

Master of Arts in Counseling

CACREP Accredited



Q: I have a degree in psychology (criminal justice, animal husbandry, etc.) and would like to be a counselor. Any problem?

A: Regardless of the applicant's undergraduate degree, GSU's Master of Arts in Counseling will accept all undergraduate degrees to apply for our program (see the application website for specifics: <https://www.govst.edu/counseling-application/>). Within the application process, the specific specialty track of interest must be identified: Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC), Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling (MCFC), or School Counseling (SC). Students are interviewed for admission solely to this identified specialty track. Each of our specialty tracks meet the academic and training requirements for licensure/certification of their specialization for the State of Illinois.

Note: It used to be that school counselors in Illinois had to have a teaching certificate, but this is no longer the case. Regardless of prior educational accomplishments, as a CACREP accredited counseling program with a school counseling specialty track, the entire program is required to meet the academic and training qualifications for certification as a professional school counselor in the State of Illinois. Please refer to the information in following question.

Q: How can I use the degree I am earning after I graduate and pass all required content or licensure examinations?

A: All of the GSU MA in Counseling tracks meet the academic and training requirements to be a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) in the state of Illinois. The licensure exam may be taken during the last year of the student's program. See the following website for licensure information in the [State of Illinois: State of Illinois | Department of Financial & Professional Regulation](#).

Clinical Mental Health Counseling: After completing the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program, students work in a variety of clinical settings, such as, hospitals, residential programs, private practices, non-profit agencies, and community mental health clinics. Student will be able to provide individual, group, and/or couples counseling after completion of the program. See the following website for licensure information in the [State of Illinois: State of Illinois | Department of Financial & Professional Regulation](#).

Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling: Graduates of the Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling program are trained to work with families including children, adolescents, and couples. From systems theoretical perspectives, attention is focused on group dynamics, intervention, prevention, and sexual issues. GSU's MA in Counseling MCFC specialty track meets all the academic and training requirements to be an Associate Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (ALMFT). The following website has the academic, training, and other required information to be a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) in the state of Illinois: [Licensure | Illinois Affiliation of Marriage and Family Therapists \(iamft.org\)](#).

School Counseling: The school counseling program is designed to prepare students to work as professional School Counselors in a public PK-12 educational setting. The primary focus is understanding and infusing the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) national model into schools, and assisting students in maximizing their academic, college and career, and social/emotional development. The SC Program meets the academic requirements for certification as a Professional School Counselor in the State of Illinois. By completing the required school counseling track in GSU Counseling Program and passing the Illinois Professional Educator License (PEL), students can qualify to be an Illinois P22 Licensed School Counselor. The following website has the official information to be a School Counselor in the State of Illinois: [How to Become an Illinois School Counselor - IL \(school-counselor.org\)](#).

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All SC track students will have to take the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) 235 - School Counselor Content Exam to obtain your Professional Educator Licensure. This exam must be taken prior to enrolling in your internship. School counseling student's program of study includes the mental health courses necessary to be eligible for the National Counselor Exam and for the Illinois Professional Counselor License.

Q: How many credits do I have to earn?

A: All of the MA in Counseling specialty tracks are 60-Credit hour programs. All courses are three credits each. There are 33 credit hours of core courses and 27 credit hours for each specialty track courses.

Q: How/when are the courses offered?

A: The MA in Counseling program courses are held Monday-Thursday at two different time periods (4:30pm-7:20pm and 7:30pm-10:20pm). Courses are generally held on-campus face-to-face with some courses meeting in a hybrid format (alternating every other week face-to-face and online asynchronous/synchronous). All School Counseling specialization courses are delivered in a hybrid format.

Q: What the overall length of the program (how many semesters)?

A: That depends on several things. Full-time students typically enroll in two to four courses per semester. A great percentage of our students are part-time, taking one course or two courses per semester. On average it takes students three to four years to finish the degree.

Q: What is candidacy?

A: Candidacy determines if you are ready to work with clients/students, starting with their practicum training experience. Students must complete the following four courses with a grade of B- or higher prior to admission to candidacy:

- 6600 Professional Orientation and Ethical Standards for Counselors
- 7720 Social and Cultural Foundations
- 7810 Beginning Counseling and Human Relations Skills
- 7847 Group Dynamics and Interventions

Students may enroll in their Practicum once accepted to Candidacy.

Q: What is the practicum and how long is the practicum?

A: The practicum is a field placement course that will allow trainees to receive hands on experience. Practicum is a minimum of 100 hours, including a required minimum 40 hours of direct client service. The CMHC and MCFC specialty tracks will have their practicum experience over two semesters through the program's Counseling Lab. Practicum for SC is only one semester and offered during the spring semester. SC practicum sites will be determined in collaboration with the program's clinical coordinator and recommended at the elementary and/or middle school levels.

Q: What is the internship and how does the internship work?

A: The internship is a field placement course that takes place over two semesters to provide more in-dept exposure and experience. There are two internships equating to a minimum of 600 overall hours of which a minimum of 240 hours is direct client service. In Internship 2, students complete a portfolio and will have to defend it to faculty. Students are encouraged to work with the clinical coordinator and/or specialty track faculty lead to secure a site for internship.

CMHC Specialty: Students in the CMHC track have a wide range of possible internship sites and training opportunities. The MA in Counseling program has a list of pre-approved training sites and guidelines of required qualifications for adding a new training site.

MCFC Specialty: Students in the MCFC track at least 120 of the required minimum 240 direct client service hours must be conjoint hours (i.e. relational in nature).

SC Specialty: Students in the SC track, must perform their internship in a school/educational setting. SC students start their internship during fall semester and do not have their internship during the summer. In that summer schools are limited as to hours and student population, and do not compare with the regular school program, students are not allowed to practice in the summer. It is important for school counseling majors who work in schools to prepare their administrators for the fact that they will be missing for a semester-long before the internship is to occur.

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Q: Will this program prepare me to open a private practice?

A: Although with licensure graduates are eligible to open a private practice, this program focuses on preparing students to work in settings where there will be opportunity for supervision and collegial support. The internship provides an excellent opportunity for both prospective employers and interns to assess future employment possibilities. Although not guaranteed, many of our graduates are hired by the school or agency in which they do their internships.

Additionally, Governors State University's Office of Career Services has updated labor market information for counseling students. Students and graduates can also receive assistance with their resume and developing a credential file from this office.

Q: Why do I have to talk about myself so much in this program?

A: Counselors have to understand what counseling is like from the client's perspective. In COUN 7810 Beginning Counseling and Human Relational Skills students will be required to function as a peer counselor and as a client. In COUN 7847 Group Dynamics and Interventions students will be required to function as a group leader and as a group member. Throughout the program students will be expected to talk about and write about how you see you are as a person and how you came to be this person. Through understanding yourself will help you to be open to understand others. It is **Highly Recommended** for students to engage in their own personal counseling throughout the program as well. Governors State University provides free counseling to students enrolled in the university. Possible unresolved personal issues invariably come up for students during this program. Having their own counseling support person will help them greatly to resolve these potential issues.

Q: What is CACREP and what does it do for me?

A: CACREP stands for the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. It is the national accrediting body for counseling programs in the United States and other countries. CACREP has very specific standards for master's and doctoral level programs. Accredited programs must be re-accredited within an eight-year period from the prior accreditation date. GSU's counseling programs (MA and Ph.D.) are currently accredited through March 31, 2023.

The benefits of CACREP accreditation include the following:

- Assurance that students are being trained in a program that meets national professional standards.
- An advantage in the job market and doctoral programs that prefer CACREP graduates.
- The opportunity to sit for the National Counselor Examination (through NBCC) during internship or immediately upon graduation.
- CACREP's Website: www.cacrep.org

Q: What are the employment prospects for counselors?

A: According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the employment of counselors is expected to increase by 23% between 2020-2030, for Marriage and Family Therapists is expected to grow 16%, and employment for educational, vocational, and school counselors is expected to grow by 11 percent. All three projections are much faster than average. Data collected in 2021 reflected the national median salary for licensed mental health counselors to be \$48,520; Chicago's annual mean wage is from \$52,480 to \$56,700. ([Bureau of Labor Statistics](https://www.bls.gov)).



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Track Leaders and Program Coordinator Contact Information

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