The practice of competency-based learning, as well as the articulation of entry-to-practice competencies, has been an area of focus in counselling and psychology for quite a long time. One of the distinct advantages of online learning is that we have an opportunity in GCAP to create a program, rather than a set of courses. What this means is that our courses are all interconnected and build on each other in a way that is systematic, planful, and purposeful, so that they lead you towards the outcomes that we want you to attain when you have completed the program.

Our purpose in doing this is to ensure that you have the competencies that you need to engage in professional practice and that you have the option to meet the entry-to-practice competencies of various regulatory bodies in counselling and counselling psychology. We have spent a lot of time in this program looking at what it means to embrace a competency-based learning model and then to clearly articulate the competencies that we all agree need to be reflected in our courses.

You notice on this page that there are two different types of learning outcomes for the program. The transdisciplinary program outcomes are the same outcomes that you would expect to attain if you took any graduate program at Athabasca University or any graduate program at another university across the country. The purpose of these transdisciplinary program outcomes is to ensure that you have the foundational competencies of someone who comes to the workplace with a set of skills that employers would expect from those who have completed a masters degree.

The second group of competencies are the disciplinary competencies. These are the competencies that have been articulated within counselling and counselling psychology. In order to create our list of disciplinary competencies, we did a careful analysis of regulatory bodies across the country, of accreditation standards, and of other written documentation and emerging principles within codes of ethics, the professional literature, and so on, to come up with a consensus as a program as to what we felt were the disciplinary competencies that were most important for you to attain.

If we scroll down to the first link on this page, we can take a look at the overall transdisciplinary program outcomes. You will see that there are seven program level transdisciplinary competencies.

1. **Disciplinary competence** Demonstrate entry-to-practice proficiency with counselling psychology disciplinary competencies.
2. **Knowledge acquisition** Evaluate critically and integrate knowledge from a range of scholarly sources and disciplines.
3. **Knowledge application** Analyze critically, synthesize, and competently apply knowledge to academic and professional tasks and roles.
4. **Knowledge transfer** Communicate and share knowledge effectively, professionally, honestly, and with integrity.
5. **Leadership & interpersonal relationships** Model respect, professionalism, and socially responsible leadership in relationships with individuals and systems.
6. **Professional capacity & autonomy** Assume responsibility for your own learning, and engage in reflective practice to support continued competency development.
7. **Digital competence** Capitalize effectively on technology for knowledge transfer, interpersonal communication, and collaboration.

Scrolling down in this table, each of these program level transdisciplinary outcomes has been broken down into course level outcomes. The reason we have done this is to make it easy to operationalize these program level outcomes within your courses and to be sure that we are actually teaching to these outcomes as you move through your program.

So for example, if you look at knowledge acquisition, you can see that there are a number of other course level competencies that feed into our understanding of the overall program outcome of knowledge acquisition. In order to be able to *evaluate critically and integrate knowledge from a range of scholarly sources and disciplines*, you need to *value interdisciplinary knowledge and promote interprofessional collaboration*. You also need to be able to *select appropriate information sources, including being able to discern the credibility of sources that are found on the internet* and to *evaluate critically the quality of research and scholarship*.

The disciplinary competencies are outlined in a similar way. In this case, we have 16 disciplinary competencies for the Master of Counselling program.

1. **Counselling models**. Analyze critically existing models of counselling and client change.
2. **Counselling Model implementation**. Apply theoretical lenses in a purposeful and systematic way in work with clients.
3. **Culture**. Acknowledge the ubiquitous nature of culture in counselling.
4. **Social justice**. Challenge social injustices, and critique their impact on client–counsellor social locations.
5. **Ethics & standards**. Evaluate critically and apply ethical and legal standards, principles, and guidelines.
6. **Ethical decision-making**. Articulate, critique, and apply a model of culturally responsive and socially just ethical decision making.
7. **Professional identity**. Embrace values-based practice as a foundation for professional identity.
8. **Responsive relationships**. Engage in evidence-based, culturally responsive, and socially just relational practices.
9. **Problems & preferences**. Implement counselling microskills and techniques, intentionally and responsively, to define client problems and identify preferred outcomes.
10. **Assessment**. Analyze critically, select, and apply appropriate assessment processes, tools, and techniques.
11. **Case conceptualization**. Collaborate with clients to apply multicultural, contextualized/systemic, and strengths-based lenses to case conceptualization.
12. **Responsive change processes**. Engage in evidence-based, culturally responsive, and socially just change processes.
13. **Goals & interventions**. Implement counselling techniques and strategies, intentionally and responsively, to co-construct goals and collaborate to facilitate change.
14. **Outcomes assessment**. Track and evaluate counselling progress and outcomes.
15. **Role of research/evaluation**: Analyze critically the scientific foundation of the counselling psychology profession.
16. **Research/evaluation processes**. Evaluate and apply the principles, processes, and steps involved in various approaches to research and evaluation.

We have organized these competencies into what we think is a logical flow for incremental learning as you move through the program. If you pay careful attention, you will notice that they also reflect the counselling process. In many cases, in terms of understanding the process of counselling, you would start by coming up with a foundational understanding of existing counselling models. You would look next at how you are going to implement those models in a purposeful and systematic way with your clients. You would have to attend to culture and social justice, which is a really strong focus within our program, to ensure that everything you do with clients is responsive to their particular lived experiences and sociocultural contexts. All of this occurs within an understanding of the ethics and standards of the profession and the ability to make ethical decisions as you encounter challenges moving through the counselling process. Each of these feeds into the way that you position yourself as a practitioner and the professional identity that you assume.

Once you have a sense of who you are as a practitioner, have the foundational understanding of counselling theories, can apply ethical, responsive, and culturally just practices, then we move you into the *how to* of counselling. We look at responsive relationships and how to establish an understanding of the problems and the preferences that clients bring to counselling, so that you can clearly articulate preferred outcomes. We look at assessment and how various assessment tools can feed into your understanding of client problems. We explore the ways in which counselling might be designed through case conceptualization to provide a multicultural, contextualized, and strength-based lens on how to collaboratively implement change with clients. We then introduce the concept of responsive change processes, which essentially means designing goals and interventions that are responsive to the needs of the particular client. It is also important to be able to track your progress within the counselling process and to articulate outcomes. More and more counselling organizations and funding bodies are looking for evidence that what we actually do is effective for clients. All of this is informed by the body of literature within counselling and counselling psychology. So we spend time in the program introducing you to the role of research and evaluation and counselling, and then offering insight into how you actually engage in research and evaluation. Some of you will use this learning to be strong consumers of the body of literature in counselling and counselling psychology, so that you can engage in evidence-based and supported practices with your clients. Others of you will take this a step farther and actively contribute to that body of literature by engaging in your own research, potentially through a thesis process.

Once again, each of these program level competencies is broken down into a number of course level competencies. If we look at the counselling models, in order to *analyze critically existing models of counselling and client change*, you have to be able to *reflect critically on the sociohistorical contextual foundations of prevailing counselling models*. You also need to be able to *analyze critically the evidence-based practice movement in counselling*.

I now want to give you a bit of a sense of how this competency framework that we've developed for the Master of Counselling program actually plays out in practice, as we develop courses and as you move through courses as part of your graduate program. I’m going to use GCAP 633 as an example.

In the introduction to every course, there is a link to program and course outcomes. If you scroll down within the content on that link, you will see disciplinary competencies and transdisciplinary program outcomes. If you open the link to disciplinary competencies, you will find a table that lists all of the assignments in the course and matches them to the program level and course level disciplinary competencies that are targeted in this particular course.

In this case, you can see that one of the assignments that you complete in this course is a cultural profile. The advantage of this layout is that you can immediately see that there are two core competencies that you are expected to demonstrate through this particular assignment.

Let's scroll down a little bit further. There is a risk-taking journal that you will be completing as a part of this course. You can quickly see that there are four disciplinary competencies that feed into that risk-taking journal. This gives you a sense of what it is that we are expecting you to accomplish through this particular task.

Now, let's look at the transdisciplinary program outcomes. You will see it the same table. If we look at the risk-taking journal again, you can see that one of the transdisciplinary program outcomes that you are expected to accomplish through that assignment is the demonstration of cognitive complexity. Moving down further you can see that there are also a number of transdisciplinary program outcomes related to leadership and interpersonal relationships that are included in the risk-taking journal. You are also expected to demonstrate professional capacity and autonomy as part of this assignment. You can then review the course level outcomes that are assessed through the risk-taking journal related to professional capacity and autonomy

I have now moved to the assignment page for GCAP 633. If I scroll down on this page, we can find the risk-taking journal. Opening that link, you will see a section that provides the assignment description. I am not going to look at that right now. You also see the assessment criteria. This is where you will see all of the disciplinary competencies and the transdisciplinary program outcomes appear again as you look at what is expected of you in this assignment.

So in this assignment, you are graded on a rubric, and your grade on the rubric will depend on how well you do on each of these program and course level disciplinary competencies. So for values-based practice, we have specified what would fall into each category of grade, and you are graded out of 10 for that particular competency. I’m going to keep scrolling down, and you will see the transdisciplinary program outcomes that are assessed through this assignment. In this case, as we saw in the introduction, cognitive complexity is assessed on the rubric. We also looked at professional capacity and autonomy, and you will see again the same items that were highlighted in the introduction to the course translated into the assignment rubric grading scale.

What this also means is that we have incrementally designed the learning within this course so that you are able to meet each of these competencies and outcomes. Then we assess them at the end in a way that is transparent, so that you can see how you are developing these competencies as you move through your program.

We have also mapped these competencies across courses. Let's take cognitive complexity, for example. There is quite a bit of emphasis in GCAP 633 on developing the skill of cognitive complexity. We hope that by the end of that particular course, you have a fairly strong tolerance for ambiguity and you are able to see beyond your own values, worldview, and sociocultural contexts. However, that is not the end of your learning around cognitive complexity. The same skill will be picked up and developed further in other courses as you move through the program. So as you move through the program, you are incrementally enhancing your competency with this particular program outcome. The same will be true of all of the program outcomes and disciplinary competencies.

I hope this video has given you a bit of a flavour of how we have designed the Master of Counselling program and the ways in which this benefits you as a student. When you get to the place of applying for licensure as a professional counsellor, a counselling therapist, or a counselling psychologist, you will be able to look back on your program and identify specifically where you attained the various competencies that may be asked for in the assessment of entry-to-practice competencies for that discipline. This will also give you a really strong foundation as you move out into professional practice to (a) know really clearly where your strengths are, and where your areas of continued competency may be; and (b) to be able to build on this solid foundation of both transdisciplinary program outcomes and disciplinary competencies.

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