GENETIC COUNSELING

Degree Offered
Master’s degree in Genetic Counseling (MGC)

Length of Program
Our program consists of 62 credit hours over 21 months beginning in August and ending in May.

Degree Requirements
All students must successfully complete the entire curriculum of the program in order to be considered for the Master’s degree in Genetic Counseling. Successful completion requires an average of 80% or above on all didactic and clinical courses unless specified otherwise in the syllabus. Students must have 50 logbook cases as defined by ACGC Standards. Finally, students must complete a capstone project as a requirement for graduation.

What is a Genetic Counselor?
Genetic counseling is a profession combining medical genetics and counseling that supports individuals and families seeking information about how inherited diseases may impact their health. Genetic counselors work with patients to offer guidance in genetic testing as well as interpretation of results. These providers provide psychosocial support to patients who are navigating the complexities of genomic medicine and decision making.

As professionals whose training in both genetics and psychosocial sciences allows them to understand how patients make decisions, genetic counselors can look at the stresses patients face and explain the genetic test results in layman-friendly terms.

Counselors also can help providers optimize genetic testing, as providers are increasingly recognizing that genetic testing is a key component of precision medicine.

Admissions
Genetic Counseling
Admission Requirements
Enrollment in the Genetic Counseling Education program is limited and competitive. The Genetic Counseling admissions committee, composed of program faculty and administration, evaluates the qualifications of each applicant and makes the final selections for admission.

Prerequisites
Degree and GPA
Applicants must have a baccalaureate degree and a minimum cumulative overall grade point average of 3.0 (based on 4.0 scale) and a minimum of 3.0 in their last 30 semester hours in the sciences (defined as any courses in biology, chemistry, biochemistry, and genetics). Specific degree not required but the genetics and psychology pre-requisites must be met at the time of the application. Most applicants have a degree in biology, genetics, chemistry, psychology, social work, nursing or related field.

Notes:

1. Applicants with an overall GPA less than 3.0 may be considered if they have post degree coursework in the sciences demonstrating higher grades or another graduate degree with a GPA of 3.0 or higher.
2. Any repeated course grades (original and repeated) will be averaged in the GPA calculations and used accordingly in evaluation of the application.
3. Admission to the program will be dependent on successful completion of all prerequisite coursework. While a prerequisite course can be in progress, genetics and psychology must be completed prior to submitting your application.

Required Coursework
One semester of AP, CLEP, and DSST credit can count toward the general biology and chemistry requirements but cannot completely fill this requirement. In addition, these courses will not satisfy the genetics, biochemistry, statistics, or psychology requirements.

- 2 semesters or equivalent of general biology with lab (biology for majors)
- 2 semesters or equivalent of general chemistry with lab (chemistry for majors)
- 1 semester or equivalent of upper level biochemistry* where organic chemistry is a prerequisite for the course *Note: content must include 1) metabolism of glycogen, fatty acids, and amino acids, 2) structure and function of proteins, lipids, carbohydrates, and nucleic acids
- 1 semester or equivalent of general psychology
- 1 semester or equivalent of general/introductory genetics
- 1 semester or equivalent of statistics
- 1 semester or equivalent of molecular or cell biology

Coursework that may strengthen an applicant’s experience includes advanced science lab (biochemistry, molecular, and/or genetics), anatomy and physiology, abnormal psychology, developmental biology, advanced genetics courses.

GRE
Scores from the general aptitude test of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test are required. Scores must be from the last five years. Subject exam is not required. The UNMC Institution Code for GRE is 6896.

Supporting Materials
1. Official transcripts from all institutions attended
2. Questions on non-cognitive variables as part of the application process for the College of Allied Health Professions
3. Three individuals to serve as a reference. These individuals will complete an online evaluation in lieu of writing a letter of support.
4. Personal statement – In 500 words or less, share your reasons for applying to the genetic counseling program, your understanding of the field based on your exposure, and your future career plans.

a. Examples of exposure include watching the National Society of Genetic Counselors (NSGC) online Master Genetic Counseling series (https://www.nsgc.org/page/prospective-applicant-master-genetic-
counseling series, interviewing a genetic counselor (in person or by phone), talking with genetic counseling students, attending genetic counseling conferences or webinars, or a formal job shadow experience. Of note, a job shadow is not required for admission.

5. Resume documenting recommended experiences (no more than 2 pages, Times New Roman, 12 pt font, 1” margins). Please include name and national match services unique number as well as the following sections: Counseling/Client Advocacy Experience, Lab/Research Experience, and Exposure to the genetic counseling field.

**Recommended Experiences**

1. Counseling/Client Advocacy Experience: We strongly recommend potential applicants have experience in counseling or client advocacy. This can include working or volunteering with a crisis center, individuals with disabilities, or persons with medical needs.

2. Exposure to the field of Genetic Counseling: Applicants should understand the role of a genetic counselor.

3. Laboratory/research experience

Admission Committee will review the entire application when selecting applicants to interview. These interviews will take place the second week in March. The interview is the opportunity for us to get to know each other better.

For more information on national averages for successful applicants, please visit the GC Admissions FAQ page available at the Association of Genetic Counseling Program Directors website (https://agcpd.org/AdmissionsInfo).

**National Match Service**

All genetic counseling programs are now participating in a National Match Service, an electronic genetic counseling match. Applicants must first register for the Match with NMS before applying to participating programs as the NMS identifier is required for the application. Similarly, our program will have an identifier code. Once admission interviews are complete, both applicants and programs will submit ranked lists of preferred placements prior to the final deadline. A computerized matching algorithm will determine final placements. This Match list will be released both to applicants and programs simultaneously. The results of the Match are binding.

For more information on this process, please visit the National Match Service page. (https://natmatch.com/gcadmissions)

**Curriculum**

**Curriculum**

Our curriculum consists of 62 credit hours over 21 months. We have defined 5 specific categories for our curriculum based on the practice-based competencies and content required by ACGC:

1. Genetic counseling skills, advanced topics, and professional development
2. Genetics Knowledge
3. Clinical Application