



**MASTER OF ARTS IN
FORENSIC MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING**

**ASSESSMENT PLAN
(2011-2012 Academic Year)**

**John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Department of Psychology
Forensic Mental Health Counseling
Master's Degree Program
Assessment Plan
2011-2012**

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I. Mission Statement of the Forensic Mental Health Counseling Program

Mental health counseling means the application of principles of human development, learning theory, group dynamics, and psychopathology to individuals, couples, and families, groups, and organizations, for the purpose of treating mental disorders and promoting optimal mental health and functionality. It includes, but is not limited to, the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of mental and emotional disorders, educational techniques developed to prevent such disorders, as well as the application of a wellness model of mental health. Mental health counselors and programs strive to follow principles and standards established by the American Counseling Association (ACA) and the American Mental Health Counselors Association.

Forensic mental health involves the application of counseling theory and practice to criminal justice, family court, and other legal settings. Many counselors work in forensic treatment settings, with forensic populations that require specialized training. Such settings include jails and prisons, juvenile detention centers, hospitals, clinics, social service agencies, probation and parole offices, child protective services, and the courts. In addition to the standard required courses in counseling, the Forensic Mental Health Counseling Program offers students the opportunity to take specialized courses in such areas as criminal behavior and aggression, juvenile delinquency, alcohol and crime, correctional and reentry counseling, risk assessment, family violence, victimology, crisis intervention, policing, sex offenders, terrorism, violent cults, criminal profiling, and others.

The MA Program in Forensic Mental Health Counseling therefore has the following two primary missions in educating its students:

- 1) To prepare students for a career as professional mental health counselors, with the commensurate skills in interviewing, counseling, and assessment, based upon established principles and research regarding human development, personality, learning, psychopathology, and counseling.
- 2) To prepare students to develop a forensic specialization within mental health counseling, through courses and externships, for work in such settings as jails and prisons, family courts, juvenile detention centers, probation and parole offices, and social service agencies that assess and counsel adolescents and adults at risk for future criminal behavior.

II. Background and History of Forensic Mental Health Counseling Program

The Master's Program in Forensic Mental Health Counseling (FMHC) Program was officially initiated in the fall of 2008. The FMHC Program, developed within the Psychology Department, has been approved by New York State as a "license eligible" academic program. It satisfies the state's educational requirements leading toward professional licensure as a Mental Health Counselor, with a specialization in forensics. It develops skills in interviewing, counseling, and assessment, based upon established principles and research regarding human development, personality, psychopathology, and counseling. Students will be uniquely prepared to work towards licensure as counselors in prisons, juvenile detention centers, probation and parole agencies, and social service agencies that counsel and assess adolescents and adults at risk for criminal behavior. The program offers research opportunities for those students interested in pursuing doctoral education; as well as related courses leading to a certificate as a Certified Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC).

The degree requires 60 credits. The program will contain a group of twelve required courses (36 credits); three to six forensic mental health electives (9-18- credits); two permitted cognate courses (0-6 credits) for particularized student interests; plus a 600 hour (6 credits) supervised fieldwork internship. Beginning students will be expected to complete courses in Introduction to Forensic Mental Health Counseling; Mental Health Professionals, Social Science and the Law; Psychopathology; Intermediate Statistics; and Research Methods, before the completion of their first 30 credits.

One of the major goals of the program was to establish itself as program that is independent and unique to the Master's Program in Forensic Psychology (FP). Because the FP program has been in existence for over 20 years at John Jay College, it had served as the only Master's degree program in the psychology department. Additionally, because the field of counseling is

There have been no formal assessments that have documented the strengths or areas of improvement for the program. Thus, it has become a goal to establish regular assessment schedules and cycles, in order to chronicle the progress of the program, advance the learning and preparation of our students, and improve the overall effectiveness of our program.

III. Assessment Philosophy

Philosophy

The goal of this outcomes assessment is to continuously improve both the teaching and learning experiences of the FMHC program. The goal of our assessment strategy is to address all six learning objectives over time, through a variety of assessments. Further, our assessment program is designed to provide appropriate data to allow us to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of our FMHC program and the degree to which we are meeting our objectives. Results from our assessments will be used to refine our program, our learning objectives (particularly specific course objectives), our course requirements, and our standards and our teaching.

IV. Learning Objectives

Overall Program Goal	To prepare students to become professional mental health counselors, with forensic specialization.				
Objectives	To prepare students to become professional mental health counselors		To prepare students to develop forensic specialization		
Learning Outcomes Students will be able to:	1. To articulate knowledge of the intersection between law and mental health counseling	2. To describe specialized areas in mental health counseling	3. To explain personality theory within the context of forensic counseling	4. To apply principles, research methods, and statistics to forensic counseling issues	5. To apply counseling theory to practice

V. Assessment Schedule and Cycle

Our assessment will follow a five-year cycle. Every year we will complete a three to four page summary report of our findings and implications of the yearly assessment process. The following plan is set for 2011-2016.

Year 1:

Fall 2011:

Development plan and PSY 758 pilot

Spring 2012:

PSY 758 mini capstone follow-up study (outcomes 1-5)

Year 2:

Fall 2012:

PSY 755 pilot (outcomes 1 & 2)

Spring 2013:

PSY 755 follow-up study

Year 3:

Fall 2013:

PSY 715 pilot (research learning outcome)

Begin five year self-study

Spring 2014:

PSY 715 follow-up study

Complete self-study

Year 4:

Fall 2014:

PSY 741 pilot (personality theory outcome)

Spring 2015:

PSY 741 follow-up study

Year 5:

Fall 2015:

PSY 780-781 pilot (learning outcome apply theory to practice)

Spring 2016:

PSY 780-781 complete follow up study

VI. Results from Year 1

Introduction

The purpose of Year 1 was to evaluate the course Psychology 758: Clinical Instruction. This class is viewed as a mini-capstone for the Forensic Mental Health Counseling (FMHC) program because all five FMHC program learning outcomes are assessed.

Methodology

Sample

There were 10 FMHC students that were assessed in the Fall Semester 2011 and 15 students that were assessed in Spring Semester 2012.

Measures

There are three assessment tools that were used, in order to measure these learning outcomes. Please see Appendix A for a description of each of these assessment tools:

- (a) **Essay Question:** Students answered two essay questions on their final exams. Through these questions, students will be assessed on:
 - Learning Outcome 1: Articulating the intersection between law and mental health counseling
 - Learning Outcome 3: Understanding mental health theories and their use in counseling settings
- (b) **Group Project:** Students participated in a group presentation, with 4 group members each. The group presentation will last from 45-50 minutes, focusing on special needs populations. Through this project, students will be assessed on:
 - Learning Outcome 2: Describing specialized areas in mental health counseling
 - Learning Outcome 4: Applying principles from research and academic literature into counseling practice
- (c) **Counseling Project:** Students were required to conduct, record, and transcribe two mock counseling sessions outside of class. Mock clients were asked to discuss an issue that is genuine and real, without being too personal or intense. The session should have lasted approximately 8 minutes. Through this project, students will be assessed on:
 - Learning Outcome 5- Applying counseling theory to practice.

In this section, we will revisit each learning outcome, the overall scores of each assessment tool, and the percentage of students at each performance level.

Learning Outcome 1: Articulating the intersection between law and mental health counseling. Students were asked to describe how the principles of forensic mental health counseling were unique in comparison to other fields (e.g., forensic psychology, social work, psychiatry). They were also asked to give one example of how mental health counseling can be affectively practiced in the criminal justice system. There were 5 points possible for this outcome:

- 1) Description of Humanistic Concepts, such as Unconditional Positive Regard, Empathy, Empowerment (2 pt)
- 2) Description of Wellness Model (1 pt)
- 3) Comparison to Other Fields (1 pt)
- 4) Effective Example of MHC in the CJ System (1 pts)

Results: For both semesters, students scored an average of 4.28 out of 5 ($SD= 0.98$). See below for the distribution of the 15 participants' scores.

Fall Semester (Pilot)

Score	Number of Students	Percentage
2.0 (Below Satisfactory)	2	20%
3.0 (Satisfactory)	1	10%
4.0 (Very Good)	3	30%
5.0 (Excellent)	4	40%

Spring Semester

Score	Number of Students	Percentage
2.0 (Below Satisfactory)	0	0%
3.0 (Satisfactory)	2	13.3%
4.0 (Very Good)	3	20%
5.0 (Excellent)	10	66.7%

Interpretation: These findings suggest that majority of students (70% in fall semester; 86.7% in spring semester) demonstrated a very good to excellent awareness of the intersection between the law and forensic mental health counseling.

Learning Outcome 2: Describing specialized areas in mental health counseling

Through group presentations, students were asked to demonstrate knowledge of a specific population within the forensic mental health counseling field. There were 15 possible points for this outcome:

- 1) Proficiency in describing the history and current issues regarding a special needs population within forensic mental health counseling (5 points)
- 2) Ability to describe obstacles and barriers to mental health counseling with the special needs group (5 points)
- 3) Capability to apply and discuss theoretical orientations regarding counseling a special needs population within the criminal justice system (5 points).

Results: For both semesters, students scored an average of 14.3 out of 15 ($SD= 1.05$). See below for the distribution of the 15 participants' scores.

Fall Semester (Pilot)

Score	Number of Students	Percentage
12.5 (Very Good)	3	30%
15.0 (Excellent)	7	70%

Spring Semester

Score	Number of Students	Percentage
13 (Very Good)	5	33.3%
15.0 (Excellent)	10	66.7%

Interpretation: These findings suggest that all of the students (100% in both semesters) demonstrated very good to excellent knowledge of specialized areas in mental health counseling.

Learning Outcome 3: Understanding mental health theories and their use in counseling settings

Students were asked to read a detailed case study. They were then asked to choose two different theoretical orientations and apply two different concepts to the case. They were also asked to argue which theoretical orientation they thought would be most effective. There were fifteen possible points for this question.

- 1) 2 concepts for 2 theoretical orientations; each concept was worth 2.5 points (10 points)
- 2) Argument for most effective theoretical orientation (5 points)

Results: For both semesters, students scored an average of 14.64 out of 15 ($SD= 0.7$). See below for the distribution of the 15 participants' scores.

Fall Semester (Pilot)

Score	Number of Students	Percentage
13.0 (Very Good)	1	10%
14.0 (Excellent)	1	10%
15.0 (Excellent)	8	80%

Spring Semester

Score	Number of Students	Percentage
13.0 (Very Good)	2	13.3%
14.0 (Excellent)	2	13.3%
15.0 (Excellent)	11	73.3%

Interpretation: These findings suggest that all of the students (100% in both semesters) demonstrated a very good to excellent understanding of mental health theories and their use in counseling settings.

Learning Outcome 4: Applying principles from research and academic literature into counseling practice

Through group presentations, students were asked to apply principles from research and academic literature into counseling practice with a specific population within the forensic mental health counseling field. There were 15 possible points for this outcome:

- 1) Proficiency in reviewing relevant literature and interpreting results (5 points)
- 2) Ability to discuss implications of empirical literature to clinical practice with a specific forensic population (5 points)
- 3) Demonstration of critical thinking skills regarding counseling principles and theory (5 points)

Results: For both semesters, students scored an average of 14.04 out of 15 ($SD= 1.02$). See below for the distribution of the 15 participants' scores.

Fall Semester (Pilot)

Score	Number of Students	Percentage
12 (Good)	3	30%
14 (Excellent)	4	40%
15 (Excellent)	3	30%

Spring Semester

Score	Number of Students	Percentage
14 (Excellent)	5	33.3%
15 (Excellent)	10	66.7%

Interpretation: These findings suggest that majority of the students (70% in Fall Semester; 100% in Spring Semester) demonstrated a very good to excellent ability to apply principles from research and academic literature into counseling practice.

Learning Outcome 5- Applying counseling theory to practice

Students were required to conduct, record, and transcribe two mock counseling sessions outside of class. There were 15 possible points for this outcome:

- 1) Use of effective counseling skills and interventions, such as reflection of feelings, paraphrasing, summarizing (5 points)
- 2) Ability to show empathy, genuineness, and develop a rapport with client (5 points)
- 3) Self-awareness of countertransference and personal attitudes (5 points)

Results: For both semesters, students scored an average of 14.08 out of 15 ($SD= 1.15$). See below for the distribution of the 15 participants' scores.

Fall Semester (Pilot)

Score	Number of Students	Percentage
12 (Good)	3	30%
14 (Excellent)	4	40%
15 (Excellent)	3	30%

Spring Semester

Score	Number of Students	Percentage
12 (Good)	2	13.3%
14 (Excellent)	4	26.7%
15 (Excellent)	9	60%

Interpretation: These findings suggest that majority of the students (70% in Fall Semester, 86.7% in Spring Semester) demonstrated a very good to excellent ability to apply principles from research and academic literature into counseling practice.

Recommendations

Given these findings, it is clear that the students are learning about the field of forensic mental health counseling. All five learning objectives were met by all or majority of the students:

- 1) Majority of students demonstrated a very good to excellent awareness of the intersection between the law and forensic mental health counseling.
- 2) All of the students demonstrated very good to excellent knowledge of specialized areas in mental health counseling.
- 3) All of the students demonstrated a very good to excellent understanding of mental health theories and their use in counseling settings.
- 4) Majority of the students demonstrated a very good to excellent ability to apply principles from research and academic literature into counseling practice.
- 5) Majority of the students demonstrated a very good to excellent ability to apply principles from research and academic literature into counseling practice.

However, there are a few recommendations that can help in improving the program.

- 1) Ensure that instructors are well-versed in principles of counseling and are able to articulate the intersection of these principles with forensic mental health. Because the field is relatively new, it is important for our instructors to be very aware of the ways that forensic mental health counseling is unique to forensic psychology. Thus, it is important that our core counseling classes are taught by counseling psychologists or counselor educators.
- 2) Further, it is important that other Forensic Psychology courses that students are taking (particularly electives) are infused with some principles of Forensic Mental Health Counseling. In order for students to develop their professional identities as forensic mental health counselors, they need to hear about how their field can be applied to research and clinical work with various populations.
- 3) Finally, perhaps there need to be better other ways of evaluating students rather than the methods that were used in the current assessment. We used essay questions, group presentations, and counseling skills projects. Perhaps a quantitative method can be used in the future, particularly as the student population increases. Further, perhaps an individual interview with each student at the end of the course can be helpful as well, in order to assess first hand what each student is learning.

Appendix A: Mini-Capstone Rubric

There will be three methods of assessing five of the six learning outcomes for the FMHC program. These three methods will be: (a) short answer questions on the final exam, (b) group presentation, and (c) individual counseling project. Each of the learning outcomes, methods of assessment, and evaluation of performance are listed below.

Learning Outcome 1: To articulate the intersection between law and mental health counseling

Method of Assessment: Exam Question

Description of Assessment: Students will take one final comprehensive exam. The following short answer question will be used to assess this outcome:

Describe how the principles of forensic mental health counseling may be unique in comparison to other related fields (e.g., forensic psychology, social work, psychiatry) and give one example of how mental counseling may be effectively practiced in the criminal justice system.

Scoring System:

1. Description of Humanistic Concepts, such as Unconditional Positive Regard, Empathy, Empowerment (2 pt)
2. Description of Wellness Model (1 pt)
3. Comparison to Other Fields (1 pt)
4. Effective Example of MHC in the CJ System (1 pts)

Evaluation of Performance: Students will be evaluated on a Likert scale of 1-5 (i.e., 1= poor, 2= satisfactory, 3= good, 4= very good, 5= excellent).

Learning Outcome 2: To describe specialized areas in mental health counseling

Method of Assessment: Group Presentation

Description of Assessment: Students are required to participate in one group presentation, in which they will demonstrate their ability to apply academic literature (theory and research) to a particular forensic clinical population. (Full description is in syllabus).

Evaluation of Performance: Students will be evaluated on a Likert scale of 1-15 (i.e., 1-5= poor, 6-9= satisfactory, 10-12= good, 13-15= excellent).

Scoring System:

- 1) Proficiency in reviewing relevant literature and interpreting results (5 points)
- 2) Ability to discuss implications of empirical literature to clinical practice with a specific forensic population (5 points)
- 3) Demonstration of critical thinking skills regarding counseling principles and theory (5 points)

Learning Outcome 3: To understand mental health theories and their use in counseling settings

Method of Assessment: Exam

Description of Assessment: Students will take one final comprehensive exam (Full description is in syllabus). The following short answer question will be used to assess this learning outcome:

[After reading a case vignette regarding a forensic client]. Choose two theoretical orientations (e.g., psychodynamic, cognitive behavioral) to explain the client's personality development. Also, describe which theoretical orientation would be most effective in counseling/mental health treatment with this client.

Evaluation of Performance: Students will be evaluated on a Likert scale of 1-15 (i.e., 1-5= poor, 6-9= satisfactory, 10-12= good, 13-15= excellent)

Scoring System:

- 1) Description of 2 concepts for 2 theoretical orientations; each concept is worth 2.5 points (10 points)
- 2) Argument for most effective theoretical orientation (5 points)

Learning Outcome 4: To apply principles from research and academic literature into counseling practice

Method of Assessment: Group Presentation

Description of Assessment: Students are required to participate in one group presentation, in which they will demonstrate their ability to apply academic literature (theory and research) to a particular forensic clinical population. (Full description is in syllabus).

Evaluation of Performance: Students will be evaluated on a Likert scale of 1-15 (i.e., 1-5= poor, 6-9= satisfactory, 10-12= good, 13-15= excellent) on each of the following areas:

Scoring System:

- 1) Proficiency in reviewing relevant literature and interpreting results (5 points)
- 2) Ability to discuss implications of empirical literature to clinical practice with a specific forensic population (5 points)
- 3) Demonstration of critical thinking skills regarding counseling principles and theory (5 points)

** The average score among these three areas will serve as a final score for the learning outcome.

Learning Outcome 5: To apply counseling theory to practice

Method of Assessment: Counseling Project

Description of Assessment: Students are required to submit two counseling projects in which they will conduct and record two mock counseling sessions outside of class. (Full description is in the syllabus).

Evaluation of Performance: Students will be evaluated on a Likert scale of 1-15 (i.e., 1-5= poor, 6-9= satisfactory, 10-12= good, 13-15= excellent).

Scoring System:

- 1) Use of effective counseling skills and interventions, such as reflection of feelings, paraphrasing, summarizing (5 points)
- 2) Ability to show empathy, genuineness, and develop a rapport with client (5 points)
- 3) Self-awareness of countertransference and personal attitudes (5 points)

Appendix B: Curriculum Map and Learning Objectives Worksheet

Forensic Mental Health Counseling Master's Degree Program Assessment

<u>Program Goal</u>	To prepare students to become professional mental health counselors, with forensic specialization.				
<u>Program Objectives</u>	To prepare students to become professional mental health counselors.		To prepare students to develop forensic specialization.		
<u>Learning Outcomes</u>	To articulate the intersection of between law, and mental health counseling	To describe specialized areas in mental health counseling	To explain personality theory within the context of forensic counseling	To apply principles, research methods, and statistics to forensic counseling issues	To apply counseling theory to practice
Required					
Psychology 758* Clinical Instruction (Mini Capstone)	X	X	X	X	X
Psychology 755* Introduction to Forensic Mental Health Counseling	X	X			
Psychology 700* Mental Health Professionals, Social Science and the Law	X				
Psychology 715* Research Design and Methods				X	
Psychology 745* Psychopathology			X		
Psychology 769* Intermediate Statistics in the Social Sciences				X	
Psychology 731* Human Growth and Development		X	X		

<u>Learning Outcomes</u>	To articulate the intersection of between law, and mental health counseling	To describe specialized areas in mental health counseling	To explain personality theory within the context of forensic counseling	To apply principles, research methods, and statistics to forensic counseling issues	To apply counseling theory to practice
Psychology 741* Theories of Personality and Counseling		X	X		
Psychology 765* Group Dynamics		X			X
Psychology 760* Counseling and Psychotherapy Methods		X	X		X
Psychology 761* Clinical Interviewing and Assessment		X	X		X
Psychology 780/781* Externship		X	X		X
Psychology 795* Introduction to Assessment		X		X	X
Key Electives					
Psychology 701 Psychology of Criminal Behavior	X	X	X		
Psychology 705 Victimology	X	X	X	X	

GROUP PRESENTATION

Assignment as described in the syllabus:

At the end of the semester, students will participate in a group presentation, with 4 group members each. The group presentation will last from 30-35 minutes, focusing on special needs populations. Each presentation should include the following points and/or elements:

- Introduction and background of special needs group
- Obstacles and barriers to counseling for special needs group
- Culturally-competent counseling techniques
- Application of theoretical orientation(s)
- Sample case presentation (i.e., case vignettes or role plays)

Group members are encouraged to be as creative as possible with their presentation. Grading will be based on covering the above criteria, clarity, presentation style, and knowledge of subject. Group members will receive a group grade, so it is imperative that group members ensure that all members are contributing equally to the project.

Group Topic: **Counseling Sexual Offenders**

Group Members: **[Removed for Confidentiality]**

1) Proficiency in describing the history and current issues regarding a special needs population within forensic mental health counseling (5/5 points)

This section was very thorough and contained a lot of information. Definitions are helpful, and statistics help provide a rationale for studying this population

2) Ability to describe obstacles and barriers to mental health counseling with the special needs group (5/5 points)

This section was very good. I especially enjoyed the section on stigma and bias and application to counseling. I also appreciate the implications for ethics as well.

3) Capability to apply and discuss theoretical orientations regarding counseling a special needs population within the criminal justice system (5/5 points).

There was a good review of CBT and Learning Theory. Make sure you describe explicitly why you chose these two theoretical orientations.

4) Proficiency in reviewing relevant literature and interpreting results (5/5 points)

The speaker was very confident in sharing results of the studies presented. You seemed knowledgeable of the methodology section.

5) Ability to discuss implications of empirical literature to clinical practice with a specific forensic population (5/5 points)

The speaker did a great job in applying empirically-based studies to clinical practice with this population

6) Demonstration of critical thinking skills regarding counseling principles and theory (5/5 points)

The role play was a fantastic way of applying all of the relevant points you discussed.

Student Name: Removed for Confidentiality

Counseling Skills and Interventions	1
Open-Ended Questions	1
Reflections of Feelings	1
Paraphrasing	1
Reframing or Confrontation	1
Summarizing	1
Counseling Rapport	
Empathy	1
Genuineness	1
Client's Comfort	1
Client's Ability to Open Up	1
Here and Now Processing	1
Self-Awareness and Attitudes	
Acknowledgement of countertransference	1
Acknowledgement of strengths	1
Acknowledgement of weaknesses	1
Acknowledgment of areas of improvement	1
Acknowledgement of cultural biases	1
TOTAL POINTS	15