Counseling Program FAQs

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

A – An undergraduate degree (B.A. or B.S.); introductory psychology course(s) is desired, but not required. You do not need to have a background in psychology to be considered for the CMHS Program. We are seeking students who are interested in completing professional training in mental health counseling because of their strong desire to help others and contribute to society.

Q – I took my GREs about six months ago. Do I have to re-take them?

A – No. GRE scores are required for the CMHS Program application (but not the SMHC application). You may submit scores from GREs taken within the past 5 years.

Q – I am sending you a copy of my letter of recommendation and resume. Would you be able to tell me the likelihood of being accepted into the program?

A – No. We will not pre-review application materials prior to applying to the program. Everyone must submit the same set of application materials via the Penn GSE website and be evaluated by the faculty review team.

Q – How will I know if I’m accepted into the program?

A – The Penn GSE Admissions Office will contact you via email with a PDF letter attached informing you of the decision.

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 an optional Year Two where students earn a second degree. Students
completing both years of the program receive two degrees: the M.S.Ed. and the M.Phil.Ed.

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

A – You will be contacted prior to the start of the fall semester with further instructions on the placement process. Faculty are responsible for matching you with a training site. You will be given a link to a database from which you can identify potential site interests.

Q – Once I complete the first year would I be eligible for licensure?

A – No, the CMHS M.S.Ed. does not prepare you to apply for licensure as a professional counselor. Students must complete both years (and 20 courses) and their internship hours (including 3,000 post-graduate hours) before they can apply for licensure. Furthermore, you cannot complete the second year at another institution due to licensing board requirements.

Q – How many students complete the program?

A – In academic year (AY) 2012-13, we had 51 graduates from the CMHS M.S.Ed. Program and 23 graduates from the Professional Counseling M.Phil.Ed. program. In AY 2013-14 we had 54 graduates from the CMHS M.S.Ed. program and 38 graduates from the Professional Counseling M.Phil.Ed. Program.

Q – Is your program CACREP accredited?

A – No. We have intentionally chosen not to pursue CACREP accreditation because of that organization’s philosophy of separating counseling from psychology. Our counseling programs are integrally linked with psychology. We feel strongly that the separation CACREP endorses is artificial and not helpful to the field of counseling and psychotherapy. Our programs are, however, aligned with Pennsylvania and national licensing guidelines. As such, we are an approved program by the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC). We are currently pursuing accreditation from the Master’s in Psychology and Counseling Accreditation Council (MPCAC).

Q – What are the employment prospects for graduates?

A – Students who complete both years of the program, pass the National Counselor Exam, and finish all of 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 strong employment prospects.

Q – What percentage of students from your program pass the National Counselor Exam on the first try?

A – Approximately 80% of our students pass the NCE on their first try; this exceeds the national average by about 20%.

Q – Why do some students only complete the Year One M.S.Ed?

A – Some of our students are interested in doing doctoral work in counseling psychology or clinical psychology. These students use the CMHS M.S.Ed. as a pathway into doctoral programs in applied psychology. Others join the workforce in mental health settings.

Q – Is there a break between Year One and Year Two of the program?

A – No. The program is completed in two consecutive calendar years: fall, spring, summer, fall, spring. Most students begin in the fall of Year One and graduate in the spring of Year Two. However, we have designed the roster to allow students to take a break in Summer Session Two (usually July and August) IF they are willing to stay and take additional courses in the summer after Year Two.

Q – How does financial aid work?

A – Questions about financial aid are best answered by the Financial Aid Office: http://www.gse.upenn.edu/admissions_financial/finaid. A small amount of merit aid is allocated upon review of each set of application materials. About 75% of incoming students receive some level merit aid, though these scholarships only cover a portion of the total cost of tuition. Award announcements are sent out along with the letter of acceptance. Penn GSE tuition is calculated per course. Tuition rates are posted here: http://www.gse.upenn.edu/admissions_financial/ tuition

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

A – No, students are reassessed for merit aid when they apply to the M.Phil.Ed. in Year Two. Students receiving the highest level of scholarship in the first year are unlikely to receive the same
amount in Year Two since we try to balance out the merit aid in the interests of fairness. Likewise, students receiving no merit aid in their first year are very likely to receive some level of scholarship in the second year, assuming their performance was satisfactory.

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

A – Full-time Penn employees can use their tuition benefits to take our courses. Please contact Penn HR for more information about this process: https://www.hr.upenn.edu/myhr/benefits/ tuition

Q – Can I keep my full-time job if I am accepted into the program?

A – No (unless you are a full-time Penn employee, see above). The two-year Counseling and Mental Health Services (CMHS) M.S.Ed. degree (Year One) followed by the Professional Counseling (PCL) M.Phil.Ed. degree (Year Two) program is designed to be a full-time academic program spanning two years. Courses meet during the day, for the most part, and students must complete practicum and internship hours. However, some students do have part-time jobs. 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 (http://www.gse.upenn.edu/smhc/).

Q – When do fall classes start?

A – Classes start on Wednesday, August 27, 2014. All new students are required to register and attend New Student Orientation (NSO). We also encourage new students to attend the Students of Color Orientation. Please go to the link to register for orientations: http://www.gse.upenn.edu/students/orientation

Q – How do I register for my courses?

A – Incoming students do not register for courses themselves. The courses you will take in the fall are required of all incoming Counseling and Mental Health services students (EDUC 613, EDUC 686, EDUC 687, EDUC 688). These courses are limited to students in the CMHS program and we guarantee that you will a have seat. In order for each section to be balanced in number, you will be registered for your classes by the Program Assistant, Rochelle Hambeau-Miller, rhambeau@gse.upenn.edu. Once you are registered for class, you will receive an email from the Program Assistant. You will then be able to view your class schedule on Penn in Touch. (http://www.upenn.edu/pennintouch/)
Q – How would I go about finding housing?

A – Here is a link that you can go to and review information on housing: http://www.upenn.edu/provost/graduate_admissions/moving/housing/

Q – I already have my clearances. May I use those or will I still need to apply for new ones?

A – For legal reasons, the University of Pennsylvania requires that you apply for new clearances before the start of your fall classes.