



STUDENT HANDBOOK

Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Counseling

**All policies & procedures contained in this handbook are subject to change at any time and without prior notice. Last revised: August 5, 2026.*

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DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (Ed.D.) in COUNSELING

Introduction

Amberton University is designed exclusively for the mature, working adult who seeks to benefit from the richness of a relevant, educational experience. An adult who attends Amberton University will find the atmosphere similar to that of professional schools of law, medicine, and engineering. At Amberton University, the student is exposed to a diverse group of working adults who share interests and ideas. Amberton University desires to equip its students with practical knowledge, tools, and character necessary to cope effectively in the situations and challenges that lie ahead. In short, Amberton University educates students for lifelong learning.

Accreditation and Credentials

Currently, Amberton University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees.. Questions about the accreditation of Amberton University may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097, telephone (404) 679 4500, or by using information available on SACSCOC's website (<http://www.sacscoc.org>). In addition, Amberton University is recognized by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the United States Department of Education as a licensed, degree-granting institution.

Welcome!

The faculty and staff of the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Counseling program welcome you to the program at Amberton University! This handbook focuses specifically on the doctoral component of the Counselor Education program, its course of study, and evaluation measures that are critically important for all doctoral students. As an Amberton doctoral student, your presence in our program requires strict adherence to the ethical principles of the counseling profession. Each student in the doctoral program is expected to conduct themselves as professionals in training.

Information in the student handbook is subject to change and does not constitute a contract or guarantee with the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Counseling program. Amberton University expressly reserves the right to change, phase out, or discontinue any policy or program. Such changes take precedence over prior statements within the student handbook. Students will be informed about these changes by the Academic Dean's office, a faculty member, or another staff member.

Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Counseling Degree Plan

I Major Requirements: 54 hours

- Advanced Counseling Theories & Techniques
- Advanced Counseling Skills & Techniques
- Human Growth & Development
- Advanced Child & Adolescents Development
- Advanced Group Counseling Skills
- Advanced Crisis Counseling: Skills & Application
- Advanced Trauma Counseling Techniques
- Advanced Multicultural Counseling: Skills & Application
- Diagnosis & Treatment of Addictive Behaviors
- Advanced Psychopathology
- Advanced Assessment in Counseling
- Family Therapy in Clinical Practice
- Counseling Ethics in Professional Practice
- Advanced Career Counseling in Professional Practice
- Intimacy and Sexuality in Relationships
- Supervision in Counseling
- Quantitative Research & Statistics in Counseling
- Qualitative Research & Statistics in Counseling

- Comprehensive Examination

II Applied Doctoral Project (6 hours)

- Applied Doctoral Project (ADP)1 (Submission Defense)
- Applied Doctoral Project (ADP) 2 (Final Defense)

Total: 60 hours

The Applied Doctoral Project (ADP) involves applying theoretical knowledge and research methods to solve a real-world practical problem in a specific professional context, rather than generating entirely new knowledge. These projects may involve creating a new curriculum, a program evaluation, a policy proposal, or a clinical protocol, culminating in a practical deliverable and a final report demonstrating mastery of the subject and the ability to bridge theory and practice to benefit a profession or organization. The primary goal is to address a current issue in a professional field by applying existing knowledge and research to propose a tangible solution. Complete details for the Applied Doctoral Project (ADP) are included in the Applied Doctoral Project Handbook.

Orientation

All new students in the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Counseling program begin their studies with a mandatory, one-time, university- and program-specific orientation. The orientations are held via Zoom at the start of each session. Students will attend orientation sessions before the start of their first session via Zoom. Additional orientation and advising sessions are offered throughout the first session to support students. The additional orientation or information sessions are strongly encouraged, but not mandatory.

Primary (full-time) Faculty

Dr. Pamela Johnson

Doctorate: Ed.D., Counseling and Guidance (Texas A&M University – Commerce)

Masters: M.S., Counseling and Guidance (Texas A&M University – Commerce)

Masters: M.A., Business and Human Development (Amberton University)

Bachelors: B.A., Communications (University of Houston)

Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC)

National Certified Counselor (NCC)

Senior Professional Human Resources (SPHR)

Dr. Levi Armstrong

Doctorate: Psy.D., Clinical Psychology (University of the Rockies)

Masters: M.A., Psychology (University of the Rockies)

Bachelor's: B.S., Health (Texas A&M)

Licensed Psychologist

Dr. Chris Bedard

Doctorate: Marriage and Family Therapy (Texas Tech University)

Masters: M.S., Marriage and Family Studies (Abilene Christian University)

Masters: M.S., Christian Education (Abilene Christian University)

Bachelor's: B.S., Youth and Family Ministry (Abilene Christian University)

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT)

Dr. Don Hebbard

Doctorate: Ed.D., Adult and Continuing Education (Texas Woman's University)

Masters: MMFT, Marriage and Family Therapy (Abilene Christian University)

Masters: MS, Biblical and Communication Studies (Abilene Christian University)

Bachelor's: BS, Ministry (Abilene Christian University)

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT)

Dr. Carla Moffit

Doctorate: Ph.D., Clinical Mental Health Counseling (Texas A&M University Commerce)

Masters: M.S., Counseling (East Texas State University, Commerce)

Bachelors: B.S. Business Ed., (West Texas State University)

Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor

Dr. Ken Johnson

Doctorate: Ph.D., Counseling Psychology (The Union Institute Graduate School)

Masters: M.S., Guidance and Counseling (Alabama State University)

Bachelor's degree: B.S., Sociology (Alabama State University)

Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor (LPC)

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT)

Dr. Stacia Alexander

Doctorate: Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology, (Walden University)

Master of Arts in Counseling, (Amberton University)

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, (University of Texas at Arlington)

Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor (LPC)

Dr. Iman Ross

Doctorate: Doctor of Philosophy in Clinical Psychology, (Union Institute & University)

Master of Arts in Counseling, (Amberton University)

Bachelor of Science in Psychology, (Howard University)

Expectations of Students

All students are expected to treat each other, staff, clients, and faculty with respect. In addition, all students must follow the rules, regulations, and ethical guidelines of the counseling profession and of Amberton University. The American Counseling Association's Code of Ethics can be found at <http://www.counseling.org/resources/aca-code-of-ethics.pdf>.

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's work as though it were your own. If you use another person's words, ideas, or information, or if you use material from an outside source – whether a book, magazine, newspaper, business publication, broadcast, speech, or electronic media – you must acknowledge that source. Plagiarism is a violation of the University's code of student ethical conduct and is taken seriously. Amberton University operates on an honor system; therefore, honesty and integrity are essential characteristics of all who are associated with the institution. All Amberton students are expected to abide by the honor system and maintain academic integrity in all their work. Amberton University and its instructors monitor student work for plagiarism and reserve the right to submit such work to technology-based plagiarism detection services and applications at any time.

The University guidelines on academic integrity and honesty can be found in the catalog at: [FUNDAMENTALS OF COMMUNICATION](#)

Ethical Standards Expected of Students

See the link to the Amberton University catalog for details regarding ethical standards.

[Student Life & Conduct | Amberton University](#)

Student Grievance and Appeal

A student who feels that he/she has been improperly treated concerning finances, grading, registration, or any other student service has the right to file a grievance to correct the wrong. The following procedure shall be followed in filing a grievance: (The terms "grievance" and "complaint" are used interchangeably.)

- I. First, whenever possible, the matter in question should be discussed directly with the person causing the grievance. Every effort should be made to resolve the grievance on a one-on-one basis. If the grievance concerns a grade earned in a class, the student must understand that he/she cannot challenge the judgment of the instructor but only the accuracy of the grade and/or fact.
- II. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the one-on-one effort (or if the student does not know who the specific individual is who caused the grievance), the student may contact the appropriate administrator for assistance (Academic Dean for academic-related and student services appeals; Executive Vice President of Operations for financial appeals). The appeal to an administrator should be in writing.
 - A. The student's written grievance should be explicit and include any support materials.
 - B. The University will respond to all written grievances and include them as a part of institutional records.
 - C. All grievances will be processed expeditiously.
- III. If the student is dissatisfied with the solution proposed by the administration, the student may appeal, in writing, to the President. The student may include additional information or facts in the written appeal. The President may make a final decision immediately or elect to form a grievance-hearing committee to consider the complaint. The committee, if appointed, will review all written documents and forward their recommendation to the President, whose decision shall be final. All student grievances must first be addressed internally. If the internal resources have been exhausted and the grievance is not satisfactorily resolved, the student may file a written complaint with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board at:
Office of General Counsel, P.O. Box 12788 Austin, TX 78711-2788.

Program Mission Statement

The mission of the Amberton Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Counseling degree program is to develop ethically, spiritually, and culturally aware mental health counselors and counselor educators. Amberton seeks to foster experts in the field who demonstrate values, knowledge, skills, and personal disposition to promote the mental health and holistic wellness of individuals, groups, couples, and families. Completing the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Counseling degree program will offer students the opportunity to impart what they have studied to others and turn knowledge into wisdom. The degree focuses on applied research and management, making graduates ideal candidates for roles that drive systemic change and organizational improvement.

Doctor of Education Counseling Program Description

The Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Counseling degree is designed to prepare students to work with individuals, groups, couples, and families in community, social services, academic, and private settings. The degree program emphasizes a systems-based approach with a focus on working with diverse populations in diverse settings. Its purpose is to provide quality doctoral-level training for future practitioners, educators, and researchers who wish to emphasize applications that promote the health and well-being of children, adolescents, adults, and families. The curriculum comprises sixty (60) credit hours. Students must also pass an Oral Comprehensive Examination following completion of all coursework. An Applied Doctoral

Project (ADP) approved by the counseling faculty is also required, representing the last six (6) of the sixty (60) mandatory hours. The online doctoral program offers flexibility and convenience, allowing students to pursue advanced degrees while balancing work and family commitments, and can be a great option for those seeking career advancement or a change in career direction.

The Amberton Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Counseling degree incorporates the standards set forth by the American Counseling Association (ACA). The program includes eighteen (18) core courses plus six (6) hours for the Applied Doctoral Project (ADP) for a total of sixty (60) hours.

The minimum requirements for a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Counseling Degree are:

- Successful completion of sixty (60) semester hours, forty-eight (48) of which must be completed at Amberton University.
- A minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.00.
- Satisfactory completion of an oral Comprehensive Examination.
- Successful submission and defense of the Applied Doctoral Project (ADP).

Important Note: The Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Counseling degree is a non-licensure-track degree program. Students who complete the Amberton University Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Counseling degree do NOT meet the Academic requirements for becoming a Licensed Professional Counselor in the State of Texas. Students who are interested in pursuing a state license in the state of Texas must take Professional Orientation to Counseling (CSL7780), take and pass the Counselor Preparation Practice Exam (CPCE), and complete Practicum 1 (CSL6840) and Practicum 2 (CSL6845). To be eligible for the practicum, students must complete all coursework required for the degree and pass the CPCE. A student may enroll in the practicum courses at the same time as their Applied Project Courses if they have taken and passed the CPCE. Questions regarding licensure in the State of Texas can be answered by visiting the Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council at this website address: [Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council](#). Students interested in National Certification should visit the NBCC website for more information. The website address is: [NBCC | National Board for Certified Counselors](#).

Admission Requirements

Admission to the doctoral program is highly selective and based on a comprehensive review of each applicant's academic background, professional experience, and potential for success in advanced study. Meeting the minimum eligibility requirements does not guarantee admission. The university reserves the right to limit the number of candidates admitted each term, and decisions of the admissions committee are final. Following are detailed admission requirements.

Non-Negotiable Admission Requirements:

- Applicants must be a U.S. citizen, or permanent resident, or have a valid visa if living in the United States.
- Applicants must have a master's degree in counseling or a closely related field from a regionally accredited university. Students with a degree from a foreign institution will be evaluated on an individual basis.
- Applicants must submit official transcripts to the admissions office before being accepted.

- Applicants must be in good standing with their previous university, e.g., have not been expelled from a higher educational institution.
- Current resume or curriculum vitae (CV) highlighting academic and professional experience.
- Applicants must submit two (2) recommendation letters from previous or current professors or workplace colleagues.
- Applicants must provide an academic statement of purpose with a personal statement (1,000 – 1,500 words) outlining academic interests, research goals, professional objectives, and reasons for pursuing the doctoral degree.
- Applicants must successfully complete a virtual admissions interview with faculty members or the academic dean. See the list of interview questions on the following page.
- Applicants must be approved by the Doctoral Program Director/Coordinator.

Required Application Materials

- Completed online application form.
- Official transcripts from all previously attended colleges and universities.
- Current resume or curriculum vitae (CV) highlighting academic and professional experience.
- Two (2) letters of recommendation from academic or professional references who can attest to the applicant's readiness for doctoral-level study and research.
- An academic statement of purpose, included in a personal statement (1,000 – 1,500 words) outlining academic interest, research goals, professional objectives, and reasons for pursuing the doctoral degree.

Student Interview

All students applying to the Amberton University Doctor of Education in Counseling program must successfully complete a virtual admissions interview with faculty members or the Academic Dean.

Interview Questions

- Why are you interested in the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Counseling program at Amberton University, and what are your specific career goals after graduation?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses as a student and future clinician or professional in the counseling field?
- How do your experiences (research, clinical, personal) prepare you for doctoral-level study?
- How will you contribute to our program community and intellectual environment?
- Tell us about your experience with diversity and how you approach working with diverse populations.
- How do you manage stress and maintain a healthy work-life balance, given the demanding nature of a doctoral program?
- How have / will you address your own countertransference when working with clients?
- Describe an ethical dilemma you encountered, and how you handled it, to demonstrate your clinical or professional reasoning and ethical decision-making skills.

DOCTORAL STUDENT INTERVIEW SCORING RUBRIC

Applicant Name: _____ **Interview Date:** _____
Interviewer(s) Name(s): _____
Position: _____

Instructions for Use

This rubric converts the Doctoral Student Interview Evaluation Form into a quantitative scoring system. Each evaluation category is scored on a 5-point scale. Total the points for each section and use the overall score to inform admission recommendations.

Scoring Scale:

- 5 = Exceptional** - Exceeds all expectations for doctoral candidacy
- 4 = Strong** - Clearly meets expectations with notable strengths
- 3 = Adequate** - Meets minimum expectations for admission
- 2 = Developing** - Below expectations; significant concerns present
- 1 = Insufficient** - Does not meet standards for doctoral study

Evaluation Categories

1. Academic Background (Maximum: 25 points)

Criteria	5	4	3	2	1
Master's degree in relevant field	Terminal degree, highly relevant	Completed, relevant	Completed, somewhat relevant	Completed, unrelated	Not completed
GPA (3.5+ on 4.0 scale)	3.9-4.0	3.7-3.89	3.5-3.69	3.0-3.49	Below 3.0
Relevant coursework and preparation	Extensive, directly aligned	Strong, well-prepared	Adequate background	Limited preparation	Insufficient
Academic writing capability	Exceptional quality	Strong demonstrated skill	Adequate competence	Needs development	Inadequate
Academic references	Outstanding letters	Strong endorsements	Positive references	Adequate but weak	Poor or concerning

Table 1: Academic Background Scoring Guide

Section 1 Score: _____ / 25

Comments: _____

2. Research Capability and Scholarly Potential (Maximum: 15 points)

Criteria	5	4	3	2	1
Research interest and focus	Sophisticated, well-defined topic	Clear and focused area	Adequate clarity	Vague concepts	Unfocused
Understanding of research process	Advanced knowledge of methodology	Strong understanding	Basic competence	Limited knowledge	No understanding
Potential for scholarly contribution	Exceptional promise for original work	Clear potential	Reasonable likelihood	Questionable capacity	Unlikely

Table 2: Research Capability and Scholarly Potential Scoring Guide

Section 2 Score: ____ / 15

Comments: _____

3. Professional Experience and Career Readiness (Maximum: 25 points)

Criteria	5	4	3	2	1
Relevant professional background	Highly relevant, senior level	Strong relevance	Adequate relevance	Limited relevance	Not relevant
Leadership experience	Executive or strategic leadership	Supervisory leadership	Team leadership	Limited leadership	No leadership
Years of professional experience	10+ years in field	7-9 years	4-6 years	1-3 years	Less than 1 year
Professional accomplishments	Distinguished record of achievement	Strong accomplishments	Notable contributions	Limited achievements	Minimal achievements
Career trajectory and advancement	Consistent upward progression	Strong advancement	Steady progress	Limited advancement	No clear progression

Table 3: Professional Experience and Career Readiness Scoring Guide

Section 3 Score: ____ / 25

Comments: _____

4. Personal Qualities and Readiness (Maximum: 20 points)

Criteria	5	4	3	2	1
Communication skills	Exceptional articulation	Strong communicator	Adequate skills	Below expectations	Poor communication
Critical thinking ability	Sophisticated analysis	Strong analytical skills	Adequate thinking	Limited analysis	Weak critical thinking
Time management and organization	Exemplary planning	Strong organization	Adequate management	Concerns noted	Disorganized
Commitment to completion	Unwavering dedication	Strong commitment	Adequate commitment	Questionable	Unrealistic expectations

Table 4: Personal Qualities and Readiness Scoring Guide

Section 4 Score: ____ / 20

Comments: _____

5. Program Fit and Alignment (Maximum: 15 points)

Criteria	5	4	3	2	1
Fit with faculty expertise	Perfect match, multiple faculty	Strong match, clear advisor	Adequate fit	Limited fit	Poor fit
Program knowledge	Exceptional understanding	Strong knowledge	Adequate awareness	Limited knowledge	Uninformed
Research priorities alignment	Directly aligned with priorities	Strong alignment	Adequate fit	Weak alignment	Misaligned

Table 5: Program Fit and Alignment Scoring Guide

Section 5 Score: ____ / 15

Comments: _____

Overall Assessment

Section	Score
1. Academic Background	____ / 25
2. Research Experience & Interests	____ / 15
3. Professional Experience	____ / 25
4. Personal Qualities & Readiness	____ / 20
6. Program Fit & Alignment	____ / 15
TOTAL SCORE	____ / 100

Table 7: Summary Score Sheet

Scoring Interpretation Guide

92-100 points: STRONG ADMIT - Exceptional candidate with outstanding qualifications across all areas. High priority for admission. Minimal to no concerns.

82-91 points: ADMIT - Strong candidate who clearly meets admission standards. Solid qualifications with notable strengths. Recommended for admission.

72-81 points: CONDITIONAL ADMIT / WAITLIST - Adequate candidate who meets minimum standards but has some areas of concern or weakness. May benefit from additional preparation or support. Consider waitlist based on cohort strength and program capacity.

55-71 points: DENY WITH ENCOURAGEMENT TO REAPPLY - Below current admission standards. Significant concerns about readiness or fit. May be suitable after additional preparation, experience, or clarification of research interests.

Below 55 points (<50%): DENY - Does not meet admission standards. Substantial deficiencies across multiple areas. Not recommended for admission.

Qualitative Assessment

Overall Impression:

Key Strengths:

- ---
- ---
- ---

Concerns or Areas for Development:

- ---
- ---
- ---

Questions or Follow-up Needed:

Additional Observations:

Final Recommendation

Based on the total score and qualitative assessment, select the appropriate recommendation:

- ☐ **STRONG ADMIT** (92-100 points) - Highly qualified candidate; priority for admission
- ☐ **ADMIT** (82-91 points) - Qualified candidate; meets all admission standards
- ☐ **CONDITIONAL ADMIT / WAITLIST** (72-81 points) - Meets minimum standards; consider conditions or waitlist
- ☐ **DENY - ENCOURAGE REAPPLY** (55-71 points) - Below standards; may reapply after development
- ☐ **DENY** (Below 55 points) - Does not meet admission standards

Conditions for Admission (if applicable):

Interviewer Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Committee Review Date: _____ **Final Decision:** _____

This evaluation rubric is confidential and part of the admissions committee deliberation process.

Grading Criteria for the Course Final Grade

Faculty will provide the number and percentage value of assignments, exams, papers, reports, group projects, etc., along with the appropriate Amberton University grading scale below for graduate work.

Numeric Grade	Letter Grade
92 - 100	A
82 - 91	B
72 - 81	C
62 - 71	D
Below 62	F
<i>Note that D grades are not counted as passing in graduate courses.</i>	

Transfer Credit

All transfer credits will be evaluated by the Academic Dean's office regardless of where the credit was obtained. No more than twelve (12) credits will be accepted, and the courses must be earned at the doctoral level within the past ten (10) years. Grades of less than a B will not be accepted in transfer.

Time Limit

The program duration is seven (7) years with a potential one-year extension for a total of eight years. Students must complete all coursework for the degree, including the Comprehensive Examination, and submit and defend the Applied Doctoral Project within eight (8) years after admission to the doctoral program. Students may request an extension; however, as stated, the program must be completed by the end of the 8th year of enrollment.

Need and justification for the Doctoral Program in Counseling

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) report that there is a growing need for professional counselors today, driven by increasing mental health awareness, the lingering effects of global events like the pandemic, and the resulting decrease in stigma around seeking help. Projections from the BLS show much faster-than-average job growth for substance abuse, behavioral disorders, and mental health counselors in the coming years, indicating strong employment opportunities in the counseling field that provide essential support for individuals, families, and communities. Employment for mental health counselors is expected to grow 18 percent from 2022 to 2032. Therefore, the outlook for mental health counselors is favorable.

For reference see [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics : U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

Continuous Enrollment Requirement

All doctoral students must be continuously enrolled in the program. If students are not enrolled for a period of three (3) years, they must reapply to the university.

Student Withdrawal Procedure

If a student decides to withdraw from the program, the student should schedule a meeting with an advisor to discuss their decision. This should be followed by the student informing the Doctoral Program Director/Coordinator in writing. The Doctoral Program Director/Coordinator will also follow up with the student via phone or email for an exit survey.

Doctoral Comprehensive Exam

Students must complete the Comprehensive Examination after completing all coursework, before being eligible to enroll in the Applied Doctoral Project I course. The Comprehensive Examination will be conducted orally by three members of the faculty and consists of eight (8) questions prepared by the Faculty Council. Once students have successfully completed the Comprehensive Examination (pass/fail), they are eligible to enroll in the Applied Doctoral Project I course. Students must sign up for the Comprehensive Exam and pay the appropriate fee. The student must score 72% or above on the examination to achieve a passing grade. Following is the grading rubric for the Comprehensive Examination.

Comprehensive Doctoral Examination Grading Rubric

Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Counseling Program

Student Name: _____

AU ID: _____

Exam Date: _____

Evaluator(s) Name: _____

Evaluator Signature: _____

Date of Evaluation: _____

Instructions for Three Evaluators

This comprehensive doctoral examination assesses student mastery across the core curriculum areas of the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Counseling program. Each of the eight questions addresses critical competencies aligned with doctoral standards and the five professional role areas: counseling, supervision, teaching, research and scholarship, and leadership and advocacy.

Evaluate each question using the point scale below. The minimum passing score is 72 points out of 100.

Scoring Scale

- Each question is worth 12.5 points for a total of 100 points.
- 12-12.5 = Exemplary: Demonstrates exceptional depth of knowledge, critical analysis, and synthesis across multiple areas; responses are comprehensive, well-supported with evidence, and demonstrate doctoral-level thinking
- 10-11.5 = Strong: Demonstrates solid understanding with clear connections to theory, research, and practice; well-organized and supported; shows advanced competency
- 8-9.5 = Competent: Demonstrates adequate knowledge and understanding; meets expectations for doctoral-level work; may have minor gaps or lack depth in some areas
- 6-7.5 = Marginal: Demonstrates partial understanding with significant gaps; lacks depth or organization; contains errors in content or application
- 0-5.5 = Unacceptable: Demonstrates little to no understanding; contains major errors; fails to address the question adequately; does not meet doctoral standards

Evaluation Criteria by Question

For each question, evaluate the student's performance across the following dimensions:

- Understanding of Question: Did the student comprehend what was being asked and respond directly to all components?
- Content Knowledge: Does the response demonstrate comprehensive understanding of theories, concepts, and evidence-based practices?
- Critical Analysis: Does the student demonstrate ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information at a doctoral level?
- Integration: Does the response integrate knowledge across multiple domains (theory, research, practice)?
- Evidence and Support: Are claims supported with appropriate citations, research evidence, or theoretical foundations?
- Organization and Clarity: Is the response well-organized, coherent, and clearly articulated?
- Professional Application: Does the student demonstrate ability to apply knowledge to professional practice, leadership, or scholarship?

Question-by-Question Evaluation

Question 1

Score: _____ / 12.5

Strengths: _____

Areas for Improvement: _____

Comments: _____

Question 2

Score: _____ / 12.5

Strengths: _____

Areas for Improvement: _____

Comments: _____

Question 3

Score: _____ / 12.5

Strengths: _____

Areas for Improvement: _____

Comments: _____

Question 4

Score: _____ / 12.5

Strengths: _____

Areas for Improvement: _____

Comments: _____

Question 5

Score: _____ / 12.5

Strengths: _____

Areas for Improvement: _____

Comments: _____

Question 6

Score: _____ / 12.5

Strengths: _____

Areas for Improvement: _____

Comments: _____

Question 7

Score: _____ / 12.5

Strengths: _____

Areas for Improvement: _____

Comments: _____

Question 8

Score: _____ / 12.5

Strengths: _____

Areas for Improvement: _____

Comments: _____

Summary Scoring

Question	Score (0-12.5)
Question 1	
Question 2	
Question 3	
Question 4	
Question 5	
Question 6	
Question 7	
Question 8	
Total Score	_____ / 100
Percentage	_____ %

Minimum Passing Requirements

Total cumulative score: 72 points or higher (72%)

Examination Result

Check one:

___High Pass -- The student demonstrated exceptional knowledge, critical thinking, and synthesis across all curriculum areas. Performance consistently exceeded doctoral-level expectations. (Typically 90+ points)

___Pass -- The student demonstrated adequate to strong knowledge and critical thinking across curriculum areas. Performance met doctoral-level expectations with competent understanding of core content. (72-89 points)

___Marginal Pass -- The student demonstrated minimally acceptable knowledge with some areas of concern. Remediation or additional preparation may be recommended in specific areas. (72-75 points)

___Fail -- The student did not demonstrate sufficient knowledge and competency across curriculum areas. Performance did not meet doctoral-level expectations. Retake required. (Below 72 points)

Recommendations

Areas of Strength_____

Areas Requiring Further Development_____

Remediation Plan (if applicable)_____

Additional Comments_____

Committee Signatures

Primary Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Committee Member: _____ Date: _____

Committee Member: _____ Date: _____

Applying for Graduation

Doctoral candidates must complete a minimum of sixty (60) credit hours, including six (6) hours for the Applied Doctoral Project. To be eligible for graduation, students must complete all required coursework with a GPA of at least 3.0, pass the Comprehensive Examination, be in good standing with the university, and complete and successfully defend the Applied Doctoral Project.

- As specified in the Course Catalog, the student must file for graduation in the Registrar's Office by the deadline indicated in the Academic Calendar. A student is entitled to graduate under the degree provisions of the catalog in effect at the time of admission to the doctoral program or a subsequent year, provided that in all cases the student fulfills the requirements of the catalog within ten years of its currency.
- The fee and Application for Graduation must be submitted no later than the second Saturday of the session in which the student anticipates graduation to occur. The application can be located on the Amberton University website (www.Amberton.edu) or picked up at the Student Services office. The Graduation Fee can be found in the current Schedule of Classes.
- Students who have applied for graduation during the Fall and Spring sessions should receive a letter by week five of the session in which the application for graduation has been submitted, regarding the purchasing of regalia and other key dates to note for the graduation ceremony to be held at the end of those sessions.

Course Schedule Recommendations

Students may take courses in any order they choose except for Quantitative Research & Statistics in Counseling (RGS7010) and Qualitative Research (RGS7005). The Quantitative Research course will serve as preparation for the Applied Project and must be taken after all other coursework is complete. The Qualitative Research course should be taken within the first twelve (12) hours of the program.

It is recommended, but not required, that the student follows the tiers listed below.

TIER ONE
CSL7055 Diagnosis & Treatment of Addictive Behaviors
CSL7020 Advanced Counseling Theories & Techniques
CSL7080 Advanced Career Counseling in Professional Practice
CSL7030 Human Growth & Development
CSL7050 Advanced Multicultural Counseling: Skills & Applications
RGS7005 Qualitative Research & Statistics in Counseling

TIER TWO
CSL7045 Advanced Trauma Counseling Techniques
CSL7025 Advanced Counseling Skills & Techniques
CSL 7065 Advanced Assessment in Counseling
CSL7035 Advanced Group Counseling Skills
CSL7085 Advanced Child & Adolescent Development

TIER THREE
CSL7070 Family Therapy in Clinical Practice
CSL7040 Advanced Crisis Counseling Skills & Applications
CSL7090 Intimacy and Sexuality in Relationships
CSS7060 Advanced Psychotherapy
CSL7075 Counseling Ethics in Professional Practice
CSL7095 Supervision in Counseling

TIER FOUR
RGS7010 Quantitative Research & Statistics in Counseling
CSL7999 Oral Comprehensive Pass/Fail Exam

TIER FIVE Applied Project – 6 Hours
CSL8010 Applied Doctoral Project (Submission Defense)
CSL8015 Applied Doctoral Project (Final Defense)

Course Descriptions

- **Diagnosis and Treatment of Addictive Behaviors (CSL7055)**

The course provides education on the complex causes, impacts, and treatment of multiple addictions, including substance and behavioral dependencies, to students and professionals interested in helping individuals and families affected by addiction. Diverse topics such as the pharmacology of psychoactive substances, the disease model of addiction, physical and psychological effects, diagnostic criteria, relapse and relapse prevention, etiology, and treatment modalities. Students learn about the neurobiology of addiction, assessment techniques, prevention strategies, and the impact on families and society. The course also explores various theoretical models, practical counseling skills, and the legal and economic dimensions of alcohol and drug addiction and other troublesome and compulsive behaviors such as gambling, sexual, and other harmful addictions. Students will be introduced to various models of addiction, such as chemical dependency and process addictions, and the effects of drugs on the brain and body, including tolerance and withdrawal. In addition, the course focuses on specific populations, public policy, public health, and the skills needed for assessment, counseling, and intervention strategies in diverse settings.

- **Advanced Counseling Theories & Techniques (CSL7020)**

The course presents complex, multi-faceted interventions for individuals, families, groups, and organizations. Emphasis is given to the conceptualization of cases, understanding theoretical foundations, and building effective interventions. Applications for various clinical arenas are explored.

- **Advanced Career Counseling in Professional Practice (CSL7080)**

This course provides an in-depth exploration of advanced career counseling and career life span development, and professional career counseling practice applications. Students will critically examine the appropriate utilization of major theories and strategies to career development and decision-making, review empirical research on career interventions, and apply evidence-based strategies in diverse career counseling contexts. Students will integrate advanced assessment tools, and examine how technological, economic, and societal factors shape career development. Emphasis is placed on multicultural perspectives and the integration of mental health and career concerns. Students will also develop advanced career counseling skills through experiential learning, case studies, and applied projects. Students will also strengthen their career counseling abilities to work effectively with clients across the lifespan in educational, clinical, and organizational settings.

- **Human Growth & Development (CSL7030)**

The course investigates the changes that occur with age and the processes underlying human growth and development throughout the life cycle. The developmental progression of the family life cycle is also examined, encompassing physical, psychological, and social aspects. Emphasis is placed on areas such as sensory and perceptual ability, cognitive and language development, behavioral genetics, and effects of socialization agents. Developmental and learning theories will be emphasized.

- **Advanced Multicultural Counseling: Skills & Application (CSL7050)**

This advanced course builds upon foundational multicultural counseling principles to strengthen students' cultural competencies in counseling practice. Students will critically examine their own cultural identities and biases while learning advanced strategies for working effectively with clients from diverse cultural, racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic, and ability backgrounds. The course emphasizes case conceptualization, culturally responsive interventions, and systems-level advocacy. Students will also explore ethical dilemmas, research-informed practices, and the role of counselors as change agents in promoting equity and inclusion.

- **Advanced Trauma Counseling Techniques (CSL7045)**

This course will focus on the nature, assessment, and treatment of trauma across a range of applications and cases. The application of primary trauma-focused counseling assessment strategies along with best practices in the field will be explored and applied to actual case studies. The ethical practice of trauma counseling, along with approaches to therapist self-care, will be presented. This course presents information on trauma-relevant, research-based treatment approaches, interventions and protocols drawing from trauma psychobiology, neuroscience and psychopharmacology. Applications to single-occurrence trauma as well as complex trauma will be made, along with exploration of grief, suicide, violence, sexual abuse, natural disasters, war, and intimate partner violence. Through the use of case studies, the students will apply theories and concepts in the preparation of case conceptualizations and treatment plans.

- **Advanced Counseling Skills & Techniques (CSL7025)**

The Advanced Counseling Skills and Techniques course is an experiential course that builds upon fundamental skills, focusing on culturally sensitive interventions, major counseling approaches, and evidence-based practices. Students develop through role-playing, case studies, and video feedback, as well as practicing skills such as active listening, reflection, summarizing, and advocacy. The course also addresses ethical and legal considerations, crisis intervention, and the integration of these skills into a personal, integrative approach. Procedures related to the practice of individual, group, and family counseling are examined.

- **Advanced Assessment in Counseling (CSL7065)**

This course prepares students to administer, score, interpret, and report on objective assessments used in counseling practice. Instruction covers objective personality and emotional or behavioral tests for children, adolescents, and adults; objective intelligence measures in the Wechsler and Woodcock-Johnson families; objective academic achievement measures in the Wechsler and Woodcock-Johnson families; and objective behavioral trauma, substance use, and marriage or family assessments. Students learn psychometric quality and test construction principles, the scope of practice and legal requirements for licensed professional counselors in Texas, and collaboration with psychologists, neuropsychologists, psychiatrists, psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners, and other counselors. The capstone is a Comprehensive Mental Health Evaluation and Treatment Plan that integrates all

assessments with a diagnostic clinical interview and record review. The report includes counseling treatment plans aligned to theoretical orientation and evidence-based guidelines, with referrals as appropriate. Responsible and transparent use of artificial intelligence for workflow support is incorporated, always with human verification and never as a substitute for professional judgment.

- **Advanced Group Counseling Skills (CSL7035)**

This course is designed to provide both theoretical and experiential understanding of groups, purpose, development, dynamics, leadership, and skills. Emphasis is placed on learning about the group process and techniques through observation, critique, and experiencing a group process. Students will participate as members and leaders of various group settings while developing a leadership style.

- **Advanced Child and Adolescent Development (CSL7085)**

This doctoral course prepares students to lead advanced counseling services for children and adolescents in schools, clinics, and integrated care settings. Students will learn how child development and mental health challenges connect, while building skills in advanced assessment and diagnosis, case planning, and evidence-based interventions that are culturally responsive. The course also covers systems, equity, ethics, and law, with a focus on working across families, schools, and communities while following professional and educational standards. Students gain leadership and supervision skills, learn to evaluate programs, and practice strategies for scaling interventions effectively. Through field-based case studies and a capstone project, learners apply research to create real, measurable improvements for youth and families.

- **Family Therapy in Clinical Practice (CSL7070)**

This course will apply the principles of marriage and family therapy to a wide range of diverse family forms and issues using family systems theory. Family systems theory assessment tools, concepts, treatment plan procedures, and overall theory of change will be applied to cases typically seen in professional practice. Through the use of case study methods, the student will assess the family system, write a treatment plan, research current literature in the field and present treatment options for the case. Students will have an opportunity to explore a wide range of treatment approaches to contemporary family challenges. A variety of crucial topics will be explored, including genograms in family assessment, family transition management, blended family issues, conflict resolution and couples therapy with complex trauma. The personhood of the therapist will be explored, considering one's family of origin, ethical decision-making processes and style of relating to clients.

- **Advanced Crisis Counseling: Skills & Application (CSL7040)**

This course provides advanced knowledge and training in crisis intervention models and applied crisis counseling strategies, with a focus on emotive, cognitive, and behavioral implications on client functioning. Students will refine their skills in crisis assessment, rapid intervention, stabilization, and referral, while integrating cultural, ethical, and trauma-informed perspectives. Emphasis will be placed on applying advanced techniques to diverse crises such as suicide, intimate partner violence, mass trauma, natural disasters, and

community-wide emergencies. Through case studies, discussion forums, and applied projects, students will gain expertise to respond effectively to high-intensity acute and chronic situations across clinical, school, and community settings.

- **Intimacy and Sexuality in Relationships (CSL7090)**

This course will apply the theory and practice of Sex Therapy to a wide range of clinical issues that often face a psychotherapist conducting individual, marital or family therapy. The student will reflect on the formation of their own sexual identity and how that influences the integration of Sex Therapy into their practice. Approaches to assessment, along with models of treatment will be explored. Therapeutic concerns will include treatment of infidelity, sexual trauma, same-sex couples and out-of-control sexual behavior. Current trends include treating sexual minority groups, alternative couple relationships and the impact of toxic religion. Learning approaches include course readings, preparation of treatment plans based upon case studies, lectures, discussions and presentations. Emphasis will be placed on building a positive, healthy sexual identity along with healthy couples' sexual relationships.

- **Advanced Psychopathology (CSL7060)**

This course integrates DSM-5-TR categorical nosology with dimensional frameworks (HiTOP) and research constructs (RDoC) across the lifespan (child, adolescent, adult, and geriatric). Emphasizes complex comorbidity, cultural formulation, medical/neurological rule-outs, psychopharmacology literacy, and legally defensible documentation. Adds a deep focus on and integration into the diagnostic process, including the administration, scoring, and interpretation of objective measures (standardized rating scales, structured diagnostic interviews, brief neurocognitive screens), as well as psychometric quality and fairness across developmental stages and cultural groups. Addresses emerging issues in AI, including AI-related 'psychosis' (technology-mediated perceptual and cognitive distortions), risk amplification and mitigation strategies, and the cautious use of AI tools for case formulation and measurement administration within ethical, legal, and professional boundaries. Includes forensic contexts of assessment from youth to older adults (e.g., violence and suicide risk, capacity/competency screening, disability and academic accommodations, child custody/abuse, criminal responsibility screening, malingering/response validity) with attention to documentation standards and courtroom defensibility.

- **Advanced Counseling Ethics in Professional Practice (CSL7075)**

This advanced doctoral course explores the complex and evolving ethical landscape of counseling in today's professional practice. Students will move beyond basic principles to examine ethical challenges through multiple lenses, preparing them to lead with integrity, cultural responsiveness, and professional courage. The course is structured around five interconnected pillars: Ethical Foundations & Advanced Decision-Making; Law, Regulation, and Risk Management; Cultural Humility, Equity and access; Technology, Telehealth, and Data/AI Ethics; and Supervision, Leadership, Organizational & Research Ethics.

Through case studies, debates, role plays, and applied projects, students will strengthen their ability to analyze, anticipate, and address ethical challenges at the highest professional level. By the end of the course, they will be equipped not only to practice ethically themselves but also to guide, teach, and mentor others in upholding the highest standards of the counseling profession.

- **Supervision in Counseling (CSL7095)**

The course provides students with the opportunity to develop their professional identity and learn the skills of a clinical supervisor. Throughout this course, students engage in experiential applications, discussions, and self-reflective assignments that focus on the strategies for working with supervisees representing diverse backgrounds and developmental and learning styles. After a critical analysis of the purpose of supervision, theoretical frameworks, and models of supervision, students develop and apply their own theory and concept of supervision. Key components include discussing case conceptualizations, reflecting on the counselor's personal impact on the client, ensuring ethical practice, and developing skills through a structured, trusting relationship. The goal is to improve the counselor's knowledge, skills, and attitudes to provide high-quality, ethical service to clients.

The course also provides a framework and training on the process where an experienced counselor (the Supervisor) guides, evaluates, and supports a less experienced counselor (the Supervisee) in their clinical work and professional development, with emphasis on ensuring ethical practice and client welfare, providing feedback and teaching new skills, fostering reflection, and helping the supervisee gain confidence and competence in providing quality care.

The course emphasizes practical experience for counseling professionals who have responsibility of directing personal and professional development of counselors, promoting counselor competency, and developing and implementing counseling services and programs. Theoretical models of supervision are utilized to develop Supervisor roles.

- **Quantitative Research & Statistics in Counseling (RGS7010)**

This course on quantitative research in counseling offers an emphasis on applied statistical strategies for analyzing data while setting the foundations for the Applied Project course. Students use open-source tools (jamovi and JASP) to design and execute reproducible analyses emphasizing research design, effect sizes, power, the GLM (ANOVA/Regression), generalized linear models, multilevel models, and psychometrics (reliability/validity; CFA; measurement invariance), as well as missing data and meta-analytic reasoning. Ethical statistical practice, APA JARS compliance, open Science and culturally responsive methodology are embedded. The course helps students begin to conceptualize their Applied Doctoral Project Proposal assignment for execution in the Applied Project II course.

- **Qualitative Research & Statistics in Counseling (RGS7005)**

This doctoral-level course provides counseling scholars and practitioner-researchers with an advanced understanding of qualitative research methodology and its integration with statistical reasoning in counseling inquiry. Students will explore the philosophical, ethical, and methodological foundations of qualitative research, learning to design, analyze, and evaluate studies that contribute to evidence-based counseling practice.

Emphasis is placed on rigorous design, ethical research practice, reflexivity, and integration of emerging AI-assisted data analysis tools to enhance qualitative research workflows. Through structured weekly assignments culminating in a simulated IRB-approved research

proposal, students will develop competencies necessary for independent qualitative research at the doctoral level.

- **Comprehensive Examination (CSL7999)**

Prerequisite: Successful completion of 54 hours of required curriculum.

***A student will be allowed three attempts to take and pass the oral exam. If the oral exam is not passed after the third attempt, the student must contact the Director of the doctoral program to discuss next steps.**

The comprehensive examination in the Doctor of Education in Counseling program is a summative assessment covering all completed coursework and core knowledge areas of the curriculum. The exam is designed to evaluate the student's integrated understanding of professional counseling theory, research, ethics, and practice gained during the student's advanced doctoral work.

- **Applied Doctoral Project 1 (CSL8010)**

***This course is repeatable; students may need to enroll in it multiple times in order to demonstrate proficiency and receive credit.**

Students will submit and defend the proposed ADP. This course guides students through Chapters 1–3 of an applied project: introduction to the problem (Chapter 1), review of relevant literature and background (Chapter 2), and research design/methodology (Chapter 3).

- **Applied Doctoral Project 2 (CSL8015 Final Defense)**

***This course is repeatable; students may need to enroll in it multiple times in order to demonstrate proficiency and receive credit.**

Students will defend their final ADP. This course supports students in implementing their approved applied project, collecting and analyzing data, presenting results in Chapter 4, and developing conclusions, implications, and recommendations in Chapter 5.

Career Opportunities for Graduates of The Doctoral Program

A non-licensure Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Counseling prepares graduates for a wide range of leadership roles across multiple sectors, not just K-12 administration. The degree's focus is on organizational leadership, data-driven decision-making, and change management makes it valuable in higher education, corporate, non-profit, and government settings.

Graduates of the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Counseling program are prepared for the following roles and responsibilities:

Advanced Clinical Practice: Enhancing skills in behavior health, mental health services, and specialized counseling areas, often with a focus on holistic wellness.

Counselor Education and Faculty Roles: Preparing to teach in higher education, training counselors, and working as counselor educators.

Clinical Supervision: Training to supervise other counselors, which involves in-depth knowledge of ethical, legal, and clinical supervisory methods.

Leadership in Schools and Community Organizations: Developing, planning, and implementing counseling programs in K-12 schools, and community organizations.

Research and Policy making: Conducting research to inform counselor education, studying social and psychological issues, and creating policies at local, state, and federal levels.

Program Evaluation: Evaluating counselor intervention programs and counselor performance.

The applied research and leadership skills gained from a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Counseling are applicable to many other specialized fields.

Forms to be completed by students applying to the Amberton University Doctor of Education in Counseling Program

All required forms are available on the Amberton University website.

- Application for Admission to Amberton University
- Doctor of Education in Counseling Application
- Required Application Materials as listed in this Student Handbook
- Program Handbook Signature Page
- Application for Re-admission, if necessary, due to a lapse in enrollment outside of the Continuous Enrollment Requirement listed in this Student Handbook.