

# Genetic Counseling Quick Facts



**Pre-Health Advising**  
Pre-Professional Advising Office  
**UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA**

## Average Matriculant Numbers

- **Overall GPA:** 3.50
- **Science GPA:** 3.50
- **GRE:** ~300 combined score & ~4.0 writing (scores above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile)

## General Information

- Master's Degree
- Most programs are 22 Months
- One institution in Georgia:
  - Emory University

You should prepare for a career Genetic Counseling by building credentials in research, scholarship, leadership, humanitarian/community service, and shadowing in the Genetic Counseling profession. There is **no "best" major** for Genetic Counseling students, but it might be helpful to consider a major in Genetics or a major with a counseling focus such as education or social work. In general, you are encouraged to pursue a major which you are interested in and one in which you will excel.

### ❖ What is a Genetic Counselor?

Genetic Counselors assess individual or family risk factors for a variety of inherited conditions, such as genetic disorders and birth defects. They provide information and support to other healthcare providers, as well as to individuals and families concerned with the risk of inherited conditions. Genetic counselors work in university medical centers, private and public hospitals, diagnostic laboratories, and physicians' offices. Genetic Counselors need a master's degree and board certification.

## Required Courses & GPA Expectations

**DISCLAIMER:** This is not a definitive list of the classes you will need for every school. It is your responsibility to check with the individual schools to which you hope to apply to confirm their specific requirements. Do not forget to read up on their policies concern AP/IB course credit. Not all programs will accept AP credit for pre-requisite courses.

### ❖ Do grade trends matter?

If you wish to enter a genetic counseling program, you will need to have both a strong science and strong overall GPA. Admissions committees look not only at raw numbers, but also at grade trends on your transcript—so all is not lost if you stumble in your first semester or two, but then show substantial improvement each subsequent year. However, they will also notice negative trends such as if you are consistently withdrawing from or performing poorly in hard sciences or if you are completing many courses away from your home institution. While an instance or two is not a deal-breaker, a pattern of behavior should be avoided. You must demonstrate the ability to handle difficult scientific content as this will translate directly to your ability to perform in a genetic counseling program.

## GRE

Genetic counseling programs require that applicants take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). The GRE consists of three sections: Quantitative, Verbal, and Analytical Writing section. There are no specific courses that you need to take prior to the GRE, but you should plan to dedicate roughly six to eight weeks to exam preparation. While you can opt for a commercial prep course for the GRE, self-study is often sufficient.

Students usually sit for the exam in August – November as most application deadlines are in December – January. The GRE is offered via University Testing Services on a regular basis.

## Shadowing Experience

As an applicant to genetic counseling programs, you are expected to have had some exposure to the genetic counseling profession. To gain this experience, you should strive to shadow or interview genetic counselors. While GC programs do not always have specific shadowing hour requirements, all programs do expect you to prove that you know what the career entails and most require that you had some interactions with a genetic counselor.

## Typical GC Pre-Requisites

**Biology** (BIOL 1107/L and BIOL 1108/L)  
**Statistics** (STAT2000)  
**Psychology** (PSYC1101 and/or PSYC3230)  
**Biochemistry** (BCMB 3100 or BCMB 4020)  
**Genetics** (GENE 3200)

## Volunteering & Undergraduate Research

**Volunteering** is an important part of the application that you should not neglect. GC programs want to see depth of commitment and substantial involvement and leadership in the community. They are looking for students who not only demonstrate that they can perform well in rigorous courses, but also those who are compassionate, enjoy working with people and are dedicated to serving the community.

Because of the nature of genetic counseling, you are expected to have experience (paid or volunteer) in **counseling, advocacy, or at least teaching**. Additionally, experience working with individuals who have special needs or genetic conditions can be very helpful. Consider volunteering with a crisis hotline, RSVP, Project Safe, The Cottage, ESP, etc.

There are many benefits to getting involved in **undergraduate research**, and research is a large component of Genetic Counseling. You are highly encouraged to dedicate at least a year to a specific project or research lab. To get started, reach out to faculty members who are working on projects that you are interested in.

## Letters of Recommendation

Most GC programs require 3-4 letters of recommendation. Requirements can vary between schools, and it is your responsibility to ensure that you have collected the correct letters for your program(s) of interest. You should obtain letters from academic and professional references who know you well and can speak highly of your abilities. At least one of your letters should come from a hard science faculty member and another from a genetic counselor or someone who can speak to your counseling/advocacy experience. Beyond that make sure to select strong letters that meet the requirements of the program such as those from other faculty, employers, volunteer coordinators, etc.

## Employment Outlook for Genetic Counselors

In 2016 there were 3,100 Genetic Counseling job available. The Genetic Counseling field is expected to grow by 29% by 2026, which is much faster than average, adding a total of 900 jobs. Ongoing technological innovations, including improvements in lab tests and developments in genomics, which is the study of the whole genome, are giving counselors opportunities to conduct more types of analyses, such as identifying a patients' risk for specific types of cancer.

## Genetic Counseling Admissions Match

The Counseling Admissions Match or GC Admissions match is designed to match applicants to masters degree programs that are accredited for Genetic Counseling. Applicants will first register an account at natmatch.com. The fee is \$100 to register. Once registered applicants complete applications and select programs they wish to interview with. It is important that applicants still apply directly through the program websites in addition to using GC Admissions.

## Southeastern GC Program Application Dates

Institution	Application Period	Matriculation Date
University of Alabama at Birmingham	July - January	August
University of Arkansas Medical Sciences	July - December	August
University of South Florida	July – December	August
Emory University School of Medicine	July – December	August
University of North Carolina at Greensboro	July – December	August
University of South Carolina	July – December	August