



# Human Development & Family Science

*College of Family and Consumer Sciences*

**UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA**

## Master of Science in

## Child Life

# PROGRAM HANDBOOK

**Fall 2023**

<https://www.fcs.uga.edu/hdfs/graduate-programs-m.s.-child-life>

**FACS Diversity Statement:** Diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. The term "diversity" encompasses differences of culture, background and experience among individuals and groups. Such differences include, but are not limited to, differences of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, and abilities, as well as political and religious affiliation and socioeconomic status. The College of Family and Consumer Sciences at the University of Georgia embraces a commitment to diversity by modeling for the state and nation, a community of individuals and programs which seek to reduce prejudice, disparities, and discrimination and build a supportive environment for all. [More about diversity.](#)

## Introduction

Welcome to the Department of Human Development and Family Science (HDFS). The goal of our graduate program is to promote the integration of knowledge and professional practice in human development and family science. To accomplish this goal students achieve three objectives: (1) to develop expertise in integrating and applying substantive and theoretical knowledge in individual development across the life course and family relationships; (2) to learn advanced analytic skills and methodologies for conducting and disseminating research on individuals and families; and (3) to develop the skills necessary to translate basic research into application through outreach, clinical practice, or preventative interventions. The department offers three degrees: (1) A Master of Science in HDFS as part of the University of Georgia's 5-year Double Dawgs program; (2) A Master of Science in Child Life; and (3) A Doctor of Philosophy in HDFS. It is also possible to pursue a doctorate in HDFS with an emphasis in Couples and Family Therapy.

This handbook is designed to guide you as you plan your career as a **Master's student in Child Life** in the Department of Human Development and Family Science. It is organized according to the major programmatic milestones you will encounter.

This handbook is also intended to inform HDFS graduate students and faculty about basic policies and procedures related to the Master of Science in Child Life program. Because it does not cover all University regulations governing graduate education at the University of Georgia, it should be treated as a supplement to the *Graduate School Bulletin*, <https://grad.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/policies-procedures/graduate-bulletin/graduate-bulletin-a-c/>, *Theses and Dissertations Student Guide to Preparation and Processing*, [https://grad.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/theses\\_and\\_dissertations-STYLE-GUIDE\\_2022.pdf](https://grad.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/theses_and_dissertations-STYLE-GUIDE_2022.pdf), and the *Graduate School's Academic Regulations and Procedures*, <http://grad.uga.edu/index.php/current-students/policies-procedures/academics/>. Like all graduate programs at UGA, the Master of Science in Child Life program in HDFS operates within an administrative structure established by the Graduate School. It is the responsibility of all faculty and graduate students to familiarize themselves with the relevant Graduate School policies.

Although every effort is made to provide accurate and current information in this handbook, the Department reserves the right to change statements in the handbook concerning policies, curricula, or other matters. Students enrolled in the graduate program agree to comply with the Department's rules and regulations and to accommodate to any changes necessary.

Last updated: September 1, 2023

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The University of Georgia is committed to the principle of affirmative action and equal opportunity. The Department of Human Development and Family Science will not discriminate in employment, admissions, programs, services, or activities regarding any position for which a student is qualified and will make reasonable accommodation for disabilities. Minorities and members of other underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply.

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## **Master of Science in Child Life Program**

The Master of Science program in Child Life is designed for students to pursue a graduate degree in preparation for working with children and families in healthcare settings. This program allows a dual focus on the study of issues and development in children and families, along with theory, practice, and research in child life. Students in this emphasis will complete the required Human Development and Family Science and child life coursework listed in their program of study (see Appendix A). Upon fulfillment of the program requirements, students will graduate with a Master of Science degree in Child Life.

## **Benefit of a MS in Child Life Degree in Human Development and Family Science**

There are many benefits to pursuing the study of child life within the Department of Human Development and Family Science. Students in this program learn about and apply research skills to their areas of interest, and learn clinical skills directly related to child life, preparing them to work in both the child life and the broader human development and family science fields.

### **1. Endorsed Academic Program to Prepare Future Certified Child Life Specialists**

A Master of Science in Child Life within the Department of Human Development and Family Science will be beneficial for students pursuing a career in the field of child life by providing an in-depth education on developmental issues and important topics concerning children and families. Additionally, students in this program will receive education on child life theory, practice, and application within the field. After meeting the program of study requirements, students will apply for and complete an in-depth internship under a Certified Child Life Specialist. The Master of Science in Child Life program at the University of Georgia is endorsed by the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP) and works in congruence with the ACLP requirements for becoming a Certified Child Life Specialist. Upon completion of both the educational requirements and internship, students will graduate and be eligible to sit for the Child Life Professional Certification Examination.

### **2. Research and Clinical Practice in the UGA MS in Child Life Program**

Research is an integral part of all graduate students' training, including for those students who hope to pursue clinical careers in child life. Various research and analytical skills are taught and refined throughout the students' studies, which include research presentations and completion of a thesis or a clinical project. These analytical skills will help students solve real-world problems and understand how to read and interpret research, how to analyze and respond to patient and family issues in the clinical setting (the "why" behind clinical practice), and how to conduct research that contributes to the child life field.

## **Timeline for Completing the Program**

Many circumstances affect the length of time necessary for a student to complete a master's degree. The program is designed so that, under ordinary conditions, students with a bachelor's degree can expect to complete their master's degree in two years, including summers.

All requirements for the degree must be completed within six years beginning with the first registration for graduate courses on the program of study. An extension of time may be granted by the Graduate School only for conditions beyond the control of the individual.

## Continuous Enrollment Requirement

The Graduate Enrollment Policy specifies that, “All enrolled students pursuing graduate degrees at the University of Georgia must maintain continuous enrollment from matriculation until completion of all degree requirements. Continuous enrollment is defined as registering for a minimum of three (3) credits in at least two semesters per year (Fall, Spring, Summer) until the degree is attained or status as a degree-seeking graduate student is terminated.” Graduate School enrollment policies can be found at <https://grad.uga.edu/graduate-bulletin/enrollment-policy/>.

## Advisors and Committees

### 1. Temporary Advisor

When students enter the program, you are assigned a temporary advisor. The temporary advisor provides guidance for the student’s educational experience during the first year in the program, or until the student has formalized their relationship with a Major Professor. The temporary advisor will sign necessary forms and answer questions about the program, policies, and other issues.

Meeting frequently with the temporary advisor will help ease the student’s transition into the graduate program. The temporary advisor can also be a helpful resource of information and insights as the student considers various major professor options. The student will work closely with the child life faculty to choose a Major Professor (either a child life faculty member or another HDFS faculty member). The Child Life Program Director and Child Life Clinical Coordinator will work together to divide students equitably between child life faculty members.

### 2. Major Professor

During the first year in the program, students are encouraged to spend some time getting to know the faculty members and familiarizing themselves with faculty research, outreach, clinical experience, and interests. Most, but not all, MS in Child Life students select one of the child life faculty members as their major professor. If students choose to do a master’s thesis, the choice of major professor will also be guided by the student’s research interests and the availability of faculty members who are qualified and willing to mentor that research; this may be a faculty member outside child life. Students are expected to select a major professor **by the end of the spring semester of their first year**.

### 3. Advisory Committee

The advisory committee is a group of faculty members who work with each student to review work, provide feedback, and certify that the student has successfully completed specific program requirements, including the thesis or clinical project and online portfolio of professional activities. The advisory committee is typically made up of 3 faculty members in the Department of Human Development and Family Science. Your major professor is one of these advisory committee members, and will serve as the chair of the committee. The advisory committee, in consultation with the student, is charged with approving the student’s program of study, approving the proposal for the thesis/clinical project, approving the completed thesis/clinical project, and approving the defense of the student’s work.

Students should work with their major professor to identify possible advisory committee members. It is the student’s responsibility to reach out to faculty and ask them to be on the student’s advisory committee. Advisory committee members should be finalized no later than **the first month of your second year of the program**. Students who have secured their your advisory committee members sooner can submit the online form to the graduate school earlier.

Persons employed by The University of Georgia, and who hold the following ranks, may serve

on graduate committees: professor, associate professor, assistant professor, clinical assistant professor, clinical associate professor, public service assistant, public service associate, senior public service associate, assistant research scientist, associate research scientist, and senior research scientist. Persons having the following ranks may **not** serve as voting members of graduate committees: instructors, lecturers, and academic professionals. However, these individuals may serve as non-voting members of a committee. If there are more than three members, there must be greater than 50% graduate program faculty representation. At least two committee members must be from the Department of Human Development and Family Science.

Additional voting members may be appointed to the committee, including no more than one non-UGA faculty, who must hold the terminal degree in their field of study. A visiting professor or a part-time or temporary faculty member may not serve on an advisory committee unless that person has sole expertise in a designated area on the student's program of study. The graduate coordinator must send a letter to the Graduate School explaining the need for substitution by the visiting professor, part-time, or temporary faculty member.

When you have created your advisory committee, fill out the Advisory Committee form required by the Graduate School. This form can be found through [gradstatus.uga.edu](https://gradstatus.uga.edu) website at <https://gradstatus.uga.edu/Forms/G130>. When you submit the form, it will automatically be sent to the Graduate Coordinator for approval and signature. Ultimately, the committee is appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School upon the recommendation of the Graduate Coordinator.

## Curriculum

### 1. Coursework Requirements

The departmental program of study for MS in Child Life students includes research methods and statistics, advanced theory, and courses that are specific to the ACLP requirements. The core curriculum for the master's degree is **36 hours** of course credit. (Note: HDFS 8910 and 7005 do not count toward this total.) All courses required for the program of study that are offered in the department must be taken in the department, except electives.

All MS in Child Life students are expected to take the core classes (HDFS 6100, 6640, 6800, and 7170), classes on child development (HDFS 6080 and 6910), classes specific to the child life field (HDFS 6810, 6820, 6830, and 7130S), Professional Seminar (8910), GradFirst Seminar (GRSC 7001), one elective, thesis or clinical project hours, and practicum and internship hours. Child life students can choose a thesis option or a non-thesis option. Students should discuss these options with their Major Professor and advisory committee.

While it is permissible for master's students to take 8000- and 9000-level classes, the Graduate School mandates that the *majority* of coursework on the master's program of study forms should be at the 6000- and 7000-level.

### 2. Program of Study

An example plan of study for Child Life students is displayed in **Appendix A**.

### 3. Research Methodology Requirements

You are expected to develop an understanding of research methods and demonstrate competence in their use. Required courses include HDFS 6800: Research Methods and HDFS 7170: Introduction to Applied Statistics in HDFS. Students who already have taken a graduate-level research methods or statistics course prior to beginning the program may not be required to take all the courses listed in the curriculum. If a student is requesting to opt out of research

methods or statistics, that student must submit official transcripts and course syllabi to the Graduate Coordinator for proof of proficiency.

#### **4. Professional Seminar**

All HDFS Child Life students are required to take 1 hour of HDFS 8910: Professional Development Seminar during fall and spring semesters each year they are enrolled. The seminar addresses issues related to the child life graduate program.

### **Thesis and Clinical Project**

All students in the MS in Child Life program will complete a master's thesis or a clinical project.

#### **1. Master's Thesis**

A thesis requires students to apply research and critical thinking skills to a research question of interest within their field. Students who select the thesis option must propose their thesis to their committee members, complete the research project and write a thesis manuscript, and pass a defense with their committee members to be eligible to graduate. See **Appendix B** for a list of steps to complete a thesis.

#### **2. Clinical Project**

A clinical project is an in-depth applied project to address an identified community need in collaboration with an organization. The clinical project requires a literature review, a written proposal, completion of an in-depth project that will be useful in the human development and family science field, and a written report. This is a rigorous, research-based project, completed in collaboration with a hospital, child life specialist, or other community partner under the direction of the student's major professor and committee. The clinical project applies a review of substantive literature and relevant theory to a problem of an applied nature in a clinical setting. The process for a clinical project closely follows that of a thesis. Students pick a topic for the project in collaboration with a community partner, complete a comprehensive literature review, propose the project to the committee, complete the project and a written report, and defend the project and report. The student's committee will evaluate the project based on its comprehensiveness, completeness, and appropriateness in relation to professional work in the student's area of interest. See **Appendix C** for a list of steps to complete a clinical project.

### **Pre-Clinical and Clinical Experiences in Child Life**

#### **Volunteering**

Child life graduate students balance coursework and applied practicum experiences during their fall and spring semesters. In addition, volunteer work is an excellent way to gain experience with children of different ages and abilities, to learn more about child life and child development, and to gain experience that will make students more competitive candidates for child life internships. Students in the child life program are encouraged to participate in volunteer work throughout their graduate studies, especially during the summer or between their first and second years.

There are many local opportunities for volunteer work that allow students to apply their knowledge and develop applied skills. Possible volunteer options include child life programs at hospitals near Athens (and in other locations during the summer), early care and education programs at the Child



Development Lab at the McPhaul Center and at other locations. Other options include working with children and youth at specialized programs such as Extra Special People, and summer camps for children with chronic illnesses such as Camp Twin Lakes in Rutledge, GA; Camp Will-A-Way in Winder, GA; Aurora Day Camp in Atlanta, GA; and Camp Sunshine in Atlanta, GA, as well as summer camps for typically developing children at a wide variety of locations around the country.

### **Child Life Practicum**

The goal of a practicum is to enable students to gain appropriate experiences to prepare them to obtain and complete a child life internship. Students will gain knowledge in the field of child life by completing practicum experiences under the supervision of a Certified Child Life Specialist at a hospital or other clinical setting. A child life practicum is primarily an observational experience.

Each student will register for a practicum during one semester of their graduate coursework. Practicum experiences will include traveling to the site at least twice weekly to shadow Certified Child Life Specialists. During the practicum, students will gain approximately 120 hours of observational experience in a clinical setting. Students will typically have practicum experience in multiple units in order to experience a variety of child life interventions. Students will also complete assignments to be turned in to their on-site practicum supervisor. During the practicum, students will have the opportunity to observe clinical skills important for child life, such as assessing patient needs, evaluating coping, and developing interventions to support children and families in the healthcare setting.

### **When to Complete the Practicum**

Students complete a practicum at different times in their graduate work, depending on the availability of practicum sites, coursework schedules, and assistantship responsibilities. Many students complete a practicum during fall of their second year, but this is not the only option. A practicum usually requires the student to be available 2 or 3 full days per week. Students register for HDFS 7210: Problems in Human Development and Family Science as one of their regular courses during the semester of their practicum. Students who have completed a child life practicum prior to admission will have the option to complete an additional practicum during their graduate program, in consultation with the Child Life Program Director.

### **Practicum Application Process**

Each hospital has different application requirements for a child life practicum. It is the responsibility of students to apply to practicum programs by the application deadline. Many students complete a practicum in hospitals near Athens (including Atlanta and Macon), but completing a practicum at another location during the summer between a student's first and second years is also an option. Students are not limited to any particular hospital or program for their practicum. The Child Life Program Director and Child Life Coordinator will work closely with each student to help find the practicum placement that best meets his/her needs.

### **Child Life Internship**

A child life internship is a **required** component of the MS in Child Life program. An internship allows students to work intensively with Certified Child Life Specialists in healthcare settings and to develop clinical skills in preparation, developmental assessments, support groups, procedural support, normalization activities, bereavement activities, documentation, and other clinical skills important to child life. Students also work directly with patients and learn how theory is applied to child life clinical practice. The internship experience provides students with extensive hands-on clinical training, as well as the ability to develop professionalism and knowledge of child life practice.

**UGA does not arrange internships for child life students**, and students should be aware that

child life internships are highly competitive. Students are encouraged to apply to a wide range of child life internships. Students typically apply and interview with multiple hospitals in order to secure an internship. Even though the program does not guarantee internships, the child life faculty will provide substantial support for students as they prepare their applications and get ready for interviews.

During the child life internship, students are expected to complete full-time internship hours at the hospital. Child life internships are typically 15-17 week long unpaid experiences. Interns are expected to secure and pay for housing and other living expenses while they are interning. Some, but not all, hospitals provide guidance and resources to help interns with housing. If students intern during summer semester and were on paid assistantships in fall and spring, their tuition (but not fees) is covered for summer.

### **Affiliation**

In order to intern while in the graduate program, students must select an internship that will enter into an affiliation agreement with UGA (often called “affiliated internships”). Some hospitals are not willing to enter into affiliation agreements, and thus are not options for MS in Child Life students. The following hospitals have **not** been willing to enter into affiliation agreements with UGA in the recent past. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list, and that hospital requirements for affiliation may change over time.

- Inova Children’s Hospital (Falls Church, VA)
- St. Jude Children’s Hospital (Memphis, TN)
- Seattle Children’s Hospital (Seattle, WA)
- Dwaine & Cynthia Willett Children's Hospital of Savannah (Savannah, GA)
- All hospitals in North Carolina

In addition, Children’s Hospital of Georgia (Augusta, GA) does not offer child life internships to students outside the UGA Joint undergraduate program.

### **When to Intern**

Students are eligible to participate in a child life internship upon completion of their program of study requirements. Most students complete their internship during the summer of their second year, but fall and spring internships are also available. An internship is a full-time commitment; **students cannot complete non-internship coursework and are not eligible for a graduate assistantship while on internship**. Keep in mind that students must still enroll and register for internship hours at the University of Georgia during their internship.

### **Internship Application Process**

In order to secure a child life internship, students will need to find and apply to programs, interview with hospital staff, and be extended a formal offer into the internship program. Students will research various child life internship programs in order to determine which programs and hospitals best suit their needs and interests. The Child Life Program Director and the Child Life Clinical Coordinator will provide input on each student’s list of possible hospitals and will alert students if they have identified a hospital where UGA cannot complete an affiliation agreement.

In order to apply, students complete and submit the Internship Readiness Common Application (available online at <https://aclp.smapply.io/>), along with any supplemental application materials individual hospitals may require. Once the completed application has been received, hospital staff will screen applicants and contact the students who may be a good fit for their internship for interviews.

Interviews may take place on the hospital campus or may be offered via Zoom and other technologies. After the interview process is complete, hospital staff extend offers to selected applicants on a standard offer date as set forth by the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP). Students have the option to accept or decline each hospital that has offered them an internship.

## Completing Affiliation Agreements

An affiliation agreement is a legal agreement between the University of Georgia and the hospital where the internship will take place concerning the student's role and educational goals throughout the internship. This legal document must be completed and signed by both UGA and the hospital prior to starting an internship. **As soon as the student has accepted a child life internship offer**, the student will work with child life faculty to complete an affiliation agreement with the hospital, unless UGA has a pre-existing agreement with that hospital. The process can be time consuming and arduous, and students should work with the designated department support staff to begin the process as soon as they accept an internship placement. **The agreement must be signed and executed by both UGA and the hospital prior to starting the internship.**

## Previous Child Life Internships

Some students may have completed a child life internship prior to their studies at the University of Georgia. Students who have already completed a child life internship prior to admission to the graduate program will not be expected to complete a second internship. Instead, they will take additional coursework that fits with their academic and career goals. This additional coursework will be selected in consultation with the Child Life Program Director and Child Life Clinical Coordinator.

## Professional Requirements for the MS in Child Life Degree

MS in Child Life students are required to complete and document a series of professional requirements that will prepare them to be successful in their child life career post-graduation. The Professional Requirements are intended to familiarize students with the child life field, provide opportunities for them to network with child life specialists, and enable them to build a professional portfolio of experiences that will prepare them for the child life field.

The requirements must be completed before the final defense of the thesis or clinical project. Students will share their online portfolio and highlights of their professional accomplishments at the final defense meeting. Advisory committee members will sign the Master of Science in Child Life Professional Requirements Approval Form, [https://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/MSCL\\_ProfRequirements\\_Approval.pdf](https://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/MSCL_ProfRequirements_Approval.pdf), approving the student's completion of these requirements. After obtaining signed approval from the advisory committee, the student is responsible for submitting the signed form to the Graduate Program Assistant.

Professional requirements for MS in Child Life students are as follows:

- Become a student member of the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP) during fall semester of their first year, and maintain active student membership throughout the degree program
- Attend the ACLP annual conference (at the end of the first year)
- Attend the 2-day Beyond the Classroom seminar at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta
- Create and present an in-service training workshop related to child life (minimum of 1 hour; can take place in a course, conference, or community setting)
- Complete a child life practicum or a directed study with children (minimum of 100 hours)
- Create an online portfolio based on the ACLP competencies for certified child life specialists

All of these requirements must be completed during the master's degree; experiences completed before beginning the MS in Child Life are also helpful, but will not count for these requirements. The following is additional information about some of the professional development requirements:

### Student Membership in the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP)

Students in the Master of Science in Child Life program are required to join the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP), which is the professional organization in the field of child life. Students should join this organization as soon as they begin their studies and are expected to maintain membership throughout the duration of their master's program. Students pay an annual membership fee to join the ACLP (\$72/year for students). Members receive a monthly newsletter concerning child life topics, have access to important literature online, and are eligible for reduced ACLP conference rates. Members are also able to read and participate in ACLP Connect online, which provides ways for students to gain valuable information on issues and topics in child life, communicate with professionals in the field, and view current job openings. In addition to ACLP, students may also choose to join regional child life organizations, such as the Florida Association of Child Life Professionals (FACLP) and the Southeastern Association of Child Life Professionals (SEACLP).

### **ACLP Conference**

Professional conferences are important opportunities for students to expand their knowledge of the theory and practice of child life, to develop their own professionalism, and to build networks in child life prior to completing the child life internship. Students are required to attend a professional conference in child life during the MS in Child Life program. Students are *very strongly encouraged* to attend the annual Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP) conference to meet this requirement.

In addition to the ACLP annual conference, regional child life associations also hold annual conferences that can be excellent professional development opportunities for MS in Child Life students. These conferences should be considered an addition to, not a replacement for, attending the ACLP conference except under unusual circumstances. Students should talk with the Child Life Program Director and Child Life Clinical Coordinator early in their first year about conference attendance plans. Students are encouraged to apply for departmental funds to help offset the cost of conference attendance.

### **Presentation or In-Service Training Workshop**

Students are expected to deliver at least one presentation or in-service training on a topic related to child life. This presentation could be a guest lecture in a Department of Human Development and Family Science undergraduate course, a presentation to faculty and staff, a presentation to a local high school or community group, or a poster or workshop presentation at a child life related conference. Previously, students have presented at the Florida Association of Child Life Professionals (FACLP) conference and have shared poster presentations at the ACLP conference. Students have also delivered guest lectures in a wide range of HDFS classes on a variety of topics. Participating in presentations, trainings, and conferences allows students to share knowledge, practice presentation style, and develop leadership skills.

### **Beyond the Classroom**

Students are required to attend the annual two-day Beyond the Classroom child life seminar at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta (CHOA) during either their first or second year of the MS in Child Life program. This seminar typically occurs during the fall of each year. Students register individually for the seminar following CHOA's registration guidelines.

### **Graduate Student Annual Evaluation**

The Department of Human Development and Family Science faculty evaluate the progress of each graduate student annually. Each student will prepare and submit information regarding completed coursework, research productivity, teaching, and professional service experience. Students will receive developmental feedback from the graduate faculty after the evaluation

meeting. The procedures for the annual evaluation are as follows.

- a. Graduate Coordinator Assistant distributes the Graduate Assistant Performance Evaluation forms to faculty supervising graduate assistants. Typically, the forms will be returned to the Graduate Program Assistant by December 1 and May 1, for the Fall and Spring semester, respectively.
- b. Graduate students submit an annual progress report and other required documents to their Major Professor or temporary advisor by mid-April.
- c. Each student will be evaluated initially by their Major Professor and advisory committee. If the student has a Major Professor, but not a committee, it will be done by the Major Professor. Should a student not yet have a Major Professor or committee, the evaluation will be done by the temporary advisor.
- d. Each student's progress shall be evaluated using the following 4-level classification system:
  - Satisfactory (the expected norm)
  - Satisfactory with concerns (a plan for improvement is imposed)
  - Unsatisfactory (a timeline for improvement is imposed)
  - Dismissal

In general, the following are the criteria for each rating:

Satisfactory students are:

- completing 12 hours of coursework per semester with mostly A's and no grade lower than B in each course (excluding students who have completed coursework and may only be taking a minimum number of hours to comply with the Graduate School's continuous enrollment policy OR part-time students who are taking only 3-6 hours per semester).
- completing programmatic milestones in a timely manner (e.g., professional activities, practicum and internship, thesis/clinical project proposal, etc.).
- engaged in appropriate scholarly activities (e.g., attending conferences, making presentations, working on thesis/clinical project proposal or the actual thesis/clinical project, depending on their stage in the program).
- engaged in the appropriate clinical work or internship (if appropriate for their program of study) and performing those roles in a satisfactory manner.
- performing their TA or RA role in a satisfactory manner. Assistantship Supervisor will fill out the Graduate Assistant Evaluation form each semester.
- other criteria the faculty may feel is appropriate to assess for a given student

Satisfactory with concerns students are:

- to some extent falling short on one or more of the above criteria.
- provided with a detailed plan for remediation for the student as well as a timeline on which the plan will be assessed.
- expected to return to satisfactory progress no later than the next evaluation period.

Unsatisfactory students are:

- to a large extent falling short on one or more of the above criteria.
- provided a detailed plan for remediation as well as a timeline on which the plan will be assessed.

- likely to be dismissed from the program if they receive two consecutive unsatisfactory annual evaluations.
- e. Dismissal may be recommended by the Graduate Faculty for students who are falling short in a significant way despite previous remediation OR who commit a transgression considered by the faculty to be serious enough to warrant dismissal without a plan for remediation first being put into place.
- f. Recommendations for students' annual evaluation will be approved by the Graduate Faculty at an end of the Spring semester meeting.
- g. Upon the Graduate Faculty's approval, major or temporary advisors will provide the Graduate Coordinator a narrative summary of the discussion about the evaluation of each student who is not rated as satisfactory. The purpose of this feedback is developmental. That is, it should help students identify strengths as well as potential areas for improvement. For areas that need improvement, suggestions for the course of actions are also included. The Graduate Coordinator incorporates the narrative summary into a letter to be sent to the student by the end of the spring semester.

## Graduate Assistantships

Paid graduate assistantship positions in the Department of Human Development and Family Science are available but are limited in number. All students admitted to the MS in Child Life graduate program will be considered for assistantships during the admissions process, and students will be notified if they have been awarded an assistantship. Students who obtain an assistantship receive a monthly stipend and will have their tuition waived; however, students with an assistantship are still responsible for paying student fees each semester (currently \$914/semester).

An assistantship is a part-time job, with specific hours and work responsibilities. The exact nature of the responsibilities may vary widely based on the type of assistantship and the expectations of the assistantship supervisor.

### Minimum Enrollment for Students on Assistantship

The Graduate School requires that all students on assistantship be enrolled in 12 hours per semester for fall and spring, and 9 hours during summer. We usually recommend that students take 9 hours of *coursework* per semester. In order to comply with the Graduate School's minimum enrollment policy, students on assistantship are expected to enroll in 1-3 credit hours using the course code for HDFS 7005, in addition to their content or practicum courses. There is no classroom time or work assignment associated with HDFS 7005 hours beyond the tasks students have already been assigned as part of their assistantship.

The department's assistantship policy has four components: award, assignment, evaluation, and continuation. Each component is described below:

#### 1. Awarding Assistantships

Assistantships are awarded to both incoming and continuing students. They generally are awarded for a term of one academic year, although some graduate school assistantships are awarded for two years. Written notice regarding an assistantship award is customarily made before the end of summer semester preceding the award year. It is expected that students with positive annual evaluations can receive assistantships funded by the department for a maximum of two years in the master's program. **MS in Child Life students are *not* eligible to receive a graduate assistantship while they are on internship.**

## **2. Assignment**

Graduate assistantships are assigned by the Department Head in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator and faculty. Faculty needs and preferences are matched to skills and preferences of students insofar as is possible. Assignment preference is given to faculty who are funding assistantships with grants, as long as overall department needs are not placed in jeopardy.

## **3. Evaluation**

All graduate assistants in the College of Family and Consumer Sciences are evaluated at the end of each semester. These evaluations are consequential in determining continued assistantship funding. An evaluation form will be distributed to all assistantship supervisors near the end of each semester. Faculty will complete the evaluations, and then meet with the student to share and discuss feedback. The evaluation form is signed by both faculty member and student before submission to the Graduate Coordinator Assistant. The student's signature indicates only that the student has received the feedback; it does not necessarily indicate agreement. The evaluation form also contains space for the student to respond to the evaluation, if desired.

## **4. Continuation**

The continuation of an assistantship is not automatic. Assistantship evaluation and annual evaluations will be used to determine whether assistantships will be continued, and all continuations are dependent upon available funding.

## **Application to Graduate**

The student must apply to graduate within the semester prior to the one in which degree requirements are completed (the deadline to apply for graduation is EARLY in the preceding semester). The application for graduation form is available online at [athena.uga.edu](http://athena.uga.edu).

## **Graduates of the Child Life Program**

Graduates of the Master of Science in Child Life program have obtained positions within various hospitals, pediatric hospice settings, and other child or family support organizations. The vast majority of child life graduates obtain jobs as child life specialists in healthcare settings such as Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Texas Children's Hospital, Duke Children's Hospital, Children's Health in Dallas, Cook Children's Hospital in Ft. Worth, Cincinnati Children's Hospital, Children's Memorial Hermann in Houston, Colorado Children's Hospital, and many others. Other positions our graduates have held include community-physician liaison, national outreach coordinator for local hospitals, extension agent, program coordinator of Children's Miracle Network, hospice specialist, and director of marketing and public relations at the Georgia Transplant Foundation. By pursuing a degree in child life within a Department of Human Development and Family Science, students are able to study diverse issues regarding children and families, while maximizing their career potential.

## **Additional Policies**

Additional UGA policies with which students are expected to be familiar and adhere to:

- (a) Grievance Policy found at [https://legal.uga.edu/grievance\\_and\\_disciplinary\\_review\\_policy](https://legal.uga.edu/grievance_and_disciplinary_review_policy)

- (b) Academic Honesty Policy found at <https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/>
- (c) Anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policy at <https://eoo.uga.edu/policies-resources/ndah-policy/>.
- (d) Sexual misconduct policy at <https://eoo.uga.edu/sexual-misconduct-policy/>.
- (e) Responsible Conduct in Research policy <https://research.uga.edu/compliance-training/rcr/>

Students are expected to be familiar with and adhere to these policies.

The University of Georgia is committed to the principle of affirmative action and Equal Opportunity. The Department of Human Development and Family Science encourages applications from qualified minorities and women.



## Appendix A: Sample Program of Study for Master of Science in Child Life (Thesis and Non-Thesis Options)

YEAR 1		
Fall	Spring	Summer
HDFS 6080 Advanced Child Development	HDFS 6640 Issues in Family Relationships	HDFS 6140E Medical Terminology for the Child Life Profession
HDFS 6830S Grief, Loss, and Bereavement Across the Lifespan	HDFS 6800 Research Methods	
HDFS 6810 Hospitalized Child and the Family	HDFS 6820 Child Life Interventions for Children and Families in Health Care Settings	
HDFS 6100 Theories in Human Development	HDFS 7130S Therapeutic Benefits of Play	
HDFS 8910 Current Research and Issues in Human Development and Family Science	HDFS 8910 Current Research and Issues in Human Development and Family Science	
GRSC 7100 GradFirst Seminar		
YEAR 2		
Fall	Spring	Summer
HDFS 7210 Problems in Human Development and Family Science (Hospital Practicum)	HDFS 7020: Non-thesis Clinical Project in Child Life OR HDFS 7300 Master's Thesis	HDFS 7930 Hospital Internship in Child Life
HDFS 7170 Introduction to Applied Statistics in HDFS	HDFS 6910 Early/Middle Childhood	
HDFS 6900 Seminar in HDFS (Child Life research and issues seminar)	Graduate elective course*	
HDFS 8910 Current Research and Issues in Human Development and Family Science	HDFS 8910 Current Research and Issues in Human Development and Family Science	

Curriculum may need to be altered depending on student's background; electives may be chosen by student in consultation with Major Professor to ensure a well-rounded background in child development and child life issues.

\*Note: The graduate elective is expected to be a regularly-scheduled course, rather than a directed study. The course can be in HDFS or any other appropriate department at the university.

## Appendix B: Steps to Complete a Thesis

1. **Thesis Proposal:** Students must obtain approval from their committee for the thesis they wish to write. Students will create a written proposal that includes an introduction, review of relevant literature and theory, and a description of planned research methods and data analysis procedures. Students will share their written proposal with their advisory committee at least 2 weeks before their proposal meeting. At the proposal meeting, students will present their proposed project, answer faculty questions, and receive feedback to refine the project as appropriate.
  2. **Conduct Thesis Research:** After receiving approval from the advisory committee, students will conduct the agreed-upon research, including data collection as needed, data analysis, interpretation, and writing of a thesis manuscript. The student will work closely with the major professor throughout this process, and will seek feedback from the full advisory committee as needed.
  3. **Written Style for Thesis:** According to the *Theses and Dissertations: Student Guide to Preparation and Processing* published by the Graduate School, there are two formats for the organization of the main-body sections for theses. The first format, referred as *chapters*, is the traditional format. The other format, referred as *manuscript style*, is the alternative format approved by the graduate school. In manuscript style format, journal manuscripts or articles are used as regular chapters for the main-body sections of theses. HDFS graduate students may choose either format to organize the main-body sections for their theses. In addition to the graduate school's guidelines for formatting, students must adhere to the following guidelines when applying the manuscript style:
    - a. A traditional-format thesis is expected to be 20 or more pages long and to follow all formatting guidelines in [https://grad.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/theses\\_and\\_dissertations-STYLE-GUIDE\\_2022.pdf](https://grad.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/theses_and_dissertations-STYLE-GUIDE_2022.pdf)
    - b. A manuscript-style thesis is expected to include multiple manuscripts for the different chapters. Manuscripts can be theoretical/conceptual reviews or empirical reports based on qualitative and quantitative data. At least one manuscript must be empirically based, employing qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. The manuscripts have been or will be submitted to scholarly journals related to Human Development and Family Science involving rigorous peer review processes. The student must be either the sole author or the first author of all manuscripts. When manuscripts have been published or accepted for publication, evidence of permission to use articles must be included in the thesis.
2. **Procedures for Thesis Defense:**
    - a. *Registration Requirement for Final Defense:* The student must be registered for a minimum of three hours of credit the semester the defense is held. This is a Graduate School rule and students who are not registered for 3 hours will not be allowed to graduate.
    - b. *Preparation for Final Defense:* When the Major Professor is satisfied with the completed thesis, he or she will certify that it has their approval and is ready to be read by the advisory committee. The copies of the thesis will then be distributed to the remaining members of the advisory committee and a final oral defense will be scheduled. The committee members will have three weeks to read and evaluate the completed thesis. Written assent of two of the three committee members will be required before it will be approved as ready for a final defense. If the advisory committee declines to approve the thesis as ready for the final defense they will determine the steps, strategies, and/or guidelines in preparing the thesis for the final defense.
    - c. *Announcement of Thesis Defense.* The student is responsible for contacting members of the

advisory committee to schedule a date and time for the final defense. Scheduling well in advance is strongly recommended because student and faculty schedules become very full near the end of each semester. At least two full weeks before the date of the defense of your thesis, the student must notify the Graduate Program Assistant of the day, time, and place of the defense, using the following document:

[https://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/Announcement\\_of\\_Oral\\_Defense\\_of\\_Thesis,\\_Non-Thesis,\\_or\\_Clinical\\_Project\\_1.pdf](https://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/Announcement_of_Oral_Defense_of_Thesis,_Non-Thesis,_or_Clinical_Project_1.pdf). No notification to the Graduate School is needed for master's students.

- d. *Final Defense Meeting*: The defense of the thesis will be chaired by the student's Major Professor and attended for the entire defense by all members of the advisory committee. If a member cannot be present, the student must choose one of the following options:
  - i. The absent member may participate via a teleconference in which all participants can listen to each person's comments. The chair of the committee must secure email approval from the absent committee member to sign the approval form for the absent member.
  - ii. A substitution may be made with another faculty member who can replace the former member in expertise of the subject field and who has knowledge of the student's research project. A revised advisory committee form must be submitted to the Graduation Office prior to the examination.
  - iii. The defense may be rescheduled for a later date.
- e. *Completion of Final Defense*: The advisory committee must approve the student's thesis and defense with no more than one dissenting vote and must certify their approval in writing using the Approval Form for Master's Thesis, Defense and Final Examination <https://gradstatus.uga.edu/Forms/G140>. The Major Professor's vote of approval is required for the student to pass the examination. An abstention is not an appropriate vote for the defense of the thesis. The committee, after having read the thesis, should verify whether human subjects were used in the student's research and indicate so by verifying that the appropriate box is checked on the approval form. The student must provide the IRB protocol number for the defense form. The "Master's Thesis, Defense and Final Examination" form must be submitted to the Graduate School before the corrected copy of the electronic thesis will be accepted as the final official copy. **The deadline for this is two weeks prior to graduation.**
- f. *Final Submission of Thesis*: The thesis will not be forwarded to the University Library until the degree is conferred. **All theses must be submitted online (PDF) at <https://gradstatus.uga.edu/Forms/G129> and must conform to the Graduate School style manual located at: [https://grad.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/theses\\_and\\_dissertations-STYLE-GUIDE\\_2022.pdf](https://grad.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/theses_and_dissertations-STYLE-GUIDE_2022.pdf).** If the student hires a typist, it is the student's responsibility to inform the typist of the formatting guidelines set forth in the Graduate School Style Manual. Any questions concerning formatting should be directed to the Graduation Office at: (706) 542-4803, or [gradinfo@uga.edu](mailto:gradinfo@uga.edu). Difficulties with electronic submission or questions about electronic PDF format and computer related problems should be referred to the ETD Help Desk Website at [etdhelp@gradsch.uga.edu](mailto:etdhelp@gradsch.uga.edu) or call (706) 583-8095.

All requirements associated with the thesis must be completed within one semester after the defense, including making any revisions required by your committee. If these are not completed within one semester, the student must re-defend the thesis.

## Appendix C: Steps to Complete a Clinical Project

A clinical project is an in-depth applied project to use research evidence to address an identified community need, in collaboration with a hospital or other organization.

The following are the basic steps to complete a clinical project. Students who choose a clinical project are strongly encouraged to identify a Major Professor early in the spring of their first year of study, and to discuss options for the project with the Major Professor as early as possible. Keep in mind that a clinical project is a rigorous, research-based effort to create an in-depth project that will have practical application in the Human Development and Family Science field.

1. **Choose a collaborating organization and identify a contact at that organization.** Collaborating organizations could be a hospital, a group of child life specialists with interest in a particular topic, a camp serving children with health care needs, or a community-based organization that serves children with physical and/or mental health needs.
2. **Identify a Major Professor and advisory committee.** Discuss clinical project ideas with your Major Professor, the Child Life Director, and/or the Child Life Coordinator as early in your program of study as possible. When you have selected your Major Professor and advisory committee members, and they have agreed to serve, get the appropriate signatures on the departmental form.
3. **Meet with your organization contact** (in person if possible) and discuss needs of the organization that you could help meet. You could develop a set of therapeutic activities, a guide for parents and/or patients to meet a specific need, or any other in-depth resource that helps further the mission of the organization.
4. **Choose a specific topic.** Discuss the topic with your Major Professor and organization contact to ensure that it is appropriate for a clinical project and that it meets the community's needs. This is also an appropriate time to discuss any specifications the organization has (e.g., specific colors or formats), and to identify people related to the organization who could review the project and provide feedback.
5. **Review the research literature related to your topic.** This includes identifying a theoretical model that you will use to guide your work, as well as specific literature about the topic that is relevant to your work.
6. **Write a clinical project proposal.** Your Major Professor will guide you in this process. Your proposal should include the following sections:
  - a. Introduction
  - b. Literature Review (including theory)
  - c. Method
    - i. Description of collaborating organization
    - ii. Description of proposed project (with specific outline if possible)
    - iii. Proposed method of collecting reviews from collaborating organization
7. **Hold a proposal meeting** with your committee to formally propose your project. Your proposal meeting should be scheduled with your advisory committee members as early as possible. Your committee should receive a copy of your proposal about two weeks in advance of the meeting. During the proposal, you will use slides to summarize your literature review and proposed project. Committee members will ask questions and make recommendations related to your proposal.
8. **Develop your clinical project** in collaboration with the organization.

9. **Conduct a readability analysis** to determine whether the reading level of your project is appropriate for the audience. Make edits if needed to achieve an appropriate reading level. Readability analyses can be conducted using Microsoft Word and/or online tools.
10. **Collect reviews of the clinical project** from your collaborating organization, based on the review plan you included in your proposal. Review the comments and make revisions as needed to address reviewers' issues.
11. **Complete a final clinical project report.** This should be an expanded version of your proposal, including literature review, a description of the collaborating organization and project, a summary of reviews you received, and modifications made to address the reviews, a summary of your readability analyses, a description of how the completed project will be shared with the collaborating organization, and information about how the organization will use and distribute the completed clinical project.
12. **Schedule a final defense of your clinical project** with your committee members. Complete the Request for Announcement of Thesis/Clinical Project Defense form and return it to the department contact so your defense can be announced at least 2 weeks in advance, [https://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/Announcement\\_of\\_Oral\\_Defense\\_of\\_Thesis,\\_Non-Thesis,\\_or\\_Clinical\\_Project\\_1.pdf](https://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/Announcement_of_Oral_Defense_of_Thesis,_Non-Thesis,_or_Clinical_Project_1.pdf). Your committee should receive a copy of your paper and completed clinical project about two weeks in advance of the meeting.
13. **Hold your final defense.** Bring copies of the Departmental M.S. Non-Thesis Clinical Project Presentation and Exam Form to your defense. Your committee will sign that form upon successful completion of your defense.

*Note: These steps refer only to the clinical project itself. It is the responsibility of the student, in consultation with the Major Professor, to ensure that all required steps are completed prior to Graduate School deadlines. Other steps to consider include committee approval of the Program of Study, completion and committee approval of the Master's Portfolio, and application for graduation.*

# Appendix D: Master of Science in Child Life Professional Requirements Approval

Department of Human Development and Family Science  
The University of Georgia

\_\_\_\_\_’s online portfolio of professional requirements has been reviewed and approved by her/his advisory committee.

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Major Professor /co-advisor	Signature	Date
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Committee Member/co-advisor	Signature	Date
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Committee Member	Signature	Date
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Committee Member	Signature	Date
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Committee Member	Signature	Date
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## Checklist of MSCL Professional Requirements

Maintain active student membership in the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP) throughout the degree program

Attend one child life conference (either national or regional)

Attend the 2-day Beyond the Classroom seminar at CHOA or a comparable child life seminar at another children’s hospital

Create and present an in-service training workshop related to child life in a course, conference, or community setting

Complete a child life practicum or a directed study with children (minimum of 100 hours)

Create an online portfolio based on the ACLP competencies for certified child life specialists

Online Portfolio URL: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E: Graduate Study Forms

1. Department declaration of Major Professor and Advisory Committee (HDFS Department form)  
[http://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/Department\\_Declaration\\_of\\_Major\\_Professor\\_and\\_Advisory\\_Committee\\_Department\\_of\\_Human\\_Development\\_and\\_Family\\_Science\\_mc\\_edits.pdf](http://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/Department_Declaration_of_Major_Professor_and_Advisory_Committee_Department_of_Human_Development_and_Family_Science_mc_edits.pdf)
2. Advisory Committee for Master of Arts and Master of Science Candidates (Graduate School form)  
<https://gradstatus.uga.edu/Forms/G130>
3. Program of Study form (Graduate School form)  
<https://gradstatus.uga.edu/Forms/G138>
4. Change of Degree Objective (Graduate School form)  
<https://gradstatus.uga.edu/Forms/G136>
5. Master of Science in Child Life Professional Requirements Approval Form (HDFS Department form)  
[https://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/MSCL\\_ProfRequirements\\_Approval.pdf](https://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/MSCL_ProfRequirements_Approval.pdf)
6. Request for Announcement of Thesis/Clinical Project Defense (HDFS Department form) [http://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/Thesis\\_Announcement\\_new.pdf](http://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/Thesis_Announcement_new.pdf)
7. Instructions for Applying for Graduation (Graduate School list) <https://grad.uga.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/appforgradinstructions.pdf>
8. Graduate School M.S. Thesis and Final Oral Examination Approval Form <https://gradstatus.uga.edu/Forms/G140>
9. Departmental M.S. Non-Thesis Clinical Project Presentation and Exam Form (HDFS Department form)  
[http://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/Non-thesis\\_Approval\\_new.pdf](http://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/Non-thesis_Approval_new.pdf)
10. HDFS 7010 Directed Study Agreement: Special Problems in Human Development and Family Science (to be completed for clinical project course credit)  
<http://www.fcs.uga.edu/hdfs/hdfs-7010-agreement>