# Application Components – 2023 Admissions Cycle

*Our Admissions Committee evaluates each application with a holistic approach, considering a number of important elements to determine whether a candidate would be successful in the program. Each application is carefully read by multiple members of the committee and program leadership.*

## ◆ 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. The majority of applicants to the program have undergraduate degrees in biology, biochemistry, genetics and/or psychology.

## ◆ GPA

The average GPA for our incoming students is approximately 3.5, however GPA is only one part of the application. We welcome applications from students with lower GPAs who are otherwise well qualified.

The National Matching Service provides helpful statistics on the most recent application cycle at https://natmatch.com/gcadmissions/statistics.html.

## ◆ Prerequisite Courses

Applicants must have completed the following prerequisite courses by the end of the spring semester of the year they plan to enroll.

- **4 Biology** courses, including at least one **genetics** course.  Human Genetics or Molecular Genetics is preferred.

- **2 Chemistry** courses, including at least one general chemistry course and **one Organic Chemistry course**

- **1 Biochemistry** course

- **1 Statistics** course which includes descriptive statistics, differences between two means, correlation and beginning concepts of analysis of variance

- **2 Psychology** courses (Sociology and Anthropology courses are not an acceptable substitute.)

<u>General Guidelines:</u>

- 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.

- Online courses taken for credit and a grade at accredited colleges and universities are acceptable for prerequisite credit.  A transcript listing the course(s) and grade(s) must be submitted as part of the application.  To determine whether a college or university is regionally or nationally accredited, check their current accreditation status on the U.S. Department of Education's online database (USDE).

- Prerequisite courses must be three to four credit courses.  One or two credit courses, including laboratory sections, are not sufficient.

- AP courses are acceptable as prerequisites if college or university credit was received and the courses are listed on the transcript.

- Typically prerequisite courses must be taken for a grade, but due to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, courses taken in the spring 2020 semester and graded as pass/fail can be used to fulfill prerequisite requirements.

- Applicants can apply to the program before completing all prerequisites.  The application includes a section for listing courses to be completed and the plans and timelines for doing so.  All prerequisites must be completed no later than the end of the spring semester prior to anticipated enrollment.

## ◆ Transcripts

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

If transfer credits from another school are included and the original grades are shown on the transcript from the degree-granting institution, a single transcript is sufficient.  Otherwise a separate transcript from the original school at which the transfer credits were earned must be also be submitted.

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

A **course-by-course evaluation of all international transcripts** of previously completed undergraduate and graduate course work by an independent evaluation service based in the United States is required.  **We recommend CertiFile** because the evaluation can be requested directly from the application in CollegeNet and the report will link to it.

WES ICAP can also be used, but the transcripts need to be mailed to the program address:

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Because this can be a lengthy process, it should be started as early as possible.

## ◆ GRE Scores

We have chosen to keep the GRE as an optional part of the application. We do not require GREs, but will review them if an applicant believes the scores will be beneficial.

The GRE code for the University of Pennsylvania is **2900**.

Information about the applicant pool for all genetic counseling programs including demographics, GPA, and GRE scores is available at https://natmatch.com/gcadmissions/statistics.html.

## ◆ Personal Statement

The official prompt for the personal statement is:

How do you envision your contribution to the field of genetic counseling?  Include abilities and experiences to support your ideas.

**Word limit: 500 words.**

The essay should demonstrate your understanding of genetic counseling and explain your interest in the field overall, and specifically in the program at UPenn. We recommend including information about relevant experiences and also on future aspirations.

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

## ◆ Current Résumé/CV

A current résumé or CV is a required part of the application. The CV should include educational achievements, positions held, qualifications acquired, and skills developed, both in and out of the health care world. It should be no longer than two pages.

## ◆ 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 someone who can comment on your academic abilities, such as a professor.
2. One from someone who can comment on other professional skills, such as a practicing genetic counselor, healthcare professional, lab manager, supervisor at a crisis counseling center, etc.
3. One additional reference, which can be a second academic reference.

Applicants enter contact information for each recommender into the online application form in CollegeNet which will automatically send out an email request for the letter. The email from CollegeNet will ask them to upload their letter directly to the application system and will give instructions on how to do so.  Applicants can check their applications periodically to see if the letters have been received.  We recommend giving recommenders several weeks' notice and a deadline, and then following up as needed.

## ◆ Shadowing/Clinical Work/Research/Advocacy/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.

Many kinds of work and volunteer experience can help a prospective student learn about the profession. Examples include shadowing with genetic counselors, internships in genetic counseling settings, volunteer or advocacy experience with patient or specific disease-focused organizations, crisis counseling, laboratory experience, clinical or bench research, professional presentations, publications, and submission of abstracts. Engaging in these activities can confirm interest in the field and develop skills in counseling, communication, coordination, and organization.

## ◆ Personal Interview

Personal interviews with the Admissions Committee and genetic counseling program leadership are an essential part of the admissions process. In past years, approximately one-third of applicants have been invited for an interview.

Typically, invitations for interviews are sent by email in mid-February, and interviews are scheduled for March and early April.

## ◆ Criminal Background Checks and Immunizations

Though they are not necessary at the interview stage, admitted students must successfully complete criminal background checks and provide all immunization records required by the University of Pennsylvania, including for flu and COVID-19 vaccination. Clinical sites may have additional requirements for clearance including, but not limited to, drug screening and TB testing.

## ◆ TOEFL & IELTS Scores

A strong command of the English language is necessary for successful study at Penn, particularly for study in a counseling field. Applicants whose native language is not English or who have not earned degrees or diplomas from post-secondary institutions in English-speaking countries (e.g. the United States, Canada, England, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand) must submit **Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)** scores to demonstrate English proficiency. Please note that the TOEFL is rarely waived; therefore, we encourage applicants to take the test to avoid delays in completing the application.

The minimum TOEFL score required for admissions consideration is 100. The TOEFL must be sent directly from ETS using the institutional code **2900**. To locate a testing site near you or to schedule an exam, visit the [TOEFL website](#).

The **International English Language Testing System (IELTS)** is also accepted and the minimum score for consideration is a 7.0. You may upload a copy of your IELTS test to the standardized test score section of the application.