



COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY  
DOCTORAL PROGRAM

MISSION, AIMS, AND COMPETENCIES

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Department of Educational Psychology  
University of Kansas

## **COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

The philosophy and conceptual model guiding the doctoral program is that of the scientist-practitioner and that of counseling psychology having a basic educational, developmental, and preventive orientation in providing health service to diverse populations. The program is designed to offer broad and general doctoral education and training that includes preparation in health service psychology (HSP). Specifically, our program is shaped to reflect the following major characteristics that are specified by our accreditation body, the American Psychological Association's Commission on Accreditation:

- a. Integration of empirical evidence and practice. Practice is evidence-based, and evidence is practice-informed.
- b. Training is sequential, cumulative, graded in complexity, and designed to prepare students for practice or further organized training.
- c. The program engages in actions that indicate respect for and understanding of cultural and individual differences and diversity.

The doctoral program in counseling psychology is designed for full-time students who can expect to complete all coursework requirements within a three- to five-year time period. The average length of the program from start to completion (over the past several years) is 5-6 years. Normally, a student who enters with a master's degree in counseling can expect to complete all coursework and comprehensive exams within four years, with additional time spent completing the year-long internship and dissertation. Students entering without a master's degree in counseling should expect to spend an additional year to two in the program. Students are required to have a dissertation proposal approved before applying for internship. Part-time enrollment, while permitted on a very limited basis, is strongly discouraged. Under current Standards of Accreditation for Health Service Psychology (SoA), promulgated by APA's Commission on Accreditation, students completing an accredited program in counseling psychology are required to be enrolled full time in graduate study for a period of three years—two of which must be in the program awarding the doctoral degree.

On a yearly basis, the program admits between 6-8 students and expects about that number to be graduated over the course of an academic year. Students have sought and obtained a variety of internship placements that reflect the variety of professional goals and interests of our students. In the recent past few years, the majority of students have completed the internship at various Veterans Administration Medical Centers nationwide, university counseling centers nationwide, and community medical centers nationwide.

### **Training Mission and Philosophy**

The stated mission of the Counseling Psychology doctoral program at the University of Kansas is as follows: "*The counseling psychology doctoral program in the Department of Educational Psychology has as its mission the preparation of counseling psychologists as educators, practitioners, researchers, and leaders who facilitate and promote the healthy personal, interpersonal, educational, and vocational development of the individuals they serve and enhance the environments in which those individuals function*".

Given this mission, our longstanding orientation has been the training of competent health service providers who are prepared and qualified to practice as counseling psychologists in a wide variety of settings. The program curriculum provides a substantive, balanced, emphasis in counseling and psychological theory and research, research methods, and clinical training in applied counseling skills. The program is neither designed nor intended for those students who are interested in becoming only practitioners, only theoreticians, or only researchers. As a faculty, we view these areas as intimately enhancing each other, and the program has been designed accordingly.

In addition, we aspire to train psychologists who are able to identify and integrate their own strengths and passions into an area consistent with the specialty of counseling psychology. Finally, we aspire to do this within an atmosphere of teaching and learning that respects individual and cultural diversity, is characterized more by cooperation and collaboration than by competition, and that allows students to develop into lifelong learners committed to the development of individual strengths and professional collaboration.

### **Educational Aims and Expected Student Competencies**

The counseling psychology program at the University of Kansas is administered to meet our stated mission via three overarching aims:

**Aim I: The program produces graduates who are multiculturally competent scientist-practitioner health service psychologists.**

**Aim II: The program produces graduates who have found a particular path within the specialty of Counseling Psychology, about which they are both competent and passionate.**

**Aim III: The program produces graduates who are lifelong learners committed to the development of individual strengths and professional collaboration by providing a positive professional learning environment characterized by cooperation and respect.**

For each aim, there are specific student competencies that our students are expected to acquire through training.

**Aim I: The program produces graduates who are multiculturally competent scientist-practitioner health service psychologists.**

**COMPETENCY #1. Graduates are capable of synthesizing and integrating psychological theory, research, and practice.**

COMPETENCY 1a: Students demonstrate an appropriate mastery of the bases of scientific and professional psychology.

COMPETENCY 1b: Students display a commitment to staying current in the literature in their professional or scholarly area.

COMPETENCY 1c: Students conceptualize cases based on sound theory and research.

COMPETENCY 1d: Students display knowledge of empirically-supported treatments and other evidence-based practice.

This most fundamental objective of the training model requires that students acquire content expertise and applied skills in both scientific and practical arenas. The goal is to integrate theory, research, and practice within a multicultural framework in courses, supervised practica, and research activity. Whether in the classroom or clinic, students are expected to demonstrate their ability to effectively combine theory and empirical data to guide their counseling practice.

There are a number of ways in which the requirements and structure of the program attempt to facilitate this integration. First, students are subjected to a rigorous academic curriculum, built upon the bases of psychology (its history and systems, its science of the biological, cognitive/affective, and social bases of behavior), and the application of those bases to the practice of professional counseling psychology. Much of the curriculum is sequenced to build upon those bases. The early courses on theory and practice (EPSY 742 for bachelor degree students and EPSY 952 for students entering with master's degrees) contain considerable content on efficacy and process research. Research training in various forms, such as developing test critiques (EPSY 830) or reading several kinds of research reviews on therapy (EPSY 952), are examples of how research material is combined with theoretical/practice material in various courses.

Finally, integration of these three basic scientist-practitioner functions occurs in Advanced Practicum I and II (EPSY 948 and EPSY 949) through which students are taught how to monitor and evaluate client change. Being able to document and evaluate their counseling work, including whether clinical goals are being achieved through the use of sensitive and appropriate assessment measures, is an example of such integration. Practicum instructors typically require and evaluate students' practice of searching the literature for any Evidence Based Treatments or for other Evidence Based Practice guidelines for clients they are seeing in practicum. Presenting cases, either in practicum or other practice-related courses (e.g., EPSY 890, EPSY 954) gives students the opportunity to combine their developing theoretical knowledge with the realities they are finding in their applied work.

Assessment of students' competence with respect to synthesizing and integrating psychological theory, research, and practice occurs throughout the program. Student performance in EPSY 890 and 952, on their comprehensive examinations, and in their design of research projects are the primary mechanisms for the assessment of student competence in this area. Students are also evaluated specifically on these competencies through the Annual Review process.

**COMPETENCY #2. Graduates are knowledgeable about and capable of generating original research and scholarship.**

COMPETENCY 2a : Students can write a critical review of the literature in an area within psychology.

COMPETENCY 2b : Students can design and carry out an empirical study alone or as a member of a research team.

COMPETENCY 2c : Students can complete an independent study in the form of the dissertation.

To ensure that students have sufficient expertise in research design and statistics, the training program requires that all students complete a research core comprised of courses in statistics, measurement, design, and computer applications.

Many courses in the program (e.g. EPSY 846, EPSY 952, EPSY 954, EPSY 955) require students to write (alone or in small teams) critical reviews of the literature, often leading to research proposals. Students are also required to enroll in three, one-hour research practica with an EPSY faculty member (EPSY 901), starting in their first or second year. A first enrollment might see a student joining a faculty member's research team, participating in the team's discussion of one or several ongoing projects, and assisting in the collection and coding of data. Subsequent semesters of enrollment should see gradually more responsibility taken by the student for a particular project, typically culminating in the student taking on primary responsibility for a project, perhaps directing the work of other members of the research team in data collection and analysis, and presenting the findings at a national conference, most often the APA convention. One goal of this progression is that the student will gain skill and efficacy for exploring research problems for potential dissertation topics. Students are required to complete all of the coursework in the research area with a grade of B- or better prior to being authorized to take the doctoral comprehensive examination.

Assessment of students' competence with respect to generating original research and scholarship occurs throughout the program. Student performance in EPSY 846, 952, 954, 955, on their comprehensive examinations, and in their design of research projects (especially via EPSY 901) are the primary mechanisms for the assessment of student competence in this area. Students are also evaluated specifically on these competencies through the Annual Review process.

**COMPETENCY #3. Graduates are knowledgeable about and clinically competent in the areas of assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and supervision and consultation.**

COMPETENCY 3a: Students can conceptualize and diagnose cases.

COMPETENCY 3b: Students can write integrative psychological reports.

COMPETENCY 3c: Students can effectively deliver interventions.

COMPETENCY 3d: Students can demonstrate a working knowledge of and beginning skills in clinical supervision and consultation.

Within our scientist-practitioner training model, we work to instill in students a perspective on the process of clinical practice that is not especially unique from that of the process of conducting scientific research: the counselor sifts through material the client presents and forms hypotheses about (a) the client's strengths and issues, (b) how best to intervene, and (c) the ways in which the client might respond to interventions. The counselor tests hypotheses

within the practice setting, and revises the hypotheses as a result of the client's response. This process of hypothesis formulation, testing, and revision recycles throughout the clinical process. We view the integration of the process of assessment (structured and clinical), diagnosis, and treatment/intervention as foundational to this clinical process.

Because some students enter our doctoral program having previously completed a master's degree in psychology at another university, some master's-level courses in assessment, diagnosis, and treatment may have been satisfied prior to entry into our doctoral program. Whether completed in our program or in previous (but recent) graduate studies, all students are required to complete as a part of their doctoral program, coursework in principles of educational and psychological measurement, psychological assessment (standardized and non-standardized assessment of personality, vocational interests, achievement, aptitudes, and cognitive/intellectual abilities), psychopathology and psychodiagnosis, and therapeutic interventions (theories and techniques). Cultural competencies are incorporated into each of these courses so that students can choose appropriate assessments and treatments. Students' knowledge and competency in these core areas are assessed through course examinations, comprehensive examinations, and through practicum and internship evaluations.

Students' ability to conceptualize and diagnose cases is developed most directly in EPSY 890: Diagnosis and Psychopathology. That course is modeled after the ASPPB recommendations for state examining boards offering the oral examination. Throughout the semester, students consider cases (often drawn from DSM casebooks) and must articulate their thought processes about possible diagnoses, reasons for and against those judgments, deliver a DSM or ICD diagnosis, and review any evidence based treatments for the diagnosis. Then they are required to consider how a change in the diversity status of the individual would impact their consideration of assessment, diagnosis, or treatment. Finally, they are given an ethical dilemma that might come up in the case and are required to respond to that. The final examination for the course requires all of this in a one-on-one meeting with the instructor.

The writing of integrative psychological reports is learned across several semesters, with a short report due in EPSY 846, other reports due in EPSY 830, and full reports in EPSY 951 and EPSY 885. Since many of our best practicum sites do not require a great deal of formal assessment, many students choose to take elective field experiences in assessment.

The program dedicates a significant portion of formal coursework to learning the theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy interventions. Many courses combine didactics/discussion with hands on role playing or work in the Center for Psychoeducational Services (CPS), where closed-circuit viewing and videotaping are available. Of course, audio/video recording is available at most practicum sites.

Finally, over the past few years the program has significantly increased its attention to supervision and consultation. In addition to the required didactic course (EPSY 945) all students are required to take 2 semesters of EPSY 996: College Teaching Experience in the Supervision of Psychotherapy. The title is a vestige of a SOE requirement for all doctoral candidates, one that we have been able to shape to fit the most common of all teaching experiences of applied psychologists, that of supervision and consultation. As a part of that course, advanced doctoral students consult with 2-3 master's level students in their first practicum. Their consultation is then supervised by the practicum course instructor.

Assessment of students' competence with respect to assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and supervision and consultation occurs throughout the program. Student performance in EPSY 830, 890, 945, evaluative feedback on students' field-based experiences (practica, supervised

field experiences), on their comprehensive examinations, and in their design of research projects are the primary mechanisms for the assessment of student competence in this area. Students are also evaluated specifically on these competencies through the Annual Review process.

**COMPETENCY #4. Graduates understand and embrace the importance of cultural and individual diversity in their clinical and scholarly work.**

COMPETENCY 4a: Students can synthesize the extant literature on diversity and contextual issues (culture, gender, sexual orientation, etc.).

COMPETENCY 4b: Students can conceptualize cases considering contextual issues.

COMPETENCY 4c: In their practical work, students demonstrate awareness of contextual issues, and commitment to APA's Multicultural Guidelines.

The program recognizes and values counseling psychology's tradition of professional awareness of and sensitivity to individual and cultural diversity (Gelso, Williams & Fretz, 2014), and it tries to assure that its graduates leave the program with an appreciation of individual diversity in its many forms (e.g., gender, age, disability, ethnicity/race, religious orientation, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, and national origin) and a sensitivity and awareness of the implications of individual and cultural diversity for their clinical and scholarly work as counseling psychologists. All students in the program are required to take EPSY 875 Understanding Cultural and Individual Differences in Professional Psychology, which has been designed not only to sensitize and educate our students to diversity issues in counseling psychology, but also to provide students with a foundation of empirical research on individual differences and cultural diversity factors as they affect the process and outcome of counseling, the utilization of services, and the process of conducting psychological research. Since their dissemination in 2002, APA's Multicultural Guidelines have been examined in depth in this particular course and in EPSY 880, and elements of the guidelines are discussed in other courses as well.

Facilitating students' sensitivity to individual and cultural differences in their clinical and research training fundamentally must be incorporated throughout the program; and consequently, such matters are discussed and woven into coursework and practica throughout the program--in assessment, psychodiagnosis, intervention, and research design. Additionally, in their professional relationships and professional activities, faculty attempt to model respect for and a valuing of individual and cultural diversity. In their work with students--in classes, in clinical supervision, and in research--faculty encourage and assist students in identifying and examining potential ways in which contextual issues may be impacting their clients and their interactions with those clients.

Assessment of students' competence with respect to awareness of and sensitivity to such contextual factors occurs throughout the program. Student performance in EPSY 875, evaluative feedback on students' field-based experiences (practica, supervised field experiences), on their comprehensive examinations, and in their design of research projects are the primary mechanisms for the assessment of student competence in this area. Students are also evaluated specifically on these competencies through the Annual Review process.

**COMPETENCY #5. Graduates are capable of identifying and responding appropriately to legal and ethical issues that may arise in their roles as counseling psychologists.**

COMPETENCY 5a: Students have a working knowledge of APA's Ethical Standards.

COMPETENCY 5b: Students are able to apply ethical principles to theoretical and actual situations.

The program recognizes that ethical considerations and legal issues (e.g., licensing, business and clinical liability) and dilemmas (e.g., privacy, duty to warn/protect) confront counseling psychologists on an increasingly frequent basis. During their first year in the program, all students complete EPSY 880 (or an equivalent course if coming in with a Master's degree). In addition, all students, regardless of previous coursework, complete EPSY 918 Current Issues in Counseling Psychology, during their first semester of graduate study in the program. This course serves as a formal introduction to current scientific, professional, and training issues within counseling psychology.

Notwithstanding the importance of EPSY 880, it is the belief of the program faculty that ethics (and ethical decision making) fundamentally must be incorporated into all aspects of the program; and consequently, content pertinent to ethical standards, ethical decision making, state licensing standards of professional conduct, and various professional guidelines for psychologists are discussed and woven into coursework and practica throughout the program. In their professional relationships and professional activities, faculty attempt to model appropriate ethical and professional conduct. In their work with students--in classes, in clinical supervision, and in research--faculty encourage and assist students in identifying and examining potential ethical dilemmas and assist them in applying ethical principles, standards, and professional guidelines in achieving appropriate resolutions to these dilemmas.

Student awareness of clinical and research ethical dilemmas, their sensitivity to ethical issues, and their ability to think them through (i.e., ethical decision making) is documented through program coursework evaluations, field-based clinical experience evaluations (e.g., practicum, field experience, and internship evaluations), and comprehensive examinations. Students are also evaluated specifically on these competencies through the Annual Review process.

**Aim II: The program produces graduates who have found a particular path within the specialty of Counseling Psychology, about which they are both competent and passionate.**

**COMPETENCY #6. Graduates have a clear sense of professional identity as counseling psychologists.**

COMPETENCY 6a: Students can summarize the literature on the history and professional identity of Counseling Psychology.

COMPETENCY 6b: Students understand and embrace the distinctiveness of counseling psychology as a specialty.

The APA, through its Commission for the Recognition of Specialties and Proficiencies in Professional Psychology (CRSPPP) recognizes a number of “specialties” within professional psychology—counseling psychology being among them (see: American Psychological Association, 1999). Despite overlapping roles and functions with Clinical Psychology and School Psychology, counseling psychology remains distinctive in its history, clientele,

orientation to assessment and appraisal, application of interventions, and general professional orientation.

The program values counseling psychology's distinctiveness as a specialty within applied psychology, and throughout the program tries to impart to our students a clear sense of what counseling psychology is and what it means to be a counseling psychologist. Students are initially introduced to the evolution of counseling in the proseminar (EPSY 918) which is taken in their first semester of enrollment in the program. Forming an identity as a counseling psychologist is reinforced most especially through the students' practicum experiences (EPSY 842, 948, 949). Irrespective of whether students' practicum placements are in a college or university counseling center, mental health clinic, VA medical center, or state hospital, we strive to help them focus on facilitating both the short-term learning and long-term development of the clients they serve, and to be oriented toward helping their clients and client settings develop humane and effective ways of behaving.

Recognizing that assessing and treating psychopathology is a professional fact of life for practitioners in counseling psychology, we nevertheless orient work with our students to focus on facilitating and cultivating the personal, interpersonal, educational and vocational development of the clients they serve (whatever their context, e.g., school, counseling center, family, medical center, state hospital, etc.) and the personal strengths and assets that clients can use in their lives, and on enhancing those environments in which they function. We believe the argument is not about where the line is between normal and abnormal, not about the field's focus on strengths vs. pathology, but on our commitment to embracing, in a hopeful and positive way, the whole of the human experience.

The program has a strong and active Counseling Psychology Student Organization that receives support from the program and generally receives funding from the University Student Senate. Funding for the organization has been used to bring in guest speakers, support a newsletter, and occasionally publish a student journal, The Journal of Contemporary Counseling. The program believes that CPSO serves a very important function in helping to build students' professional identities as multiculturally competent scientist-practitioner counseling psychologists. Through colloquia, students are introduced to the work, research, and scholarship of fellow students and the faculty. Through invited presentations of mental health practitioners in the field and of state and regional psychological associations, students become acquainted with the roles and functions of psychologists and other health care providers practicing in the community.

The program's success in meeting its objective of helping students develop a clear sense of professional identity as counseling psychologists is assessed through coursework performance, practicum performance, students' performance on their written and oral comprehensive exams, students' success in attaining internships and first positions, and alumni performance on the EPPP examination.

**Objective #7. Graduates have begun to develop an identifiable area of professional interest and expertise within counseling psychology.**

COMPETENCY 7a: Students can articulate their strengths, and how those can be utilized within their chosen area of interest.

COMPETENCY 7b: Students can demonstrate knowledge and currency in their area of interest.

Although the primary objective of the training program is to prepare competent generalists in counseling psychology, the program faculty acknowledge that every student comes into the program with their own set of strengths and passions, as well as objectives they wish to develop and pursue within their graduate programs, and the faculty expect that students will begin to identify and develop some expertise in these areas.

Structured experiences are provided in coursework that facilitates students becoming aware of their strengths, interests, and personal style, and how those might be utilized in their graduate work and beyond. For example, EPSY 846 requires an extensive case study built around the student as the subject of the case. Care is taken to allow students to reveal as much or as little as they are comfortable with to the instructor and to others in the class, and students invariably rate the self-study as the highlight of the course.

Despite the fact that program requirements are quite structured, the program strives to support students in their pursuit of personal interests through the provision of an elective core, GRA and GTA positions, and a variety of practicum sites. In addition to the core courses in counseling psychology, psychology, and research, students develop a set of elective courses which serves two general objectives: (a) to permit students to develop their expertise in some area(s) of particular professional interest, and (b) to supplement work taken in other core areas of the program. The elective work may be taken in any department and is managed through agreements between the student and the advisor. Students are required to declare a special area of expertise and are examined in this area in a section of the doctoral comprehensive exam.

**Aim III: The program produces graduates who are lifelong learners committed to the development of individual strengths and professional collaboration by providing a positive professional learning environment characterized by cooperation and respect.**

**Objective #8: The program provides a supportive environment that respects and encourages individual student strengths, goals, and life balance.**

COMPETENCY 8a: Students demonstrate a commitment to their ongoing personal and professional development.

COMPETENCY 8b: Students are able to maintain an appropriate level of well-being as they matriculate through the program.

COMPETENCY 8c: Students are aware of their strengths and areas of development as they matriculate through the program.

Clearly this goal is the most aspirational of the three overarching goals of the program. Our program aspires to train psychologists within an atmosphere of teaching and learning that respects individual and cultural diversity, is characterized more by cooperation and collaboration than by competition, and that allows students, faculty, and staff to maintain a sense of healthy balance in their lives. The growing awareness nationally of the problems of impaired professionals requires training programs to not only address this issue didactically, but to model healthy functioning both in persons and in systems.

From their very first course in the program (EPSY 918) students are allowed to openly discuss the difficulties of training to be, and eventually practice as, psychologists. Students are aware that in some programs, seeking counseling or psychotherapy is considered a sign of

weakness, thus our program faculty and published materials make it clear that students should feel encouraged to seek such services at any time in the program. EPSY 918 allows for discussion of how to address peers who may be experiencing difficulties or exhibiting unhealthy behaviors. While these are typically very sensitive issues, opening lines of communication with students is an important first step.

The Annual Review process is perhaps the key ingredient both in assessment and in implementation of this set of competencies. Each year students are afforded the opportunity to outline the gains they have made over the past year, and to set goals for themselves for the upcoming year. At the same time, the faculty rate each student on the full range of expected competencies. Those ratings go both to the Director of Training as well as to the student's advisor, who presents the student's review to the faculty at a closed meeting. The advisor then writes the student's Annual Review letter which is followed by a meeting between the student and the advisor. This meeting is primarily formative in nature, allowing a discussion of the strengths and goals of the student, but also includes a discussion of any areas where the student is behind schedule or below expectations. When significant deficiencies are noted, the faculty will develop a specific written remediation plan, detailing any interventions, a time frame, and a clear set of assessment expectations. This plan and subsequent documentation become a part of the student's file. Assessment of this Objective is through the Annual Review process, through practica evaluations, and through the periodic program reviews that survey current students and alumni.

**Objective #9: Students display professionalism in their relationships with faculty, staff, and peers that will enable them to flourish in multiple career settings.**

COMPETENCY 9a: Students demonstrate respect for collaboration in training and in their professional settings.

COMPETENCY 9b: Students demonstrate excellent interpersonal skills with others, including members of the faculty, supervisors, peers, staff, and supervisees.

COMPETENCY 9c: Students are responsive to input from faculty, supervisors, and peers.

As noted above, our program places a significant emphasis on creating a healthy learning environment. Central to that environment is healthy communication, and a key marker of that environment is collaboration, as seen in classroom behavior, in outside projects, and in the behavior of students in their various professional roles. From the first interview with each prospective doctoral program applicant, collaboration is emphasized as a hallmark of the program, but specifically among the student cohort. While it is relatively difficult to be admitted to the program, the faculty believes and strives to convey to students that once here there is more value on collaboration than on competition.

Collaboration is built into several courses (e.g., EPSY 830, 844, 846, 890, 954) and all practica. Formative feedback is solicited from students for their peers' formal presentations in these and other classes. In many courses, assignments are given that require collaboration and work on projects inside and outside of class. Advanced students have the opportunity to consult with Master's level students in their initial practicum, testing both students' abilities to give and to receive feedback. The ability to work in interdisciplinary settings is increasingly required in today's healthcare marketplace, and the variety of practicum sites available to students in the program requires students to fit into existing team structures. Assessment of this Objective is

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through the Annual Review process, through practica evaluations, and through the periodic program reviews that survey current students and alumni.

In fulfilling our program aims, and in compliance with APA Standards of Accreditation, the program offers a curriculum within which all students are expected to acquire and demonstrate (through course examinations, the doctoral comprehensive examinations, and practica) a substantial understanding of and competence in both Discipline Specific Knowledge (DSK) and Profession-Wide Competencies (PWC).

DSK knowledge is ensured through educational experiences in foundational areas of psychology (biological, cognitive/affective, social, and individual bases of behavior, plus history and systems of psychology). PWCs are achieved through course work and other learning activities in the following areas:

- i. Research
- ii. Ethical and legal standards
- iii. Individual and cultural diversity
- iv. Professional values, attitudes, and behaviors
- v. Communication and interpersonal skills
- vi. Assessment
- vii. Intervention
- viii. Supervision
- ix. Consultation and interprofessional/interdisciplinary skills