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COUNSELING PROGRAM FAQ'S

Prior to Submitting Your Application

Q: What is the difference between the CMHS M.S.Ed. program and the PCL M.Phil.Ed. program?

A: Good question! The counseling program at Penn GSE has two components: Counseling and Mental Health Services (CMHS) M.S.Ed. and Professional Counseling (PCL) M.Phil.Ed. At the end of Year One, students will have earned the M.S.Ed. degree. Students then have the option of leaving Penn GSE *OR* continuing on to the PCL Year Two Program and earning their M.Phil.Ed. (in addition to the M.S.Ed. earned in Year One). Thus, 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: An undergraduate degree (B.A. or B.S.) is required, and we like to see completion of an introductory psychology course at the undergraduate level. You do not have to have a background in psychology to be considered for the CMHS Program. We offer suggested readings for those students interested in learning more about this field. We are looking for students who are interested in completing professional training in mental health counseling because they have a 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: GRE scores are required for the CMHS program 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 résumé. Would you be able to tell me my chances of getting accepted into the program?

A: No, we will not 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 much is tuition? Is there financial aid available?

A: Penn GSE tuition is calculated per course. [Click here to view tuition rates](#). Please visit the [Financial Aid Office](#) website for more information about funding. About 75% of incoming students receive some level of merit aid, but these scholarships only cover a portion of the total cost of tuition. Award announcements are sent out along with the letter of acceptance.

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

A: 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. The Counseling and Mental Health Services (CMHS) M.S.Ed. degree (Year One) followed by the Professional Counseling (PCL) M.Phil.Ed. degree (Year Two) is designed to be a full-time academic program spanning two years. Courses typically meet during the day, 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.

Q: Is the CMHS/PC program CACREP accredited?

A: CMHS and PC chose not to pursue CACREP accreditation. Our programs are designed to meet licensure guidelines in PA, NJ, NY, and other neighboring states. The National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) reviewed and approved our counseling programs and granted us status as a National Counselor Exam (NCE) site, which means that students who complete our approved counseling programs, pass the National Counselor Exam (taken toward the end of the second year in the program), and complete the required 3,000 hours of post-graduate supervised field work are automatically granted

National Counselor Certification. Once licensed or license-eligible, CACREP accreditation status has little bearing on career prospects.

Q: How many students completed the program last year?

A: In the 2012-13 academic year, we had 53 graduates from the CMHS M.S.Ed. program and 23 graduates from the Professional Counseling M.Phil.Ed. program.

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 decision letter attached as a PDF.

After Acceptance into the CMHS Program: Starting Your First Year

Q: When do fall classes start?

A: You can find starting dates and other pertinent calendar entries on the [Penn Academic Calendar](#). All new students are required to [register and attend New Student Orientation \(NSO\)](#). We also encourage new students to attend Student of Color Orientation.

Q: Where will I live while attending Penn GSE?

A: The Provost's office has [a website with information on housing for graduate students](#).

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 have a 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: I already have my clearances. Can I use those or will I have 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. Matriculating students will receive more information on applying for clearances in their acceptance materials.

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

A: Prior to the start of the fall semester, you will be contacted by the faculty member responsible for matching you with a training site with further instruction on the placement process. You will be given a link to a database from which you can identify potential site interests at this time.

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

A: Yes, our program has created a site placement database that is available to all our students. With the help of our faculty site coordinators, students will have the opportunity to choose three sites that are of interest via an online form. We will review these requests individually with each student and match them according to availability. If a student has a particular site of interest, we will reach out to this site on their behalf. Students who live out of state or at a distance from Philadelphia are encouraged to suggest sites of interest in their local area. We will reach out to these sites to check that they meet the site and supervisor guidelines. Students may also use their place of employment as their site placement, as long as these sites meet the required guidelines.

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

A: Practicum supervisors are not required to have any specific credentials other than experience in the area they are supervising. Internship supervisors for school counseling certification must be certified school counselors with at least 3 years of experience.

To be eligible in the Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) internship, supervisors 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: Is there a break in between Years One and Two of the program?

A: No. Most students begin in the fall of Year One, take courses during the summer session, and graduate in the spring of Year Two. However, we have designed the course roster to allow students to take a break in Summer Session Two (usually July and August), and then complete the remaining coursework in the summer after Year Two.

Q: Why do some students leave after Year One?

A: Some of our students are interested in doing doctoral work in counseling psychology or clinical psychology, and use the CMHS M.S.Ed. to strengthen their applications. Others join the workforce in mental health settings.

Q: If I complete the first year and choose not to return, 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 before they can apply for licensure. Furthermore, you 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, will I get the same amount of scholarship in my second year?

A: 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; we try to distribute merit aid as fairly as possible. 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.

Starting Professional Counseling Program (Year Two)

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

A: The Pennsylvania Department of Education requires candidates to obtain experience at the elementary (Pre K-8) and secondary (7-12) levels during their field experiences. This ensures exposure, understanding, and candidate competence regarding the practice and delivery of academic, career, and personal/social interactions at multiple levels. Students may satisfy the requirement of field experience at the elementary and

secondary levels through their pre-practicum, practicum, or internship placements. Students will be required to complete a supervised, post-practicum internship experience (a minimum of 420 clock hours) that provides opportunities for them to demonstrate their ability to design and implement school counseling programs at various grade levels. This internship leads to a Pre K-12 School Counselor Certification.

Upon completion of these requirements, you will be certified when you graduate if you have met the following criteria:

- Completed 60-credits of coursework and a Comprehensive Examination Capstone
- Passed the [PRAXIS II Exam](#)
- Completed the PA state [TIMS application](#) process

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

A: The Pennsylvania Board of Professional Counselors requires that students complete 600 hours of supervised internship hours, with 240 of those hours in direct service to individuals and groups. This is the only programmatic requirement for our students while at Penn GSE. Although you will not be licensed when you graduate, you will have completed the programmatic pre-requisites for licensure that include completing a 60-credit master's program and having the opportunity to take and pass the National Counselor Exam (NCE). After you graduate, you must complete 3,000 hours of supervised work in the field.

For more information from the [State Board of Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists and Professional Counselors](#), click [here](#).

Completion of Professional Counseling Program (Year Two): Post Graduation

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 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 II Exam and work as school counselors. These credentials give our graduates very good employment prospects.

Q: What do I need to do to obtain LPC licensure?

A: In order to be eligible for licensure, graduates must have completed a 60-credit master's degree program with 600 hours of supervised field experience, with 240 of those hours coming in direct service to clients. All other requirements for LPC licensure are completed as a post-graduate. However, Professional Counseling is part of the NCE for Graduate Students program, which allows our students to take the required National Counselor Exam (NCE) in April of their second year (after completing 48 credits).

Q: Will I be certified in all states for school counseling and licensure?

A: States are allowed to establish their own requirements for both school counselor certification and licensure as a Professional Counselor. Since you are attending a Pennsylvania university, you will gain certification and/or licensure in PA. We will work with you individually to research requirements in other states. Many states have reciprocity agreements; however, some additional requirements may need to be met and the program will do everything in our power to help you meet them.

Q: What percentage of students from your program passes 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%.