



***Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) Guide to
Graduate Programs in Educational Psychology at NAU***

- 1. What are the differences among the masters programs in educational psychology (EPS)?**
 - EPS offers five masters degrees: student affairs, school counseling, school psychology, clinical mental health counseling, and human relations. I generally begin by asking students about the environment in which they would like to work. If you want to work on a college campus with college students, student affairs is the best choice. If you want to be a licensed counselor in the community or in private practice, clinical mental health counseling is best. If you want to work in K-12 schools, school counseling or school psychology are best. Finally, if you already have a chosen profession, for example as a teacher or police officer, and you are place bound and unable to move to Flagstaff, and need a master's degree for promotion, then the Human Relations program is a good choice (the program is available all online). For more info, please see Figure 1, at the end of this document.
 - Also, see this excellent article which compares/contrasts the most common behavioral health professions:
 - http://www2.binghamton.edu/psychology/undergraduate/docs-pdfs/robiner_2006.pdf
- 2. Is it possible to study part-time?**
 - Yes, several students have completed the program part-time while working full time and raising families. In Flagstaff, most students attend full-time (4-5 classes per term), whereas the norm in Phx and Tucson is 3 courses per semester.
- 3. I want to keep my options open. Is there a way that I could complete more than one program?**
 - Keeping options open is often a way to avoid making a commitment to a profession, and can sometimes set you back in your professional progress. Increasingly, professional tracks in counseling and educational psychology are developing distinct requirements. You are better served choosing a profession by researching your options, before you apply to one selected graduate program. It is difficult to switch programs once you are admitted.
- 4. Can I take courses now, before being officially admitted into the program?**
 - Yes, but it's limited. After gaining acceptance to the NAU Graduate College (this allows you entry into open-enrollment courses, but not to those courses which are closed to the Counseling cohorts), you may be eligible to take certain EPS courses. Typical open-enrollment options include: EPS 602 (the only open student affairs course), EPS 525, EPS 620, and EDR 610.
- 5. How long do these programs take to complete?**
 - The School Counseling program usually takes **about 2 years** to complete, while the M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling generally takes **2 to 3 years** to complete. Students progress through the program in a "cohort".
- 6. What is a "cohort"?**
 - A cohort is a group of students, usually of about 15-20 students per program, who are admitted at the same time and who progress through most classes together as a group --- they tend to study together at each other's homes and in coffee shops, and not infrequently, become friends as well as long-term

colleagues. Students report that they experience a great deal of support and camaraderie via the cohort structure. The result is that this type of format does not allow for as much flexibility for individual students to alter their course sequence as programs that do not operate on the cohort system.

7. Do I take classes at night, on weekdays, or during weekends?

- In Flagstaff, almost all courses are held from Monday through Thursday between 8am and 5pm that run for the entire semester (16 weeks), for 2.5 hours per class meeting.
- In Phoenix and Tucson, all classes are offered in the evenings – generally Monday through Thursday nights. Each **16-week semester** is divided into 8-week sessions. The first 8 weeks you will generally have one class, the second 8 weeks a second class and a third class that runs the entire 16 weeks. In this way, you attend classes 2 times per week. A 3-year schedule of upcoming classes is available at the end of this document (subject to minor changes).

8. Do I receive a license or certificate immediately after I graduate?

- For the School Counseling program, graduates mail their transcripts to the AZ Department of Education (DOE), and generally receive their certificates as AZ K-12 Guidance Counselors within a few weeks.
- The DOE link for Guidance Counselor certification info is here: <http://www.azed.gov/educator-certification/certificate-requirement/professional-non-teaching-certificates/>
- For the Clinical Mental Health Counseling graduates, students can become licensed as Professional Counselors, or LPC's, once they complete our accredited 60-credit hour M.A. program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, pass the National Counselor Exam (usually in their last semester), and after they complete an additional post-graduate "work experience" requirements as specified by the Arizona Board of Behavioral Health Examiners, <http://azbbhe.us/> The LPC, by the way, is the license that allows counselors to practice independently, i.e., without supervision, and in private cash-pay or insurance-based practices (name in phonebook, etc.). Immediately after graduating, students can apply to become Licensed Associate Counselors, or LAC's, which is the intermediate phase between graduating from a master's program and earning one's LPC. The main thing to keep in mind is that this licensure process tends to sail along smoothly when students are working at a mental health agency in the field, and are thus completing their internship while on their "day job", and accruing hours toward LPC on the job as well. Most states that license professional counselors usually require a Masters degree in counseling plus an additional 2 years minimum of post-graduate, supervised work experience: they want to make sure that each LPC has been approved by multiple supervisors along the way so that they are effective in providing counseling services *independently* (without supervision) to a wide variety of clients.
- For certification requirements in other states, see the American Counseling Association's web site at <http://www.counseling.org>

9. Are these programs accredited?

- NAU is accredited by the North Central Association (NCA), which accredits universities in general, and the M.Ed. in School Counseling and the M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling are both accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), which accredits Counselor Education programs specifically.
- Graduating from a CACREP accredited program can help students move more quickly through the post-graduate certification or licensure processes, and, can help with acceptance into doctoral programs that are also CACREP accredited.

10. What about a doctoral degree at NAU?

- There is a PhD in Counseling Psychology at NAU's Main campus in Flagstaff. For more information, please visit the program website: <http://nau.edu/COE/Ed-Psych/Degrees-Programs/Doctoral/PhD-Counseling-Psychology/>

11. If admitted, how much time will I need to devote to the program?

- The rule of thumb from the Arizona Board of Regents is that students can expect to spend twice as many out-of-class hours studying as they do in-class...thus, if you're taking a course that meets from 4:30-7:00 on Monday nights, plan on devoting **about 5 hours** of your week studying for that class.

12. What can I find out about admission rates?

- The acceptance rates vary widely by year, and sometimes, by city as well (Flagstaff, Phoenix, Tucson). We may receive anywhere from 30-60 applicants per program for any given new cohort. We aim for an average of 16 new students per program in each new cohort. Some of the reasons why some applications are not admitted include relatively lower GPA or GRE scores, lack of experience related to the field compared to other applicants, and essays that are excessively brief or not nearly as well written as higher-ranked applicants.

13. What courses are required, and in what order?

- The Programs of Study for each program are available at:
 - Clinical Mental Health Counseling:
 - <http://nau.edu/COE/Ed-Psych/Degrees-Programs/Graduate/MA-Counseling/>
 - School Counseling:
 - <http://nau.edu/COE/Ed-Psych/Degrees-Programs/Graduate/MEd-School-Counseling/>
- On the Flagstaff campus, the CMHC students usually follow the Recommended course sequence, <http://nau.edu/COE/Ed-Psych/Degrees-Programs/Graduate/MA-Counseling-Class-Sequence/> while the School Counseling students usually adhere to this one: <http://nau.edu/COE/Ed-Psych/Degrees-Programs/Graduate/MEd-School-Counseling-Class-Sequence/>

14. Can I get detailed advisement before I begin the program?

- This FAQ document should answer most questions for prospective students. Formal advisement is reserved for formally-admitted students, however, you may contact the Program Coordinators with specific questions (
 - For Clinical Mental Health OR School Counseling in Flagstaff, pit.kolodinsky@nau.edu
 - For Student Affairs program in Flagstaff, susan.longerbeam@nau.edu
 - For School Psychology in Flagstaff, lisa.persinger@nau.edu
 - For Human Relations in Flagstaff, Vicki.weedman@nau.edu

15. Can I earn the School Counseling degree and then work as a Clinical Mental Health Counselor or psychotherapist instead, in a non-K12 setting?

- It can be done, but is very complicated, and requires respecialization (taking many additional classes). It is obviously best to enter the program that meets your career goals.

16. Can I get the Clinical Mental Health Counseling degree and then work as a School Counselor instead, in a non-K12 setting?

- It can be done, but is very complicated, and requires respecialization (taking many additional classes). It is obviously best to enter the program that meets your career goals.

17. Who are the professors?

- You may find out more information about the faculty and staff at each location at: <http://nau.edu/COE/Ed-Psych/Faculty-Staff/>

18. Have your previous graduates secured jobs in the field?

- You may read more about the success of our graduates by visiting: (<http://nau.edu/COE/Ed-Psych/Degrees-Programs/Graduate/MA-Counseling/>, and clicking on Read about CACREP outcomes)

19. Is it possible to specialize, for instance, in treatment of children with ADHD?

- The CMHC program is a *generalist* program that prepares you for comprehensive work as a psychotherapist. The degree provides the educational requirements for licensure.
- The School Counseling program prepares for work as a K-12 guidance counselor and state certification as a guidance counselor.
- Further specialization requires additional training beyond these programs.

20. Does getting certified or licensed matter?

- Yes. School districts strongly lean toward hiring only certified K-12 Guidance Counselors.
- Licensure is required for most professional counseling positions. Licensure is required to practice *independently* as a psychotherapist in Arizona. Becoming a Licensed Professional Counselor in Arizona allows LPC's to set up their own private practices, to contract with mental health providers (insurance companies), to advertise in the phonebook, to accept clients on a cash basis, etc.

21. What is "Practicum", and what does the Internship require?

- Practicum is sort of a mini-internship. It's generally taken in a student's second-to-last semester. Practicum is a one-semester class in which students gain real-world experience working with clients under direct supervision.
- Once a student passes Practicum, they then enroll in Internship during their final semester. Internship is an immersion-experience at a school or Clinical Mental Health agency site, again under the close supervision of a certified school counselor OR Licensed Professional Counselor.

22. Can I get paid for my practicum or internship?

- NAU has nothing to do with whether or not you get paid, though it's not unusual for students to secure paid internships. Each Program Coordinator will work with students to find sites – some sites pay, and some don't.

23. What is the style or philosophy of the counseling training at NAU?

- The programs are designed to assist students in the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Knowledge refers to theories, issues clients deal with, treatments, etc. Skills refers to opportunities for practicing techniques with cohort peers and clients, whereas attitudes involve developing self-awareness. We also emphasize evidence-based treatments - i.e., students learn to skillfully seek out and find interventions and counseling strategies that outcome research has found to be validated, such as Cognitive-Behavioral therapy for some anxiety disorders, etc. Since our program is CACREP (www.cacrep.org) accredited, our programs adhere to CACREP standards, and thus, our syllabi and program objectives reflect these standards.
- Students also receive a significant amount of live, real-time supervision by experienced clinician/teachers.

24. Will I have to do many group projects with my peers?

- Individual professors may, on occasion, assign students to work on projects in groups. NAU's counseling programs do not assign permanent study groups or use study groups in place of classroom instruction with the professor.

25. What is important to know about course sequence?

- The most sequenced courses are in the counseling series (begin with EPS 601), and the student affairs series (begin with EPS 565). Ideally, if you plan to finish within two academic years, you should take these courses in your first semester. See the complete recommended course sequence on our website.

26. How do I register for classes?

- Many of the classes in Student Affairs are held for you and restricted to you so you will be registered by our personnel in the EPS office (Eastburn 110, 928.523.7103). Two of the classes in your first semester fit this category: EPS 565 and EPS 608. However, EPS 608 requires a completed fieldwork contract before you are registered, generally in the first week of classes. You will complete this contract with your site supervisor (generally in your assistantship) and your instructor.
- Please be aware there may be holds on your account which prevent you from registering. Common reasons include the need for immunization documentation, transcripts, and bill payments.

27. What courses are offered online?

- Generally the statistics courses are offered online. For a complete list, see the course schedule on the website.

Applying/Advisement

28. Do I have to take the GRE Graduate Record Exam (General test) to get admitted?

- Yes, as specified in the application link. The GRE is an aptitude test that gives universities a sense of a prospective student's ability to succeed at the graduate level.
- Contact number for the GRE is 1-800-473-2255, or, you may visit their site at <http://ets.org>
- [GRE subject exams are not required for application.](#)

29. What is the process for applying?

- Application details can be found here [click on APPLY NOW, at <http://nau.edu/COE/Ed-Psych/Degrees-Programs/Graduate/>]. Deadline is as follows, etc.

30. How much does the program cost? Are scholarships and loans available? And what about Graduate Assistantships?

- Tuition, scholarships, loan and G.A. info can be found here: <http://nau.edu/gradcol/financing/>
In Flagstaff, the vast majority of our Graduate students have tended to obtain Graduate Assistantships which allow them to offset tuition costs. G.A.'s typically work on campus for 20 hours per week. Part-time 10 hour GAships are available as well, for half-tuition remission and stipend.
- Students who get admitted to one of these 2 programs will find out about G.A. possibilities at the same time they receive their acceptance letters, including additional steps to apply for various G.A. roles.
- G.A. roles are always contingent upon the university budget, so it's difficult to predict how many roles will be available for any new cohort.

31. Will any of the classes from a different, previously earned master's degree at NAU apply towards one of these Counseling programs?

- Generally, if they are the exact classes required or equivalent to required classes, yes. For instance, up to 9-credit hours from a previously completed Human Relations degree are generally acceptable transfer hours.
- However, students who are in this situation still have to apply to the new program.

32. I am in another NAU Master's program for now, but I really want to apply to School or Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program. What should I do?

- We recommend that you talk to your advisor of your current program. Be mindful that if you complete a degree in another program, you can only transfer in up to 9 suitable credit hours from that program. It is thus generally advantageous to NOT complete the other program until/unless you see if you've been admitted to the program you really want to be in!

33. Can I take courses now, before being officially admitted into the program?

- Yes, but it's limited. After gaining acceptance to the NAU Graduate College (this allows you entry into open-enrollment courses, but not to those courses which are closed to the Counseling cohorts), you may be eligible to take certain Counseling courses. Contact your Program Coordinator for details. Taking these classes does not guarantee acceptance into the program, and doesn't shorten the overall length of the program.

Resources

34. What kinds of resources are available to assist Counseling students in succeeding throughout the program?

- All NAU students have access to almost unlimited number of academic resources the NAU Cline Library, which is available online at nau.edu/library. This includes counseling-related databases and books for students at all three of our sites.

Comparing/Contrasting Programs/Careers

35. What about Master's degrees (or doctorates) in Counseling that offer some classes as independent study or over the Internet?

- Most universities offer at least some of their counseling classes on-line. We offer some. Counseling is an interpersonal career and we think it's most effective when most of the training is done in traditional, face-to-face formats. Look for accredited programs. However, most of our courses involve additional "hybrid" aspects – ie., face-to-face formats along with online course supplements for downloading assignments, online discussions with classmates and much more.

36. I'm looking into the MA in Counseling degree as well as an MSW degree. I'm hoping you can give me some insights -- My biggest question is what more (or less) does having a counseling degree do (career-wise) over a social work degree?

- The biggest differences between an MSW and a Master's in Counseling (an M.C. or M.A.) are in philosophy and focus. For example, Social Work philosophy and perspective is somewhat different from the individual psychology/counseling philosophy and perspective. Graduates from both degree programs often compete for the same jobs in the Clinical Mental Health or engage in private practice, with MSW's often serving administrative positions. An MSW is basically a terminal degree, meaning that you wouldn't gain much more by getting a doctorate in Social Work – unless you want to teach. A Master's in Counseling can lead to a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology, Counselor Education, or Clinical Psychology. Generally these doctoral degrees offer many additional career opportunities in the field. I would encourage you to go to the ASU or SDSU web site regarding MSW training and also to view the NAU website for the MA in Counseling. I would also encourage you to look in the classifieds to see what kinds of opportunities are offered to MSWs and what kind to MAs in Counseling. In addition, I urge you to interview an MSW and an MA in Counseling about what their jobs are like day to day.
- Also, when someone in a community needs counseling, they typically look to the "Counseling" page in the phone book or online. Most licensed therapists are listed in this section regardless of whether they are Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Clinical Social Workers, or Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists. Consumers may turn to the "Psychologist" pages in the phone book as well. So in the eyes of most clients, it probably doesn't much matter what the license is, as opposed to who has the best word-of-mouth buzz, etc.

Again, thank you for your interest in our programs, and don't hesitate to contact the folks mentioned about with questions. *See Figure 1, next page*

Figure 1: Differentiating between 4 NAU Masters degrees housed within the Ed Psy Dept.

	School Counselor	Community Counselor	Student Affairs professional	School Psychologist
Setting	K-12 schools (not college campuses)	Psychotherapy settings (behavioral health agencies, clinics, hospitals, private practices, etc.)	College and university campuses	Ed.S. and Ph.D. -early childhood settings; K-12 school settings; special education district leadership; Ph.D. also - college campus learning centers; private practice; hospitals; behavioral health; researcher
Population	K-12 students, along with their parents, teachers, staff and administrators	Entire lifespan: from young children through the elderly	College students (of all ages)	Life span focus on individuals with disabilities- generally focused on birth-21
Role(s)	Professional School Counselor	Psychotherapist primarily, but also consultant, researcher, mediator, etc.	Student Affairs Professional: widely varying roles in higher education	School Psychologist
Standards			Meets CAS Standards for Professional Preparation Programs in Student Affairs http://www.cas.edu/	Meets NASP Standards for Graduate Preparation of School Psychologists, 2010
Licensure/certification?	Certification as a K-12 Guidance Counselor	License as an Associate Counselor (LAC) or Professional Counselor (LPC). LPC signifies independent practitioner	No licensure nor certification required	Certification as a School Psychologist PK-12; Ph.D. may be eligible for Psychologist license
License/Cert "overseer" after graduation	AZ Dept of Education	AZ Board of Behavioral Health Examiners		AZ Dept of Education (Ed.S.); optional AZ Board of Examiners of Psychologists (Ph.D.)
NAU requirements	48-credit hours, about 14 classes, usually just under 2 years.	60-credit hours, about 19 classes, roughly 2 years or more.	48-credits, approximately two years.	Ed.S. 72 credits, approximately 3 years; Ph.D. 109 credits
Accreditation	CACREP-accredited (see cacrep.org)	CACREP-accredited (see cacrep.org)		NASP Approved
Lifestyle	Usually an 8-4pm weekday career, with 10-month contracts, typical public school schedule	Usually an 8-4pm weekday career, but some agencies require evening hours, some on-call hours, etc. Private practitioners set their own schedule	Varying work schedules. Generally includes evenings and weekends. Residence Life includes on-call.	Typically on a 10 month calendar employed in a school district; though other settings tend to be 12 month
Private practice?	No	Yes, once LPC status is achieved, private practice is an option	No.	Doctoral only
Where can I read more?	http://www.bls.gov/ooh/Community-and-Social-Service/School-and-career-counselors.htm	http://www.bls.gov/ooh/community-and-social-service/mental-health-counselors-and-marriage-and-family-therapists.htm	Two national associations, ACPA and NASPA: http://www2.myacpa.org/ http://www.naspa.org/	nasponline.org/about_sp/index.aspx

