

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY STUDIES, MS

Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS) focuses on helping children, families, and relationships thrive. Our students and faculty work from a lifespan ecological perspective on development and families, recognizing and supporting the many forms of diversity in individuals, families, developmental pathways, and contexts. We focus on discovering and applying new knowledge to strengthen individuals, families, relationships, and communities, and on preparing the next generation of professionals to serve and lead.

Human Development and Family Studies' (HDFS) students seek advanced employment or leadership positions in occupations serving children, adults, and families, or admission to PhD programs. All students complete coursework in lifespan human development, family science, research methods, statistics, and select additional courses aligned with their interest and career goals. Faculty research laboratories, The Children's Program, and collaborations with various agencies serving children and families across the state of Alabama provide opportunities for research and experiential learning.

Concentrations

Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) provides graduate students with high quality training in the theory, skills, and professional identity essential to competent practice in the field of marriage and family therapy. Students graduate equipped to treat a wide variety of individual, couple, and family mental health issues with diverse populations.

Child Life (CL) is for students who wish to pursue the healthcare career of a Certified Child Life Specialist (CCLS). Specialists support children and their families in the healthcare setting by providing education about diagnoses, support through procedures, and by promoting development. Through personalized advising and a flexible curriculum, the program accommodates students trained in other areas who wish to pursue a career in Child Life, as well as Child Life Specialists seeking advanced training.

Admissions

See the Admission Criteria section of this catalog for more information.

Curricular Requirements

HDFS M.S.	Hours
HD 500 Lifespan Human Development	3
HD 562 Dynamics Of Family Reltn	3
HES 509 Research Methods	3
BER 540 Statistical Methods In Educ	3
Credit Hours Subtotal:	12
Students must also complete a thesis or comprehensive exam.	
Thesis Requirements	
HD 599 Thesis Research	6
Advisor Approved Statistics Class	3
Total Hours	21

In addition to the 12 credit hour Program Core, students opting for a thesis will complete 9 credit hours (plus the 9 credit hours of thesis requirements), whereas students opting for the comprehensive exam will complete 18 credit hours.

Concentrations

Students may complete the HDFS M.S. with no concentration, a concentration in Child Life, or with a concentration in Marriage and Family Therapy. After being admitted into a specific concentration, any request to switch concentrations must be approved by the HDFS Graduate Faculty Committee. Students should consult with their advisor or the Department Chair before requesting to switch concentrations.

HDFS M.S. with No Concentration

The HDFS M.S. with no concentration prepares students for advanced employment and leadership roles and/or for admission to PhD programs.

HDFS M.S. with no concentration	Hours
Choose 9-18 credits from the following:	9-18
Must include one Family Studies Course	
HD 561 Theories Family Studies	
HD 535 Parent/Child Relationship	
Must include one Developmental Course	
HD 512 Adult Development	
HD 602 Adv Infant Development	
HD 601 Advanced Child Development	
HD 603 Adv Adol Development	
Advisor Approved Electives	
Total Hours	9-18

Marriage and Family Therapy Concentration

The Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) concentration which prepares students to take the licensure examination leading to Clinical Membership in the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. In addition to the 12 credit hour Program Core, students pursuing the MFT program of study will complete 39 credit hours (24 didactic + 15 practica and internship) of concentration courses. Clinical opportunities are provided in the College's Capstone Family Therapy Clinic.

Curricular Requirements

HDFS M.S. with MFT Concentration	Hours
HD 640 Couple and Sex Therapy	3
HD 641 MFT Ethics (MFT Ethics)	3
HD 642 Assess Psychopathology MFT	3
HD 645 Cultural Diversity in MFT	3
HD 664 Family Therapy	3
HD 665 Advanced Family Therapy	3
HD 567 Pract Marriage Family Therapy	3
HD 568 Pract I Marriage Family Thery	3
HD 667 Pract II Marriage Family Ther	3
HD 668 Intern Marriage Family Therapy	6
Choose 6 credits from the following:	6
HD 535 Parent/Child Relationship	
HD 561 Theories Family Studies	
HD 631 Readings Human Developmt	

Advisor Approved Electives

Total Hours 39

Concentration in Child Life

The concentration in Child Life prepares students to take the Child Life Professional Certification Exam to become a Certified Child Life Specialist. In addition to the 12 credit hour program core, students pursuing the Child Life concentration will complete 24 credit hours.

Curricular Requirements

HDFS M.S. with Child Life Concentration		Hours
HD 550	Hospitalzd Child & Youth	3
HD 551	Loss And Bereavement	3
HD 591	Sp Prob Hum Dev Fam Stdy	3
Choose 2 Developmental Courses		6
HD 602	Adv Infant Development	
HD 601	Advanced Child Development	
HD 603	Adv Adol Development	
HD 670	Internship in Child Life	9
Total Hours		24

Transfer Credit

Graduate School information on Transfer Credit.

Accelerated Masters Program

Graduate School information on the Accelerated Masters Program.

Comprehensive Examination/Capstone

Students must complete a thesis, PILOT, or comprehensive exam. The comprehensive exam is a take-home essay exam normally completed in the student's final semester. Students will have two attempts to pass the comprehensive exam.

Internship Requirements

Each student completing the Marriage and Family Therapy, or the Child Life concentration will be required to complete an internship. The internship does not satisfy the capstone requirement. Students must also complete a thesis, PILOT, or comprehensive exam.

To be eligible to sit for the Child Life Professional Certification Examination, child life students must complete a 600 hour clinical internship under the supervision of a Certified Child Life Specialist. Child life internships are unique in that students apply and compete for an internship in child life programs of their choice. During an internship, child life students further their knowledge and skills and practice implementing child life services with patients and families in order to become job ready. Child life internships are very competitive, and child life students are encouraged to meet with their advisor to learn about and prepare for the process.

Plan I - Thesis Process Requirements

Students must complete a thesis, PILOT, or comprehensive exam. A thesis evidencing research capacity, independent thought, and the ability to interpret materials is required of all Master's degree candidates who pursue Plan I. The subject chosen must be in the major field and must be approved first by the student's major professor and then by the graduate committee of the major department or school and by the head of the student's major department or division. The thesis committee must

consist of at least three members approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. A student and his or her major professor will select the thesis committee. All members of a thesis committee must be members of the Graduate Faculty. Two members must be from the student's major department and one member must be from outside the student's major department. The student's major professor will serve as the committee chair.

The thesis should be completed, if possible, while the student is in residence at the University. To request permission to complete a thesis in absentia, the student must, before leaving the University, submit a satisfactory outline and timeline for the completion of the thesis project, as well as evidence that adequate facilities are available where the work will be done, to the head of the major department or school. Students are strongly encouraged to complete the thesis while in residence.

Note that students completing a thesis must also take an additional statistics class and at least 6 credit hours of HD 599 Thesis Research.

Plan II - Non-Thesis Process Requirements (PILOT)

Students must complete a thesis, PILOT, or comprehensive exam. Students may be able to complete a project-in-lieu-of-thesis (PILOT) at the discretion of the student's Major Professor. A PILOT (Plan II) is not always available, or feasible. Students should not assume that they will be able to conduct a PILOT. The major difference between a traditional thesis and a PILOT is that in the former, the student originates the idea for the study and fully develops the research question and the design of the study. In contrast, a PILOT is likely to be an idea that the major professor has already fully developed, or is in the process of developing, or is a study or project already in the process of being conducted.

After consulting with their Major Professor about the possibility of completing a PILOT, and receiving approval to complete a PILOT, a written agreement should be developed between the student and the Major Professor as to what will comprise the PILOT, including a timeline to complete the PILOT. The Major Professor and student must sign the agreement for it to be valid. Prior to starting on the PILOT, students must also propose their project to a committee of three faculty members. All three committee members may come from within the Department of Human Development and Family Studies. The student's major professor will chair the student's committee and will be one member on the PILOT Committee. Only two of the three committee members must be members of the Graduate Faculty.

The student must produce a written document that describes the planning and implementation of the project, including a literature review, (or similar acceptable document, such as an IRB protocol) to present to the PILOT committee. No date will be set for the committee to meet until the committee reads and provides feedback to the Major Professor and/or student about the PILOT. The student is responsible for scheduling a proposal meeting with the PILOT committee, presenting the proposal and receiving approval from the committee to conduct the PILOT. Once the project is completed, the student submits the written document to the committee, and presents the results of the project at a final defense before the committee members. The PILOT committee unanimously must approve the student's defense of the project and sign-off on the PILOT Defense Form. PILOT Defense Forms can be obtained from the Program Assistant in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies. If the PILOT is part of a study already being conducted, the IRB must be amended to include the student's name after the PILOT committee has approved the PILOT. The student is expected to write different sections

of the PILOT, including assisting with the writing of the PILOT (e.g., literature review), collecting and working with data (e.g., administering assessments, coding videotapes, scoring and entering assessments into a database, etc.), assisting with the data analyses and interpretation and write up of the results and discussion sections.

Students who complete a PILOT must enroll for at least 6 credit hours of HD 598 Research Practicum - Non Thesis Research.

Time Limits for Degree Completion Requirements

Graduate School information on Time Limits.

Student Progress Requirements

Each student pursuing the MFT concentration will meet with program faculty, at least annually, to review the student's progress and discuss steps for continued growth in the program. The meeting will address progress on coursework, clinical skills, professional competencies, ethical and legal competencies, and adherence to the non-discrimination, diversity, and inclusion code of conduct.

Faculty will provide three levels of support for student development. The first level encompasses the typical day-to-day professional interactions and practices that occur during coursework and clinical supervision. The second level comes into play when a student struggles to make progress on one or more competencies through typical coursework and supervision procedures. Such "minor deficiencies" will be addressed through the collaborative development and implementation of an improvement plan. The third level typically occurs when a student fails to make progress toward overcoming a "minor deficiency," but there may be occasions when a "severe deficiency" appears suddenly (e.g., a student commits a significant ethical violation). "Severe deficiencies" are addressed through the collaborative development and implementation of a remediation plan. Failure to adequately address a "severe deficiency" will result in dismissal from the program.

Academic Misconduct Information

Graduate School information on Academic Misconduct.

Withdrawals and Leave of Absence Information

Graduate School information on Withdrawals and Leave of Absence.

Academic Grievances Information

Graduate School information on Academic Grievances.

Grades and Academic Standing

Graduate School information on Grades and Academic Standing.

Graduate School Deadlines Information

Graduate School information on Graduate School Deadlines.

Application for Graduation Information

Graduate School information on the Application for Graduation.