



MS in Counseling 2023 Admission FAQs

When can I start?

We offer cohort-style programs that begin in Summer (June) each year; summer is the only term students may begin study. We must receive all application materials by **December 1**. To learn more about our admissions requirements, visit <https://epc.utk.edu/clinical-mental-health-counseling/cmhc-application-requirements/> or <https://epc.utk.edu/school-counseling/application-requirements/>.

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 is offered in a traditional face-to-face, cohort-style environment in Knoxville. Although several electives outside the program may be offered in online or hybrid formats, Counseling courses are typically offered in person with each class meeting three hours once a week.

Do you offer an online program?

No. Our program is completely face-to-face. At times, students may complete online elective coursework as part of their plan of study.

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 in Counselor Education & Supervision. To learn more about CACREP, including the value of attending an accredited program, visit <https://www.cacrep.org/>.

How long does it take to complete the program?

When students attend full-time, our 60-hour program may be completed in 2 years, including two summers. Part-time students may complete the program in as little as 3 years, 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?

Most students study full-time; however, some students study part-time 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 faculty matches students with local sites that fit their learning needs and career goals. Our CMHC concentration is closely connected to our community with most site placements in Knoxville. Our School Counseling concentration primarily places students in Knox County Schools, although students can request placement in adjacent counties as well.

Typically taken in the first spring semester, Practicum involves a one-semester, 100-hour field placement (about 8-9 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 two-semester, 600-hour field placement (about 20-25 hours/week) in which the student takes on all professional roles of a counselor in a CMHC or SC setting. During these experiences, students engage in supervision with an experienced on-site counselor, group supervision with a faculty member and peers, and individual or triadic supervision with a doctoral student supervisor.

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. Multiple 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 (CHORIS – Commitment, Humility, 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 address all prompts. Select your references carefully to ensure that they can speak to your unique strengths. If possible, at least two references 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 development and 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.

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

We have suspended this requirement and are exploring discontinuing it altogether. If you submit GRE scores, we will not consider them as part of the holistic review process. To learn more about our admissions requirements, visit <https://epc.utk.edu/clinical-mental-health-counseling/cmhc-application-requirements/> or <https://epc.utk.edu/school-counseling/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 counadmit@utk.edu 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/>.

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 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 our 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. 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 COUN 580 (non-majors section): 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/>.

Do you accept transfer students and credits?

As a CACREP-accredited program, we are responsible for ensuring students have received comprehensive coursework related to CACREP 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 can accept up to 12 credit hours of coursework from a CACREP-accredited program. Of those 12 hours, only 6 may be practicum

prerequisites. If you are considering transferring to the program, please consult the transfer policy in the handbook and contact counadmit@utk.edu to discuss your unique situation. The faculty will need actual syllabi for the courses you completed (semester and instructor) to evaluate equivalency.

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 MS students. We encourage students to seek competitive 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 or certification. 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 during the program (for CMHC and school counseling) and after graduation (CMHC only)

To practice counseling outside the public school or religious setting in Tennessee, one must be licensed as a Professional Counselor. To practice as a school counselor in public or private schools in Tennessee, one must hold a school services personnel license specific to school counselors. Definitions of counseling, educational requirements for licensure, examination requirements for licensure, and experience requirements for licensure vary from state to state.

UT's CMHC concentration 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 meets 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 in Tennessee.**

UT's School Counseling concentration meets **educational** requirements for school counselor licensure in Tennessee and most other states as well. The program also prepares students for the Praxis, the most common **examination** for school counselor licensure in the United States. Finally, there is no additional **experience** requirement for school counselors in Tennessee, and UT students who take the Praxis exam before graduating or shortly afterwards can immediately apply for licensure. For more information on current school counselor licensure requirements in Tennessee, please visit <https://www.tn.gov/education/families/student-support/school-counseling.html>

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 will 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 or departments of education, visit <https://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/licensure-requirements> (CMHC) or <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/State-Requirements-Programs/State-Licensure-Requirements> (SC).

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 and School Counseling alumni who wished to be employed in the field found employment within 6 months of graduation; many students 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
- Public & private elementary, middle, and high schools

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 and/or provide a range of services reaching every K-12 student through a comprehensive school counseling program. 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

	<i>Or</i> Licensed School Counselor		
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 Counseling program at UT?

- Learning in intimate cohorts (e.g., about 16-18 CMHC and 10-12 School Counseling students per year) focused on team environments and meaningful relationships
- Living out CHORIS (e.g., commitment, humility, 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 a collaborative, open door 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
- Engaging hands-on activities in an on-site Counselor Training Clinic from the very beginning of the program
- Learning alongside Counselors for Inclusion (CoFI), a student-faculty diversity, equity, and inclusion collaborative that provides ongoing 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 RSVP for a program information session on our [Application Requirements](#) page or reach out to us at counadmit@utk.edu