



Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies

CYAF MS and Accelerated MS Degree Program *Handbook*

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Welcome to Child, Youth, and Family Studies (CYAF)!

1. Overview and Mission. *Child, Youth and Family Studies is committed to enhancing the wellbeing of children, youth, adults and families in the state, nation and world by improving the environments in which they live and learn.*

The CYAF Identity is demonstrated and applied as follows:

- **Applied and Translational** experiences create real-world impacts
- Complex problems necessitate **interdisciplinary** collaboration
- **Respect and human dignity** is present in every interaction
- **Local to global engagement** extends perspectives and impact
- **Diversity, equity and inclusivity** create an environment where all can experience safety, belonging, and mutual respect



CYAF MS Degree Program

1. Overview and Learning Outcomes

The CYAF M.S. program promotes work with children, youth, and families by tailoring course work to student career goals, through research experienced relevant for pursuing a Ph.D. (research track) or through direct service (practitioner track).

Graduates of this program will:

- Understand child development and family-based theories and how those apply to real-life contexts;
- Demonstrate an evidence-informed perspective from which to understand individual, family, and interpersonal dynamics;
- Development professionally through targeted research design and analyses (research track) or scholarly practice within the human services field (practitioner track); and
- Work with leading researchers in the field of children, youth, and family studies.

2. Program Options (A or B) and Coursework

Based on long-term career interests and in consultation with their advisor, students complete either Option A (Research/Thesis) or Option B (Practitioner/Project) programs of study. Students in both tracts will expand their knowledge about how lifespan development, stress and crisis and interpersonal dynamics impact individuals, families and communities.

Option A is intended for those who are preparing for careers in research and scholarly work or additional academic pursuits beyond the master’s degree (e.g., Ph.D.). Under Option A, a student must earn a minimum of 30 semesters of credit, consisting of at least six credit hours of thesis (CYAF 899) and work with a supervisory committee to write a research thesis.

Table 1: Option A Coursework Requirements

Course Number	Course Name	Credits
REQUIRED: 18 CREDITS		
CYAF 972	Theories of Human Dev. and Family Relations	3
CYAF 865	Research Methods	3
PSYC 941 OR EDPS 941	Fundamentals of Research Design and Analysis I Intermediate Statistics: Experimental Methods	3
PSYC 942 OR EDPS 942	Fundamentals of Research Design and Analysis II Intermediate Statistics: Correlational Methods	3
CYAF 899	Thesis	6
ELECTIVES: Select four (12 credits) of the following:		
CYAF 833	Nonprofits in a Global Society	3
CYAF 813	Global Case Studies in Refugee Health & Wellbeing	3
CYAF 815	Family Violence in the Global Context	3
CYAF 846	Addictions and Families	3
CYAF 858	Family Stress and Crisis, Coping and Recovery	3
CYAF 882	Global Family Health and Wellbeing	3
TOTAL CREDITS		30

Option B is most appropriate for students pursuing practice-based or professional careers in which the master’s degree provides suitable training. Under Option B, a student must earn a minimum of 30 credit hours, including an internship (3-6 credits) and scholarly project (3-6 credits).

Table 2: Option B Coursework Requirements

Course Number	Course Name	Credits
REQUIRED: 18 CREDIT HOURS		
CYAF 972 OR CYAF 884	Theories of Human Dev. and Family Relations Foundations for Family Studies	3
CYAF 865 OR CYAF 864	Research Methods Consumers of Science	3
CYAF 873	Program Design & Evaluation	3
CYAF 897D	Internship in CYAF	3-6
CYAF 996	Scholarly Practice & Discovery	1-6
ELECTIVES: Select four (12 credits) of the following:		
CYAF 833	Nonprofits in a Global Society	3
CYAF 813	Global Case Studies in Refugee Health & Wellbeing	3
CYAF 815	Family Violence in the Global Context	3
CYAF 846	Addictions and Families	3
CYAF 858	Family Stress and Crisis, Coping and Recovery	3
CYAF 882	Global Family Health and Wellbeing	3
TOTAL CREDITS		30-33

3. Option A: Thesis & Ethical Research

3a. Thesis Committee: Students in Options A must form a committee of three faculty members (including the student’s adviser) who convene at least twice: once for the thesis proposal meeting to give approval prior to the start of the thesis work; and second for the thesis defense. Committees should be created in consultation with the adviser and include faculty with expertise relevant to the student’s thesis.

3b. Human Subjects (CITI) Training: CITI offers two human subjects research courses. [Students in this program will complete Group 2 Basic Course for Social Behavioral Research Investigators.](#)

3c. Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval: IRB approval must be given for all research involving new data collection prior to participant recruitment and data collection. The IRB reviews projects involving human subject research. These reviews are in accordance with Federal regulations and UNL assurance documents to the Office for Protections from Research Risks (OPRR). Note that the IRB will not review projects already in progress; approval must be secured prior to the initiation of the research.

3d. Thesis Requirements: The subject of the thesis is chosen based on the student’s interest and approval of the advisor and thesis committee. The thesis should reveal a capacity to carry on independent study or research and should demonstrate the student’s ability to use the techniques employed in their field of investigation. Guidelines are presented below.

3e. Announcing the Defense: It is the student's responsibility to begin the process for making their Thesis and/or Dissertation defense public. Please submit the [Dissertation and Thesis Defense notification form](#) at least 3 weeks prior to the defense date. The notification will go out to the CEHS website, social media and in hometown news

Table 3: Thesis Components

Chapter	Guidelines*
I. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first part of the Introduction should clearly state the purpose of the study; • Statement of the Hypothesis or Research Question: A clear statement(s) that identifies the precise research question should be included; • Significance: Identify significance of study as well as its <i>uniqueness</i>. In other words, how will your study contribute to the current state of knowledge and what gaps will it fill? The following sections <i>may</i> be included (consult with advisor): • Definitions: Provide simple list of definitions of terms that directly pertain to this study and of which might be unclear to the reader. • Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions (typical in quantitative studies)
II. Literature Review (LR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide LR into headings and smaller sub-headings. For each, provide a thorough examination of the current literature (as well as seminal studies) that influences or is representative of research on that topic and subtopic. The LR should collectively support the process and purpose of the study, with contradictory literature addressed. • The theoretical framework for the investigation must be included.
III. Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly present each aspect of the process by which the research will be completed.

	<p>Suggestion: Pretend you are explaining the methods to an audience that is completely unfamiliar with your work but hopes to replicate it exactly as you did.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sub-sections typically include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Participants: This section should identify requirements for inclusion, estimated sample size, and composition of sample. ○ Procedures: Should describe process for participant recruitment and data collection process. ○ Instrumentation: Describe the tool(s) used for collection of data collection as well as their psychometric properties. For interviews (or focus groups): include the research questions and sub-questions to be asked. ○ Plan of Analysis: How will the data be analyzed? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Suggestion: For each research question (or hypothesis) outline the analyses that will be used to address it. ● Positionality: Include a section on researcher biases (or positionality); and, for sensitive topics or studies including vulnerable populations, include a section on ethical responsibility and protection of participants.
IV. Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Order of Presentation: Describe results in the order that corresponds to how the hypotheses or research questions were presented. So, for instance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hypothesis 1 (restated): Followed by Results OR ✓ Research Question 1 (restated): Followed by Results ○ Provide only the results here; avoid discussion or interpretation of results.
V. Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide inferences and implications that the results of the study provide you and the reader or others who may have interest in the results. This is a time to expound on your results and offer insight into what your study does or does not contribute to the body of information on your topic. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The results of your study must be <i>integrated with</i> the broader literature. To what extent does this study support or contradict the work of others? ○ Future directions for research, service, practice or policy: What recommendations do you have to use this investigation as a springboard for continued scholarly advancement or service or policy? ● Limitations: Provide a sub-section that outlines study limitations. ● Conclusions: Include a final section that offers specific conclusions resulting from your study.
References	Appear at the end of the Thesis.
Appendices	These may include, for instance, IRB approval, instrumentation/interview questions, recruitment materials, etc... and should appear after the reference section.

4. Option B: Internship & Scholarly Project

4a. Internship (CYAF 897D): Students must enroll in 3-6 credits of internship (with approximately 50 hours of internship work for each credit hour). The Internship provides hands-on participation in a social service agency in student’s area of **career interest**. The [CYAF 897D contract](#) must be completed to receive an enrollment code.

If a student completed CYAF 497D as an undergraduate, the 897D site must be at a different location, unless the “placement policies” (see below) are met. The digital portfolio must be updated to reflect the new 897D experiences, acquired skills, completed products, letter from site supervisor, etc...

Placement Policies. Students determine the appropriate placement site, in consultation with their advisor. However, students **may NOT** complete the internship anywhere they have worked or volunteered in the past, unless the following criteria are met:

1. The student would be learning new skills, and have a new set of responsibilities;
2. The student would be working with a new/different supervisor; and
3. The student would be working with a new/different clientele.

Digital Portfolio. Using Google Sites (or a comparable platform) students must submit a professional digital portfolio at the culmination of the internship experience. Required elements:

1. A brief introductory paragraph about yourself and your career interests
2. Relevant hard and soft skills
3. Your education and employment resume
4. All applicable work and volunteer experience **including at the** Internship.
 - a. must include the following contact information: name & location of where you worked, website link if available, dates of internship, name, title and contact information of supervisor
5. **Description (including photos/visual ques and examples)** of projects and/or work examples from the internship to give insight into the activities you were engaged in and skills and knowledge you developed over the course of your internship.
6. **Testimonial(s)** about your internship performance. A letter of support from your site supervisor is required and should:
 - Be on company/organization letterhead and include supervisor's contact information;
 - Address the type of work you did for the internship, hours invested, and dates internship was completed; and
 - Identify student strengths (e.g., skills, aptitudes)
7. Contact information (including on-line presence; e.g., LinkedIn website).

Digital Portfolio Examples:

- <https://sites.google.com/view/sidneythieleportfolio?usp=sharing>
- <https://sites.google.com/view/j-bahl/home>

4b. Scholarly Project (CYAF 996): A scholarly project consists of 1-6 credit hours (each credit is equivalent to 50 hours work) and the scope and foci should be directly related to the student's practitioner and career interests. The scholarly project is **designed in consultation with, and must be approved by, the student's advisor.** The project should reveal a capacity to identify gaps in

services or practitioner needs, think critically and creatively, and assert leadership in the initiation and completion of the project.

Project Supervision. The Scholarly Project Supervisor may or may not be the student's advisor. However, the advisor must approve the Scholarly Project.

Projects. The scope and foci of the project is determined by the students and their **project supervisor** but typically involve creation of output that demonstrates synthesis and application of learning. Examples include:

- Development of research-based online resources to support family service providers
- Development of research-based family service Extension curriculum
- Research-based strategies to promote health and well-being among seasonal migrant families with school-aged children and youth
- Development of research-based guidebook to enhance case managers working in the Child Protection field.

Written Explanation. Scholarly projects must be accompanied by a written summarization that includes the following elements:

1. Question(s) that guided the project / problem the project was meant to address;
2. Approach taken to answer the question(s) / investigate the problem;
3. Outcome. Summarize the results of your approach. Was the question answered (e.g., what was learned)? / Was the problem solved (e.g., what is the solution)?
4. What are the implications of the work for policy, practice, and/or continued investigation?

CYAF Accelerated MS Degree Program

1. Overview and Admission. The educational goals of the Accelerated CYAF MS Program is to prepare high quality students for (1) competitive employment in the human services field, working in direct service with children, youth and families in a variety of capacities, and/or (2) for pursuing doctoral work in the human sciences.

This program also allows students to complete the M.S. degree part-time, in order to enter the job market while pursuing the M.S. degree, thereby maximizing both job experience and formal education to enhance professional development within the human service field.

Students may apply to the program after completing a *minimum of 30 undergraduate hours* (i.e., after establishing sophomore standing). A minimum of *60 undergraduate credit hours* will be required at the time of entry into the program.

1a. Admission Requirements and Application Materials:

- Full-time student status
- Minimum GPA of 3.0.
- Personal Statement: 1-2 page statement that includes the following
 - One to three personal and professional goals, and how admission into the accelerated CYAF MS degree program will help you achieve those goals; and
 - How your past experiences (work, volunteer, research, etc.) provide a context for professional success in the field.
 - How your interests align with the CYAF M.S. program.
- Transcripts: from all coursework taken at post-secondary institutions.
- One Letter of Recommendation: *must* be from someone in academia (professor, instructor, academic advisor, research supervisor) who can speak to your academic achievements, academic potential, and critical thinking skills.

1b. Application Review and Advising. Applications will be reviewed first by the CYAF Graduate Education Committee (GEC), if acceptable, files will be forwarded to the CYAF MS Selection Committee for further review and to determine admission.

- Selection and admission procedures for accelerated master's degree students is the same as for other CYAF M.S. applicants.
- Students selected for admission will be assigned a faculty advisor based on similarity in professional/career interests and capacity.
- Students will work with their advisors to determine course work and educational opportunities that will best meet their professional goals (i.e., Option A/research track or Option B/practitioner track).

2. Graduate Level Coursework

No more than 12 graduate course credit hours may count toward the bachelor's degree. The table below includes a selection of courses from which 12 credit hours should be selected. 900-level courses are not permitted to count toward the bachelor's degree.

Table 4: Accelerated MS Course Selections

Select Four of the Following Courses					
Course Number	Course Title	Credits Hours	Frequency offered	Grading Requirement UG course	Grading Requirement GR course
CYAF 413/813	Global Case Studies in Refugee Health & Wellbeing	3	Spring	C	B
CYAF 415/815	Family Violence in the Global Context	3	Spring	C	B
CYAF 446/846	Addictions and Families	3	Summer/Fall	C	B
CYAF 458/858	Family Stress and Crisis, Coping and Recovery	3	Fall, Spring, Summer	C	B
CYAF 498/898	Research Experience in CYAF	3	Fall, Spring, Summer	C	B
CYAF 493/893	Special Topics in Contemporary Family Issues	3	Varies	C	B
CYAF 495/895	Special Topics in Family & Cultural Diversity	3	Fall	C	B
CYAF 482A/882A	Study Abroad	3	Varies	C	B
CYAF 833	Nonprofits in a Global Society	3	Fall		B

Additional Documents & Information

1. Change of Advisor: Students are assigned an advisor upon acceptance into the CYAF MS Degree Program or the CYAF Accelerated MS Degree Program. Students are allowed to change advisors but must do so formally and only upon approval of a new advisor. The [Advisor Transfer form](#) must be completed and signed by both the former and new advisors.

2. Memorandum of Courses (MOC): All master's students must complete a [memorandum of courses](#) (MOC) which is approved by the student's adviser and the department graduate chair. Per the Office of Graduate Studies this *must be filed prior to completion of over one-half of required coursework*. Please carefully review the Office of Graduate Studies' [Master's Degree Milestones](#) for guidance on procedures and paperwork necessary for successfully meeting the M.S. degree requirements.

3. Time to Complete a Master's Degree: A master's degree student is expected to complete all degree requirements within five years of their first term of admission to the master's degree program, unless the student is enrolled in a program with a different time limit that has been approved by the Office of Graduate Studies. Graduate courses taken prior to the start of the master's degree program and not counted toward a previously awarded graduate degree may be included on the student's Memorandum of Courses, provided the previous courses were taken within 10 years at the time of degree completion.

4. Previously Enrolled Students: Students who have not been enrolled for three consecutive terms and who (if eligible) have not been approved for an Academic Leave will need to reapply for admission.

Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer
Enrolled	Not Enrolled		If not enrolled must reapply.					
	Enrolled	Not Enrolled			If not enrolled must reapply.			
		Enrolled	Not Enrolled		If not enrolled must reapply.			

