



Summary of the Counseling Compact's 60-Hour Master's Degree Requirement

Section 3(A)(3) of the Counseling Compact [model legislation](#) indicates that member states must *currently*:

“Require Licensees to have a 60 semester-hour (or 90 quarter-hour) master’s degree in counseling or 60 semester-hours (or 90 quarter-hours) of graduate course work including the following topic areas...”

Some have interpreted the latter half of this requirement (“or 60 semester hours [...] of graduate coursework”) as meaning that practitioners can participate in the compact without a master’s degree. However, this is inaccurate for the following reasons:

1. Section 3 of the Counseling Compact outlines eligibility for *states* to participate, not practitioners. Requirements for practitioners are outlined in Section 4. A *state* joining the compact must currently meet the provisions of Section 3.

For instance, a state must license practitioners. A state must require licensees to pass a recognized national exam. A state must require licensees to complete a supervised postgraduate professional experience. The requirement for 60 semester-hours (or 90 quarter-hours) of graduate course work assumes an earned master’s degree.

2. The Counseling Compact is based on current state licensure requirements. All states require an earned master’s degree for licensure in counseling, and the Counseling Compact reflects this reality. Further, applicants for state licensure must have earned a master’s degree in order to sit for a national exam.
3. The Counseling Compact requires licensees to complete a supervised postgraduate professional experience. “Postgraduate” presumes an earned master’s degree.

Interstate compacts for occupational licensure reflect the current state licensure requirements of eligible member states. The Counseling Compact recognizes and respects these requirements and assumes that they will continue.

The Counseling Compact Drafting Team crafted the 60-hour master’s degree requirement carefully and intentionally. Beyond its consistency with state licensure requirements, the Drafting Team envisioned several additional benefits of this requirement:

1. The Drafting Team, at CSG’s suggestion, did not seek to include all of the myriad “grandparenting” clauses that many states have employed over the years as they have increased licensure standards.

Thus counselors who obtained a 36-hour or 48-hour master’s degree prior to their state’s adoption of a 60-hour requirement would be eligible for the compact as long as their state *currently* regulates the profession at the 60-hour level. This approach works for the counseling profession because in the present day most states have very similar licensure requirements for the profession.

2. There are a few states that license practitioners who have a 60 semester-hour (90 quarter-hour) master's degree in counseling *or* 60 semester-hours (90 quarter-hours) in a related field if they have completed 60 semester-hours (90 quarter-hours) of graduate course work in the eight subject areas described in Section 3(A)(3) of the compact. This language ensures that these states are eligible to join the compact.
3. The Drafting Team believed strongly that it was important to open the compact to as many practitioners and as many states as possible. This language reflects this belief and mirrors the reality of how the profession is regulated across the country. By evaluating only a state's *current* licensure requirements, the compact avoids excluding counselors licensed prior to their state's adoption of a 60 semester-hour (90 quarter-hour) master's degree requirement, as well as states that have required fewer hours of coursework in years past.

In summary, interstate compacts for occupational licensure seek to mirror current predominant state licensure requirements, and all states require an earned master's degree with 60 semester-hours (90 quarter-hours) of coursework in counseling for licensure as a counselor. The Counseling Compact respects this uniform requirement and anticipates that it will remain in place across all member states.

The Council of State Governments (CSG) is providing technical assistance to states considering the Counseling Compact. For more information, please feel free to contact Andrew Bates, CSG staff, at abates@csg.org.

