BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS
Board of Licensure for Pastoral Counselors
(New Administrative Regulation)

201 KAR 38:031. Equivalent course of study.

RELATES TO: KRS 335.620
STATUTORY AUTHORITY: KRS 335.615(6), 335.620(1)(d)-(g)
CERTIFICATION STATEMENT:
NECESSITY, FUNCTION, AND CONFORMITY: KRS 335.615 requires the Kentucky Board of Licensure for Pastoral Counselors to promulgate administrative regulations to implement KRS 335.600-335.699. KRS 335.620(1)(d)-(g) authorizes the board to promulgate administrative regulations establishing a course of study equivalent to a Master of Divinity degree. This administrative regulation establishes the criteria for the equivalent course of study.

Section 1. To qualify as an equivalent course of study as referenced in KRS 335.620(1)(d), a master's or doctoral degree shall consist of a minimum of sixty (60) semester hours of graduatelevel coursework. The coursework may include, or extend beyond, the professional degree in a theological or spiritual discipline or a mental health discipline, and may include unlimited graduatelevel hours earned in either:

(1) A pastoral counseling training program approved by the Kentucky Board of Licensure for Pastoral Counselors, such as the Kentucky Association of Pastoral Counselors Academy (hereinafter "KAPC Academy"); or

(2) Another educational institution or program that meets the requirements stipulated by the Board.

Section 2. A master's or doctoral degree in an equivalent course of study shall include the following:

(1) Theological foundations. This area shall consist of a minimum of fifteen (15) semester hours in any of the following areas:

(a) Scripture;
(b) Theology;
(c) Religious history;
(d) Theological and social ethics;
(e) Spirituality;
(f) World religions; and
(g) Non-degree theological formation, subject to the following:

1. Qualifying nondegree theological formation may include, but is not limited to:

a. Completion of an ordination preparation process recognized by a denomination, faith community, or ecclesiastical body;

b. Completion of one or more units of clinical pastoral education which are accredited by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (hereinafter "ACPE");

c. Completion of a structured theological curriculum offered by a board-approved training program, such as the KAPC Academy, where the content is substantially equivalent to graduate-level theological coursework; or

d. Other theological formation, as reviewed and approved by the board on a case-by-case basis, with documentation of such to be provided by one or more of the following:

2. Ordination certificates and documentation of ordination process;

3. Clinical pastoral education unit completion records, program curricula, syllabi, and certificates of completion; or

4. A written statement from a supervising clergyperson, bishop, or denominational authority attesting to the nature and scope of the formation.

(2) Core clinical theory. This area shall consist of graduate level coursework in each of the following core clinical theory areas:

(a) Pastoral Counseling Theory. Coursework may include theological and psychological integration models, pastoral counseling frameworks, spiritually-oriented therapeutic approaches, religious coping theory, and the application of pastoral identity within clinical practice.

(b) Counseling Theory and Techniques. Coursework may include foundational and contemporary counseling theories, models of change, therapeutic processes, and evidencebased intervention techniques applicable to individual counseling practice.

(c) Group Dynamics and Techniques. Coursework may include theories of group development, group leadership styles, facilitation skills, therapeutic factors, and methods for conducting psychoeducational and therapeutic groups.

(d) Couples and Family Systems. Coursework may include systemic theories, relational patterns, family development, couple and family assessment, and intervention strategies grounded in family systems approaches.

(e) Social and Cultural Diversity. Coursework may include multicultural counseling theory, cultural humility, identity development, social justice frameworks, and the impact of culture, power, and context on the counseling relationship.

(f) Professional Ethics. Coursework may include ethical decisionmaking models, professional standards of practice, legal considerations, confidentiality, boundaries, and application of the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics, or comparable professional codes.

(g) TraumaInformed Care and Neuroscience. Coursework may include the neurobiological foundations of trauma, principles of trauma-informed practice, the impact of adverse experiences, including complex and relational trauma, on development and functioning, and evidence-based approaches to trauma recovery.

(3) Where a single graduate-level course addresses the content requirements of more than one of the core clinical foundation areas described in subsection (2) of this section, the Kentucky Board for Licensure for Pastoral Counselors may, in its discretion, accept such a course as satisfying the requirement for each area addressed, provided the applicant submits a course syllabus or description that in the Kentucky Board for Licensure for Pastoral Counselors' discretion, demonstrates that the relevant content was substantively covered.

(4) Additional Applicable Coursework. The following graduatelevel coursework may also be applied toward the sixty (60) semester hour requirement set forth in Section 1, provided the content is consistent with the knowledge, skills, and competencies expected of a clinically trained pastoral counselor and is documented through an official transcript or other means of verification suitable in the discretion of the Kentucky Board of Licensure for Pastoral Counselors.

(a) Advanced Pastoral Counseling Theory. Coursework may include graduatelevel study that deepens the integration of clinical mental health practice with theological reflection, spiritual assessment, pastoral identity formation, and spiritually informed approaches to trauma, grief, crisis, and ethical decisionmaking within therapeutic practice.

(b) Professional Identity. Coursework may include the history and philosophy of the counseling profession, roles and functions of professional counselors, professional organizations, credentialing, and advocacy.

(c) Theories of Human Behavior, Learning, and Personality Development. Coursework may include developmental theories, learning theories, personality theory, and the study of human growth across the lifespan.

(d) Career Development. Coursework may include career development theories, vocational assessment, career counseling techniques, and the impact of work on mental health and wellbeing.
(e) Diagnostic Assessment. Coursework may include diagnostic interviewing, use of the DSM, differential diagnosis, case formulation, and assessment strategies used in clinical mental health settings.
(f) Abnormal Behavior. Coursework may include the study of psychopathology, symptom patterns, etiology of mental disorders, and evidencebased approaches to treatment planning.
(g) Substance Use Disorder Assessment and Treatment. Coursework may include screening and assessment of substance use disorders, models of addiction, cooccurring disorders, and evidencebased treatment approaches.
(h) Specialized Technical Studies. Coursework may include advanced or specialized clinical approaches such as family systems theory, marriage and family therapy, psychodynamic psychotherapies, cognitivebehavioral therapy, brief therapy models, and group therapy methods, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, or other counseling theories and techniques.
(i) Assessment and Testing. Coursework may include principles of psychological testing, test selection, administration, scoring, interpretation, and ethical use of assessment instruments.
(j) Research and Program Evaluation. Coursework may include research methods, statistics, evidencebased practice, program evaluation, and the use of research to inform clinical decisionmaking.
(k) Human Sexuality. Coursework may include psychosexual development, sexual functioning, sexual ethics, and counseling approaches related to sexuality and relationships.
(l) Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention. Coursework may include crisis theory, risk assessment, crisis stabilization, suicide prevention, and emergency response strategies.
(m) Grief, Loss, and Bereavement. Coursework may include theories of grief, complicated grief, spiritual dimensions of loss, and counseling interventions for bereavement.
(n) Pastoral or Spiritual Care Practices. Coursework may include spiritual assessment, pastoral care methods, religious coping, and integration of spirituality in counseling practice.
(o) Psychopharmacology. Coursework may include basic knowledge of psychotropic medications, indications, side effects, and collaboration with prescribing professionals.
(p) Technology, Telehealth, and Digital Ethics. Coursework may include the ethical and legal dimensions of technology-assisted counseling, telehealth delivery standards and best practices, electronic health record management, HIPAA compliance in digital clinical environments, informed consent for remote services, and the clinical limitations and contraindications of telehealth modalities.
(q) Ordination Preparation. Coursework may include supervised formation processes, denominational ordination requirements, ministerial identity development, ecclesial leadership, and vocational discernment, but no more than six (6) semester hours in Ordination Preparation may count toward the sixty (60) semester hours required for an equivalent course of study in Section 1.
(r) Clinical Pastoral Education. Coursework may include supervised clinical ministry, pastoral assessment, spiritual care interventions, interdisciplinary collaboration, and reflective practice consistent with the training models of the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, but no more than six (6) semester hours in Clinical Pastoral

Education may count toward the sixty (60) semester hours required for an equivalent course of study in Section 1.

(s) Practicum, internship or residency. Coursework may include any supervised hands-on activities, practical experience, or other activities relating to the rendering of pastoral counseling services, but no more than three (3) semester hours in a practicum, internship or residency course may count toward the sixty (60) semester hours required for an equivalent course of study in Section 1.

COMPILER'S NOTE: 2025 RS HB 6, enacted by the General Assembly on March 27, 2025, altered the information to be provided at the time an administrative regulation is filed. Aside from formatting changes necessary to upload the regulation into the LRC's publication application, this regulation has been published as submitted by the agency.

201 KAR 38:031
MARGARET BROOKS, Chair

APPROVED BY AGENCY: August 31, 2026

FILED WITH LRC: October 13, 2026 at 11:13 a.m.

PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMENT PERIOD: A public hearing on this administrative regulation shall be held on December 21, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. EST at the Mayo-Underwood Building, Room 127CW, 500 Mero Street, Frankfort, Kentucky. Individuals interested in being heard at this hearing shall notify this agency in writing by five (5) workdays prior to the hearing of their intent to attend. If no notification of intent to attend the hearing was received by that date, the hearing may be cancelled. A transcript of the public hearing will not be made unless a written request for a transcript is made. If you do not wish to be heard at the public hearing, you may submit written comments on the proposed administrative regulation. Written comments shall be accepted through December 31, 2026. Send written notification of intent to be heard at the public hearing or written comments on the proposed administrative regulation to the contact person by using the PPC public comment portal at the address listed below.

CONTACT PERSON: Name: Matthew D. Ellison, Title: Staff Attorney III Agency: Department of Professional Licensing, Office of Legal Services, Address: 500 Mero Street, 2 NC WK#4, Phone Number: (502) 782-0706 (office), Fax: (502) 564-4818, Email: Matthew.Ellison@ky.gov, Link to PPC public comment portal: https://ppc.ky.gov/reg_comment.aspx, Email: Matthew.Ellison@ky.gov