MARITAL AND FAMILY THERAPY — D.M.F.T.

Program director
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The Doctor of Marital and Family Therapy (D.M.F.T.) program is one of the few D.M.F.T. programs in the United States that is accredited by the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT). The degree curriculum adopts the practitioner-administrator-evaluator approach and focuses on applied skill development for use in clinical practice and administrative positions. The goal of the curriculum is to prepare students to apply evidence-based standards to the systemic/relational principles of marriage and family therapy as they design, evaluate, and administer programs that impact a clinical population. Graduates of the D.M.F.T. program are multicultural informed and well-prepared to serve as ethically-competent leaders who advance the marital and family therapy profession. Our alumni most often work as program directors, grant writers, program evaluators, advanced clinicians, and clinical supervisors across the nation and even outside of the United States. Some alumni also serve the University as faculty members and adjunct professors.

The 121-unit* D.M.F.T. degree curriculum requires a minimum of three years of full-time study for completion. This includes course work, 1000 hours of direct client contact, a doctoral project, and supervised professional development experience. The program is also designed to meet the requirements for California state licensure as a marital and family therapist.

*Students who have completed a master’s degree from a COAMFTE-accredited program receive advanced standing of 43 units, reducing the required time to complete the degree to a minimum of two years. Consideration for advanced standing will be given to students entering the D.M.F.T. degree program with an M.A. or an M.S. degree from a non-COAMFTE-accredited program on a course-by-course basis.

Knowledge and skills promoted

Theory and practice
Students study the work of the original thinkers in marital and family therapy, as well as the most recent developments in the field—such as social constructionism, evidence-based practice, and global perspectives. D.M.F.T. degree students will develop skills in applying marriage and family therapy principles and frameworks to public and private clinical practice settings. They will develop a critical understanding of the theoretical and philosophical foundations of marriage and family therapy, be conversant with the current issues in the field, and use this knowledge to develop programs and services.

Personal development
The program encourages students to develop a clear understanding of themselves and invites reflection and consideration of the impact of their personal values, social positions, and contexts on their clinical, administrative, and program development practices. Students are supported in the development of their strengths as they create an epistemological framework and ethical consciousness that guide their approach to professional practice in their lives; and are encouraged to engage beyond their local communities to include experiences in wider cultural and global contexts.

Practice and supervisory skills
Students will apply an in-depth understanding of theory as it relates to the practice of marital and family therapy interventions and program activities at the family, community, and societal levels—drawing on the core marriage and family therapy frameworks. They will develop sophistication in clinical, administrative, and supervisory skills necessary for multisystemic engagement. As it is COAMFTE-accredited, the D.M.F.T. degree program offers students the opportunity to complete the requirements for becoming an AAMFT-approved supervisor prior to graduation.

Evaluation skills
Students will develop skills and understanding of the process of evaluation research related to marital and family therapy programs and services. This includes the ability to apply research findings to clinical practice and to utilize research findings in creative ways for the benefit of the general population. D.M.F.T. degree students will focus on evaluation of program performance and outcomes in practice-based settings.

Program goal and outcomes

The goal of the D.M.F.T. degree program is to prepare doctoral-level marital and family therapists to serve as program developers, as well as evaluators-administrators, who will promote the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities. This goal works in combination with the larger University mission of advancing health services that attend to the whole person by developing practiced-based knowledge in marriage and family therapy.

There are two overall program outcomes. These outcomes integrate our University’s commitment to diversity and quality training of health-care professionals with the need for diverse doctoral-level practitioners skilled in program development/evaluation and administration. The program outcomes are:

1. The program will graduate a diverse student body prepared to advance the field of marriage and family therapy through practiced-based leadership.
2. The program will prepare doctoral-level family therapy professionals to apply the systemic/relational principles of the field to design, evaluate, and administer programs that contribute to MFT practice.

Student learning outcomes

1. Students will develop a professional identity as doctoral-level marital and family therapists aligned with national practice standards.
2. Students will become adept in systems/relational practice, demonstrating sophistication as therapists, program developers, evaluators, and administrators of marital and family therapy services.
3. Students will be able to use marital and family therapy, human development, and family science literature to design and evaluate programs, clinical protocols, organizational structures, and service-delivery processes.
4. To further benefit families and communities, students will demonstrate the ability to use research and evaluation methodologies to improve human service program performance and outcomes.
5. Students will be responsive to the societal, cultural, and spiritual contexts in which health and well-being are embedded.
6. Students will develop an ethical consciousness that guides their practice in all aspects of professional work.
Advanced standing policy

National accreditation and certification processes ensure that degrees are comparable across institutional boundaries. This advanced standing policy recognizes the value of these professional review processes on the part of the Department of Counseling and Family Sciences and facilitates cooperation in professional training within the marital and family therapy discipline. The policy assures that at least half of all interim master’s degree units and 60 percent of doctoral academic credit will be earned at Loma Linda University, while enabling cooperative relationships with other accredited programs.

Guidelines

Advanced standing may be granted for previous course work equivalent in content and scope to required counseling and family sciences (CFS) courses. This reduces the number of units to be taken at this University. Determination of advanced standing is based on the following guidelines:

1. Residency requirements
   a. Interim master’s degree. Advanced standing may not reduce total units below 45 units for an interim master’s degree earned in combination with a CFS doctoral degree.
   b. Doctoral degree. Advanced standing may not reduce total units below 60 units for a Ph.D. degree in marital and family therapy, Ph.D. degree in family studies, or Doctor of Marital and Family Therapy (D.M.F.T.) degree.

2. Determination of equivalency
   a. Credits applied to advanced standing must be graduate-level courses earned at an accredited institution. No credit may be applied for grades lower than B-.
   b. Courses completed in programs accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) will be reviewed as a whole in relation to CFS program requirements. It is anticipated that comparable course content from these schools may be divided into different course configurations than that of this University. Students seeking advanced standing based on units earned at other institutions will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis in accordance with COAMFTE standards.
   c. Advanced standing is not granted for religion courses.
   d. Doctoral courses taken more than five years previously may be considered for advanced standing only if the content has been used professionally on a regular basis and the student can demonstrate current knowledge in the field.
   e. Approved prior client contact hours may also be applied. See CFS doctoral handbook for approval process.

3. Approval process

Students seeking advanced standing should meet with their program director prior to admission or within the first two quarters of study and supply copies of each syllabus of prior course work. Following the course review, the program director will write a letter to the School of Behavioral Health that outlines which courses from previous institutions qualify for advanced standing and which equivalent CFS courses will be waived. The letter will specify how many units and client contact hours the student will need to complete the degree. Rather than completing separate academic variances for each course, the student will submit one academic variance accompanied by the program director’s letter outlining the advanced standing.

Financial assistance

Students who are accepted into the D.M.F.T. degree curriculum in marital and family therapy may apply for work-study and department-funded research, teaching, and administrative assistantships awarded by the Department of Counseling and Family Sciences. Departmental awards are contingent on the availability of funds. Students may also apply for need-based financial aid, such as a loan or other work-study programs on campus. Students accepted into the D.M.F.T. degree curriculum in marital and family therapy are eligible for and encouraged to apply for the AAMFT minority fellowships. See <http://www.aamft.org> for information.

Students may apply for financial aid by writing to:

Student Financial Aid Office
Loma Linda University
Loma Linda, CA 92350
909/558-4509

Accreditation

The Doctor of Marital and Family Therapy degree program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE), 112 South Alfred Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314; telephone: 703/838-9808; e-mail: <coa@aamft.org> (http://www.aamft.org).

Admissions

Applicants must meet Loma Linda University (http://llucatalog.llu.edu/about-university/admission-policies-information/#admissionrequirementstext) and School of Behavioral Health (http://llucatalog.llu.edu/behavioral-health/#generalregulationstext) admissions requirements; and give evidence of academic ability, professional comportment, and mature judgment. The Doctor of Marital and Family Therapy degree curriculum represents advanced study over and above a standard master’s degree curriculum in the field. Admission is based on an integrated evaluation of the following criteria:

- Five-page personal essay (guidelines included in the online application).
- M.S. degree in Marital and Family Therapy, or equivalent.
- Grade point average (3.3 minimum).
- Structured oral interview with department (one day).
- Three letters of reference (two academic and one professional).
- Curriculum vitae.

Pre-entrance clearance (http://llucatalog.llu.edu/about-university/admission-policies-information/#preentrancerequirementstext):

- A background check
- Health clearance


In the department of Counseling and Family Sciences, we adhere to the policy (http://llucatalog.llu.edu/introduction/affirmative-action) of the university and additionally do not discriminate against anyone on the basis of socioeconomic or relationship status.
Program requirements

Corequisites

Students are expected to have basic academic preparation before entering the D.M.F.T. degree curriculum. If a student is deficient in courses, such as those listed below, a plan of study incorporating these courses will be developed to give the student a solid grounding in the foundations of the field. Transcripts will be evaluated to determine readiness or deficiency in previous course work. These courses will be regarded as corequisites in that the student will be able to incorporate them into his/her curriculum.

Theoretical knowledge in family systems/relational therapy 13  
Clinical knowledge in marital and family therapy or a related field 13  
Research 8

Licensure-specific knowledge/corequisites required of students who have not completed a COMAFTE accredited master's degree

COUN 675  Dynamics of Aging 1  
MFAM 515  Crisis Intervention and Client-Centered Advocacy 3  
MFAM 524  Psychopharmacology and Medical Issues 3  
MFAM 536  Case Presentation and Documentation 3  
MFAM 537  Case Presentation 3  
MFAM 547  Social Ecology of Individual and Family Development 3  
MFAM 556  Psychopathology and Diagnostic Procedures 3  
MFAM 567  Treating the Severely and Persistently Mentally Ill and the Recovery Process 3  
MFAM 604  Social Context in Clinical Practice: Gender, Class, and Race 3  
MFAM 614  Law and Ethics 3  
MFAM 624  Individual and Systems Assessment 3  
MFAM 635  Case Presentation and Legal Issues 3  
MFAM 638  Family Therapy and Chemical Abuse 3  
MFAM 644  Child Abuse and Family Violence 3  
MFAM 674  Human Sexual Behavior 3  

Total Units 43

Curriculum

Theory and practice

MFTH 504  Advanced Theory in Marital and Family Therapy 4  
MFTH 506  Foundations of Systemic Practice 3  
MFTH 546  Advances in Family Sciences 3  

Supervision

MFTH 501  Fundamentals of Supervision in Marital and Family Therapy 3  
MFTH 502  Advanced Supervision in Marital and Family Therapy 1  

Program development and administration

MFTH 524  Marital and Family Therapy Administration: Organizational Structure, Process and Behavior 3  
MFTH 525  Advanced Marital and Family Therapy Assessment and Testing 3  
MFTH 555  Organizational Development and Change 3  
MFTH 624  Program Development for Families and Communities 3  
MFTH 625  Grant Writing 3  
MFTH 626  Program Evaluation and Monitoring 3  

Spirituality

RELE 505  Clinical Ethics (or RELE 5__ graduate-level ethics elective) 3  
RELR 535  Spirituality and Mental Health 3  
RELT 615  Seminar in Philosophy of Religion 3  

Research

MFTH 545  Research and Practice with Couples and Families 3  
MFTH 601  Statistics I 4  
MFTH 604  Advanced Qualitative Methods 4  
MFTH 605  Advanced Quantitative Methods 4  

Dissertation/Doctoral project

MFTH 695  Project Research 12

Total Units 68

Professional development and practice 2

MFTH 634  Practicum in Marital and Family Therapy 9  
MFTH 785A  Begin Clinical Training in Couple, Marital, and Family Therapy 0  
MFTH 785B  Clinical Training in Couple, Marital, and Family Therapy 1, 2, 3  
MFTH 786  Professional Development Proposal 0  
MFTH 786A and 786B total combined units 4 36  

Total Units 49

1 Course repeated to fulfill total unit requirement
2 700-numbered courses do not count in total didactic units required for the degree
3 Clinical hours earned prior to entering program may be applied to meet this requirement upon approval of Director of Clinical Training.
4 Those MFTH 786B Professional Internship in Marital and Family Therapy—Clinical units that are completed satisfactorily will reduce the number of MFTH 786A Professional Development in Marital and Family Therapy units needed to meet total requirement of 36 at a 1:1 ratio.

Noncourse requirements

Doctoral degrees in Marital and Family Therapy will be awarded when students have completed all the required course work and the following noncourse requirements:

• 1000 approved client contact hours, and
• 200 approved hours of clinical supervision, and
• A written qualifying examination, and
• An oral defense of the doctoral project.

Normal time to complete the program

With a COAMFTE-accredited master’s degree: 2 years (7 academic quarters) based on full-time enrollment
With a non-COAMFTE-accredited master's degree: 3 years (11 academic quarters) based on full-time enrollment