

AFCPE® Approved Education Program

Supervisor's Guide to Experience Hours

The Association for Financial Counseling and Planning Education® (AFCPE®) has more than 30 years of history as a professional association of individuals who provide financial education services, teach aspiring financial counselors, research personal financial topics or provide one-on-one financial counseling to individuals and families in a variety of settings or to a variety of audiences. The Association trains, educates and supports more than 1,000 professional members and several thousand AFCPE certified professionals.

The Accredited Financial Counselor (AFC®) Program is the premier financial counseling certification program in the field. AFC candidates submit to a rigorous education and examination program over a period of up to 36 months. The AFC program includes the study of many personal finance topics including budgeting, credit use, debt management, housing, insurance, individual taxation, investments, retirement planning and estate planning. In addition, certification program candidates acquire an understanding of the basic principles of counseling and counseling techniques.

Program participants are not only required to pass an examination, but must also complete 1,000 hours of experience in personal financial counseling or education. Each candidate must also submit three letters of reference and sign a strict code of ethics before a certificate is issued.

The AFCPE Approved Education Program is a unique partnership between AFCPE and universities who offer curriculum which meets the core competencies required for the AFC certification. The purpose of the program is to provide an affordable path for students to become certified prior to completing their education. It is expected that program participants will enhance their employment opportunities after meeting the certification requirements and benefit personally and professionally from the knowledge they gain.

Program participants will obtain their knowledge by completing required coursework through an AFCPE Approved Education Program. As part of the AFCPE Approved Education Program, participants must gain experiential hours by providing financial education and/or financial counseling services. This experience can be in a paid position or on a volunteer basis. Candidates must obtain 1,000 hours of experience before earn the certification.

The Experiential Component of the Program is designed to provide practical, hands-on learning for the program participants. Students can submit experience obtained up to 2 years prior to registering in the AFC® certification program. If a program participant has no previous experience, we suggest that the student offers 4-8 hours each week of service for a period of one to two years. There are several types of services a student participant may be able to offer. These include:

- ✦ Developing financial education programming
- ✦ Teaching financial education programs
- ✦ Providing one-on-one financial counseling assistance

Experience hours should be monitored and tracked by the student. However, we ask that the supervisor make themselves available to help the student set goals, answer questions and review the work of the student.

Experience obtained under the supervision of an AFC® certified professional is weighted, allowing for an accelerated path to reaching the experience requirement. Every hour worked in one-on-one or group counseling activities under the supervision of an AFC® certified professional in good standing will be valued at 1.5 experience hours (100 hours worked = 150 experience hours).

Once a student has successfully passed the AFC certification exam and obtained the required 1,000 hours of experience, they must report the total number of hours accrued in each position through their myAFCPE account. The supervisor may be asked to confirm to AFCPE that the claims are accurate and complete.

On the following pages, you will find some forms that may be useful, but are not required, to work with a student interested in certification. The professional experience progression may prove especially useful for those who will be providing one-on-one counseling with clients.

Guidelines and Suggestions for Experience Hours

Suggested Activity	Hours Allowed
One on one financial counseling or group financial counseling	Can be 100% of total hours required
Develop and/or teach financial education course(s) or webinars	Limited to 70% of total hours required.
Financial Counseling / Personal Finance related course work. Only client centric or experience-based projects.	Limited to 10% of total hours required.
Attend local professional financial training opportunities (conferences, meetings, seminars)	Limited to 10% of total hours required.
Write for the AFCPE® newsletter and/or blog	Limited to 5% of total hours required.
Participate in web-based trainings such as webinars. <i>(The AFC online webinar review course, an optional study resource provided by AFCPE, does not count toward experience hours)</i>	Limited to 5% of total hours required.

One-to-One Counseling

Professional Experience Progression

The following outline provides a recommended “progression path” for practicum activity that includes one-to-one counseling. This progression provides an opportunity to ensure that skills are properly developed and to ensure the understanding and success of these future financial counselors.

Level One

- ✦ Customer Service duties
- ✦ Field calls and answer questions about services offered
- ✦ Schedule classes and appointments
- ✦ Shadow financial counselors
- ✦ Attend classes and briefings for financial counselors/educators

Level Two

- ✦ Assist financial counselor with preparation for appointments or classes
- ✦ Observe counseling sessions upon approval
- ✦ Attend financial trainings or conferences

Level Three

- ✦ Research material for class development
- ✦ Attend financial conferences and meetings
- ✦ Attend local professional training opportunities
- ✦ Instruct classes monitored by financial counselors
- ✦ Verify clients’ bills

Level Four

- ✦ Begin counseling clients on loans and debt management (with supervision)