

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
ABOUT ADMISSIONS TO THE
MS HUMAN GENETICS AND GENETIC COUNSELING PROGRAM
Updated October 2016**

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 or at a distance?** A: No. At this point in time, our program requires you to be on campus minimally for the entire first year and first summer. Distance training is feasible for part or all of the second year. Please contact our office in advance of your application to discuss.
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. 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 also has videos of ‘master counselor’ genetic counseling sessions so you can learn more about the profession (<http://nsgc.org/p/cm/ld/fid=248>)
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 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 80-140 applications, interviewed 30-40 applicants, and accepted up to 11 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 4-6 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 2018, the total tuition for the 2-year program is approximately \$78,111. 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. We are also aware of additional national programs that allow remaining loans to be waived after making 10 years of minimum payments.

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.

9. **Q: Where can I find information pertaining to international applicants?**
A: Information on academic credential requirements, visas, and English proficiency requirements for international applicants can be found here:
<https://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/gradadmissions/applying/international>

The online application process

10. **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>
11. **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
12. **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 and a personal statement that detail your specific experiences of interest – these 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.
13. **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.

14. **Q: Is there a page limit for personal statements?** A: Please limit your personal statement to 500-750 words maximum. We prefer double spaced submissions.
15. **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 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 21, 2016 and reopening January 4, 2017, 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 most correspondence will be sent out by email.

GREs, GPA and Course Pre-requisite questions

16. **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. Contact the Office of Graduate Admissions directly with these questions: <https://gradadmissions.stanford.edu/about>
17. **Q: By what point do I need to take the GRE exam for admissions?** A: Our application deadline is in early 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, 2016). 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.
18. **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. Once you submit your application, you will be able to track the status of your materials by logging into your application account. Please make sure you submit the scores to 4704.
19. **Q: I haven’t yet completed all the course pre-requisites. When do I need to complete them?** A: All course pre-requisites need to be completed before you start classes within the program. However, depending on the missing pre-requisites 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-requisite completed before submitting your application. Please indicate on your application your plans to complete any remaining courses between the application time and estimated time of matriculation.

20. **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 took molecular genetics more than 5 years ago we strongly suggest a refresher since the material has changed so dramatically in recent years.
21. **Is there a minimum grade for the course pre-requisites?** A: Yes. You are required to have a B or greater in all pre-requisite courses.
22. **Q: Do AP credits fulfill the course pre-requisites for this program?** A: No, AP courses are not counted towards program pre-requisites.
23. **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.
24. **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 a pre-requisite, an online or community college course is often fine. Please email us if you have questions about whether a specific course will satisfy our pre-requisite requirements - it's most useful if you can attach a syllabus or course description.
25. **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.
26. **Q: What topics should be covered in a Biochemistry course to fulfill the Biochemistry pre-requisite?** A: (1) Structure and function of macromolecules (proteins, lipids carbohydrates, and nucleic acids); (2) Signal transduction and membrane transport; (3) Pathways involved in energy production and metabolism of glycogen, fatty acids, and amino acids.
27. **Q: What topics should be covered in a Molecular Biology course to fulfill the Molecular Biology/Genetics pre-requisite?** A: (1) Structure and function of DNA; (2) Amplification and sequencing of DNA; (3) Structure of the human genome; (4) Molecular mechanisms surrounding replication, recombination, and expression of genes and the genome.
28. **Q: Do I have to take the TOEFL exam?** A: The University requires TOEFL scores for 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:

<https://gradadmissions.stanford.edu/about>

29. **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 an undergraduate GPA above a 3.0. If your undergraduate GPA is below 3.0, we will consider your application if you have an additional graduate degree with >3.5 GPA prior to applying to 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. GRE scores above the 50%ile are generally competitive if other aspects of the application are strong. If you score lower than the 50%ile in two of the GRE categories, we strongly recommend retaking the exam. These mean GPA and GRE scores are similar to those described by other graduate level genetic counseling programs.

Clinical rotations

30. **Q: I'd like to complete one/some of my second-year rotations outside of the Bay Area. What factors will impact whether that is possible?** A: The feasibility of an external rotation during the academic year will depend on whether your city/cities of interest are home to another genetic counseling training program and/or how many ABGC board-certified genetic counselors are available and interested in supervising a student during that time. Some students may also be interested in completing a rotation abroad, which is philosophically and institutionally feasible, but can be logistically more challenging. As with all other rotations, we will also consider your academic and clinical needs and progress when determining whether an external rotation would be possible. We are happy to answer more specific questions during interviews and upon admission.

After the program

31. **Q: What sorts of jobs are available to graduates of your program?** A: In recent years, all of the program graduates have obtained positions by the time they graduation, across the US and in Europe. 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. In the past 4 years, our

graduates have taken jobs in prenatal genetics, cancer genetics, pediatric/mixed clinical settings, teratology, infertility, cardiogenetics, laboratory genetics and genomics to date. The outlook for jobs has been excellent. Two websites to learn more about the varied roles of genetic counselors are: <http://nsgc.org/p/cm/ld/fid=386> and <http://nsgc.org/p/cm/ld/fid=43>

32. **Q: How do your students do on the ABGC board certification exam?** A: As of August 2016, 88% of Stanford GC graduates have passed the exam on their first sitting and 98% of graduates who have taken the exam are currently certified (the remaining person holds certification internationally).