



COUNSELING PROGRAM FAQs

Prior to Submitting Your Application

Q – What are the admissions requirements for the program?

A – Thank you for your interest in Penn GSE! You can find detailed application instructions on our [admissions website](#). If you have any further questions, feel free to call us at (215) 898-6415, or email us at admissions@gse.upenn.edu.

Q – When should I apply?

A – We recommend that you apply in the fall/winter to receive priority financial aid consideration. The program has a rolling admissions policy, and will continue reviewing applications until the seats are filled. Most applications are received between January and April.

Q – I would like to visit Penn’s campus. Whom should I contact?

A – Prospective students are welcome to visit Penn GSE for an information session or campus tour. Please see the [Penn GSE Campus Visit page](#) for more details.

Q – What is the difference between the CMHS M.S.Ed. Program and the PCL M.Phil.Ed. Program?

A – The Counseling and Mental Health Services (CMHS) M.S.Ed. is Year One and Professional Counseling (PCL) M.Phil.Ed. is Year Two of a two-year program. Students have the option of leaving Penn GSE after completing Year One and earning their M.S.Ed. Students can opt to continue with the PCL Year Two Program, earning their M.Phil.Ed. M.S.Ed. students completing both years of the program end up with two degrees: the M.S.Ed. and the M.Phil.Ed.

Q – What are the requirements for applying to the CMHS Program?

A – Applicants must have a bachelor’s degree. Students are encouraged to take a college-level psychology course, but this is not a requirement.

Q – What kind of applicants are you looking for?

We are looking for students who are interested in completing professional training in mental health counseling because of a strong desire to help others and contribute to society through counseling. You do not have to have a background in psychology to be considered for the CMHS Program.

Q – How long is my GRE score valid?

A – Five years. Students can submit scores up to five years after their testing date.

Q – Is there a minimum GRE score or GPA?

A – Penn GSE looks holistically at applications, and a low GRE score or GPA does not automatically disqualify a student. While there is no minimum, you can [view the average GRE scores](#) for current master’s and doctoral students.

Q – If I send you copies of my letters of recommendation and resume', would you be able to tell me if I am a competitive candidate?

A – No. We will not pre-review application materials prior to receiving your application. Everyone must submit the application and additional materials through the Penn GSE website, and be evaluated by the faculty review team.

Q – How do I apply for scholarships?

A – There is no separate application for merit-based scholarships, and students will be notified of any award in their acceptance letter. While approximately 75% of incoming students receive a scholarship, the master’s program is not fully funded.

Additional information about tuition and financial aid can found on our [website](#).

Q – I am a full-time employee, how would my tuition benefits from Penn work?

A – Please see the [Penn Human Resources website](#) for more information.

Q – Can I work full-time while completing the program?

A – No. The two-year Counseling and Mental Health Services/Professional Counseling program is designed to be a full-time academic program spanning two years. Courses usually meet during the day, and students must complete practicum and internship hours. Applicants who wish to keep their full-time jobs should apply to the [SMHC Executive Program](#), which is designed to accommodate the needs of working

professionals. Exceptions are made for full-time Penn employees who would like to use their tuition benefits to take 1-2 courses per semester.

Q – Is the CMHS/PCL program CACREP-accredited?

A – CMHS and PCL chose not to pursue CACREP accreditation because it is primarily designed to separate the counseling profession from psychology, and, in particular, counseling psychology. This does not appear to influence the job prospects for our alumni, because our program ensures that graduates are eligible for counseling licensure once they have completed the post-graduate requirements.

Our graduates are license-eligible because our programs are designed to meet licensure guidelines in PA, NJ, NY, and other neighboring states. Recently, the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) reviewed and approved our counseling programs and granted us status as a National Counseling Exam (NCE) site. This means that students who complete our approved counseling programs, pass the National Counseling Exam (taken toward the end of their second year in the program), and complete the required 3,000 hours of post-graduate supervised fieldwork are automatically granted National Counselor Certification. This status signals to states and employers that the student or licensure applicant has graduated from a program approved by the NBCC.

Q – How many students are typically in the program?

A – We normally have at least 40 students in the CMHS M.S.Ed. Program (Year One) and about 30 in the Professional Counseling M.Phil.Ed. Program (Year Two).

Preparing for the CMHS Program

Q – When do fall classes start?

A – All new students are required to [register](#) for and attend New Student Orientation, which is held in late August. Classes begin soon after.

Q – Where do graduate students live?

A – Penn GSE students have a wide range of options for living on or off campus. More information can be found on the [admissions website](#).

Q – How do I register for courses?

A – Incoming students do not register for courses themselves. The courses you will take in the fall (EDUC 613, 686, 687, and 688) are required of all incoming Counseling and Mental Health Services students. CMHS students are guaranteed a seat in these four classes. Our Program Assistant, Rochelle Hambeau-Miller, can be reached at rhambeau@gse.upenn.edu if you have additional questions about this process.

Once registered, you will receive an email from Rochelle and be able to view your schedule on [Penn in Touch](#).

Q – I already have my clearances to work at school and clinical sites, can I use those or will I still have to apply for new ones?

A – All incoming students are required to apply for new clearances before the beginning of the fall semester, per University of Pennsylvania policy.

Q – What is the placement process and when will that begin?

A – Further information on the placement process will be sent out prior to the start of the fall semester. You will then be able to identify placement sites of interest.

Q – Does the program provide field placement sites? Can I find my own site?

A – Our program has created a site placement database available to all of our students. With the help of our faculty site coordinators, students will have the opportunity to indicate which three sites they prefer. These requests are reviewed individually, and students are matched based on their interests and site availability. If a student has a site of interest not in our database, they should notify the site coordinators, and an effort will be made to accommodate these requests.

Q – What are the required professional credentials for practicum and internship supervisors?

A – External practicum supervisors must have experience in the area they are supervising. The internship supervisors for school counseling certification must be certified school counselors with at least 3 years of experience.

Supervisors for LPC eligibility must be mental health professionals with more than 3 years in the field. They can be a licensed mental health professional (LPC, LMHC, psychologist, social worker, psychiatrist), or non-licensed mental health professional with extensive experience (an exception that requires program approval).

Completion of Counseling and Mental Health Services Program (Year One)

Q – Am I required to take summer classes?

A – Yes. The program is designed for two consecutive academic calendar years: fall, spring, summer, fall, spring. Most students begin in the fall of year one and graduate in the spring of year two. Students have the option to take a break during the second summer session (usually July and August) if they take additional courses in the summer following their second year.

Q – Why do some students leave after the first year?

A – Some of our students are interested in doing doctoral work in counseling psychology or clinical psychology, and find the CMHS M.S.Ed. helps them gain acceptance into doctoral programs in applied psychology. Others join the workforce in mental health settings that do not require the PCL M.Phil.Ed.

Q – Am I eligible for licensure if I only complete one year?

A – No. Students must complete both years (20 courses) and fulfill their internship hours before they can apply for licensure. Students intending to apply for licensure cannot complete the second year at another institution; licensing boards require that the training take place within one program.

Q – If I receive merit aid in my first year, am I guaranteed the same amount of scholarship the second year?

A – No. Students are reassessed for merit aid when they apply to the M.Phil.Ed. in year two.

Starting the Professional Counseling Program (Year Two)

Q – How many internship hours are required for school certification? Will I be certified when I graduate?

A – The Pennsylvania Department of Education requires that candidates obtain experience at the elementary and secondary levels during their field experience, which includes pre-practicum, practicum, and internships. Students will be required to complete a supervised, post-practicum internship (a minimum of 420 hours), demonstrating their ability to design and implement school counseling programs at various grade levels. This internship leads to a Pre-K–12 school counselor certification.

Additionally, students need to meet the following criteria:

Complete 60 credits of coursework and a comprehensive examination capstone

Pass the [PRAXIS II Exam](#)

Complete the Pennsylvania [TIMS application](#)

Q – How many internship hours are required for LPC eligibility? Will I be licensed when I graduate? What are the specific requirements?

A – Students will not be licensed when they graduate, as they must still complete 3,000 hours of post-graduate supervised work in the field. The Pennsylvania Board of Professional Counselors requires students to complete 600 supervised internship hours, including 240 hours in direct service to individuals and groups prior to degree completion. Our students complete the pre-requisites for licensure, including a 60-credit master’s program and taking (and passing) the National Counselor Exam (NCE).

Completion of Professional Counseling Program (Year 2)-Post Graduation

Q – What are the job prospects for graduates?

A – Students who complete both years of the program, pass the NCE, and complete their internship hours are eligible for licensure and will be competitive for positions requiring the LPC credential. Students who also complete the requirements for school certification will be eligible to take the Praxis and work as school counselors. These credentials give our graduates very good employment prospects.

Q – Will I be eligible in all states for school counseling certification and licensure?

A – States have individual requirements for school counselor certification and licensure as a professional counselor. Since you are attending a university in Pennsylvania, you will gain certification and/or licensure in this state. Faculty members are happy to help students research other state requirements.

Q – How many students from this program pass the National Counselor Exam on the first try?

A – At least 80% of our students have passed the NCE on their first try in past years, exceeding the national average by about 20%. Recently, our pass rate has been over 90%.