   B. **Continued probation and remediation**: The student has made significant progress in addressing the identified concerns, but has not yet attained the expected degree of competence in the problem areas. An updated behavioral plan is prepared, and a date is set for another reevaluation at the program faculty's discretion.
   C. Dismissal from the program: The student has failed to attain the behavioral goals and there is no expectation that he or she can reasonably attain them in the near future.
9. The Forensic Psychology Program Director will notify the student in writing of the reevaluation decision and will request that the student make an appointment with the advisor for feedback concerning the decision.

10. The student will be requested to sign and date two copies of the reevaluation decision. One copy will be retained by the student and one copy will be placed in the student's file.

11. If dismissal from the program is recommended by the faculty, a written notification will be sent to the student. One copy will be provided to the student, one copy will be placed in the student's file, and one copy will be sent to the Arts and Sciences Dean’s Office.

12. Depending upon the reevaluation decision, the student and the advisor will meet to review the options available to the student and assist the student in educational, career, and remediation planning.

13. If dismissal from the program is recommended, the student will be given 30 days in which to
   A. Prepare and present to the faculty a written response to the notification
   B. Request, in writing, a faculty review of the termination recommendation, if the student chooses.

14. If the student requests such a review, the student will be invited to the next scheduled faculty meeting to present her or his case to the faculty.

15. Following the student's presentation, the program faculty will meet to render a decision as to whether the dismissal recommendation is to be upheld. Written notification of the decision will be provided to the student by the Director of Forensic Psychology.

*Adapted from the 2007 Regents of the University of Minnesota remediation policy.

Professional Issues

Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) Regulations

Students should be aware that licensing regulations are independent of the UHV Forensic Psychology degree requirements. State law dictates what criteria must be successfully met before an individual is eligible to receive a particular license. Licensing law determines what title a professional may use when presenting himself/herself to potential consumers of psychological or counseling services, and in most cases determines what type of professional activity the individual may engage in. It is the student’s responsibility to be fully aware of existing state licensing regulations. Such regulations usually dictate a) degree and curriculum requirements; b) performance criteria for demonstration of knowledge in one’s field (e.g., successful completion of a standardized examination); and c) requirements for supervision of post-degree professional activity. Students should be aware that specific license requirements may vary considerably from state to state.

The American Psychological Association (APA) has not approved the provision of a license for master’s-level practitioners in the field of Psychology. Texas does provide a license for master’s degree-level professional counselors (known as the LPC, for Licensed Professional Counselor). Texas state law does dictate certain criteria that must be satisfied before the professional is able to gain the LPC license. All of these criteria must be satisfied prior to receiving the license:
Degree and Curriculum Requirements: The student must graduate from a master’s-level degree program that includes a curriculum that addresses the following major areas of academic training (each number indicates the content area along with the UHV course that addresses that content):

- Normal Human Growth and Development (PSYC 6330-Life Span Development)
- Abnormal Human Behavior (PSYC – 6321 Advanced Abnormal Psychology)
- Appraisal or Assessment Techniques (PSYC 6336, PSYC 6337, PSYC 6327 – Intellectual, Personality and Forensic Assessment)
- Counseling Theories (Psych 6334 Theories and Issues in Psychotherapy)
- Counseling Methods or Techniques, including Counseling individuals and groups (PSYC 6335 Techniques of Psychotherapy; PSYC 6338 – Group Psychotherapy)
- Research (PSYC 6326 – Advanced Research Methods)
- Life Style and Career Development (PSYC 6319-Vocational Psychology and Career Counseling)
- Social and Cultural Foundations (PSYC 6331-Multicultural Psychotherapy)
- Family Issues (PSYC 6339- Theory and Techniques of Family Therapy)
- Professional Orientation (PSYC 6333-Ethics and Practice of Psychology)
- Practicum (Internship) (PSYC 6304 Practicum in Forensic Psychology)

As of August 1, 2017, the following courses to meet the 60-hour requirement shall include:
- Addictions Counseling (PSYC 6350 Addictions Counseling)
- Professional Practices (PSYC 6343 – Professional Practices in Forensic Psychology)
- Psychopathology (PSYC 6322- Psychopathology II)

Additional courses may include:
- Crisis Counseling (PSYC 6351 – Crisis Counseling)
- Couples, Marriage, Families, or Parenting (PSYC 6339 – Theory and Techniques of Family Therapy)

National Counseling Examination

Following successful completion of the master’s degree, a student must demonstrate a knowledge base of content areas by successful completion of the National Counseling Examination (NCE). In order to become an LPC, you must take the NCE and receive an adequate score to allow for participation in supervised post-graduate counseling activities.

Post-Degree Supervision of Professional Activity:

The LPC license applicant must receive 3000 hours of supervised clinical/counseling experiences. It is the responsibility of the student to secure and obtain post-graduate supervised hours for licensure after graduation with MA from UHV. Supervision must be done by a qualified supervisor (pre-approved by the LPC board of examiners). Please go to the TSBECP web page for recent changes regarding supervision or any other rule changes.

Texas State Board of Examiners of Professional Counselors-New License Requirements (LPC):

- A master's or doctoral degree in counseling or a counseling-related field from an accredited college or university
• A planned graduate program in counseling or a counseling-related field of at least 48 graduate semester hours
• NOTE: Board rules specifically define "counseling-related field": §681.2. Definitions (9)
  Counseling-related field - A mental health discipline utilizing human development, psychotherapeutic, and mental health principles including, but not limited to, psychology, psychiatry, social work, marriage and family therapy, and guidance and counseling. Non-counseling fields include, but are not limited to dance therapy, sociology, education, administration, and theology.
• Applicants must obtain academic course work in each of the following areas: normal human growth and development; abnormal human behavior; appraisal or assessment techniques; counseling theories; counseling methods or techniques (individual and group); research; lifestyle and career development; social, cultural and family issues; and professional orientation
• As part of the graduate program, a supervised practicum experience that is primarily counseling in nature. The practicum should be at least 300 clock-hours with at least 100 clock-hours of direct client contact. Academic credit for the practicum must appear on the applicant's transcript.
• After completion of the graduate degree and before application, an applicant must take and pass the National Counselor Exam and the Texas Jurisprudence Exam. After receiving a temporary LPC license from the board, the applicant may begin the supervised postgraduate counseling experience (internship). 3000 clock-hours with at least 1,500 being direct client contact of internship under the supervision of a board-approved supervisor is required. The 3000 clock-hours may not be completed in a time period of less than 18 month.
• If reapplying for a temporary license, the applicant must submit any supervised experience gained during their previous temporary license

**Licensed Psychological Associate (LPA) Requirements**

The coursework requirements for LPA licensure is consistent with coursework required for the LPC license. According to the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists (TSBEP), LPA applicants need to complete the following requirements (click on the subtitle above to go to TSBEP website):

• A master’s degree in Psychology, with a minimum of 42 credit hours (at least 24 need to be psychological in nature).
• Complete at least 450 hours of supervised practicum experience.
• Students interested in obtaining a license as a Licensed Psychological Associate (LPA) will need take the Examination for Professional Practice in Psychology (EPPP) and obtain a passing score of at least 55%. In addition to the EPPP, LPA licensing applicants must also successfully pass the Texas Jurisprudence Exam with a minimum score of 80%.

**Other Credential Opportunities**

Having a master’s degree in Forensic Psychology has a range of opportunities for additional credentials in the state of Texas. Please see attached links for information regarding the Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor (LCDC) and Licensed Sex Offender Treatment Provider (LSOTP).