

Specialization In Marriage and Family Therapy Program

Collecting Effective Student Learning Outcome Data for Program Improvement

OVERVIEW

Outcome-Based Accreditation

The Specialization in Marriage and Family Therapy (SMFT) Program is accredited by the Commission for the Accreditation of Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE), which recently established educational outcomes as the primary focus of accreditation including the expectation to:

- Create Program, Student Learning, and Faculty Outcomes
- Collect Aggregate Data on our Educational Outcomes
- Analyze the Outcome Data on an Annual Basis
- Make Program Improvements Based on Data Assessment

2015 Re-Accreditation

Initially unable to create an effective educational outcome process prior to the 2015 COAMFTE re-accreditation visit, faculty and School of Family, Consumer, and Nutrition Sciences (FCNS) Administration created an **Assessment and Review Schedule** in August 2015 that identified:

- Outcome Measurements
- Data Collection
- Assessment of Outcome Data by Faculty (Spring and Fall Reviews)

As a result, the program was granted re-accreditation through 2021 with stipulations. This plan was implemented in the Fall 2015 semester and will be completed in Spring 2017, replaced by a new, more effective outcome-evaluation process.

Communities of Interest

Communities of Interest are another core component of COAMFE accreditation. They provide vital data for the assessment of our educational outcomes. Our COIs include:

Community of Interest	Data Measurements
1. Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student Course Evaluations• Exit Survey• Contextual Factor Survey
2. Alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bi-Annual Alumni Survey
3. Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Graded Assignments• Course Learning Outcomes Rubric• Readiness Assessment• Practicum Evaluations• Comprehensive Examinations
4. Site Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internship Evaluations• Bi-Annual Site Supervisor Survey
5. NIU Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bi-Annual Administrator's Survey
6. Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bi-Annual Employer's Survey

Spring 2016 Faculty Review

After a review of aggregate data from the Fall Semester, SMFT faculty found that each educational outcome was met easily. The aggregate data, then, suggested that there was no need for program improvement. The faculty determined that:

1. The program needed more effective educational outcome data
2. Feedback from the Student Community of Interest was needed

The major program improvement for 2016, then, became the creation of more effective educational outcome measurements to develop an in-depth, multi-dimensional assessment program.

ASSESSMENT & SYLLABUS CHANGES

Pilot Project: Student Course Evaluations

A pilot project was created by adding 10 items to the course evaluation for FCNS-694 *Family Therapy with Children and Adolescents* that enabled students to evaluate each course learning outcome. The following 6-point Likert Scale was used:

"1" = Strongly Disagree "2" = Disagree "3" = Mildly Disagree
"4" = Mildly Agree "5" = Agree "6" = Strongly Agree

Examples of these items include: "I achieved a high level of learning and/or growth in"

- Item 1:** "My knowledge of MFT theory."
Item 2: "My ability to apply theory to cases."

The pilot project represented the first step in gathering effective data from the Student Community of Interest. CLO items are now added to all student course evaluations.

Faculty CLO Evaluation

Faculty also evaluate students on each course learning outcome. For example, the faculty for FCNS-784 evaluates the following CLO using a 5-Point Likert Scale:

1. Understand the fundamental concepts of systems theory					
Student	1	2	3	4	5
Student #1				X	
Aggregate Score					

An evaluation of these course learning outcomes by both students and faculty produces effective data that is used for:

1. Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes → Program Improvements
2. Assessment of Course Learning Outcomes → Course Improvements
3. Identification of Individual Learning Issues → Student Growth

2016 Exit Survey

Eleven quantitative questions were added to the 2016 Exit Survey that enabled students to evaluate their progress on the **Student Learning Outcomes**. An example survey question: "Evaluate your skill level in applying systemic theories to the listed areas using the following scale with "1" indicating a low skill level and "10" indicating a high skill level:"

- Systemic Assessment
- Clinical Hypotheses
- Systemic Case Conceptualization
- Treatment Planning for Clients
- Intervention with Clients

Syllabi Revision Project

We decided to revise all SMFT course syllabi for the 2016-2017 academic year to connect course learning outcomes, course assignments and weekly course topics to our Student Learning Outcomes. For example, at the end of course FCNS-697 "students will"

1. Demonstrate an understanding of intergenerational, psychodynamic and experiential approaches to couple and family therapy (SLO #1, #2)
2. Exhibit the ability to use these approaches to assess and conceptualize clinical cases (SLO #3)

The project was completed in Spring 2017.

ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

The Summer 2016 Faculty Review assessed the Pilot Project. Student feedback generally suggested excellent student learning in the course while identifying areas of course improvement in student learning:

Item	Mean	Analysis of Results	Action Plan
Item 1: I achieved a high level of learning and/or growth in my knowledge of MFT theory.	5.63	This score suggests that students achieved a strong understanding of MFT theory as it relates to family therapy with children and adolescents.	Continue theory building teaching practices in this course
Item 4: I achieved a high level of learning and/or growth in my confidence in doing play therapy.	5.00	This was the lowest mean aggregate scores. Although they were relatively strong scores, more attention to skill development with play therapy would improve the course.	Increase focus on skill-building through role plays and assessment of recorded sessions.

In its Exit Survey, the graduating class identified the need for more training in couple therapy including strengthening FCNS-697 – *Therapy with Couples*. The course was strengthened by:

1. Increasing the quantity and quality of course readings
2. Integrating Gottman Level I Training
3. Designing skill-development course assignments

FCNS-697 Course Improvements

Readings

2015 Course	2016 Course
Gurman, A. et al (2015). Clinical handbook of couple therapy (5th Ed.).	Hargrave, T.D., Pfitzer, F. (2011). Restoration therapy: Understanding and guiding healing in MFT.
	Johnson, S.M. (2004). The practice of emotionally-focused couple therapy.
	Johnson, S.M. (2002). Emotionally-focused couple therapy with trauma survivors: Strengthening attachment bonds.
	Gurman, A. et al (2015). Clinical handbook of couple therapy (5th Edition) (Selected chapters).

Assignments

2015 Course Assignments	2016 Course Assignments
Self of the Therapist Paper	Case Conceptualizations for Bowen FST and EFT.
Online Journal	Demonstrations of the basic skills of EFT.
Group Project: Publishable Paper	Role Plays displaying Gottman assessment and intervention skills.
IAMFT Conference Proposal	Treatment of Affairs Exercise: In-depth case study project of couples' therapy with affairs.
	Sex Therapy Presentation
	"Hope Springs Reflection: Applying theories of change to the movie depiction of couple therapy

