

MEDICAL FAMILY THERAPY, PH.D.

Saint Louis University's doctorate in medical family therapy prepares students to work within an integrated health care setting in collaboration with medical and mental health professionals. SLU coursework focuses on theory, practice and research in the field of couple and family therapy, emphasizing intervention in primary care medical settings and as adjunct health providers in specialty care.

Curriculum Overview

The doctoral program involves a minimum of 51 credits of coursework beyond the master's degree, plus comprehensive examinations and original research culminating in the dissertation (12 credits). The Ph.D. has a clinical component in which students will be trained in mental health and medical settings as part of an integrated care team of health professionals. Students are required to complete a 9-to-12-month internship.

Fieldwork and Research Opportunities

Doctoral students engage in sustained, mentored research aligned with their scholarly interests and professional goals. Working closely with faculty advisors, students design and conduct original research that advances knowledge in medical family therapy and relational health.

Ph.D. candidates are expected to disseminate their scholarship through peer-reviewed publications and professional conference presentations, demonstrating the ability to contribute meaningfully to the field's evidence base and academic discourse.

Careers

Graduates of the Ph.D. program in medical family therapy are prepared for leadership roles in academic, clinical, and research settings. Career pathways include:

- Faculty positions in universities and academic medical centers
- Independent and collaborative research roles advancing relational and integrated behavioral health
- Clinical leadership positions in health care systems, medical centers and mental health organizations
- Private practice, consultation and program development in integrated care settings

The program equips graduates to contribute to scholarship, train future clinicians, and advance the integration of relational and behavioral health within health care systems.

Admission Requirements

A master's degree with a marriage and family therapy program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE) or a related mental health area with coursework equivalent to a COAMFTE-accredited program.

Application Requirements

- Online application and fee
- Transcript(s)

- Three letters of recommendation
- GRE scores
- Résumé
- Interview
- Professional goal statement
- Scholarship sample (e.g., thesis, manuscript, journal article)

Requirements for International Students

All Saint Louis University admission policies and requirements for domestic students apply to international students. International students applying to SLU must also meet the following additional requirements:

- Demonstrate English language proficiency (<https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/office-admission/undergraduate/english-language-proficiency/>)
- Academic records must include an English translation. Unofficial copies may be accepted in some cases for initial admission review, however official copies must be received prior to enrollment. Course-by-course transcript evaluations are accepted.

Students must submit financial documents to be issued an I-20 for their F-1 visa application. Proof of financial support must include:

- A letter of financial support from the person(s) or sponsoring agency funding the student's time at Saint Louis University
- A letter from the sponsor's bank verifying that the funds are available and will be so for the duration of the student's study at the University

Tuition

Tuition	Cost Per Credit
Graduate Tuition	\$1,450

Additional charges may apply. Other resources are listed below:

Information on Tuition and Fees (<https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/student-financial-services/tuition/>)

Miscellaneous Fees (<https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/student-financial-services/fees/>)

Information on Summer Tuition (<https://catalog.slu.edu/academic-policies/student-financial-services/tuition-summer-current/>)

Learning Outcomes

1. Graduates will be able to demonstrate an expanded knowledge of theoretical and clinical practice in MFT, medical family therapy and integrative care.
2. Graduates will be able to demonstrate advanced competency in clinical practice. Sub-objectives:
 - a. Admission, assessment and diagnosis
 - b. Treatment planning and case management
 - c. Therapeutic interventions
 - d. Legal issues, ethics and standards
 - e. Use of supervision and practicum
 - f. Social justice issues and self-awareness
3. Graduates will be able to demonstrate competency in a student-selected area of clinical specialization or expertise.
4. Graduates will be able to extend the knowledge base of MFT through original research and intellectual inquiry.

5. Graduates will be able to contribute to the field through the development of effective teaching skills.
6. Graduates will be able to attain basic competency in providing clinical supervision.
7. Graduates will be able to attain an increased cultural competence in working with diverse populations.
8. Graduates will be able to demonstrate personal and professional skills that promote social justice through involvement and leadership in their communities.
9. Graduates will be able to effectively communicate their values and demonstrate how they guide their personal and professional lives.

Requirements

Code	Title	Credits
MFT 6140	Interpretive Phenomenology	3
MFT 6500	The Neurobiology of Interpersonal Behavior	3
MFT 6690	Supervision in Family Therapy	3
MFT 6720	Integrative Care Practicum (taken over multiple semesters)	9
MFT 6730	Research Practicum (taken over multiple semesters for 4 credits)	1
MFT 6740	Theories and Models of Medical Family Therapy	3
MFT 6750	Practicum: Supervision of Marriage and Family Therapists	3
MFT 6760	Families, Health, and Illness	3
MFT 6770	Behavioral Medicine and Integrative Care	3
MFT 6795	Community Health and Health Policy	3
MFT 6825	Teaching Skills in Medicine	3
MFT 6830	Couple and Family Research in Healthcare	3
MFT 6870	Clinical Supervision (Advanced) (taken over multiple semesters)	2
MFT 6910	Doctoral Internship	3
MFT 6970	Advanced Research Topics in Medical Family Therapy	3
MFT 6990	Dissertation Research (taken over multiple semesters, 12hrs total)	0-6
Research Elective		3
Total Credits		66

Continuation Standards

Students must maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.00 in all graduate/professional courses.

Non-Course Requirements

Qualifying Examination and Defense

After completing a certain number of courses, the student must prepare for and successfully pass the doctoral qualifying examination.

Doctoral Qualifying Examination

The qualifying exam is a written examination. The written test shall occur over a five-day period (excluding weekends). The committee will request the faculty to submit questions on: material covered in any of the coursework completed by the student to date, research papers or reviews

that will be provided to the student, and/or philosophical matters related to the history of medical family therapy.

The committee will review the submitted questions and questions will be selected or created by the committee to ensure the questions are fair and appropriate, that they test the student's knowledge base, and that they help evaluate the problem-solving skills of the student. Failing the qualifying exam will result in the student being recommended to being dropped from the Ph.D. program. In this case, the director can elect to offer the failed student the option of completing a terminal master's degree.

Once the student has passed the doctoral qualifying examination, the student must register for Dissertation Research. A minimum of 12 credits are required for degree completion and typically occurs over two to three academic years. Initially, the student must identify a research project under the guidance of a faculty member. A Ph.D. dissertation committee will then be formed as the student prepares their research proposal.

A three-member Ph.D. dissertation committee, chaired by the student's primary adviser, will be appointed by the director. The committee must include at least two members of the medical family therapy graduate faculty. A third member of the committee can be appointed by the graduate program director if they are graduate faculty in other departments or at another university. It is the decision of the graduate program director to accept the adviser's recommendation and to identify the final member of the committee. Once the proposal has been approved by the Ph.D. dissertation committee it is then submitted to the Office of Graduate Education.

Doctoral Oral Qualifying Examination

The oral qualifying exam will be scheduled after the student has submitted a detailed dissertation research proposal, conducted preliminary experiments to substantiate the proposal and the dissertation advisory committee formed. The committee will consist of five members of the graduate faculty and will be approved by the program director. The oral exam will be public and designed to test the student's fundamental knowledge of their proposed studies, background for the studies, and critical analysis and thinking.

Prior to the doctoral student's request for consideration for advancement to candidacy, submission of their research proposal, formation of their research committee, initiation of the major components of their proposed doctoral research project, and registration for any research credits, the student must have completed most of their required core or elective coursework and successfully passed their preliminary/written qualifying exam.

Advancement to Candidacy

Completion of the dissertation research project entails the following: writing of the thesis, application for advancement to candidacy and the dissertation defense. It shall be the responsibility of the student to initiate their candidacy by filling out a candidacy form through the Office of Graduate Education. The completed form must be returned by the deadline stated in the graduate education calendar of deadlines. Once the completed candidacy form has been processed by the Office of Graduate Education, the thesis committee chair will receive ballots for the oral defense of the thesis. The ballots are distributed to the other committee members by the thesis committee chair when they vote on the oral defense. Once the ballots are completed, signed and sealed, it is the committee chairperson's responsibility to deliver the ballots to the Office of Graduate Education immediately following the defense.

Dissertation Defense

The defense of the dissertation provides an opportunity for the student to formally present their findings to their committee, the faculty and students, and to any family member or anyone from the general public wishing to attend. Two weeks before the dissertation defense, an electronic and print announcement of the date, time, location and title of the defense will be publicized to the SLU community. The dissertation defense is two parts. First, the student will make an oral, PowerPoint presentation of no longer than 45 minutes duration where they present their research. Following the presentation, questions from the collective audience will be encouraged.

Once all questions have been satisfactorily answered by the student, the audience is excused and the closed, or executive, part of the defense takes place with only the student and their committee present. The dissertation committee can ask detailed questions and expect the student to demonstrate a thorough knowledge of their project and related research. Questions on general topics in medical family therapy, unrelated to their research, may also be asked. Following all questioning, the student is excused from the room and the committee members, without discussion, complete the defense ballot.

Roadmap

This roadmap is just one example of a semester-by-semester plan of study for this program. There are other plans students can and do take. The plan of study for each particular student is established in consultation with each student’s academic advisor; *this roadmap does not replace academic advising appointments.*

Roadmap notes:

- This Roadmap assumes full-time enrollment unless otherwise noted.
- Courses/Milestones marked with an “!” are critical and must be completed in the semester listed in the Roadmap to ensure a timely graduation.
- Course availability and sequencing are subject to change.

Course	Title	Credits
Year One		
Fall		
MFT 6720	Integrative Care Practicum	3
MFT 6730	Research Practicum	1
MFT 6740	Theories and Models of Medical Family Therapy	3
MFT 6760	Families, Health, and Illness	3
MFT 6830	Couple and Family Research in Healthcare	3
Credits		13
Spring		
MFT 6500	The Neurobiology of Interpersonal Behavior	3
MFT 6720	Integrative Care Practicum	3
MFT 6730	Research Practicum	1
MFT 6970	Advanced Research Topics in Medical Family Therapy	3
Credits		10
Summer		
MFT 6720	Integrative Care Practicum	3
MFT 6770	Behavioral Medicine and Integrative Care	3
Credits		6

Year Two		
Fall		
MFT 6690	Supervision in Family Therapy	3
MFT 6730	Research Practicum	1
MFT 6870	Clinical Supervision (Advanced)	1
Research Elective		3
Credits		8
Spring		
MFT 6140	Interpretive Phenomenology	3
MFT 6730	Research Practicum	1
MFT 6750	Practicum: Supervision of Marriage and Family Therapists	3
MFT 6825	Teaching Skills in Medicine	3
MFT 6870	Clinical Supervision (Advanced)	1
Credits		11
Summer		
MFT 6910	Doctoral Internship	1
MFT 6990	Dissertation Research	4
MFT 6795	Community Health and Health Policy	3
Credits		8
Year Three		
Fall		
MFT 6910	Doctoral Internship	1
MFT 6990	Dissertation Research	4
Credits		5
Spring		
MFT 6910	Doctoral Internship	1
MFT 6990	Dissertation Research	4
Credits		5
Total Credits		66