

SYSTEMS, FAMILIES, AND COUPLES—PH.D.

Program director

Zephon Lister

The Ph.D. degree in systems, families, and couples follows the scientist-practitioner model in which students are expected to develop expertise in research, teaching, and professional practice. The three-to-four year, 92-unit curriculum includes two years of coursework, professional development and clinical practice leading to licensure or certification, and one year of supervised dissertation experience. The purpose of the curriculum is to develop family science scholars and practitioners who will advance theory, research, practice, and teaching in the fields of couple and family therapy and family social science. Students will be prepared for academic, professional, and clinical positions in universities, community mental health, and medical settings. Ph.D. students develop expertise in conducting original research using quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches; teaching in academic and community settings; and advanced clinical practice.

Ph.D. degree program

The core academic curriculum is composed of 53 units of coursework in the areas of research, theory and practice. Students also take 9 units of religion. Students will then choose 18 elective units from the following content areas: (1) MFT Clinical Supervision, (2) Medical Family Therapy, (3) Advanced Clinical Practice, and (4) Community Mental Health.

The *MFT Clinical Supervision* electives fulfill the educational and practice requirements to become an AAMFT-approved supervisor.

The *Medical Family Therapy* electives provide the education, clinical training, and practical experiences to work in inpatient, intensive outpatient, hospital, and outpatient health-care settings.

Advance Clinical Practice electives provide students the opportunity to further develop their clinical awareness and skills in the areas of social context, self of the therapist, and the integration of spirituality into the clinical practice.

The *Community Mental Health* electives focus on areas of skill development for community mental health practice including program development and evaluation as well as organizational development, assessment, and administration.

Knowledge and skills promoted

Theory

Students study the work of original thinkers in systems, families, and couples as well as the most recent developments within the fields of family studies and family therapy. They develop a critical understanding of the theoretical and philosophical foundations of the field, critically examine the interplay between the biopsychosocial-spiritual dimensions of relationships, become conversant in the current issues in the field of family science, and contribute to the discourse regarding them. Students will use this knowledge to advance the fields of family therapy and family studies.

Research skills

Students develop skills and a critical understanding of the process of research and evaluation related to families and interventional work. A

scientist-practitioner model is used to equip them with the ability to develop, consume, and apply research in professional practice. Students will develop expertise in social science statistical analysis; quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method research methodologies; and grant writing.

Teaching skills

The program provides experiential and didactic training for teaching in higher education and community settings. Through didactic training, students will be exposed to current trends and best practices in teaching. Students will examine various teaching and learning paradigms with the intention of helping them develop their own epistemology and philosophy of teaching. They will test and grow this epistemology through experiential training as they assist with courses (e.g., develop syllabi, lecture, and assignments) under the supervision of a faculty member. Students will be given opportunities to assist, facilitate, or co-facilitate courses on their own.

Practice and supervisory skills

Students will apply a critical understanding of theory and research to work with couples and families, larger communities, and organizations. They will develop an in-depth understanding of clinical theory and its application to clinical practice. Advanced supervised clinical training and family life education opportunities will be provided throughout the course of the program. Additionally, students in the couples and family therapy specialty will develop skills as an AAMFT-approved clinical supervisor.

Personal development

The program encourages students to develop a clear understanding of themselves, and it invites reflection and consideration of the impact of their personal values, social positions, and contexts on their clinical and scholarly practices. Students are supported in the development of their strengths as they create epistemological frameworks and ethical consciousness to guide their research and practice. They are encouraged to engage beyond their local community to include experiences in wider cultural, social, and global contexts.

Program learning outcomes

By the end of this program, the graduate should be able to:

1. Analyze, synthesize, apply, and critique theories of human development and family therapy/family science to advance and integrate theory into research and practice in the field.
2. Demonstrate knowledge and skills as a researcher in the field of marital and family therapy/family science through research, professional publication, and presentation.
3. Demonstrate competency in teaching and supervision within academic and community settings.
4. Become adept in systems/relational practice, demonstrating sophistication as a scientist/practitioner (only applies to CFT specialty).
5. Develop a professional identity as doctoral-level family therapists/educators aligned with national practice standards, demonstrating service and professionalism through professional and community involvement.
6. Be responsive to the societal, cultural, and spiritual contexts in which health and well-being are embedded.
7. Be proficient in the legal guidelines of the marital and family therapy/family life education fields, and develop an ethical consciousness that guides their practice in all aspects of professional work.

Financial assistance

For information regarding funding opportunities, see Student Aid (<http://llucatalog.llu.edu/about-university/financial-policies-information/>) in the financial policies section of this CATALOG.

Students who are accepted into the Ph.D. degree in systems, families, and couples 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 upon the availability of funds.

Accreditation

The Ph.D. degree program in systems, families, and couples is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE), the accrediting body for the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), 112 South Alfred Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314; telephone: 703/838-9808; email: coa@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 compartment, and mature judgment. The Ph.D. 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:

- Master's degree in clinical mental health field
- Grade point average (3.3 minimum)
- Structured oral interview with department
- Three letters of reference (two academic and one professional)
- GRE scores (taken within the past five years). Due to issues associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the GRE General Test is waived for all 2021-2022 applicants to doctoral programs in the School of Behavioral Health. Please do not submit GRE scores through ETS or report your scores in any application materials as they will not be taken into consideration.
- Curriculum vitae (preferred, but not required)

The admissions committee uses the above criteria to evaluate applicants on each of the following equally weighted criteria:

1. Academic preparedness
2. Professional preparedness for doctoral study
3. Research potential
4. Ability to work with diversity
5. Clinical and/or Family Life Education skills

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

- Health clearance

Program requirements

Corequisites

Student transcripts will be evaluated on a course-by-course basis for the following areas of corequisite study. A plan of study incorporating these standard master's degree-level courses is available for students who have not completed these corequisites. See required master level courses.

Theoretical knowledge in family systems/relational therapy or family science	8
Clinical knowledge in marital and family therapy or family life education	16
Individual development and family relations	8
Additional study in the three areas above	4
Professional issues and ethics in marital and family therapy or family studies	4
Research	4
Additional related study	4
Total Units	48

A grade of B or better indicates a student has mastered the knowledge, skill, and professional practice performance competencies outlined by the program. In order to progress successfully and complete the degree, students must meet both course and cumulative G.P.A. standards. The University allows students to repeat two courses per degree. Course repeat expectations set by the School of Behavioral Health may be found in the general regulations (<http://llucatalog.llu.edu/behavioral-health/#generalregulationstext>) section of this CATALOG.

Curriculum

Theory and practice

CFSD 504	Advanced Theory in Marital and Family Therapy	4
CFSD 505	Advanced Family Studies: Theory Construction	3
CFSD 506	Foundations of Systems Thinking: Theory and Application	3
CFSD 519	Teaching in Higher Education	3
CFSD 544	Health and Illness in Families (or additional elective if taken during master's degree)	3
CFSD 546	Multicultural and Global Mental Health ³	3
CFSD 565	Neurobiology of Relationships, Stress and Trauma: Family Science Applications	3

Research

CFSD 545	Research and Practice with Couples and Families	3
CFSD 601	Statistics I	4
CFSD 602	Statistics II	4
CFSD 603	Statistics III	4
CFSD 605	Advanced Quantitative Methods	3
CFSD 606	Issues in Family Research	3
CFSD 611	Qualitative Research Methods I	4
CFSD 612	Qualitative Research Methods II	3
CFSD 625	Grant Writing	3

Electives

Choose one of the following specialty areas		
MFT Clinical Supervision		
CFSD 501	Fundamentals of Supervision in Marital and Family Therapy	

Medical Family Therapy	
CFSD 540	Introduction to Medical Family Therapy ⁴
CFSD 548	Family Therapy and Medicine
CHLS 506	Therapeutic Play for Children Affected by Illness and Injury ⁴
CHLS 508	Grief and Loss ⁴
Advance Clinical Practice	
CFSD 634A	Practicum in Couple and Family Therapy
CFSD 634B	Practicum in Couple and Family Therapy
CFSD 634C	Practicum in Couple and Family Therapy
Community Mental Health	
CFSD 526	Advanced Marital and Family Therapy Assessment
CFSD 555	Organizational Development and Change
CFSD 624	Program Development for Families and Communities
CFSD 626	Program Design, Evaluation and Monitoring
Spirituality	
RELE 5__ or above	3
RELR 5__ or above	3
RELT 5__ or above	3
Dissertation	
CFSD 698	Dissertation Research ¹ 12
Total Units	92
Professional development ²	
CFSD 786	Professional Development Proposal 0
MFTH 786A and 786B total combined units	36
CFSD 786A	Professional Development Doctoral Portfolio ¹
CFSD 786B	Professional Internship in Couple and Family Therapy ¹
Total Units	36

¹ Course repeated to fulfill total unit requirement

² 700-numbered courses do not count in total didactic units required for the degree

³ Fulfills service learning requirement

⁴ If not taken during master's degree

Noncourse requirements

Doctoral degrees in systems, families and couples will be awarded when students have completed all the required coursework and the following non-course requirements:

- 300 approved client contact hours (applies to students who choose the clinical requirement as part of their professional development portfolio).
- 200 approved hours of clinical supervision (applies to students completing AAMFT Approved Supervisor certification).
- Professional developmental portfolio criteria A (see program handbook for details) or written qualifying examination.
- An oral defense of the doctoral dissertation.

Normal time to complete the program

Three (3) to four (4) years (13 academic quarters) – based on full-time enrollment

Additional required courses for MFT licensure in California

Students entering the Ph.D. program without a COAMFTE accredited master's degree, who wish to obtain licensure in California, will be required to meet the course requirements of the M.S. in Marital & Family Therapy (<http://llucatalog.llu.edu/behavioral-health/marital-family-therapy/ms/#ms-mft-requirements>) program. A course-by-course evaluation will be done to determine which courses in the student's previous master's degree program fulfill specific course requirements for California licensure.