

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
ABOUT ADMISSIONS TO THE
MS HUMAN GENETICS AND GENETIC COUNSELING PROGRAM
Updated October 2014**

General questions about applications and the program

1. **Q: Can I apply for winter or spring quarter?** A: No. We only accept applications to start in the fall quarter.
2. **Q: Do you offer a program that I can do online?** A: No. At this point in time, our program requires you to be on campus for the bulk of the program's 2 year time-frame.
3. **Q: Can I do the program part time?** A: No, this program requires a full-time commitment for 2 full academic years (21 months).
4. **Q: Where can I find more information about the genetic counseling profession?** A: We would strongly recommend you review the website for the National Society of Genetic Counselors (nsgc.org) and several GC program websites to gain information about the profession and application process. If you still have questions after that, we encourage you to contact practicing genetic counselors in your area (use the NSGC "Find a Genetic Counselor" site or if you are local to the Bay Area, look at our "Shadowing a GC" sheet on the admissions page). While it is becoming more challenging to shadow in clinic, many genetic counselors will meet with you or talk by phone to discuss the profession and their "typical day" and some can arrange for short internships. The NSGC website now also has videos of 'master counselor' genetic counseling sessions so you can learn more about the profession.
5. **Q: Can you send me some additional information about the program?** A: No, we do not currently have any additional brochure materials - we post all our program information on the website, both to ensure it's most up-to-date, and also to be more "green" and limit our paper consumption.
6. **Q: How many applications did you get last year, and how many candidates did you interview and accept?** A: For the past few years, we have received approximately 75-90 applications, interviewed 32 applicants, and accepted a class of 7 students each year. Bios of our accepted students are available on the website. We estimate that >90% of those candidates who were interviewed by our program received at least one offer from a genetic counseling program, and we encourage all applicants to apply to several programs to maximize their chances of receiving an offer from a program they would be interested in attending.
7. **Q: Do you do information sessions? Can I come for a visit?** A: We do not offer information sessions, nor do we have the facilities to offer all interested

applicants a personal visit. If you have specific questions about your background and potential application, please email us at geneticcounseling@stanford.edu. In some situations, we will be able to answer your questions by email, and in other situations, we may need to set up a brief phone call to discuss your application questions. If you want to explore the Stanford campus, you may do so on your own, or take one of the guided tours, although they are generally focused on “main campus” and undergraduate studies.

8. **Q: What financial aid packages do you have available?** A: For the Class of 2016, the total tuition for the 2 year program is approximately \$72,894. Students who are eligible to receive Perkins Loans are able to have up to \$12,000 (the maximum available for 2 years) waived after licensure or certification if they work full time for a period of 5 years. Financial aid packages vary yearly, and in some years we will have departmental money available to help support the costs of tuition. Specifics will be discussed at the interviews each year.

The online application process

9. **Q: When does the application go online?** A: Usually the university posts graduate applications online by mid to late September. This website is a good resource in preparing to apply:
<http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/gradadmissions/applying>
10. **Q: I am trying to figure out for the online application what the name of the program is?** A: “Human Genetics MS” in the Department of Genetics
11. **Q: Can I attach supplementary materials to my online application?** A: As you will see from our admissions page, you are required to attach a word document of a CV or resume that details your specific experiences of interest – this should be attached as part of the online application, and should NOT be sent in hard copy. Beyond this, we prefer that you do not attach any further supplementary material unless it is of core importance, such as explaining an issue that will be important for us to know in evaluating your application (e.g. a personal issue that interrupted schooling, etc). Please do NOT attach full copies of papers or of your work in courses. Please do NOT attach additional personal statements beyond the one required in the online application.
12. **Q: Can I submit more than 3 references?** A: You may have up to 4 references, but 3 references are required. We suggest you have at least one academic reference, and that your references are persons able to speak about the different aspects of academic background, interpersonal relationships and genetic counseling experience that are represented in your application. Your references may be submitted online (strongly preferred) or by hard copy – if your reference prefers to do a hard copy letter, please make sure to get it in a sealed and signed envelope (on letterhead) and include it with your transcripts in a single package to our office.

13. **Q: When will I hear from you about the status of my application?** A: We do not do a “rolling admissions” process, but rather we review all the paper applications in January and February, and invite candidates to interviews in March and April. We adhere to the date set by the Association of GC Program Directors for common notification in late April. We will notify you by email when your application is complete (or if any materials have not yet been received) starting in mid-December. [Please note: our offices are closed for 2 weeks starting December 22 and reopening January 5th, 2015, so there may be a time lag during this time]. We encourage you to check your online application status around early to mid February for notifications, and please keep your email address up to date, as much correspondence will be sent out by email.

GREs, GPA and Course Pre-requisite questions

14. **Q: I finished school several years ago, and it’s been more than 5 years since I took the GRE. Do I really have to take the GRE?** A: Yes, this is a university requirement. If you already have a doctorate degree, the university admissions office may, in some cases, be willing to waive your re-take of the GRE, and if so, the department is comfortable with that as long as you can provide an old set of scores. If you cannot receive a GRE waiver from graduate admissions, you will be required to submit scores from the past 5 years.
15. **Q: By what point do I need to take the GRE exam for admissions?** A: Our application deadline is in mid-December, and we need scores to be received no later than January 1st in order for us to do a complete evaluation of your application. You should visit the GRE exam website to determine how long it takes to have your scores sent to our institution and plan your exam date to occur no later than at that time (most likely no later than December 1, 2014). You are welcome to write in your scores from the verbal and quantitative exam sections on the application when you submit it, but the scores do need to be officially received by Stanford in order for your application to be considered complete.
16. **Q: Can you tell me if you have received my GRE scores yet?** A: The university admissions system does not register your GRE scores until a few days after you submit your online application. So, if you haven’t yet submitted your online application, your scores may be in the university system but not yet paired with your application, and we will be unable to tell until that time. If you have submitted your online application, we will send you an email when the application is complete, including the GRE scores. Please make sure you submit the scores to 4704.
17. **Q: I haven’t yet completed all the course pre-requisites. When do I need to complete them?** A: All course pre-reqs need to be completed before you start classes within the program. However, depending on the missing pre-reqs it can be hard, if not impossible, to provide a fair evaluation of your application. You are strongly encouraged to have, at a minimum, the genetics pre-req completed before submitting your application. You may indicate on your application your

- plans to complete any remaining courses between the application time and estimated time of matriculation.
18. **Q: Do AP credits fulfill the course pre-requisites for this program?** A: No, AP courses are not counted towards program pre-requisites.
19. **Q: Some of my course pre-reqs are from 5-10 years ago, since I am changing careers. Is that too old?** A: No, they are generally fine, although if you have taken molecular genetics more than 5 years ago we strongly suggest a refresher, since the material has changed so dramatically in recent years.
20. **Q: Can I take or audit classes at Stanford to meet my course pre-requisites?** A: Only students who are currently matriculated in a Stanford program are allowed to enroll in or audit courses at Stanford. If you are local and need to fulfill your course pre-reqs we have identified some sample universities and community colleges where you might be able to obtain the required courses. You may also find some courses online (especially developmental psychology or statistics!).
21. **Q: Can I take classes at a community college nearby, or online?** A: We evaluate everyone's application a little differently. If you are trying to demonstrate that you can bring your grades up, we strongly recommend taking graduate level classes at a 4 year university. However, if you are simply trying to fulfill the pre-requisite, an online or community college course is often fine.
22. **Q: For the science pre-requisites, do I have to take a lab section?** A: Taking a lab section is more important for the genetics pre-requisite and/or if you weren't a science major in undergraduate. For biochemistry, the lab section is not required.
23. **Do I have to take the TOEFL exam?** A: *TOEFL Scores are required of all applicants whose first language is not English.* Exceptions are granted for applicants who have earned a U.S. bachelor's or master's degree by a regional accrediting association in the United States, or the equivalent of either degree from a non-U.S. college or university of recognized standing where all instruction is provided in English. Being a U.S. citizen does not automatically exempt an applicant from taking the TOEFL. Minimum TOEFL scores are 250 (computer based), 600 (paper based) or 100 (internet based). Please contact the graduate admissions office of the university if you have additional questions about your TOEFL requirements.
24. **Q: What is the average GPA and GRE score for your applicants?** A: While GPA and GRE are an important measure of academic abilities, we acknowledge that many applicants have additional strengths that influence how we review your application. With that in mind, many applicants still want to have a general sense of how they compare to our applicant pool. The mean GPA for successful

applicants is ~3.5, but varies significantly, and we will consider all applicants with a GPA above a 3.0. If your GPA is below 3.0, you are encouraged to take additional graduate level courses prior to applying to the program (particularly if your pre-req grades are lower than a B grade) and demonstrate your ability to handle high level science coursework. Our mean GRE scores are around the 60-70%iles, but there is also significant variation here and GRE scores above the 50%ile are generally competitive if other aspects of the application are strong. These mean GPA and GRE scores are similar to those described by other graduate level genetic counseling programs.

After the program

25. **Q: What sorts of jobs are available to graduates of your program?** A: Since our program started in 2008, our first two classes of graduates completed their training in June 2010 and 2011 respectively. Despite our challenging economy in recent years, about half of our graduates have obtained positions by the time they graduation, all of which are clinical genetic counseling jobs or are otherwise directly applying their genetic counseling skills in a laboratory genetic counseling setting or clinical research setting. It is typically graduates who were constrained geographically were still looking for positions (often with several interviews in place). Just in the past 2 years, our graduates have taken jobs in prenatal genetics, cancer genetics, pediatric/mixed clinical settings, teratology, infertility, cardiogenetics, laboratory genetics and genomics to date. However, based on prior experience and the professional status survey, the outlook for jobs has been good, especially when the economy is more stable. Many new graduates take jobs in a clinical role (or in a combined clinical/clinical research role). However, there are many expanding opportunities to work in industry (e.g. in a marketing role at a genetic testing company or as a “lab genetic counselor”), education or policy-making exist. Two websites to learn more about the varied roles of genetic counselors are: <http://www.nsgc.org/career/Skills.cfm> and http://www.nsgc.org/career/index.cfm#as_a_profession .
26. **Q: How do your students do on the ABGC board certification exam?** A: While only a few of our students have had the opportunity to sit for the exam since the program started, cumulatively over 90% of the students that Professor Ormond has trained have passed the exam on their first sitting.