

Genetic Counseling Quick Facts



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA
Pre-Health Advising Office

Students prepare for a career Genetic Counseling by building credentials in research, scholarship, leadership, humanitarian/community service, and shadowing in the Genetic Counseling profession. There is **no “best” major** for Genetic Counseling students, some common majors are: Psychology, Social Work, Genetics, and Education. However, students are encouraged to pursue majors in which they are most interested and in which they believe they will excel.

Average Matriculant Numbers

- Overall GPA: 3.50
- Science GPA: 3.50
- GRE: ~300 combined score & ~4.0 writing (scores above the 50th percentile)

What is a Genetic Counselor?

Genetic Counselors assess individual or family risk factors for a variety of inherited conditions, such as genetic disorders and birth defects. They provide information and support to other healthcare providers as well as to individuals and families concerned with the risk of inherited conditions. They help patients generate strategies and resources to cope with genetic disorders. Genetic counselors work in university medical centers, private and public hospitals, diagnostic laboratories and physician’s offices. Genetic Counselors need a master’s degree and Board Certification.

General Information

- Master’s Degree
- Most programs are 22 Months
- Applications may be completed through individual program websites or the Genetic Counseling Admission Match program.
- One institution in Georgia:
 - Emory University

Required Courses & GPA Expectations

DISCLAIMER: This is not a definitive list of the classes you will need for every school. Always check with the individual schools to see their specific requirements. Also check with schools to see if AP credit is accepted. Not all schools will accept AP credit in pre-requisite courses.

Typical GC Pre-Requisites

Biology (BIOL 1107/L and BIOL 1108/L)
Statistics (STAT 2000)
Psychology (PSYC 1101)
Biochemistry (BCMB 3100)
Genetics (GENE 3200)

Recommended

Psychology (PSYC 3230)

❖ Do grade trends matter?

Students who wish to enter a Genetic Counseling program will require strong science and overall GPAs as admission is competitive. Admissions committees look not only at raw numbers, but also at grade trends on a student’s transcript—so all is not lost if a student stumbles in their first semester or two, but then shows substantial improvement each subsequent year. However, they will also notice negative trends such as if a student is consistently withdrawing from or performing poorly in hard sciences or is completing courses away from their home institution. While an instance or two is not a deal-breaker, a pattern of behavior should be avoided. Students must demonstrate the ability to handle difficult scientific content as this will translate directly to their ability to perform in a Genetic Counseling program.

GRE

Genetic Counseling Programs require that applicants take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). The GRE consists of three sections: Quantitative, Verbal, and Essay section. There are no specific courses that students need to take prior to the GRE, but students should plan to dedicate roughly six to eight weeks to exam preparation. While students can opt for a commercial prep course for the GRE, self-study is often sufficient.

Students usually sit for the exam in August – November as most application deadlines are in December – January. The GRE is offered via University Testing Services on a regular basis.

ppao.uga.edu

Shadowing Experience

Generally, GC programs require that applicants have experience observing or shadowing Genetic Counselors. Shadowing requirements for admissions can vary program to program so be sure to check your programs' requirements. To find a Genetic Counselor in your area visit this link: <https://www.nsgc.org/page/find-a-gc-search>. To watch videos relevant to the field, use this link: <https://www.nsgc.org/p/cm/ld/fid=248>.

Undergraduate Research & Volunteering

Extracurricular activities, such as club affiliations and volunteering, are a large portion of the application that should not be neglected. GC schools are looking for students who not only demonstrate that they can manage rigorous courses while staying busy, but also those who are compassionate, enjoy working with people and are dedicated to serving the community. As a result, it is best to focus on strong engagement in few activities rather than to spread oneself too thin. Advocacy volunteering is highly suggested, some potential areas to volunteer are a crisis hotline volunteer, project safe, Athens area homeless shelter, CASA worker, etc.

There are many benefits to getting involved in undergraduate research. Research is a large component of Genetic Counseling and as a result students should plan to dedicate at least a year to a specific project or research lab. It is suggested that students connect with faculty as soon as possible to discuss the possibility of research and to inquire about research projects. Students may also reach out to CURO on campus.

Letters of Evaluation

Most GC schools require four letters of evaluation. Requirements can vary between schools, and it is the student's responsibility to ensure that they have collected the correct letters for their program of interest. Generally, programs expect students to provide one letter from a GC, two from faculty members (one from a hard science professor), and one other of the student's choosing. This can come from another GC, a research mentor, volunteer coordinator, employer, etc. Students should select what they believe will be the most compelling letter.

Employment Outlook for Genetic Counselors

In 2018 there were 3,100 Genetic Counseling jobs available. The Genetic Counseling field is expected to grow by 27% by 2028, which is much faster than average, adding a total of 800 jobs. Ongoing technological innovations, including improvements in lab tests and developments in genomics, which is the study of the whole genome, are giving counselors opportunities to conduct more types of analyses, such as identifying a patient's risk for specific types of cancer. The median salary in 2019 was \$81,880.

Southeastern GC Program Application Dates

Institution	Application Period	Matriculation Date
University of Alabama at Birmingham*	July - January	August
University of Arkansas Medical Sciences*	July - December	August
University of South Florida*	July - December	August
Emory University School of Medicine*	July - December	August
University of North Carolina at Greensboro*	July - December	August
University of South Carolina*	July - December	August

*Indicates that they participate in the Genetic Counseling Admission Match program. For more information visit, <https://natmatch.com/gcadmissions/applicants/index.html>.