



Marriage and Family Therapy

Doctor of Philosophy
in Marriage and Family
Therapy (PhDMFT)

Program Handbook

Spring 2023



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Department of Marriage and Family Therapy

Dear National Marriage and Family Therapy Doctoral Student:

Welcome to National University's Doctor of Philosophy in Marriage and Family Therapy (PhDMFT) program. We are pleased to welcome you as a student and colleague in the pursuit of knowledge in the field of MFT. The National University MFT Programs are one of only a handful of online graduate MFT training programs that exist today, and our MAMFT and PhDMFT programs were the first such programs to be accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE). Our MFT programs have seen considerable growth within the past several years, particularly following receipt of COAMFTE accreditation. We developed this Program Handbook to assist you as you begin and progress through your studies. We wish you the best and look forward to your participation in, and contribution to, the PhDMFT Program at National University.

Sincerely,

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Introduction

This handbook has been prepared to serve as a guide for students enrolled in the PhDMFT program at National University. University-wide rules and regulations can be found in the [National University Catalog](#). The policies of this handbook are consistent with university policies and are intended to supplement, not replace, university policies and procedures. In addition, the educational and training protocols of the program are designed to conform to the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) standards of training and practice, including the [AAMFT Code of Ethics](#).

Please read this handbook carefully, as you are expected to know this information. If you have any questions, please contact the Chair of the Department of Marriage and Family Therapy or the Director of the MFT Doctoral Programs (you can e-mail them at mfs@nu.edu). This document will be revised periodically to reflect necessary programmatic changes that may occur due to changes in the profession, the University, or other relevant contexts. All policies, and any changes to these policies, shall be reviewed and approved by appropriate administrative personnel and will be communicated to students as needed.

The Profession of Marriage and Family Therapy

The profession began as a number of psychologists and psychiatrists began to see limitations in treating many mental health issues using treatment approaches focused on individuals. It became apparent to these women and men that treating whole families and combinations of family members (e.g., parents, couples) yielded positive results. From these initial observations and efforts, the field of marriage and family therapy (MFT) was born. The MFT field has now become a distinct mental health discipline with its own body of theory, research, clinical techniques, and code of ethics. All fifty (50) states and the District of Columbia currently have active legislation that governs the practice of MFT. Marriage and family therapists diagnose and treat problems from a systemic perspective. They work with individuals, couples, families, and larger systems in a variety of contexts. The work of MFT focuses on interactional and relational processes and seeks to build on the clients' strengths and resources. Marriage and family therapists help families address and change relationships and patterns of communication so those families can find reasonable solutions to problems for themselves. There are many models of practice in MFT, and individual practitioners may vary greatly in their methods and techniques of clinical work.

Program Policies and Procedures

Overview of the PhDMFT Program

The Doctor of Philosophy in Marriage and Family Therapy (PhDMFT) program at National University was designed to provide a quality and rigorous education and training experience for students who wish to prepare for professional life as marriage and family therapists. A high standard of excellence is expected. In support of this, program faculty members are selected for their expertise and ability to support students and facilitate exceptional educational attainment. The program is focused on developing research capabilities, advanced skills, and personal and professional growth for effective contributions to the field of marriage and family therapy. The program offers advanced clinical education and training, research coursework and opportunities, and supervision training and experience. Graduates of the program will be prepared to carry out advanced clinical work and supervision and education and research in the field of marriage and family therapy.



There are eight specializations within the Doctor of Philosophy in Marriage and Family Therapy degree program. The program website provides further detail about each specialization. [Click Here](#) to learn more about each specialization below:

- Child and Adolescent Therapy
- Couple Therapy
- Culture, Diversity, and Social Justice in a Global Context
- Education and Supervision
- General Family Therapy
- Medical Family Therapy
- Systemic Leadership
- Therapy with Military Families

University Vision, Mission, and Values

Please visit the [National University Catalog](#) for the University's current Vision, Mission, and Values, which are located [here](#).

Department of Marriage and Family Therapy (SMFS) Mission, Vision, and Goals

Department Mission

The mission of the National University Department of Marriage and Family Therapy is to provide personalized educational opportunities to students throughout the world that will allow them to acquire the knowledge, skills, and values integral to professional practice within the marriage and family sciences.

Department Vision

The vision of the National University Department of Marriage and Family Therapy is to unite a diverse community of faculty, staff, and students to improve the human condition through research and practice.

Department Goals

The National University Department of Marriage and Family Therapy promotes the development of:

- Expertise in discipline-specific models and theories
- Ethical professionals
- Commitment to affirm and advance diversity
- Research competency
- Practical skills that positively impact individuals, families, and communities

Program Mission

The mission of National's PhDMFT Program is to prepare competent, ethical, culturally sensitive marriage and family therapists. The program emphasizes a family systems perspective so that client processes, whether these clients are individuals, couples, or families, are conceptualized relationally and systemically. Faculty engage students in a one-on-one process that invites students to grow both professionally and personally through the development of critical thinking skills, information literacy, important clinical skills, an appreciation for and knowledge of research through the scholar-practitioner model, a valuing of diversity and social justice, and a lifelong commitment to learning and service.



Educational Outcomes: PhD Marriage and Family Therapy

The five program goals are informed by the COAMFTE Developmental Competency Components and are associated with five related student learning outcomes:

COAMFTE Developmental Competency Component	Program Goals	Student Learning Outcomes
DCC #1	Knowledge	SLO #1
1. Knowledge of the MFT profession	1. To prepare students to apply relational/systemic knowledge to positively impact individuals, families, and communities.	1. Students will cultivate relational/systemic innovations addressing contemporary issues in the field of couple/marriage and family therapy.
DCC #2	Practice	SLO #3
2. Practice of relational/systemic therapy as a qualified behavioral/mental health provider.	2. To guide students in developing advanced relational/systemic clinical competence.	2. Students/graduates will develop expertise in an area of specialization related to the field of couple/marriage and family therapy.
DCC #4	Diversity	SLO #3
4. Awareness, knowledge, and skill to responsibly serve diverse communities.	3. To demonstrate a clear commitment to diversity and social justice.	3. Students will cultivate competence in working with diverse populations in various contexts.
DCC #5	Research	SLO #4
5. Development and application of research to further the knowledge and practice of the MFT profession.	4. To foster the development of scholar-practitioners in the field of couple/marriage and family therapy.	4. Students will create new knowledge in couple/marriage and family therapy through independent research.
DCC #3	Ethics	SLO #5
3. Commitment to ethical practice through ethical codes of the MFT professional and pertinent regulatory bodies.	5. To train students to practice as ethical professionals.	5. Students will appraise relational/systemic ethical behaviors in various settings.

Program Assessment Plan

The targets and benchmarks established for each program SLO are identified below.

SLO #1. Students will cultivate relational/systemic innovations addressing contemporary issues in the field of marriage and family therapy.

- **Foundations for Doctoral Study in MFT course:** 80% of students will score above 82% on Assignment 4.1. Please see the Catalog for specific course information.
- **Doctoral Portfolio I course:** 80% of students will receive average student/faculty rating of 2 on Assignment 4.1 (Some knowledge or skill). Please see the Catalog for specific course information.
- **Students:** 80% of students will rate the degree to which NU is meeting this SLO as Mostly or Fully
- **Local Supervisors and Mentors:** 80% of local supervisors will indicate the degree to which NU is meeting this SLO as Mostly or Fully

SLO #2. Students/graduates will develop expertise in an area of specialization related to the field of couple/marriage and family therapy.

- **Doctoral Portfolio I course:** 80% of students will receive average student/faculty rating of 2 on Assignment 4.1 (Some knowledge or skill). Please see the Catalog for specific course information.
- **Students:** 80% of students will rate the degree to which NU is meeting this SLO as Mostly or Fully
- **Local Supervisors and Mentors:** 80% of local supervisors will indicate the degree to which NU is meeting this SLO as Mostly or Fully



The following are collected for both students and graduates, but only apply as targets/benchmarks for graduates of the program

- **Sat for exam:** 80% will have sat for the state/national MFT licensing exam
- **Passed exam:** 80% of students who sat for the exam will have passed the state/national MFT licensing exam
- **LMFT:** 80% will have obtained full licensure as an MFT
- **Employment:** 80% of graduates will report being employed using MFT skills

SLO #3. Students will cultivate competence in working with diverse populations in various contexts.

- **Dynamics of Family Interaction:** 80% of students will score above 82% on Assignment 3
- **MFT Doctoral Practicum I :** 80% of students will score above 82% on Assignment 3.1
- **Students:** 80% of students will rate the degree to which NU is meeting this SLO as Mostly or Fully
- **Local Supervisors and Mentors:** 80% of local supervisors will indicate the degree to which NU is meeting this SLO as Mostly or Fully
- **Doctoral Portfolio I course:** 80% of students will receive average student/faculty rating of 2 on Assignment 4.1 (Some knowledge or skill). Please see the Catalog for specific course information.

For specific course information, please visit the Catalog.

SLO #4. Students will create new knowledge in couple/marriage and family therapy through independent research.

- **Scholarly Writing in MFT:** 80% of students will score above 82% on Assignment 11
- **Students:** 80% of students will rate the degree to which NU is meeting this SLO as Mostly or Fully
- **Advanced Qualitative Design and Analysis:** 80% of students will score 82% or higher on Signature Assignment
- **Dissertation:** 80% of students who begin 9901A will complete a dissertation

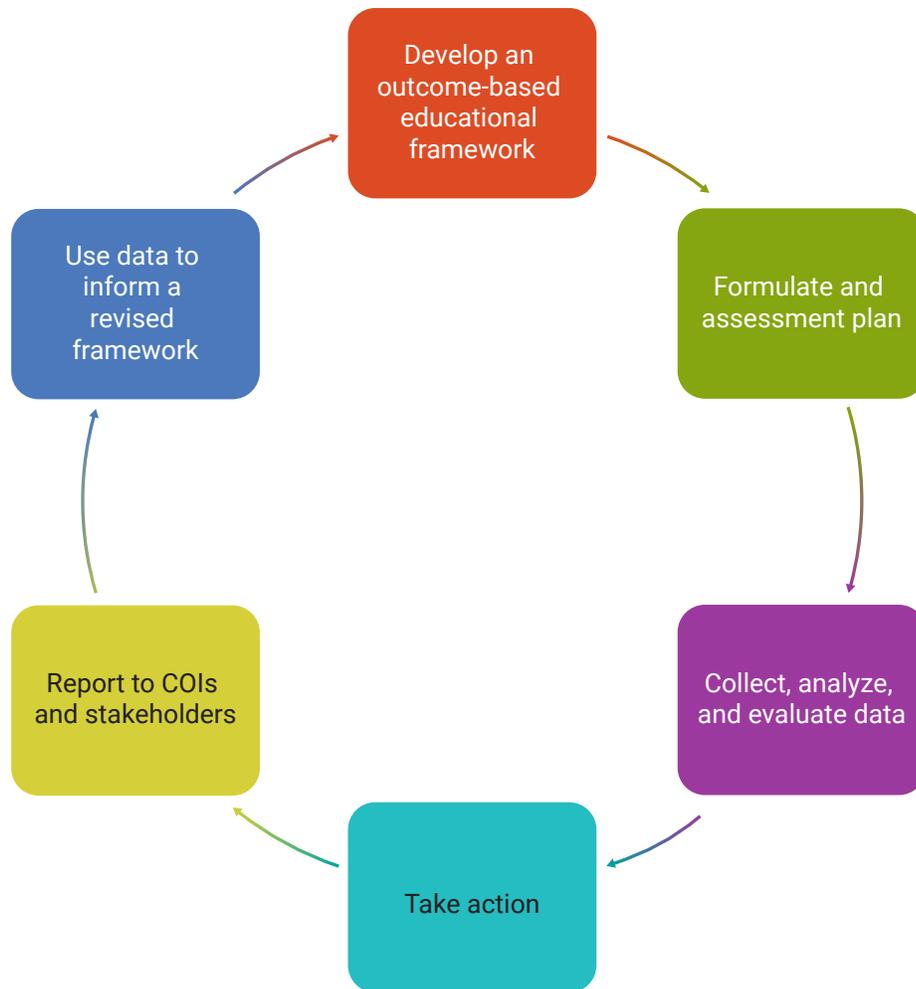
For specific course information, please visit the Catalog.

SLO #5. Students will appraise relational/systemic ethical behaviors in various settings.

- **Foundations for Doctoral Study in MFT:** 80% of students will score above 82% on Assignment 5.1
- **Advanced Assessment in MFT Research and Intervention, Quantitative Measurement and Design in MFT** 80% of students will score above 82% on Assignment 10/8 (respectively)
- **MFT Doctoral Practicum I:** 80% of students will receive a rating of Exceeds Most Expectations (90-93%) on the Week 11 Signature Assignment Score Rubric (relational/systemic ethics criteria)
- **Students:** 80% of students will rate the degree to which NU is meeting this SLO as Mostly or Fully
- **Local Supervisors and Mentors:** 80% of local supervisors will indicate the degree to which NU is meeting this SLO as Mostly or Fully
- **Qualitative Measurement and Design:** 80% of students will score above 82% of Assignment 9



Program Assessment Cycle



Communities of Interest

The Communities of Interest (COI) for the program consist of faculty, students, alumni, local site supervisors, Professional Advisory Council (PAC), and State Regulatory Bodies. The composition of each is devised of a group of constituents ranging in diversity-related factors.

Faculty: Program faculty reflect diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, culture, race, religion, and geographic locale. As our faculty live and professionally practice throughout the U.S. and, at times the world, this produces a higher level of diversity and experience within our program. Our faculty includes individuals identifying as African American, Asian, Russian, and Caucasian, as well as heterosexual and lesbian.

Students and Alumni: Students and alumni reflect diversity in gender, race/ethnicity, culture, religion, geographic locale, and professional/educational backgrounds. Because NU has students across the world, our students come from a variety of locations and backgrounds that include diverse, marginalized and underserved groups. Due to the nature of our ability to educate students across the globe, many of our students live in areas in which they are providing services to clients who come from underserved communities. We currently have students in over 40 U.S. states and 5 countries outside the U.S.



The demographics of our current students from the 2021 Annual Report include:

- 85% female, 15% male
- 39% Caucasian, 32% African American, 10% Hispanic/Latino, 6% multiracial, 4% Other, 6% Asian, 1% international, and 1% American Indian/Alaska Native.

Local Site Supervisors: The local supervisors selected by students in the program include diversity associated with gender, ethnicity, race, religion, geographic locale, professional experience, and areas of specialization.

The demographics of local supervisors from the 2021 Annual Report were:

- 76% female, 24% male
- 72% Caucasian, 15% African American/Black, 7% Latino/Hispanic, 4% Other, and 1% Asian

Professional Advisory Council (PAC): The PAC consists of a small group of MFT professionals (3-4 members) reflecting diversity in gender, ethnicity, race, religion, geographic locale, and professional/academic experience. The diversity of this group of professionals benefits the MFT program in that they provide constructive feedback related to the structure and functioning of the program, which directly influences the development of the goals and outcomes of the program.

Academic and Student Support Resources

The following is a list of Academic and Student Support Services available to all students. Because they are online, students can easily access them via telephone or computer.

- **Enrollment Services (ES).** Applicants are assigned an ES upon applying to the program. ES remains with students as they transition into their first course.
- **Academic and Financial Aid (AFA) advisors.** Students are assigned an AA at the beginning of their program that supports them throughout the program.
- **Library.** The National University online library provides extensive access to digital journal articles, ebooks, media content, and interlibrary loan services. The library's mission statement reflects a commitment to excellent library services for NU students: <https://nu.libguides.com/c.php?g=635527&p=4445026>
- **24/7 IT Support Services.** Dedicated 800 # for IT support services.
- **Academic Success Center (ASC),** which functions as a Writing Center. Students are provided link to schedule appointments or are referred by faculty for writing or statistical coaching.
- **Disability Services (ADA).** AFAs direct students to the ADA services when a need is identified. This office also provides wellness checks on students who appear to be struggling. Students are provided with an electronic form to submit via email to ADA.
- **Student Financial Aid.** AFAs also provide student financial aid guidance and support.
- **MFT Student Association (MFTSA).** All students in the program are automatically members of the MFTSA, which meets monthly. Every quarter the meeting is open to all students and provides a forum for student input into the program.
- **MFT Student Advisory Board (SAB).** The purpose of the SAB is to provide the program with regular, formal input from students. Faculty recommend outstanding students to serve on the SAB. The program director invites them to join the board, which meets bimonthly. Students serve as officers and run the meeting; the program director attends as a faculty liaison. Each meeting the faculty liaison sets the agenda with items the program would like input on. However, each meeting, also includes a request for the student members to raise any issue they would like to discuss.
- **The Commons.** Academic and Social Networking Site. Provides a centralized area for students to interact with students, faculty and staff. Houses program resources such as lecture videos, conference workshop info, and links to articles.
- **Dissertation Center.** Resource hub for students and faculty that contains a wealth of resources to support students in completing their dissertations.
- **Clinical Administration Team.** This team of professionals assists students in their transition from didactic courses to clinical training, oversees the entire clinical training, and provides support to students as needed.



NU Teaching Philosophy

The core teaching philosophy at National University is the [Teaching Through Engagement](#) approach, which includes six elements:

- Engagement (“an authentic interaction that uses technology to facilitate genuine, systematic, and substantive dialogue before, during and after the creation or application of scholarship,” NU, 2019, para. 2)
- Presence (“being there” in the interaction)
- Understanding students
- Respecting diversity
- Working towards inclusion
- Building relationships with students

Program faculty must embody these characteristics when they interact with our students in order to fulfill our mission of engaging students in a one-on-one process that invites students to grow both professionally and personally through the development of critical thinking skills, information literacy, important clinical skills, an appreciation for and knowledge of research through the scholar-practitioner model, a valuing of diversity and social justice, and a lifelong commitment to learning and service.

Within our curriculum, we have chosen several teaching/learning practices to mentor students and help them to learn and master the material in our curriculum and practice components. Each week, students are introduced in the LMS to the specific course/assignment teachings for that week. Each weekly discussion includes an introduction to the week and specific assigned resources (chapters, articles, videos, websites, etc.) that incorporate the required content for that portion of the course. Students receive feedback on the key teaching/learning practice (described below) from faculty. Each weekly assignment is built upon the next, creating a scaffolding educational experience for the students.

The seven key teaching/learning practices in our program include:

- 1. One-to-one discussions with faculty.** Across the curriculum, there are assignments requiring students to schedule a time with their faculty member and discuss the assigned topic. In addition, faculty have weekly office hours, providing an opportunity for student to have synchronous discussions weekly with faculty one-on-one regarding specific assignments and/or course content.
- 2. Written assignments** include discussion entries to the faculty member, memos, white papers, concept maps, literature critiques, critiques, integrative papers, and research proposals. Students develop written content in the format of summaries/comparisons/critiques that exemplifies their ability to comprehend and apply weekly content. The dissertation is the culminating written assignment in the program.
- 3. PowerPoint or Prezi Presentations.** Students develop a variety of presentations that provide opportunities to present and share their knowledge.
- 4. Audio or video responses.** Students prepare a range of audio and video responses to course assignments. The former is often in the form of a mock podcast to help them develop their ability to present and articulate their thoughts on course content, while the latter might involve them filming a mock clinical interview or sample lecture.
- 5. Evaluations.** In addition, across the program, students evaluate themselves as a means of establishing baselines, identifying skills and competencies, and documenting growth. Faculty complete and discuss with the student some of these evaluations as well.
- 6. Supervision.** During the clinical practicum, students attend weekly supervision with their NU Faculty Supervisor. Supervision occurs weekly for 2 hours of synchronous contact
- 7. Case Studies/Presentations.** Students in practicum prepare case presentations to solicit targeted feedback on specific elements of the case. In other courses, students illustrate their grasp of theory, treatment planning skills, or supervisory approaches using case studies.



Student Governance

Students can participate in scheduled committee meetings, especially in matters relating to curricula and the delivery of educational services, through electronic communication methods. The administration will notify students of scheduled meetings, the agenda, and invite student input.

In part because of the larger size of the DMFS faculty and to ensure faculty have sufficient time and opportunity to share ideas and influence the direction of the program, rather than having single monthly faculty meetings, like many traditional programs, a variety of smaller more focused faculty meetings are held on a regular basis. For example, faculty meet weekly (i.e., Student Success Summit) with AAs, Program Director and Department Chair to discuss the needs of the student and any changes needed in the program to better support new students.

From the program level, we support and encourage all students to participate in the governance of the PhDMFT program. The primary way in which we encourage their governance is through the following methods:

- Participation in the Student Advisory Council
- Participation in the MFT Student Association

Students, as consumers, have a valuable perspective on the educational services they receive. Therefore, the University can benefit from their perceptions and input, especially on academic and administrative matters. Students are invited to participate in academic and administrative governance of the University through participation in the:

- General Discussion Forum on the student website
- Post-Course Survey
- School/Department conference calls
- Appeal and Grievance procedure

Program Clinical Supervisors provide MFT relational/systemic supervision within a COAMFTE-accredited program. Program Clinical Supervisor qualifications include the following:

- a) demonstration of professional identity as a marriage and family therapist, and
- b) demonstration of training in MFT relational/systemic supervision by one of the following:
 - A graduate course in MFT relational/systemic supervision equivalent to three semester-credit hours
 - Postgraduate professional education in MFT relational/systemic supervision of at least 30 clock hours
 - A state-established MFT supervisor designation that includes relational/systemic supervision training
 - Designation as an AAMFT Approved Supervisor or AAMFT Approved Supervisor Candidate

Curriculum

The program includes 25 courses: four Foundation courses, five research courses, five clinical/applied courses, four specialization courses, three portfolio courses (which function as the comprehensive examination), and a minimum of four dissertation courses. The bodies of information that inform the curriculum include the four COAMFTE Advanced Curriculum Areas, and three sets of Professional Marriage and Family Therapy Principles (PMFTPs; the Condensed Core Competencies, Northey & Gehart, 2020; the AAMFT Code of Ethics; and the AMFTRB Domains of Practice).

The table that follows lists the program courses by course category and links them with SLOs, the four COAMFTE Advanced Curriculum Areas, and the three PMFTPs.



Course Name**	SLOs	ACA	CCC	
Foundation Courses				
Foundations of Doctoral Study in MFT	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3	3,14	
Advanced Theories in MFT	2,3	2,3	1,4	
Dynamics of Family Interaction	2,3,4,5	1,2,3	2,3,7	
Scholarly Literature Review in MFT	2,3,4,5	1,3	16	
Research Courses				
Research Methods in MFT	2,3,4,5	1	16	
Quantitative Analysis in MFT	4	1	16	
Quantitative Measurement and Design in MFT	2,3,4,5	1	16	
Qualitative Measurement and Design in MFT	2,4,5	1	16	
Advanced Qualitative Design and Analysis in MFT or Advanced Quantitative Design and Analysis	2,4,5	1	16	
Specialization Courses (Students choose four; depending on the specialization they select)				
Various	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight Specializations • Child & Adolescent Therapy • Couple Therapy • Culture, Diversity, and Social Justice in a Global Context • Education and Supervision • General Family Therapy • Medical Family Therapy • Systemic Leadership • Therapy with Military Families See Appendix C for a list of all potential specialization courses	1,2,3,4,5	2,3,4	1,2,3,4, 7,9,10,11, 12,14,16
Clinical/Applied Courses				
MFT Practicum (Group)*, or MFT Practicum (Individualized)*	1,2,3,5	2,3	1-16	
MFT Supervision Practicum*	2,3,5	2,4	1-16	
MFT Supervision	3,5	2,4	1-16	
APEC I (Internship) APEC II (Internship) APEC III (Internship)	1,2,3,5	1,2,3,4	Varies by APEC emphases chosen,	
Comps/Portfolio Course				
Doctoral Portfolio I Doctoral Portfolio II Doctoral Portfolio III	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4	1,3,11, 13,14,16	
Dissertation Sequence (At least 12 credit hours)				
Dissertation Research I, II, III, IV	1,2,3,4,5	1,3	3,12,16	

*Non-LMFTs choose between MFT Doctoral Practicum I or MFT Doctoral Practicum II; LMFTs take MFT Supervision Practicum and under unique circumstances, may choose MFT Doctoral Practicum I.

** For specific course information, please visit the Catalog.

The first four content courses of the program, plus any leveling courses required to meet the COAMFTE foundational curriculum content, are referred to as the foundation courses. Students begin the program with these Foundation courses that provide the systemic/theoretical and doctoral writing and library research skills necessary to move into the program clinical and research courses.

We replaced the end of program comprehensive examination with three four-week comps portfolio courses that are distributed across the program (during the Foundation sequence, halfway through the program, the last course prior to dissertation).





Thus, students pause after the third Foundation course and take the first comps/portfolio course. A central element of this course involves students and their professor evaluating the student's knowledge and skills relative to the four domains and six subdomains identified in the COAMFTE description of the Advanced Curriculum Areas (ACA). Going forward, students upload artifacts to document their competency in these areas.

In the next phase of the program, students begin alternating between the five research courses, their four specialization courses, and the three clinical courses. During this phase, students solidify their clinical/supervisory skills and develop the ability to complete a dissertation. They complete the second comps/portfolio course approximately halfway through the program, in which both they and their professor provide a second evaluation of the student's skills (along with related artifacts) relative to the four domains (and sixteen subdomains) identified in the COAMFTE description of the Advanced Curriculum Areas (ACA).

Students generally complete four of the five research courses, all their specialization courses, and all of their clinical coursework before they start the APEC (internship). This ensures students have a solid foundational knowledge of systemic theory and paradigms, research methods, and a good understanding of their area of specialization.

In the final phase of the program, students enroll in the last research course, which focuses on the methodology they plan to use in their dissertation. Then, they complete the final comps/portfolio course. In this course, they upload additional artifacts and again both they and their professor rate the student's knowledge and skills relative to the four domains and sixteen subdomains identified in the COAMFTE description of the Advanced Curriculum Areas (ACA). They must pass this course in order to become a doctoral candidate, which suggests they are ready to complete a dissertation. They then move into the dissertation sequence and complete a basic research, theoretically-informed dissertation. The following table lays out a typical program of study.

***Non-LMFTs choose between MFT Doctoral Practicum I or MFT Doctoral Practicum II; LMFTs take MFT Supervision Practicum and under unique circumstances, may choose (not "make choose") MFT Doctoral Practicum I.* For specific course information, please visit the Catalog.*

Course Name	Credit Hours
Foundation Courses (plus first Comps/Portfolio course)**	
Foundations of Doctoral Study in MFT	3
Any required Foundational Curriculum (Leveling Courses)	3x # Needed
Advanced Theories in MFT	3
Dynamics of Family Interaction	3
Doctoral Portfolio I	3
Scholarly Literature Review in MFT	1
Alternate Research, Specialization, Clinical courses (plus second Comps/Portfolio course)	
Research Methods in MFT	3
Specialization Course #1	3
Quantitative Analysis in MFT	3
Specialization Course #2	3
Quantitative Measurement and Design in MFT	3
Doctoral Portfolio II	1
MFT Practicum (Group or Individualized) or MFT Supervision Practicum*	3
MFT Supervision	
Specialization Course #3	3
Qualitative Measurement and Design in MFT11	3
Specialization Course #4	3
APEC I (Internship)	3
APEC II (Internship)	1
APEC III (Internship)	1
Advanced Qualitative Design and Analysis in MFT or Advanced Quantitative Design and Analysis	1
Final Comps/Portfolio Course	
Doctoral Portfolio III	1
Dissertation Sequence (At least 12 credit hours)	
Dissertation Research I, II, III, IV	3

PhDMFT Program's Definition of Diversity

Respect for diversity is embedded in the nature of the MFT Programs at National University, and the Programs are committed to acknowledging and discussing issues of diversity ([Program Handbook](#), Appendix E, pp. 11-12). We employ a definition of diversity that addresses specific social dimensions of diversity while also recognizing the interconnections among these dimensions.

Our Program definition of diversity includes, but is not limited to, diversity in academic and professional background, race, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, relationship status, gender identity, socioeconomic status, disability, health status, religion and spiritual beliefs and/or affiliation, national origin, veteran status, and belief systems ([Program Handbook](#)).

In addition, the program embraces the university's [diversity definition](#), which emphasizes the intersectionality of social dimensions making up diversity:

National University's definition of diversity encompasses multiple dimensions. We use the Diversity Wheel in Appendix A demonstrates the intersectionality of those dimensions. We believe diversity includes all aspects of one's identity, including but not limited to internal dimensions such as gender, race, sexual orientation, ability, etc.; community dimensions like marital status, education, religion, language, etc.; life experience dimensions such as experiencing historical events, personal history of abuse or prosperity, various living or employment situations, etc.; and current NU institutional dimensions such as roles (e.g., student, staff, faculty, governing board, administrators, and stakeholders), school or department association, organizational position, etc. We believe that all aspects make up one's diverse identity and enrich the university.

As reflected in the [Diversity Wheel \(Appendix A\)](#), our definition of diversity incorporates the concept of intersectionality. An intersectionality lens involves seeing interactions among multiple social dimensions and recognizing that societal power structures influence the meaning attributed to social identities. An intersectionality lens means that advancing diversity is intertwined with advancing equity and inclusion. This definition presents the advancement of diversity as an explicit aim and something that enhances the university community.

Anti-Discrimination Policy (including Definition of Diversity)

The MFT Programs abide by the University's Non-Discrimination Policy, as found in the current National University Catalog. In addition, faculty are invested in the personal and professional growth of students, and developing an understanding and appreciation for diversity is an important element of this growth. As noted above, diversity includes, but is not limited to, academic and professional background, race, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, relationship status, gender identity, socioeconomic status, disability, health status, religion and spiritual beliefs and/or affiliation, national origin, veteran status, and belief systems. This policy applies to recruitment, admission, codes of conduct, hiring, retention or dismissal of students, faculty, and supervisors or other relevant educators and/or staff.

Respect for diversity is embedded in the nature of the MFT Programs at National University, and the Programs are committed to acknowledging and discussing issues of diversity. Due to the online nature of the program, students and faculty members come from a wide variety of contexts. As such, the importance of diversity is seen in the actual diversity of our students, faculty, and supervisors, as well as being evident throughout our curriculum, clinical training, and our aspirational educational outcomes.



Program Emotional Climate

The University and the PhDMFT program have policies and procedures in place for supporting a climate of safety, respect, and appreciation for all students. In addition, the university has relevant policies and procedures in place that support a climate of safety, respect, and appreciation. Below is a list of policy and procedure documentation:

- NU Policy and Procedure Manual (see Appendix B below):
 - Policy 205-2 (Non-Discrimination Policy and Section 504/ADA Coordinator)
- The [University Catalog](#) includes a section on [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), which addresses issues related to well-being, safety, and non-discrimination:
 - [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#)
 - [Title IX Notice of Nondiscrimination](#)

In the 2020 Annual Student Survey, 92% of students indicated they Strongly Agree or Agree that the: **PhDMFT program demonstrates a climate of safety, respect, and appreciation for all learners, including those from diverse, marginalized, and/or underserved communities.**

Student Experiences with Diverse, Marginalized, and/or Underserved Communities

At present, we have students in over 40 states in the U.S. and a handful of countries outside of the U.S. They provide clinical services and engage in internship activities in a wide variety of placements. Because our students are so dispersed, rather than located in a single community, and can provide services in their local communities, many of them have opportunities to work with diverse, marginalized and underserved communities.

Students. In the 2020 student survey, students indicated whether or not they had opportunities to work with clients from diverse, marginalized, and/or underserved populations. Of those students who were completing or had completed the applied portion of the program, 100% (29/29) indicated YES to this question.

Students were also asked how often their clinical work affords them the opportunity to work with clients from various diverse backgrounds. The proportion reporting at least weekly work with various groups are included below:



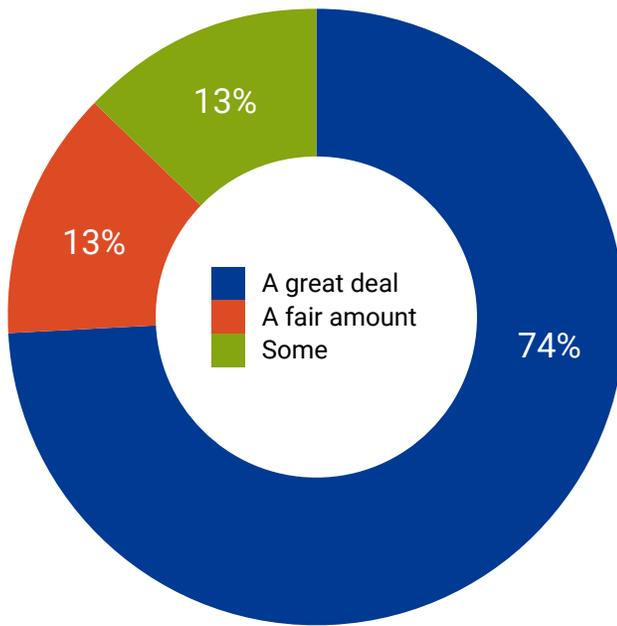
Populations (Daily, Almost Daily, or Weekly)	Proportion
Black or African American	21/29 (72%)
American Indian or Alaska Native	10/29 (34%)
Asian	10/27 (37%)
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	4/28 (14%)
Persons of Hispanic Origin	20/29 (69%)
Military service member, veteran or military family	19/29 (66%)
Homeless	9/28 (32%)
Persons with Disabilities	17/29 (58%)
LGBTQ	15/29 (22%)
Persons with different SES backgrounds	23/29 (79%)
Persons with different health statuses	22/29 (76%)
Persons with different religious or spiritual practices	26/29 (90%)
Persons with different immigration status or language	12/29 (41%)
Others mentioned: Minors, Africans	

Alumni. In addition, we asked program alumni in the 2020 alumni survey how effective the faculty were in helping students achieve SLO #3 (cultivate competence in working with diverse populations in various contexts). Two-thirds reported the faculty were very effective or effective in helping them do so.

Local supervisors. In a recent survey (January 2020), local supervisors categorized the extent to which the NU student they were supervising had opportunities to provide services to diverse, marginalized, and/or underserved communities:

- A great deal (74%)
- A fair amount (13%)
- Some (13%)

Students had such opportunities



In addition, the local supervisors (n=25) indicated their supervisee had the following experiences with such communities:

Experiences	Proportion
Provided therapy to members of such communities	96%
Conducted research with such communities	12%
Provided supervision to therapists from such communities	20%
Consulted with members of such communities	48%
Taught members of such communities	36%
Completed projects with such communities	24%
Provided service to such communities	48%
Conducted interviews with members of such communities	32%
Provided workshops to such communities	0%

Accordingly, it is our goal that all students will have experiences with diverse, marginalized, and underserved populations.



Faculty and Supervisor Evaluations

The program director, clinical faculty members, and local clinical supervisors are also evaluated within the program. The results of these evaluations are included below.

Faculty and Supervisor Effectiveness

The program evaluation process and measurements used to determine faculty and supervisor effectiveness occurs:

- (a) at end of each course (Post course surveys)
- (b) annually (Annual Student Survey), and
- (c) at conclusion of practicum (End of practicum evaluations of NU Faculty, Clinical Faculty Member, and Local Clinical Supervisor)

In the text and tables that follow, we present aggregated data of faculty and supervisor effectiveness from the following sources:

1. Faculty

- a. Post course surveys
- b. Annual Student Survey
- c. NU Clinical Faculty Member Evaluations

2. Supervisors

- a. Post-practicum student evaluation of local supervisors
- b. Annual Student Survey

Post Course Survey: Average Students Ratings of Faculty (2018-2020)

Item	Average Rating (5=Strongly Agree to 1=Strongly Disagree)
1. I receive helpful feedback from the instructor on my course work	4.58
2. The instructor built upon our interactions	4.49
3. The instructor clearly stated expectations	4.43
4. The instructor connected my responses to course material	4.53
5. The instructor encourages me to do my best in the course	4.51
6. The instructor highlighted the practical relevance of course materials	4.59
7. The instructor is responsive to my questions and concerns	4.47
8. The instructor provided useful insights	4.58
9. The instructor shared relevant knowledge	4.54
10. The instructors grading standards are appropriate	4.49
11. My overall rating of this instructor is (5=excellent)	4.57

Summary. The first ten mean ratings are all between Strongly Agree and Agree, suggesting that students view the faculty member positively, as does the last rating (mean between Above Average and Excellent). Faculty effectiveness is essential to the program's ability to achieve all five SLOs.



2020 Annual Student Survey Ratings of Faculty (2020)

I believe that the faculty:...	Proportion Rating as Strongly Agree or Agree
1. Are academically, professionally, and experientially qualified to support me in achieving my educational goals.	98%
2. Want me to succeed.	99%
3. Are competent to teach the material in their assigned courses.	96%
4. Bring adequate attention to issues of diversity, culture, and context in their teaching and feedback.	87%
5. Make efforts to communicate effectively with me.	91%
6. Are available to me when I need further clarification or mentoring.	87%
7. Are sufficient in number to provide support to me and other students to help us achieve our educational goals.	87%
8. Provide me with the resources and feedback I need to grow as a Marriage and Family Therapist.	91%
9. Are preparing me to complete a dissertation.	88%
10. I enjoy working with the faculty within the MFT program.	93%

Summary. The proportion of students indicating they **Strongly Agree or Agree** with these ten elements of faculty effectiveness are all greater than 80%, which we interpret as evidence of the effectiveness of program faculty. Again, our faculty members must teach and mentor students in order for the program to achieve its SLOs.

Students' Evaluations of NU Clinical Faculty Member (2018-2020)

Domain	Above Expectations	Meets Expectations	Below Expectations
Cultural Sensitivity	83%	17%	0%
Enhancing Clinical skills	77%	23%	0%
Family Systems Theory	78%	22%	0%
Ethics	78%	22%	0%

Summary. Across the four domains, 100% of students rated NU Clinical Faculty members as Above or Meets Expectations range. These ratings speak to the ability of the NU clinical faculty to support students in their clinical growth (SLOs 1, 2, 3, & 5; corresponding to Program Knowledge, Practice, Diversity, and Ethics goals).

Local Clinical Supervisors

Students' Evaluations of Local Clinical Supervisor (2018-2020)

Domain	Above Expectations	Meets Expectations	Below Expectations
Diverse Populations	73%	27%	0%
Clinical Skills	51%	43%	6%
Family Systems Theory	56%	40%	4%
Ethics	62%	38%	0%

2020 Annual Student Survey: Average satisfaction with local supervisor (5=Very satisfied to 1=Very dissatisfied) = **4.70**

Summary. Across the four domains, from 94 to 100% of students rated the Local Clinical Supervisors as Above or Meets Expectations range. In addition, students report high levels of satisfaction with their local supervisor. These data attest to the ability of these supervisors to support students in their clinical growth (SLOs 1, 2, 3, & 5; corresponding to Program Knowledge, Practice, Diversity, and Ethics goals).





Miscellaneous Policies

Various other program policies and procedures are listed alphabetically below.

AAMFT Ethical Code Policy

All faculty, local clinical supervisors, and students will conduct their practices and professional relationships in accordance with the most current edition of the AAMFT Code of Ethics. Care will be taken to "...do no harm" through treatment decisions, practice, and personal relationships.

When practicing, supervising, or observing therapy, all students, faculty, and on-site supervisors must follow the [AAMFT Code of Ethics](#). These guidelines will be presented to students in various courses and places throughout the program. However, it is each student's responsibility to know the provisions of the code prior to conducting therapy sessions. Please read and follow ethical guidelines carefully. All students are strongly encouraged to schedule an appointment with the Director of Clinical Training to ask any questions regarding MFT ethics.

Academic Calendar

National University doesn't use a standard academic calendar. We are open 51 weeks a year. Students can begin a course on any Monday throughout the year. Hence, the only relevant calendar information lists the days the university is closed ([click here](#)).

Academic Integrity (Authenticity of Student Work)

Refer to the [Academic Integrity](#) section of the [National University Catalog](#) for information about Academic Integrity policies.

Accreditation/Approval status

The PhDMFT program received initial COAMFTE accreditation in May of 2015.

Admission Policy

Admission to the National PhDMFT program requires a conferred clinical master's degree from a regionally accredited institution. In addition, a current resume or curriculum vita and a copy of degree transcripts are required. Additionally, PhDMFT applicants must participate in a one-on-one synchronous interview with current MFT faculty. Applicants will also complete an application packet that reviews the program requirements and expectations. The packet requires applicants to review the MFT Program website, the [National University Catalog](#) regarding the requirements for pursuing licensure and program/graduation requirements for MFT training.



Applicants, who are not yet licensed, are expected to compose a plan to obtain licensure, including exploring the requirements of finding a clinical practicum site and supervisor, as well as post-master's degree requirements for licensure. Applicants are also required to respond to a series of questions referred to as a "Statement of Intent" so that MFT program faculty may evaluate the applicant's interest in and readiness for the MFT program, as well as to see a brief sample of their writing. Applicants complete a Statement of Professional Ethics and Conduct, in which they are required to report any previous ethical or criminal behavior that may be relevant to training and practicing as a marriage and family therapist. Because state laws require licensed marriage and family therapists to be of good moral character, any prospective student who has been convicted of a felony prior to or subsequent to admission is required to immediately inform the Chair of the Department of Marriage and Family Therapy of this conviction in order to determine the best course of action. In addition, a felony conviction may also disqualify a non-licensed student from some clinical internship placement sites, thereby making it likely the student will be unable to complete the requirements of the MFT degree programs. After submitting all required materials and completing a one-on-one interview with program faculty, the applicant will complete a background check prior to enrollment.

What follows is an outline of what to expect once the student is accepted.

Responsible Party	Action
Academic and Finance Advisor (AFA)	Provides the student access to the university's learning management system (LMS) and works with the student to schedule courses for at least one year in the Course Scheduler.
Student	Stays in contact with her or his Academic and Finance Advisor (AFA) in order to adjust the timing of courses, ask questions, or request information or assistance regarding any matter related to the educational aspects of the program. The most common ways of maintaining contact are email, phone calls, or the University message system.
Student	Utilizes the University's LMS as the primary means for completing coursework and degree requirements, serving as the gateway to courses, the NU Bookstore, communication with faculty, staff, and other students, University resources such as the National Library, the Academic Success Center, the Commons, and the IT Help Desk. Using The University's LMS, the student can review her or his degree plan, request/register for specific courses, manage educational finances, and set up or edit personal information found in the University's LMS.
Student	Begins courses and also begins to submit assignments in a timely manner. No "bulk uploading" is accepted. The student must receive a grade on the current assignment before submitting the next assignment.
Faculty Member	When assignments are completed and submitted for grading, the faculty member reviews, evaluates, offers detailed feedback, and submits the feedback and grades for students' completed work. University requirements are such that faculty must respond to questions in messages or email within 24-48 hours, and they must grade and submit detailed feedback for all work submitted within four calendar days.
Student	Takes advantage of this asynchronous model to work at his or her convenience, within allowable timeframes for course participation and faculty member responsiveness. Students are encouraged to also set time to talk via Zoom, Skype or phone during the first week of each course and, thereafter if additional mentoring or support is needed.

Codes of Conduct

National University has established a Code of Conduct for all students and faculty in the University community, including applicants and alumni. Students in the PhDMFT program are expected to abide by this code at all times. This code can be found in [Code of Conduct](#) section of the [National University Catalog](#). In addition, MFT students and faculty are expected to follow the [AAMFT Code of Ethics](#). Those found to have committed a violation or to have attempted to violate either of these Codes will be subject to disciplinary sanctions, up to and including dismissal from the University.



Complaints and Grievances

Complaint Procedure

Part of the process of becoming a professional is learning to deal appropriately with disagreements and grievances. Generally speaking, most concerns can be effectively addressed and resolved between the student and their faculty member. Engaging in a respectful interchange of ideas and concerns with peers and supervisors is an important part of a student's professional development. Learning to address concerns in a professional manner is an important graduate student skill.

If students experience a concern, either academic/clinical or administrative (e.g., university policy or procedures), they should follow the steps outlined in the table below. These steps are consistent with the levels of action described in the [University Catalog](#). For academic concerns regarding grade appeals, students should contact their Academic & Financial Advisor or refer to the [University Catalog](#) for the current appeal process.

Step	Academic/Clinical Concerns	Administrative Concerns
Level 1	Faculty/Professor	Academic and Financial Advisor
Level 2	MFT Program Director, when addressing concerns regarding clinical training first contact the Clinical Director (MFTtraining@nu.edu)	Associate Director Student and Financial Services
Level 3	DMFS Department Chair,	Senior Director of Student and Financial Services
Level 4	DMFS Assistant Dean of Students	Ombudsman or Office of Legal Affairs
Level 5	SSBS Dean	Formal Grievance
Level 6	Ombuds or Legal Affairs	
Level 7	Formal Grievance	

Credit Hour Requirements

The PhD in Marriage and Family Therapy degree requires a minimum of 63 credit hours at the graduate level beyond the master's degree. National University may accept a maximum of 12 semester credit hours in transfer toward the doctoral degree for graduate coursework completed toward a non-conferred doctoral degree at an accredited college or university with a grade of "B" or better. Transfer credit is only awarded for coursework that is evaluated to be substantially equivalent in content to the required coursework for the MFT program.

Degree Completion Requirements

Program degree requirements are listed [here](#) in the NU Catalog (the same information is provided for all eight specializations).

Description of Faculty

See the description of our faculty at this [link](#). A list of faculty in the School of Social Behavioral Sciences is also available at this [link](#).

Description of Supervisors

When PhDMFT students are practicum and internship (APEC), they are supervised locally by AAMFT Approved Supervisors, AS supervisor candidates, and state-approved MFT supervisors employed in a range of contexts from hospitals to agencies to private practices. See the demographic of local supervisors at this [link](#).



Description of Students

Our students live in approximately 40 U.S. states and five countries outside the U.S.. Their demographic characteristics are summarized at this [link](#).

Degree Completion Timelines

NU allows eight years to complete all doctoral programs that require more than 60 credit hours. Students who are unable to complete a degree program within the stated time limits are dismissed. If a student believes they have extenuating circumstances, they may document the circumstances and send a request for consideration to their respective School Dean or designee. Exceptions to the policy are determined on a case-by-case basis and are granted only once.

The normal time to completion for this program is 66 months. Time to completion varies depending on the pace at which a student completes courses and the number of transfer credits accepted. As most NU students are working adults balancing educational, professional, and personal commitments, our academic and financial advisors will work with you to develop a program schedule that works best for your needs.

The normal time disclosed above reflects the experience of students who may have entered under different program requirements. In the quest for continuous improvement, academic leadership has revised the program to optimize curriculum and pace, facilitate student learning, and improve chances for success. Therefore, the program is now designed for students enrolling today to take advantage of these revised course structures, lengths, and schedules. New students following the preferred schedule designed by the Dean for this program, and applying no transfer credits, can expect to finish in as little as 56 months.

Dissertation

The following section from the [Doctoral Student Experience Handbook](#) provides an informative and succinct overview of the dissertation process at National University:

The dissertation is the capstone accomplishment in the doctoral candidate's degree program. The PhD dissertation has a research focus, and the applied degree (the DMFT) is practice-based. The doctoral dissertation is a substantial, scholarly work conducted independently by a candidate under the guidance of faculty members comprising the candidate's Doctoral Dissertation Committee. Committee roles include the Dissertation Chair, Subject Matter Expert (SME), and the Academic Reader (AR). More information on the Committee roles and responsibilities can be found in Section 2 of this guide.

In the dissertation process, the candidate:

- Identifies a researchable problem substantiated through evidence.
- Summarizes, analyzes, and integrates recent (generally five years or less) scholarly literature and research relevant to the topic under study, and writes chapters 1, 2, and 3 of the Dissertation Proposal (DP)
- (Ultimately) Presents original research in an area related to their program and specialization. (While PhD dissertations contribute to the body of research, the applied doctorate dissertations typically contribute to practice).
- Receives NU IRB approval to conduct research, collects and analyzes the data, and reports the research findings in chapters 4 and 5 of the Dissertation Manuscript (DM).
- The final manuscript is comprised of five Chapters:

The Dissertation process is generally divided into three broad stages: preparation and approval of the Dissertation Proposal (DP) which includes Chapters 1, 2, and 3; NU IRB approval to conduct research and conducting the study's research; and preparation and approval of the final Dissertation Manuscript (DM) which includes all elements of the DP, with the addition of Chapters 4 and 5 to complete the manuscript including the dissertation defense.



The Dissertation process is arduous and iterative. As candidates proceed through the dissertation process, they will be required to understand and apply faculty/committee feedback. Successful engagement with faculty requires a high level of conceptual understanding. Dissertation Committee Members review and substantively evaluate work submitted by candidates. Regular, iterative reviews of dissertation sections and drafts are a common - and important - practice in the process.

Grading/Assessment

Refer to the [Grading Policies & Procedures](#) section of the [National University Catalog](#) for information about the NU Grading Policies.

Graduation Policy

Upon completion of all program requirements, students will contact their Academic and Finance Advisor to begin the process of petitioning for graduation. To assure that all requirements of the program, degree, and specialization, as well as those of the University, are met prior to conferring the degree, a Graduation Audit will be performed in response to a student's Graduation Request.

The student submits the request to graduate electronically which sets an alarm for the Academic and Finance Advisor. The advisor then verifies that all general requirements have been met to earn the degree. An additional audit is performed by the Chair of the Department of Marriage and Family Therapy to ensure that program specific requirements have been met.

For all students, degree requirements include:

- 3.0 (letter grade of "B") or higher GPA
- Official documents on file for basis of admission from an appropriately accredited academic institution
- Official transcripts on file for all transfer credit hours accepted by the University
- All financial obligations to the University paid in full

For doctoral students, degree requirements include:

- A minimum of 51 credit hours of graduate instruction must be completed through National
- Satisfactory completion of a Comprehensive Exam or Portfolio Process
- University Approval of Dissertation Manuscript and successful completion of the Oral Examination
- Submission of the approved final Dissertation Manuscript to the University, including the original unbound Dissertation Manuscript and an electronic copy

Program Specific Requirements include:

- Completion of all coursework
- Completion of all clinical training requirements

Once the Academic and Finance Advisor and Assistant Dean have approved the request, an alarm is set for the Accounting Department which then verifies that all fees are paid. When approved by Accounting, the Registrar receives an alarm to issue the diploma.

Liability Insurance

When enrolled in Practicum or Internship, each student is required to obtain student level liability insurance. Students can buy this through CPH & Associates (www.cphins.com). AAMFT Student Members in good standing can receive free professional liability insurance through AAMFT. **Students must have liability insurance before they can begin seeing clients.**



Marriage and Family Therapy Honor Society



Delta Kappa, the International Marriage and Family Therapy Honor Society, has symbolic and historical significance within the field of marriage and family therapy. The purpose of Delta Kappa is to provide marriage and family therapy professionals an ongoing scholarly forum for the exchange of ideas related to the development of research, theory, and clinical practice. The Greek letters, Delta Kappa, have symbolic and historical significance within the field of marriage and family therapy. DELTA represents the triangle. The points of the triangle represent the three corners of the therapeutic relationship - the client/family present in the room, the therapists and therapeutic treatment team, and the external influences intertwined between lives of clients and professionals. KAPPA is the universal symbol for knowledge. The shape of the KAPPA symbol has a single long vertical line representing the intervention that occurs in the therapeutic process. The two lines meeting at the midpoint of the vertical line create a point of confluence with the therapist and the client system - joining together for change.

National's SSBS hosts the Iota chapter of Delta Kappa. Student in the MFT doctoral programs can qualify for the honor society if they have a 3.75 cumulative GPA or higher and have completed 12 semester hours in the program. To apply, students must complete the application form and submit a \$75 one-time membership fee.

Membership in Professional MFT Associations

All students are encouraged to join the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT), the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapist (CAMFT), the International Family Therapy Association (IFTA), or other national professional association representing the profession of MFT in the student's home country. Part of training to be a Marriage and Family Therapist is investing in one's professional development. Being involved with relevant professional associations such as the AAMFT is an important part of the learning process and of establishing a professional identity as a MFT. Visit the sites for the [AAMFT](#), [CAMFT](#), or [IFTA](#) and browse the resources that are available. Also, look into the requirements and benefits of joining. For example, among other things, AAMFT members receive copies of the Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, six annual issues of Family Therapy Magazine, access to AAMFT Job Connection, free access to most of the resources that are available through Family Therapy Resources and a liability insurance policy is included with the student membership. MFT Students at National University normally qualify for the Student Membership (the exception to this is if you are already licensed as a MFT, which would then qualify you for a Clinical Membership).

Notification to International Students

While the field of marriage and family therapy is an increasingly international phenomenon, it continues to have strong historical and contextual roots in western cultures (e.g., the United States). Therefore, much of the practice, literature, and research in the field continues to be conducted in contexts common in western cultures. One of the benefits of online education is the expansion of the practice of marriage and family therapy into international contexts, thus expanding the field's knowledge base and applicability. While all students are encouraged to read broadly in professional literature, international students are specifically encouraged to seek out literature and experiences that will help them to practice ethically and sensitively in their local contexts. In addition, international students are strongly encouraged to work closely with their local supervisors to practice in a culturally sensitive and ethical manner that is appropriate to their local contexts.

Percentage of Students Graduating Within Advertised and Maximum Timeframes

Graduate timeframes and student achievements can be accessed on the PhD-MFT webpage, section titled Graduate Achievement Data for National University's PhDMFT Program. <https://www.nu.edu/degrees/jfk-social-sciences/programs/doctor-of-philosophy-in-marriage-and-family-therapy/>



PhD Program Clinical Training

The bulk of information on the clinical portion of the program is contained in the [Clinical & Advanced Practice Handbook: PhDMFT Program](#). However, a few issues are addressed below.

The PhDMFT program is not designed to meet licensure requirements. However, the PhDMFT program requires students to show completion of the COAMFTE Foundational Curriculum (FC), which is a key component of licensure in most states. So, any additional courses students need to meet FC requirements are often the same courses they will need for licensure purposes. Students with questions about pursuing licensure should consult with NU faculty about this matter by emailing MFTtraining@nu.edu.

Many of our doctoral students are already LMFTs or licensed in another mental health discipline. Other students have completed a master's degree and are working on completing the post-degree experience for licensure. Whatever the specific situation, clinical training at the PhD level requires that the student grows both in skill competence and in theoretical analysis and synthesis. Students who are not LMFTs will be required to complete 300 hours of direct client contact, which includes conducting face-to-face therapy (this includes teletherapy) with individuals, couples, families, and groups. Fifty of these 300 hours, however, should involve therapy conducted in the same room with clients (not teletherapy). At least 150 hours of client contact must be relational (i.e., couple or family). In conjunction with client contact, doctoral students must receive a total of 60 hours of supervision. Supervision of students will occur at the rate of one (1) hour of supervision per every five hours of client contact and will be face-to-face (including telesupervision) or live supervision conducted by AAMFT Approved Supervisors, Supervisor Candidates, or equivalent state-approved supervisors. In some cases, students may be required to pay for local clinical supervision. This will depend on the placement location, and the local supervisor they contract with. For more information, please read through the practicum and internship course descriptions. The decision to pay for local supervision is entirely up to the student and not a requirement of National University. Students who obtain their full license as an MFT will by default have met the requirement of 300 hours of client contact and the 60 hours of supervision. In addition, all doctoral students, regardless of licensure status, are required to complete a 9-month Advanced Practical Experience Component (APEC; internship); see below for more information regarding the APEC.

Using raw data in supervision, including live sessions through a one-way mirror and video, has been a cornerstone of MFT training for decades. While we do not conduct live virtual therapy sessions as part of supervision, but we do use video recordings of sessions in local and NU group supervision extensively. Students enrolled in MFT Doctoral Practicum I will be required to record some sessions to present in NU supervision. Video is an excellent learning tool. It effectively allows you to see you as others see you. However, it does raise the level of ethical risk for a violation of clients' confidentiality. As is the case with any powerful tool, you will want to take extra care to use it properly. In this case, carefully follow HIPAA and AAMFT Ethical Code Standards, the NU Ethics Protocol, and additional instructions from your site to guard client confidentiality.

Portability of Degree

Because in MFT the terminal clinical degree is the master's, the PhDMFT degree is not designed to provide students with the coursework required to meet typical state educational requirements for licensure. However, students who are not yet licensed MFTs should determine what courses they lack for licensure and explore with their AFA and/or the Director of the MFT Doctoral Programs if these classes can be incorporated into their program of study at NU. These courses are often the same leveling courses required by students who did not graduate from an MFT master's degree program. In addition to visiting the licensure board for their state, we provide a database for students where they can identify the licensure requirements for this state at this [link](#).



In addition, two state regulatory boards do not accept degrees earned in an online environment as meeting the educational requirements for licensure. Other states may have requirements for specialized accreditations or other unique course/credit requirements above and beyond the standard degree plan that would prevent clinical practice as a student and/or successful application for licensure. Although licensure laws are governed by individual states and can change frequently, the MFT program administration seeks to identify these states and notify applicants in those states with any known limitations. However, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that all licensure requirements are met.

Licensure Resources

Students are informed of the regulatory requirements of their state/location in four ways:

1. Students are first informed about regulatory requirements for entry-level practice in their state during the application process.
2. Students' licensure status is revisited during the third week of the first portfolio course, generally the fourth class in the program:

Doctoral Portfolio I Week 4 Assignment 3 Instructions

Schedule an appointment to meet with your professor using video conference software (e.g., Zoom, Skype, VSee), and engage in a discussion about your plans for experiences and artifacts related to the various ACA subdomains, as well as the current status of your ideas for how you will meet the clinical and professional requirements of the program (Practicum and APEC–Internship).

3. In addition, students are reminded to be sure they are aware of informed about regulatory requirements for entry-level practice in their state during the Clinical Preparation Process (CPP).
4. Finally, in addition to the link noted above, the educational requirements for licensure in each state are available at this [link](#).

Scope of the Notification Process

Because there are some states that have regulations that prohibit the use of a degree from the National University MFT Program as meeting licensure requirements, the MFT program administration will notify applicants who live in, or express interest in practicing within, one of those identified states.

Continued Requirements after Admission

Once enrolled, students are required to work with the state in which they wish to practice as a MFT to ensure that they are in compliance with all licensure requirements. The program will provide information when possible to support those efforts, but it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that all licensure requirements are met. Completion of the program does not guarantee the opportunity to sit for licensure.

Regional Accreditation

National University is a WSCUC-accredited institution. WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), 985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100, Alameda, CA 94501, 510.748.9001, www.wascsenior.org. WSCUC is recognized by the [U.S. Department of Education](#) and the [Council on Higher Education Accreditation \(CHEA\)](#).

<https://www.nu.edu/accreditations>

<https://www.wscuc.org/institutions/National-university>



Remediation and Dismissal

Program Probation & Remediation

Occasionally students experience difficulty in their graduate program that may lead to being placed on probation or other corrective actions. A student may be placed on program probation by the University or DMFS administrative faculty for unsatisfactory academic progress or for unsatisfactory performance in other training domains. These include, but are not limited to, practicum placements, internship placements, professional or ethical violations or concerns or other reasons identified by faculty.

A student placed on probation will, in consultation with the MFT faculty, develop a remediation plan (Guided Action Plan). Remediation plans are structured to assist students in working through whatever difficulties they are experiencing with the ultimate goal of achieving their professional goals. These plans will specify, in writing, the basis for the probation, the term of the probationary period, and the conditions which must be met in order to be removed from probationary status. Students placed on probation will remain on probation for a minimum of twelve weeks. Students placed on probation for unacceptable grades must successfully remediate the unacceptable grade and meet the requirements of their remediation plan, without incurring any additional complaints or problems, in order for probationary status to be removed. Removal from probation requires satisfactory progress of the remediation plan as determined by faculty consensus. Failure to meet the conditions of probation will result in dismissal from the program. If a student believes that the probationary status is not justified, or that the conditions of the probation are unreasonable, the student may appeal in writing to the Chair of the Department of Marriage and Family Therapy within 10 working days. A student who has formerly been on probationary status may be terminated from the program for future inappropriate conduct or subsequent academic difficulties.

Dismissal from the Program

A student's dismissal from the program may be a student decision or faculty decision. Students with a history of legal difficulties, or with legal charges or issues pending at the time of enrollment, are expected to make full disclosure of said charges during the enrollment and interview process. Failure to disclose information or students convicted of a felony during the program may be dismissed from the program. Students who violate the University's Code of Conduct and/or Academic Integrity policy while enrolled in the program may be subject to immediate administrative dismissal. Students who have been dismissed due to a violation of the Code of Conduct or Academic Integrity policy, or due to any other legal or ethical matter, do not qualify for readmission to National University. Students in violation of the University's Attendance policy may be withdrawn. Dismissal of students who fail to meet their financial obligations to the University is handled by the Accounting department. The Code of Conduct, Attendance policy, and a summary of the Academic Integrity policy are published in the Catalog. For additional information regarding Dismissal Policies students can reference the NU Catalog: [Academic Dismissal](#) or [Administrative Dismissal](#).

Retention

The PhDMFT program facilitates the success and retention of all students in ways that are consistent with the university mission and anti-discrimination policy, through faculty training, academic advising, and student support services. Program faculty meet weekly to discuss strategies to support at-risk students and those facing challenges in the program.



Satisfactory Academic Progress

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) is the standard by which National University measures students' progress toward completion of a degree or certificate program. The three components of SAP are Grade Point Average (GPA), Course Completion Rate (pace), and Maximum Timeframe. If, at any time, a student is not meeting the minimum requirements for SAP, he/she receives an email notification in NU Course Room as well as an email to the personal address on file. However, it is ultimately the student's responsibility to know these requirements, and failure to receive notification does not nullify the SAP status.

Additional information regarding the Satisfactory Academic Progress policy can be found in the [National University Catalog](#).

Student and Faculty Recruitment

The program has an intentional and comprehensive strategy to attract and retain a diverse student body and faculty, including instructors, supervisors, and professional staff. Due to the distance-based education structure, the program is accessible to students and faculty from diverse and marginalized backgrounds that may face challenges enrolling in an accredited MFT graduate program in a regionally accredited brick-and-mortar university. The recruitment strategy of the program entails a broad and diverse approach to marketing to attract potential students, staff, and faculty. We utilize the power of the Internet and social media to reach the most diverse population possible. Additionally, in the recruitment of potential students, we use organizations that advertise to a wide variety of people and collect leads expressing interest in graduate studies. These leads are then purchased by NU and the potential students are contacted to see if there is a fit between the goals of the applicant and the programs we offer. The Program Director and Department Leadership meet with the University marketing team on a monthly basis to review current social media adds, recruitment efforts, and the use of paid leads to ensure we diversify the type of information being shared and student populations being attracted. As part of this strategy, the program has strived to offer diversity in curriculum, offering specializations in a variety of areas to attract a wider body of students, supervisors, and faculty. Faculty are recruited through traditional Internet-based websites (Higher Ed Jobs, Monster, AAMFT Job Connections, etc.) where we often purchase the "diversity package" to ensure the post are on specific websites that market to diverse populations of professionals. Reaching potential students, staff, and faculty is facilitated by the many Internet-based resources that remove many of the barriers to searches that existed historically. In addition, we receive referrals from our current full and part time faculty, students, and alumni which are spread across the national and many foreign counties, as well as our Professional Advisory Council members.

We also recruit potential students, staff and faculty at professional conferences (e.g., AAMFT Annual Conference, state MFT conferences) where we receive inquiries regarding our programs and employment with the University. The program works with each student to support their efforts to secure supervisors in the student's local community, ensuring that program supervisors reflect the diversity we see in our student body. There are formal structures in place to not only attract but retain a diverse student body and faculty/staff. The School of Social and Behavioral Sciences has a formal Diversity Committee that meets regularly to explore initiatives to increase diversity in the program composition as well as increased understanding and respect for diversity within and outside of the program. The department also has a formal Retention Committee that meets regularly and provides regular reports to program leadership to monitor and develop initiatives to address the retention of the diverse student body within the program. Although the program continually strives to increase the diversity of the program, the current strategic efforts have successfully created a program rich in diversity in its current student body, faculty, and supervisors.

Student Concerns, Complaints, and Grievances

The process students should follow for addressing concerns, complaints, and grievances are addressed [above](#), which also references relevant university policies in the [University Catalog](#).



Student/Graduate Achievement

The following table, which can be found towards the bottom of this [page](#) (just before the **Available Specializations** list) contains the COAMFTE Student Achievement Criteria Data for the NU PhDMFT Program.

COAMFTE Student Achievement Criteria Data for National PhDMFT Program						
Accredited: May 2015						
Advertised Program Length: 6.2 years*						
Maximum Program Length: 8 years**						
Cohort Year Students Entered Program	# of Students Enrolled in Program	# of Active Students	Advertised Graduation Rate (%)*	Maximum Graduation Rate (%)**	Job Placement Rate (%)***	Licensure Exam Pass Rate (%)****
2014-2015	25	3	52%	Maximum program length not yet reached	100%	92%
2015-2016	36	10	31% Graduated early Remainder of cohort have not yet reached advertised program length	Maximum program length not yet reached	91%	93%
2016-2017	58	32	12% Graduated early Remainder of cohort have not yet reached advertised program length	Maximum program length not yet reached	100%	95%
2017-2018	45	30	7% Graduated early Remainder of cohort have not yet reached advertised program length	Maximum program length not yet reached	100%	85%
2018-2019	43	36	Advertised program length not yet reached	Maximum program length not yet reached	Advertised program length not yet reached	82%
2019-2020	54	44	Advertised program length not yet reached	Maximum program length not yet reached	Advertised program length not yet reached	92%
2020-2021	54	49	Advertised program length not yet reached	Maximum program length not yet reached	Advertised program length not yet reached	92%
2021-2022	15	15	Advertised program length not yet reached	Maximum program length not yet reached	Advertised program length not yet reached	100%

***This is defined as the percentage of graduates from the cohort year listed who are employed within 3 years of their graduation utilizing skills learned in the COAMFTE-accredited program.

****This is defined as the percentage of graduates and students from the cohort year who passed the state or national licensing exam for Marriage and Family Therapy, after having sat for the exam at least once.

Supervision Coursework

In addition to advanced coursework in marriage and family therapy, students must complete a course in MFT supervision methodology (this requirement can be satisfied by taking NU's supervision course



or completing AAMFT's online [Fundamentals of Supervision](#) course. The supervision course will be conducted in connection with the requirements established by AAMFT for students to become Approved Supervisors. Not all requirements will be completed for the students to achieve the designation while in the program at National University. For students in the MFT PhD program, the supervision coursework is pre-approved by the AAMFT to count for the 30-hour supervision course requirement. Students will have to complete the direct supervision and supervision mentoring requirements outside of the program in order to qualify for the Approved Supervisor designation.

Student Support Services

National University offers an array of student support services. Contact information for all student support services can be found in the current [National University Catalog](#). You will also find links in the university's LMS for key student services. Please consult the [National University Catalog](#) for specific information pertaining to the following services:

- Enrollment Services
- Office of the Registrar
- Academic and Finance Advising
- Disability/ADA Services
- Center for Teaching and Learning
- Academic Success Center
- The Commons
- NU Library
- Alumni Services

Technical training for students

Students

- **Learning Management System**- Students are required to participate in the "Walk to Class" with their Academic and Finance Advisor. Advisors will provide personal one-on-one training in which they will show the new student how to use the University's LMS (online classroom). In addition, students are expected to review the asynchronous training on the University's LMS provided by the NU Center for Teaching and Learning (access within the university's LMS or the Commons).
- **Video Conferencing**- Currently, the MFT program uses an application called Zoom, which is a HIPAA-compliant video conferencing tool. Students are required to participate in the orientation and training that will be provided during their first clinical course/practicum. In addition, students are required to review the [audio and video sharing training resources](#) for this tool.
- **Clinical Tracking Application**- Currently, the MFT program uses an application called Tevera to track all clinical hours and supervision received during the practicum and internship courses. The application allows local supervisors to verify and sign off on client contact hours as well as the supervision hours received.

Students will receive guidance and training with this application during their clinical courses with their assigned faculty. Online training from Tevera is also available at this [link](#).

Technology Requirements

Students in an online program must have the technological resources necessary for them to be successful. Please click [here](#) for a discussion of the minimum technical requirements for NU students.

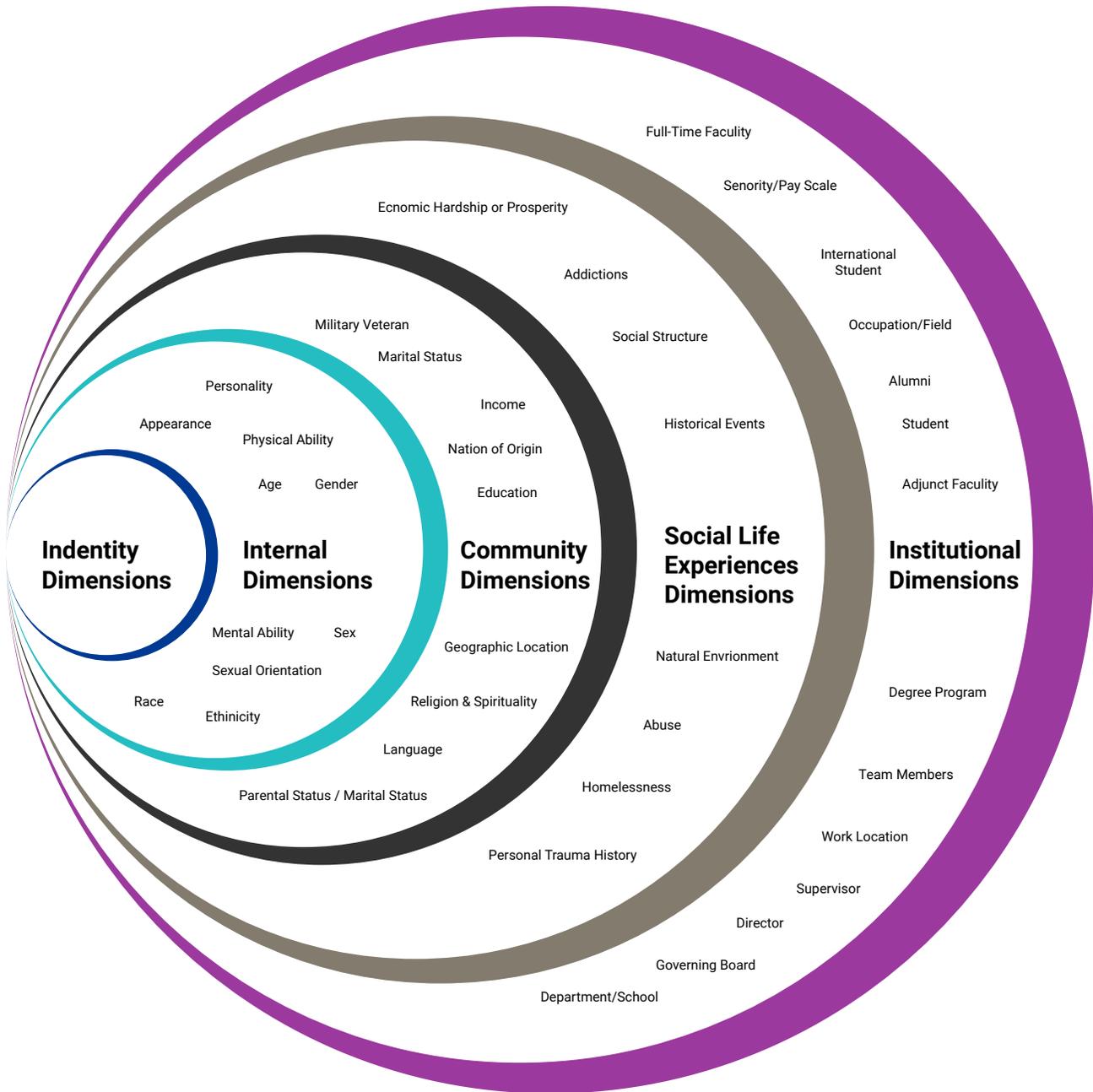
Tuition and Fees

Information on NU tuition and fees can be found on the [NU website](#) and [here](#) in the university catalog.



APPENDIX A

National University Diversity Wheel





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