



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
AND COUNSELING

CMHC FAQs

2022 Admission Cycle

Is the GRE required? What are minimum scores for GRE?

Typically we require the GRE as part of our holistic admission process. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have suspended this requirement for the 2022 admission cycle (February 1, 2022 submission date for Summer or Fall 2022 admission). We will make a determination about 2023 GRE requirements by August 2022. To learn more about our admissions requirements, visit <https://epc.utk.edu/clinical-mental-health-counseling/cmhc-application-requirements/>.

Is there a minimum GPA requirement to apply for the program?

The Graduate School requires that all potential graduate students who are United States degree holders earned a minimum of 2.7 out of 4.0 or a minimum of 3.0 during the senior year of undergraduate study; individuals with previous graduate coursework must have earned a minimum of 3.0 out of a possible 4.0 GPA. Applicants with non-U.S. degrees must have earned a minimum of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale (equivalent to a B average) in undergraduate study or a minimum of 3.3 on a 4.0 scale (equivalent to a B+ average) in graduate study.

We understand there are sometimes very good reasons applicants did not perform optimally during previous study. If you do not meet the Graduate School's minimum GPA requirement, you can request that our faculty appeal the Graduate School GPA requirement so you may be considered for admission to our program. Please contact the Program Coordinator if you believe you will need an appeal to progress in the admissions process. To learn more about the Graduate School's admission requirements, visit <https://gradschool.utk.edu/admissions/>.

When can I start?

We offer cohort-style programs, and we conduct admissions just one time per year. Typically, applications are due on February 1 each year, with those admitted to the program beginning study in the Summer (June) or Fall (August). To learn more about our admissions requirements, visit <https://epc.utk.edu/clinical-mental-health-counseling/cmhc-application-requirements/>.

Do you require an undergraduate major or specific undergraduate coursework as prerequisites?

All candidates must complete a Bachelor's degree, in any field, prior to their first semester of enrollment. Many of our students have backgrounds in Psychology, Child and Family Studies, or Education. However, some students come to us by way of various degrees (e.g., Music, English, Accounting, Engineering). This diversity of background and life experiences enriches the program. Although some undergraduate coursework in psychology (e.g., development, abnormal behavior) may be a helpful foundation for students, we do not consider this coursework as part of the admissions process or require specific undergraduate coursework as prerequisite to the program or to program courses.

Can I take some courses to see if I might be interested in applying to the program?

Our professional program is designed to be intimate and focused on development of knowledge, clinical skills, and professional dispositions. As such, most of our courses are restricted to counseling majors. However, there are several courses that are appropriate for enrollment as an undergraduate or graduate-level non-degree-seeking student. Specifically,

- COUN 480 or 580 Skills for Counseling
- COUN 460 or 560 Practicum in Grief Support

Only coursework taken at the graduate level may count toward the graduate degree. For more information regarding taking courses as a non-degree-seeking student, visit

<https://admissions.utk.edu/apply/other-applicants/non-degree-seeking-student/>.

Is your program accredited?

Yes, we are proud to have longstanding accreditation from the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). We were recently reaccredited with all standards met through October 31, 2028. Specifically, our MS in Counseling concentrations are accredited in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling; our doctoral program is accredited as a Counselor Education & Supervision program. To learn more about CACREP, including value of attending an accredited program, visit <https://www.cacrep.org/>.

What are you looking for in an applicant? How can I make my application as strong as possible?

Application to our program is competitive, and we use a holistic application process to make admissions decisions. A number of factors go into these decisions including career goals, aptitude for graduate-level study, potential success in forming effective counseling relationships, respect for cultural differences, and demonstration of professional dispositions (CORIS – Commitment, Openness, Respect, Integrity, and Self-Awareness).

We hope you will use your application to help us understand you as a unique person and developing professional. Take time with the application and the prompts within it. Select your references carefully to ensure that they can speak to your unique strengths; if possible, at least two should be familiar with your academic work. If you have been out of school for some time, select those who can speak to your professional qualities and potential. Highlight work, volunteer, academic, and personal experiences that have influenced your personal development and your professional goals. If you are invited to interview, we have assessed your materials and believe that you have strong potential for academic success. To the extent possible, relax and let us (and your peers) get to know you during the interview process.

Do you accept transfer students and credits?

As a CACREP-accredited program, we are responsible for ensuring students have received comprehensive coursework related to a number of standards *and* assessing student growth and development at multiple points in time. Prior to placement in practicum and internship, we must have direct evidence regarding students' development of counseling skills and professional dispositions. This limits the number and nature of transfer coursework we can accept. In select cases, we are able to accept up to 12 credit hours of coursework from a CACREP-accredited program. If you are considering transferring to the program,

please consult the transfer policy in the handbook and contact the Program Coordinator to discuss your unique situation.

What is the delivery format of the program?

We believe in the power of human relationships for supporting optimal development. As such, our MS in Counseling Programs are offered in a traditional face-to-face, cohort-style environment. Although several electives outside the program may be offered in online or hybrid formats, all Counseling Courses are offered in person, usually with each course meeting for three hours once a week. Typically, we try to offer several courses, back to back, on the same day.

Due to COVID-19, we shifted to largely online operations for Spring 2020-Summer 2021. We are returning to face-to-face instruction in Fall 2021 and will follow university guidance regarding delivery format. Even as our courses are temporarily online, field experiences continue to be in person in the Knoxville area.

How long does it take to complete the program?

When students attend full-time, our 60-hour program may be completed in as little as 2 years and 1 semester, including two summers. Part-time students may complete the program in as little as 3 years and 1 semester, including summers; however, some part-time students may take 4 years to complete the program. Officially, students have up to 6 years to complete the MS degree.

Is the program full-time or part-time?

The majority of our students choose to study full-time; however, some students study part-time in order to accommodate employment schedules, caregiving commitments, and financial considerations. Our faculty advisors work with students to develop a customized program of study that meets their needs, including transitions between full-time and part-time status. It is important to understand that our courses are offered Monday through Thursday, typically during the traditional business day.

How do practicum and internship work?

Our accredited programs require that candidates complete field experience as part of study. Our CMHC program is closely connected to our community. For both practicum and internship, our faculty match students with local sites that fit their learning needs and career goals.

Typically taken in the first spring semester, Practicum involves a one-semester, 100-hour field placement (about 8 hours/week) in which the student begins to develop counseling relationships with real clients. Internship typically begins during fall of the second year and involves a three-semester, 900-hour field placement (about 20-25 hours/week) in which the student takes on all professional roles of a counselor in a CMHC setting. During these experiences, students engage in supervision with an experienced on-site clinician, group supervision with a faculty member and peers, and individual or triadic supervision with a doctoral student supervisor.

Do you offer assistantships or fellowships?

Because we are a graduate professional program in which the master's degree is considered entry-level, we are unable to offer assistantships for most MS students. However, we are active in nominating students for the [EPC Diversity Fellowship](#). Additionally, we encourage students to seek university-level

assistantships across campus. For more information regarding costs, assistantships, and fellowships, visit <https://epc.utk.edu/financial-aid/>.

When I graduate, will I be ready for licensure in my state?

Yes and no. All U.S. states and territories regulate the practice of counseling through licensure. Although the content and specifics of licensure laws vary by state, they all contain the 3-Es: Education, Examination, and Experience.

- Education – master’s degree with a specific number of credit hours and specific coursework
- Examination – credentialing examination, often offered by a national testing company
- Experience – certain number of supervised counseling hours in the years following graduation

To practice counseling outside the public school or religious setting in Tennessee, one must be licensed as a Professional Counselor. Definitions of counseling, educational requirements for licensure, examination requirements for licensure, and experience requirements for licensure vary from state to state.

UT’s CMHC program is aligned to **educational** requirements for the LPC-MHSP in Tennessee. As a CACREP-accredited program, our curriculum meets educational requirements for most other states as well. In addition, our program prepares students to take the most common licensure **examination**, the National Counselor Examination (NCE) prior to graduation. Our graduates also take the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE) and Jurisprudence examination prior to licensure as an LPC-MHSP. Finally, UT’s program exceeds the minimal number of field hours needed in a graduate program. Once our students graduate, they are prepared to begin working under an approved supervisor to accrue the 3000 post-graduate hours required to practice counseling independently as an LPC-MHSP.

If you expect to practice outside the state of Tennessee, we urge you to investigate education, experience, and examination requirements in states of interest. Your advisor can help you customize your time in the program by choosing electives that fill any state-specific curricular requirements not already included in our required coursework. To access a directory of state licensure boards, visit <https://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/licensure-requirements>

Do your graduates get jobs? What do they do?

Yes! Our graduates have a strong track record of employment. In the most recent 5 years, 100% of our CMHC alumni who wished to be employed in the field found employment within 6 months of graduation; many alumni secure their positions while still enrolled within the program. You will find our graduates in:

- Major community mental health centers (e.g., Omni Community Health, Helen Ross McNabb)
- Non-profit organizations (e.g., Sexual Assault Center of East Tennessee, Harmony Family Services)
- College counseling centers (e.g., Pellissippi State Community College, University of Tennessee Student Counseling Center, Virginia Tech Counseling Center)
- School-Based Mental Health Programs
- Local private counseling practices

How is Counseling similar to or different from related professions such as Psychology and Social Work?

A variety of professionals provide mental health services in clinical settings. Many of the skills and work functions overlap. Still, each profession has unique areas of emphasis, professional organizations, licensure processes, and accrediting bodies. Professional Counseling has philosophical roots that include attention to wellness, strengths, culture, human development, and prevention or early intervention. We excel in promoting optimal human development with attention to strengths, relationship, and systemic context. We are qualified to provide diagnosis and treatment for individuals who have a wide range of mental disorders; we bring a unique strength-based, relational focus to this work.

If you are working to discern differences between professions and which degree is right for you, the following chart might help you investigate your options.

	Counseling	Social Work	Psychology
Unique focus areas	Holistic, developmental, wellness, strengths-orientation	Systems, advocacy	Assessment, pathology
Degree required for unsupervised practice	Master's	Master's	Doctorate
Licensure	Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) / Licensed Mental Health Counseling (LMHC) [names vary by state]	Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)	Licensed Psychology
Professional Organization	American Counseling Association (www.counseling.org)	National Association of Social Workers (www.socialworkers.org/)	American Psychological Association (www.apa.org)
Accrediting Body	Council for the Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (www.cacrep.org)	Council on Social Work Accreditation (www.cswe.org)	American Psychological Association (www.apa.org)

What is unique about the CMHC program at UT?

- Learning in small, intimate cohorts (e.g., about 13-15 CMHC and 8-10 School Counseling students per year) focused on team environments and meaningful relationships
- Living out CORIS (e.g., commitment, openness, respect, integrity, and self-awareness) dispositions together as a community committed to personal and professional development
- Cultivating self-awareness and role of self in the counseling relationship
- Engaging in an open door, collaborative, and caring environment
- Taking courses taught by core faculty members who are leaders and scholars in the field and who work as a team to promote student development
- Practicing in on-site Counselor Training Clinic for hands-on opportunities from the very beginning
- Learning alongside Counselors for Inclusion (CoFI), a student-faculty diversity, equity, and inclusion collaborative that provides ongoing professional development and opportunities for conversation

- Working with award-winning Chapter of Chi Sigma Iota for mentorship, community engagement, professional development, and leadership opportunities
- Excellent program outcomes: 100% examination pass rates, 100% job placement rates

I still have more questions, what can I do?

For questions regarding residency, finances, and the application portal, please view the materials located at [Graduate Admissions](#). You may contact them with follow-up questions.

If you have additional questions regarding the program after reviewing our admissions materials, program information, and FAQs, please reach out to the Program Coordinator, Dr. Casey Barrio Minton (cbarrio@utk.edu). She will be happy to respond via email or to schedule an individual meeting.