

FAQs: USF's Genetic Counseling (GC) Graduate Degree

1. What is Genetic Counseling?

Genetic counseling is a rapidly growing profession with a wide array of employment opportunities working in health care, laboratory, industry, and public health settings. Genetic counseling provides a great blend of science, critical thinking and personal interactions. Some genetic counseling tasks include:

- Interpreting family medical history and genetic test results to assess the chance of disease.
- Educating about inheritance, genetic testing, management, prevention and resources.
- Counseling to promote informed choices about and adaptation to health risks or conditions.

For general information on a career in genetic counseling please visit www.nsgc.org

2. How do I become a Genetic Counselor?

To become a genetic counselor in the U.S. or Canada, students obtain a Master's degree from any one of approximately 40 graduate programs in North America that have been accredited by the Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling (ACGC) www.gceducation.org. To practice as a genetic counselor, graduates become certified through passing a national board examination administered by the American Board of Genetic Counseling (ABGC) www.abgc.net.

3. What is unique about USF's Genetic Counseling (GC) Graduate Program

USF's College of Public Health is home to Florida's first and only ACGC accredited genetic counseling graduate program. Upon successful completion of this program, students will receive a Master of Science in Public Health with a concentration in genetic counseling and will be eligible to take the ABGC certification examination. Throughout the 21-month, full-time program students will complete a unique blend of didactic and skills-based coursework in genetics/genomics, patient-centered communication, public health, and research. Given our philosophy that students learn best by observing and doing, clinical rotations and field experiences will begin in the second semester and continue throughout the program. We believe the public health training our students will receive will be invaluable as genetics becomes infused into more aspects of health care, as service delivery models evolve, and as we learn more about the complex interactions between genetic, environmental and behavioral risk factors.

4. What are the pre-requisites for admission to USF's GC Program?

We encourage applicants from any undergraduate major who meet the following criteria:

Minimum requirements to apply for all MSPH concentrations:

- Bachelor's degree from an accredited institution
- Minimum undergraduate GPA 3.0
- GRE taken within the previous five years (*may substitute MCAT scores*)
- TOEFL score of 79 or higher (*only applies to applicants whose native language is not English or who have not earned a degree in the U.S.*)

Strongly preferred coursework, experiences, and scores for the Genetic Counseling Concentration:

- 1 to 2 semesters of Biology
- 1 semester of Genetics/genomics (*or equivalent*)
- 1 semester of Psychology or Counseling (*or equivalent*)
- GRE score of 50th percentile or above in verbal and quantitative (*or combined MCAT score ≥ 500*)
- 1 semester of Statistics or Probability (*or equivalent*)
- Prior counseling or advocacy experience. Examples include: peer counseling, crisis hotlines, a pregnancy counseling center, or working with individuals who have genetic conditions or disabilities.
- Applicants should have a good understanding of the Genetic Counseling profession. Many applicants have accomplished this by shadowing and/or visiting with genetic counselors and by attending one of USF's annual genetic counseling open houses or similar events at other institutions. A clear

understanding of the genetic counseling profession can be conveyed through volunteer/shadowing/internship experiences and through a well-written statement of purpose.

5. What does USF's GC curriculum include?

- Minimum of 42 graduate-level credit hours:
 - MSPH Core Course Requirements – 9 credit hours
 - Genetic Counseling Concentration courses – 24 credit hours
 - Research Courses – 3 credit hours
 - Thesis – 6 credit hours
- Clinical Rotation Requirements (description in the GC student handbook)
- Research Thesis (description in the GC student handbook)

6. How do I apply to USF's GC program?

Interested individuals who meet minimum application requirements can apply by completing and paying fees that are associated with each of the three tasks:

- a) Submit an application through SOPHAS at <http://sophas.org/>
- b) Submit an application to USF's Graduate Admissions
<http://www.usf.edu/admissions/graduate/index.aspx>
- c) Register for the National Genetic Counseling Admissions Match at <https://natmatch.com/gcadmissions>
Please visit each of the respective websites above for more information.

7. When is the next deadline for applications?

Applicants to the MSPH who are interested in the Genetic Counseling Concentration must submit all application materials by **December 15, 2018** to be competitive. This is based on the admission timeline as determined by the Association of Genetic Counseling Program Directors. We highly recommend that you submit your application in November or Early December and check with SOPHAS often to ensure that the application has been verified. We cannot review an application which has not been verified by SOPHAS. We cannot stress enough how important it is to submit early.

8. Do I have to take an Embryology course in order to apply to USF's GC Program?

No, you do not need this to apply. However, students who are accepted into the program and have not yet taken an approved Embryology course or equivalent will be required to complete one (in person or online) the summer before classes begin as it is required for full matriculation into the GC program. *For more information on the Embryology pre-requisite please refer to the GC student handbook.*

9. What is the student selection process for entrance into USF's GC program?

We follow the same general admissions timeline as other genetic counseling training programs across North America and participate in the NMS GC-match. During a competitive admissions process, select students will be invited to an in-person interview between February and April. Prospective students must submit their Rank Order List by mid-April and the results of the match will be released two weeks later (see <https://natmatch.com/gcadmissions/index.html> for the specific dates of the next admission cycle). We anticipate interviewing approximately 25 students. Due to the relatively small number of genetic counselors practicing in the Tampa Bay area, we will be accepting approximately 4 students. More positions may be available as we grow the genetic counseling workforce in our area.

10. What is it like to live in Tampa?

Tampa is an extremely diverse city that has something for everyone. As a mid-size city, Tampa offers many great arts and sporting events. From the old Cuban neighborhoods around Ybor city, to the trendy, hipster vibe of Seminole Heights, and popular Downtown area, there is always something going on or something new to try. The beautiful beaches characteristic of Florida are about a 45-minute drive from the USF main campus and are enjoyable to visit year round. The cost of living in Tampa is about 3% lower

than the national average, so it is easier to enjoy a comfortable lifestyle than it is in larger cities across the country.

11. How much will it cost to complete the 21 month GC program?

In-state (resident) tuition and fees for the 42-credit hour degree is approximately \$20,000

Out-of-state (non-resident) tuition and fees is approximately \$40,000

To find the most up-to-date information and estimate other cost of living expenses please visit

<http://www.usf.edu/admission/cost-to-attend.aspx>

12. Is funding or financial support available?

While we do not currently guarantee funding for genetic counseling students, they may apply for Teaching Assistant (TA), Graduate Assistant (GA), or part-time (OPS) positions (~10 hours per week) within the College of Public Health. These positions provide salary support and/or tuition remission, depending on the available funds and position type. Students may also apply for University-wide graduate scholarships and financial aid. For more information, please visit <http://www.usf.edu/admissions/graduate/graduate-assistantships.aspx> and <http://health.usf.edu/publichealth/academicaffairs/FinAid>.

We are excited to report that our inaugural class of students will all have tuition remission for their second year! We will work to secure funding in future years as well, but this cannot be guaranteed.

13. Can I work during the program?

Due to the demanding nature of the genetic counseling training program, we strongly recommend that students work no more than 10 hours per week. Students can expect to spend a minimum of 40 hours a week studying, working in clinics, attending classes, or working on their research thesis. Although several classes will be in the late afternoon or evening, clinical rotations will occur during typical business hours. Given the demanding schedule and clinical rotations, there is currently no part-time option for completing the genetic counseling program.

14. What housing options are available to graduate students at USF?

USF offers several on campus housing options for graduate students. Information about our residence halls can be found at <http://www.usf.edu/student-affairs/housing/housing-application/graduate-students/index.aspx> Additionally, USF is surrounded by apartment complexes and private neighborhoods. One bedroom apartments cost between \$750-\$1500 per month. There are a range of options from individual 1/1 apartments to 4/4 that can be shared with classmates or friends. Some of the neighborhoods within a 20-minute drive of campus include: New Tampa, Seminole Heights, and Carrollwood.

15. Will I need a car?

Yes, you will likely need a car to travel to clinical rotation sites. Although some public transit is available, Tampa currently lacks a comprehensive public transit system. Most rotation sites will be on or near main campus or within a ~30 minute drive from USF's main campus. However, some rotation placements are in Orlando which is about 1.5 to 2 hours away. There are few transportation options between the two cities besides car.

16. Does USF offer fitness facilities?

Yes! USF has three recreation centers, a main gym and two satellite facilities. Gym membership is free for students and comes with access to group fitness classes, campus pools, and outdoor recreation opportunities at our riverfront park. For more information, please visit

<http://usfweb2.usf.edu/campusrec/index.html>



All questions related to **admissions** should be directed to (813) 974-6505 or email preadmissions@health.usf.edu

For more information specific to the genetic counseling program
please visit <http://health.usf.edu/publichealth/genetic-counseling.htm>
or contact Paige Phillips at pgphillips@health.usf.edu

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