



North Carolina Board of Licensed Professional Counselors

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NCBLPC Professional Brief

Content Area: Graduate Counseling Experience

Brief Overview/Description:

Graduate counseling experience (GCE) is clinical counseling work done while in a master's level training program in counseling and is gained during the practicum and internship coursework. Some applicants earn their graduate counseling experience as a doctoral learner and those cases will be examined on a case-by-case basis. Graduate counseling experience (GCE) is not gained through volunteer work that is outside of practicum and internship, although these experiences can strengthen a resume and marketability for post-graduation jobs. GCE is supervised by a university faculty member, who signs the [Verification of Graduate Counseling Experience](#).

GCE can also be supervised by a site supervisor, someone who provides supervision at the place where the field experience occurs. A site supervisor, however, cannot sign the Verification of Graduate Counseling Experience form (only the University Supervisor can sign). Applicants for licensure as a Licensed Professional Counselor Association (LPCA must complete a minimum of 300 hours of GCE in practicum and internship, but many counseling training programs incorporate over 600 hours into their programs. Again, these hours must be verified by the university supervisor. Hours beyond the minimum 300 hours of GCE may not be applied toward post-Master's supervised professional counseling experience. During the GCE, individuals will have both direct hours and indirect hours. Direct hours are those spent in direct contact with the client populations served by the practicum and internship sites. Indirect hours include paperwork such as intake and progress notes, assessment preparation, scheduling, and even consultation. As part of GCE, individuals will participate in group and individual/triadic supervision with a university supervisor/faculty member and supervision with a site supervisor (which may be group, individual, or both).

Resources:

NC General Statutes Article 24: Licensed Professional Counselors Act; CHAPTER 53 - BOARD OF LICENSED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS; NC Board of Licensed Professional Counselors website (www.ncblpc.org)

Key Legal Factors:

During GCE, individuals must disclose to clients who are served that the counselor is a graduate student and a counselor in training, including the fact that an supervisor will have access to session content. Some counseling settings and agencies have a standard informed consent to use and discuss with clients; during the initial session the informed consent should be reviewed during which the training status of the counselor is disclosed. Even if a standard informed consent is not used at the GCE setting/location, counselors-in-training will need to disclose this information to clients. Most counselors-in-training will likely be required by the training program to record sessions for supervision and must have written consent from clients prior to recording. Please note that a client may withdraw consent at any point without negative consequences or further discussion to try to persuade them to continue recording.

Real Issues to Consider:

All counselors-in-training should maintain their own log of GCE hours, both direct and indirect, as well as supervision received. For supervision, a record of individual/triadic and group supervision time on-site and that which is provided by

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your university supervisor should be maintained. It is a good idea to maintain GCE logs forever as these may be needed in the future if application for licensure in another state is made.

Graduate counseling experience does not apply towards the required 3,000 hours of Professional Counseling Experience required of an LPC Associate (LPCA) who is applying to become an LPC. It does, however, help you meet the course work requirements set forth by the Board for applying to become an LPCA.

Catch 22:

Individual graduate programs set the requirements of site supervisors, and this individual may or may not be eligible to supervisor post-Master's counseling experience after graduation if the counselor-in-training becomes employed at the location. For employment after graduation at the internship site, the supervisor will need to meet the requirements for supervisors set by the NC Board of Licensed Professional Counselors.

Summary Statement:

Graduate counseling experience (GCE) is gained during a graduate program and is supervised by a university supervisor and most likely a site supervisor. The university supervisor will verify the graduate counseling experience for application to become a LPCA.