

PREPARING FOR A CAREER AS A GENETIC COUNSELOR

ADMISSION CRITERIA

- Understanding of the field - Genetic Counselor shadowing required
- Leadership Skills and Life Experience
- Cultural Understanding
- A strong GPA (3.5)/Science GPA 3.5 or more
- General GRE Score at or over:
 - 72% Verbal, 65% Quantitative, 60% Analytical
- Excellent, Personal recommendations (min. of 3)
- Advocacy experience as a counselor (volunteer or paid)
- Certain coursework [see below]
- Lab experience is a plus

Step one: Gain enough experience to convince yourself, your letter writers, and an admissions committee that you know what genetic counseling is and that is a career path for which you are well-suited. Gain the skills, maturity, and cultural competency needed for this career.

Step two: Acquire advocacy experience as a counselor that includes 1:1 interaction with clients. Examples include: crisis counseling for rape survivors or victims of domestic abuse, crisis hotline work, camp counseling for children with disabilities, bereavement counseling, hospice work, peer or community counseling, Planned Parenthood.

There are 34 accredited programs as of 2019 in the U.S. and Canada. They are listed at <https://www.gceducation.org/program-directory/>. There is some variation in the pre-requisite coursework needed, but most successful applicants are life science majors (biology, biochem, or neuroscience) or psychology majors with lots of science courses. Natural science majors are well served to take courses in psychology, anth, or ETST as preparation for their career path. Below is a listing of the undergraduate coursework required by most programs:

Pre-Requisite Courses:

Biol 130 - Cells to Organisms
Biol 260 - Genetics
Chem 116 - Energetics and Dynamics
Chem 250 Organic Chemistry 1 OR
Chem 340/Biol 444 - Biochemistry I
Psych 260 - Developmental Psychology
OR a Clinical Psych course (335/355)
Biol 170 or Math107 or Psych 170

Additional courses for some programs:

Biol 150 - Organisms to Ecosystems
Advanced Genetics (Human genetics tutorial)
Molecular Biology
Human Anatomy or Physiology

There is a match program for admission to genetic counseling programs. See <https://natmatch.com/gcadmissions/rules.html> for the rules.

COSTS and PROGRAM LENGTH

The length of genetic counseling programs is typically 21 months. The average cost per year for tuition, fees, books and equipment in 2019 is as follows (not including living expenses):
Tuition: \$21,700-40,000/yr

PROGRAMS attended by recent LU ALUMS

UW-Madison, U. Cincinnati, Case Western