

MFT Practicum Qualifying Exams-Guidelines (2011/2012)

Rationale

One of the advantages you have of being a student in BSSD's MFT program is the good reputation that students going before you have gained with a number of practicum sites in the county. Every year, several sites request more of our students to fill their practicum trainee positions. This reputation has been earned partially because of the level of preparation for doing relational therapy that our students bring with them into the start of their practicum year. The Practicum Qualifying Exams have been developed specifically for this purpose. They have also been designed to help our beginning trainees to feel more confident and thereby less anticipatory anxiety about seeing clients.

Students begin practicum one year or more after they studied MFT theories so the review of these theories prior to starting supervised clinical experience is very helpful. Though it might be ideal to have this exam more comprehensively cover the MFT curriculum, the program has decided to limit the coverage to only theories of family therapy. Not all students prior to earlier exam dates have taken all of the other courses.

The Exams

There are two one-hour exams, one in objective multiple-choice format and one in essay format. Both exams approach students' various types of knowledge of MFT theories and offer students different ways to reveal the depth and breadth of their understanding.

Objective PQE

The 50 multiple-choice questions in this test cover a wide variety of general knowledge as well as application of theories in clinical contexts and clinical cases. Be prepared to respond to questions that may address all of the listed theories. Most of the exam's questions will focus on the major theories (**in bold as listed on page 2**). Please know that questions are never formed with the intent to "trick" students. They are designed to measure various levels of knowledge and ability to apply that knowledge. The following three sample questions are actually taken from recent exams. Note that these are only samples and are not intended to indicate every type of multiple-choice question used in the PQE.

- S-1 Experiential family therapists attempt to
- a. strengthen family boundaries against individuation
 - b. encourage the influence of family myths
 - c. decrease the impact of mystification on children's development
 - d. all of the above
 - e. none of the above
- S-2 Nathan Ackerman and Melanie Klein are most closely associated with
- a. psychodynamic family therapy
 - b. family systems therapy
 - c. structural family therapy
 - d. experiential family therapy
 - e. none of the above

- S-3 Parents decided to remove the chore of clearing the dinner table when their son comes to dinner the first time he is called. This is an example of
- positive reinforcement
 - the Premack principle
 - negative reinforcement
 - social reinforcement
 - none of the above

Essay PQE

The essay PQE is designed for students to show their depth and breadth of knowledge of between two and four MFT theories. The essay exam will always provide choices. In some cases students will choose one of two or two of three distinct essay items. Sometimes students will select one to four theories from a list to write about in one item. Some items request comparisons between selected theories on a variety of aspects or dimensions (e. g., philosophical basis, underlying concept of humanity, view of pathology, family dynamics, application to a case example, etc.). Other items request the student to discuss selected MFT theories regarding the theories' systemic relationship with current or historical psychosocial contexts, your family of origin (FOO), why you are choosing to do practicum therapy from a particular theory, diversity issues, etc.

Theories

The objective and essay exams will be comprised of items only on the following list of theories. Each exam may or may not include items on all of the theories. Be especially well prepared to respond to items on the more major theories (those in **bold font**). Note that some of the bold theories began as a single theory and have developed into two or more theories.

Bowen Family Systems Therapy

Psychoanalytic Family Therapies

including but not limited to:

Object Relations Family Therapy

Strategic Family Therapies including

but not limited to:

The MRI Approach

The Milan Model

Cognitive-Behavioral Family Therapies

including but not limited to:

Behavioral Couples Therapy

Cognitive-Behavioral Family

Therapy

Gottman Method Couples Therapy

Functional Family Therapy

Structural Family Therapy

Narrative Therapy

Collaborative Therapy

Solution-Based Therapies including but not limited to:

Solution-Focused Therapy

Solution-Focused Brief Therapy

Solution-Oriented Therapy

Experiential Family Therapies including but not limited to:

Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy

Internal Family Systems Therapy

Symbolic-Experiential Therapy

The Satir Growth Model

Integrative Models including but not limited to:

The Narrative Solutions Approach

Integrative Couples Therapy

The Metaframeworks Model

Integrated Problem-Centered Therapy

Exam Logistics

The five exams are scheduled as follows.

Wednesday, September 21, 2011 – Room 207

Wednesday, November 16, 2011 – Room 207

Thursday, January 19, 2012 – Room 208

Thursday, March 29, 2012 – Room 208

Thursday, May 10, 2012 – Room 208

7:00 – 8:00pm and 8:00 – 9:00pm

(room subject to change)

Students are encouraged to thoroughly prepare for the exams, as passing both tests is a requirement for admission to practicum. Students will have up to **three opportunities per academic year** to pass both the objective exam and the essay exam. Please note that you may sit for a maximum of three of the five test dates listed above.

ESL students and students with diagnosed disabilities may have special accommodations by **prior** arrangement with the MFT Program Administrative Assistant. Please inform the MFT Program Administrative Assistant ASAP if disability-related accommodations are needed. Please contact the instructor as soon as possible if disability-related accommodations are needed. Accommodations for students with documented disabilities are set up through the office of Disability Services. Contact Disability Services at 651-638-6833. You may visit www.bethel.edu/disability for further, detailed information.

To register for the exam:

- Complete, submit and **have accepted by the MFT practicum coordinator and MFT program administrator**, an electronic copy of the *Practicum Self-Assessment Form*. Self-assessment forms are due at least **one month** prior to the date on which you plan to take the PQE. Any self-assessments submitted after the due date will not be accepted for that examination date
- Contact Laura Simpson, MFT administrative assistant (lcs53974@bethel.edu or 619.325.5226) to register for one or both exams.

In order to pass the PQE, students must receive a minimum score of **70%** on the objective and the essay exams. The exams are scored separately. If both exams are attempted on a given date and only one is passed, only the exam that was not passed needs to be taken on a later date.

Preparation Guidelines

The PQE's are not easy exams. Nor are they excessively difficult. A good number of students pass both exams on their first attempt. However, many students are required to take one or both exams more than once in order to receive the minimum pass rate of 70%. Failure to pass often results from lack of preparation, misreading items, inadequate time management during the exams, limiting study too narrowly, attempting to know everything thoroughly, taking too little time to

carefully read items, and being too brief when writing essay responses. Be assured that it is extremely rare that a student is not able to pass both exams in three attempts during a given year. Though students are not afforded the option to view failed exams, they are strongly encouraged to meet with their advisor, the practicum coordinator or the MFT program administrator to discuss their exam-preparation and exam-taking strategy.

It is advised that students focus their study most heavily on the theories in **bold font**. However, students should also be sure that they are conversant regarding the other theories. Though there are many books, journal articles and other sources available, it is recommended that the greatest amount of time be invested in reviewing and studying MF504 and MF505 class notes and the following two texts.

Gehart, D. (2010). *Mastering competencies in family therapy: A practical approach to theories and clinical case documentation*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Nichols, M. P. (2010). *Family therapy: Concepts and methods* (9th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson. (Use the latest edition available to you.)

The MFT program is also continuing to develop its collection of training media. These items can be checked out one at a time for up to three days. Study groups of students can also check them out one at a time for viewing on campus. See the MFT administrative assistant to check out media.

If possible, create your study plan months prior to your anticipated test dates. Do you best prepare alone or in a group? Set your study schedule in advance, specifying weeks, days and times. Be as realistic as you can. We want you to succeed and we want you to be as prepared as possible for an enjoyable, satisfying and successful practicum experience.