Application Components/Admissions Criteria - 2021

♦ Undergraduate Degree

A bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution is required. Applicants may have majored in any field of study as long as they have completed the required prerequisites and have an academic record showing an interest in human and molecular genetics and psychology. The majority of applicants to the program have undergraduate degrees in biology, biochemistry, genetics and/or psychology.

♦ GPA

A minimum GPA of 3.4 is preferred.

♦ Prerequisite Courses

Applicants must have completed the following prerequisite courses prior to the start of the program:

- 4 Biology courses, including at least one genetics course (Human Genetics or Molecular Genetics is preferred.)
- 2 Psychology courses
- 2 Chemistry courses (at least one general chemistry course and one organic chemistry course)
- 1 Biochemistry course
- 1 Statistics course which should include descriptive statistics, differences between two means, correlation and beginning concepts of analysis of variance

General Guidelines:

- Any grade below a “C” in a prerequisite course will not be accepted.
- At least one-half of the prerequisite courses must have been taken within 10 years prior to application.
- Prerequisite courses must be taken through the appropriate departments, e.g., Biology, Chemistry, and Psychology. Statistics is the one exception to this. Statistics may be taken through a department other than Mathematics, such as Psychology.
• Prerequisites may be taken online, but only through an accredited institution that will provide a transcript.
• Applicants can apply to the program before they complete all prerequisites. The application includes a section in which applicants can list courses to be completed and their plans and timelines for doing so. All prerequisites must be completed prior to the beginning of classes in the fall.

♦ Transcripts

One transcript from each college, university or professional school attended is required.

Transfer credits included on a transcript must show the grades earned; if not, an official transcript from the original school must be submitted.

Unofficial transcripts will be accepted for preliminary application purposes and should be uploaded through the CollegeNet application.

♦ GRE Scores

Official test scores for the GRE are required. The GRE must have been taken within five years of the application deadline. GRE scores for the verbal and quantitative sections must be above the 50th percentile. A minimum score of 4 is required for the analytical writing portion of the test. The GRE code for the University of Pennsylvania is 2900.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, GRE scores are preferred but not required for the 2021 admissions cycle.

♦ Personal Statement

A prompt for the personal statement can be found on the online application. The essay should demonstrate the applicant’s understanding of genetic counseling and explain the nature of the applicant's interest in the field and specifically in Penn’s program.

If your plans (shadowing, internships, etc.) were disrupted by the pandemic, please let us know that and tell us what you did to prepare instead.

♦ Current Résumé/CV

A current résumé or CV is a required part of the application.
♦ Letters of Reference

Three letters of reference are required and no more than three will be considered. Letters should come from individuals who can attest to the applicant’s suitability for graduate study and interest in genetic counseling, and should include:

1. One from a practicing genetic counselor, genetics professional or comparable health professional
2. One from a professor
3. One additional reference

Applicants will be asked to enter their recommenders' contact information in the online application form. That will prompt CollegeNet to send each individual an email asking them to upload their letter to the application system and giving them instructions on how to do so.

♦ Other Relevant Experience

Knowledge of the genetic counseling profession through work or volunteer experience is important to success in the program. A broad overview of the profession is preferable to experience in a limited area.

Examples include shadowing experience with genetic counselors, internships in genetic counseling settings, volunteer or advocacy experience, crisis counseling, laboratory experience, clinical or bench research, professional presentations, publications, and submission of abstracts.

♦ Personal Interview

Personal interviews with the genetic counseling program leadership are an essential part of the admissions process. Interviews are competitive and only a select percentage of those who apply will be invited for an interview.