



Department of Educational Psychology

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) Guide NAU Counseling Programs (2018-2019)

The Program & Application process

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

- As of March, 2017, applicants who are applying for admission into cohorts that begin in August 2017 or thereafter do NOT have to take the GRE any longer, unless they have an undergraduate GPA of less than 3.0.
- Applicants who have less than a 3.0 undergraduate GPA do have to take the GRE General Test. 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>

2. What are the application requirements, and, how do I apply?

- See APPLY NOW links at:
 - <https://nau.edu/coe/ed-psych/degrees-programs/graduate/med-school-counseling/> OR
 - <http://nau.edu/coe/ed-psych/degrees-programs/graduate/ma-clinical-mental-health-counseling/>
- The APPLY NOW link is a one-stop link. Simply follow the directions.
- Requirements:
 - Grade point average (or GRE-General Test scores for those with GPA's less than 3.0)
 - 3 recommendation forms -- Email recommenders directly from within the APPLY NOW link. They will be prompted to complete our electronic recommendation form and return it well ahead of the application deadline.
 - 3 Essays (Goals, Desired Skills, Personal Factors). Directions are found within the APPLY NOW link.
 - Interview
 - Official Transcript -- Follow directions within the APPLY NOW link.

3. How much does the program cost? Are scholarships and loans available? What about Graduate Assistantships?

- Information regarding tuition, scholarships, loans, and G.A. positions 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. GA's work on campus for 20 hours per week. 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.
- 4. Will any of the classes from a different, previously earned master's degree at NAU apply toward one of these Counseling programs?**
- Students who have completed other Counseling graduate coursework still have to go through the formal application process.
 - Attempts to transfer courses from other CACREP programs are generally successful, so long as the syllabus objectives match up reasonably.
 - Courses from non-CACREP programs might also be transferrable, and are evaluated on a case-by-case basis following syllabus review.
 - Per Graduate College policy, no more than 25% of previously-completed coursework can be transferred from another university's degree program.
 - Formal analyses of previously completed coursework take place only after admission to a program and are initiated by a Request to Transfer Course Petition process.
- 5. 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 talking to your advisor from your current program. Be mindful that if you complete a degree in another program, you can only transfer in up to 25% of the suitable credit hours from that program. It is thus generally advantageous to NOT complete the other program until you see if you've been admitted to your program of choice!
- 6. Can I take courses now, before being officially admitted into the program?**
- Yes, but options are limited. Gaining acceptance to the NAU Graduate College allows entry into open-enrollment courses but not to courses closed to the Counseling cohorts. Once accepted, you may be eligible to take certain Counseling courses. Typical open-enrollment options include: EPS 602 (only open to Student Affairs majors), and EPS 525 or 625. We highly recommend that you enroll in a Counseling Research section of EDR 610 (discuss with advisor).
 - Succeeding in open-enrollment courses taken prior to admission is often helpful to the admission process but does not guarantee acceptance into the program. Though this generally doesn't shorten the overall length of the program, students who do so have "lighter (credit) loads" in upcoming semesters, which is often desirable.
 - Contact your Program Coordinator for details.
- 7. 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. In order to distinguish between these programs, it's best to reflect on the post-degree context/environment in which one would enjoy working.
 - If you want to work on a college campus with college students, Student Affairs is probably the best choice. If you want to be a Licensed Counselor (i.e., psychotherapist) 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 ideal. Finally, if you already have a chosen profession, for example as a teacher or police officer (etc.), and you are unable to move to Flagstaff, and need a generalist master's degree to enhance your professionalism and possibly get a promotion, then the Human Relations masters might be worth looking into.
 - If interested in our Doctoral Program in Counseling/School Psychology, please see the item pertaining to that program later in this document, and contact lore.dickey@nau.edu, the Doctoral Program Training Director.
 - For a chart that helps to differentiate these degrees/professions, check out Figure 1 at the end of this document.

- Also, follow this link to the Bureau of Labor Statistics to compare and contrast the most common behavioral health professions:
- <https://data.bls.gov/search/query/results?q=mental%20health%20counselor%20inurl:bls.gov/ooh/>

8. Is it possible to study part-time?

- Yes. Although the vast majority of our students complete 4-5 courses per semester, it is possible for a small percentage of our students to work through the program on a part-time basis, often 2-3 courses per term. Several students have completed the program part-time while working full-time and/or raising children, etc. In Flagstaff, most students attend full-time (4-5 classes per term), whereas the norm in Phoenix and Tucson is to take 3 courses per semester.
- If admitted to our program and considering part-time enrollment, set up a time with your appointed advisor to discuss your options.

9. I want to keep my options open. Is there a way to complete more than one program?

- Keeping options open is often a way to avoid committing to a profession and can 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 applying to one selected graduate program. If you are certain you would like to consider switching programs, discuss options with your advisor as early as possible.

10. Once I am admitted, but before I officially start, can I take a class or 2 in order to experience graduate coursework and/or get a course or 2 “under my belt”?

- Yes, but please contact the program coordinator, as this takes some careful planning.

11. How long do these programs take to complete?

- In Flagstaff, the School Counseling program usually takes under 2 years to complete, while the M.A. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling generally takes 2 to 2.5 years to complete. Students progress through the program in a “cohort”.
- Please see recommended course sequences under the Programs of Study heading on [our webpage](#).

12. What is a “cohort”?

- A cohort is a group of students, usually 15-20 students per program, who are admitted at the same time and progress through most classes together. They tend to study together and become friends, as well as long-term colleagues. Students report experiencing a great deal of support and camaraderie via the cohort structure.

13. Do I take classes at night, weekdays, weekends?

- In Flagstaff, almost all courses are held from Monday through Thursday between 8am and 6:30pm and 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.

14. 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. Be sure to consult with the EPS Chair’s office in order to make sure you receive your Institutional Recommendation in a timely fashion.
 - The DOE link for Guidance Counselor certification info is here: <https://cms.azed.gov/home/GetDocumentFile?id=58fe4f961130c01f0c1cfd36>

- 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" requirement as specified by the [Arizona Board of Behavioral Health Examiners](#). The LPC is the license which allows counselors to practice independently without supervision in behavioral health care clinics and agencies, and in private practices (cash-pay or insurance-based).
- 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. Most states that license professional counselors require a Master's degree in counseling plus an additional 2 years minimum of post-graduate, supervised work experience. They generally want to ensure that each LPC has been approved by multiple supervisors and 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: <https://www.counselor-license.com/resources/state-counselor-license.html#context/api/listings/prefilter>

15. Are these programs accredited?

- Yes! Northern Arizona University is accredited by the North Central Association (NCA), which accredits universities in general. 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 specifically accredits Counselor Education programs. Our CACREP programs have been continuously CACREP-accredited since 1998, and are up for renewal in 2022.
- Graduating from a CACREP-accredited program can help students move more quickly through the post-graduate certification or licensure processes, may be considered more prestigious by internship sites and employers, and can help with acceptance into doctoral programs that are also CACREP accredited.

16. 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/>

17. 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 for 2.5 hours per week (the standard class contact time in Flagstaff) then plan on devoting about 5 hours of your week studying for that class.
- Using that same standard, at our Phoenix and Tucson locations, expect to spend 8-10 hours per week preparing/studying for a course that meets for 5 hours per week of class time.

18. 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 around 40-60 applicants per program for any given new cohort. We aim for an average of 16-20 new students per program in each new cohort. Some reasons certain applications are not admitted include relatively lower GPA or GRE scores, lack of field-related experience compared to other applicants, lukewarm recommendations, poor performance on the interview, and/or essays that are excessively brief or less well written than higher-ranked applicants.

19. 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/>

20. 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 officially-admitted students, but you may contact the Program Coordinators with specific questions.

21. 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 re-specialization (taking 8-9 additional psychotherapy-oriented courses, including a clinically-based internship). It is obviously best to enter the program that meets your career goals.

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

- It can be done but is very complicated and requires re-specialization (taking 4 additional classes and a school counseling-based internship). It is obviously best to enter the program that meets your career goals.

23. Who are the professors?

- Our professors possess doctoral degrees in Counselor Education, Marriage & Family Therapy, or Counseling Psychology
- All professors/instructors have ample experience working as counselors or psychologists in a wide variety of settings.
- Our faculty are quite diverse in terms of their respective research interests as well
- You may find out more information about the faculty and staff at each location at: <http://nau.edu/COE/Ed-Psych/Faculty-Staff/>

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

- You may read more about the success of our graduates by clicking on the links & documents under the **Testimonials, Internship Partners, FAQ and Graduates' Employment Rates heading at:**
 - <http://nau.edu/coe/ed-psych/degrees-programs/graduate/ma-clinical-mental-health-counseling/> OR
 - <https://nau.edu/coe/ed-psych/degrees-programs/graduate/med-school-counseling/>

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

- These masters degrees are generalist degrees that are meant to provide a pragmatic, real-world-oriented training foundation that allows graduates to be successful in entry-level professional counseling positions.
- The CMHC program is a psychotherapy-generalist program that prepares you for work as a psychotherapist and to meet 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, some of which is available during these programs.

26. Does getting certified or licensed matter?

- Yes. School districts strongly lean toward hiring only certified K-12 Guidance Counselors.
- For the Clinical program, licensure is required for most professional counseling positions. *Please see the question above that references the importance of licensure.*

27. 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 a few clients per week under direct and thorough 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.

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

- NAU has nothing to do with whether or not you get paid
- More and more, it's not unusual for students to secure paid internships in the clinical track, although it's highly atypical for school counseling students to earn paid internships.
- For unpaid internships, it is important to plan ahead financially.
- Our professors mentor and advise students to think ahead about which internships might be most appealing and connected to their students' long-term goals.

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

- The programs are designed to develop assist students in the development of knowledge, skills/competencies, and attitudes that are highly conducive to succeeding as counselors. Knowledge refers to theories, issues clients face, treatments, etc. Skills/competencies refer to opportunities for practicing counseling strategies/approaches with cohort peers (pre-Practicum) and with clients (during Practicum and Internship), whereas attitudes involve developing self-awareness and holistic awareness of clients (cultural, familial, and environmental).
- We also emphasize evidence-based treatments - i.e., students learn to skillfully seek out and find interventions and counseling strategies validated by outcome research, such as Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for some anxiety disorders. Since our program is [CACREP accredited](#), our programs adhere to CACREP standards. Our syllabi and program objectives reflect these standards.
- Students also receive a significant amount of live, real-time supervision by experienced clinician/teachers.
- For these reasons, we strongly believe that a primarily-online or an all-online training program is not congruent with the development of highly knowledgeable and skilled counselors. Our courses are highly experiential and delivered in traditional, face-to-face formats with ample time for modeling, demonstrations, and role-plays.

30. 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. However, since counselors often work collaboratively with other counselors and counseling administrators, our class-time often involves small group work in order to mimic these contacts and help students develop appropriate interpersonal skills.

31. What is important to know about the course sequence?

- Once admitted into a Counseling program, your advisors and the professors teaching your Introductory Courses (Introduction to School Counseling, or Introduction to Clinical Mental Health Counseling) will work with you to map out a sequence of courses.

- Ideally, students stay on-track with our Recommended Course Sequence, which provides the best opportunity to complete the program on time and in a logical order (with pre/co-requisites).

32. How do I register for classes?

- Once admitted into a program, you will receive a Welcome Letter that will contain instructions for enrolling.

33. Which courses are offered online?

- Generally, the statistics courses are offered online. For a complete list, see the course schedule under the Program of Study heading on the website.

Resources

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

- Our resource library is very current and cutting-edge. All NAU students have access to almost unlimited number of academic resources the NAU Cline Library, which is available online at library.nau.edu. This includes counseling-related databases, access to unlimited counseling-related articles and electronic-books, and, thousands of videos (lectures and counseling demonstrations completed by major leaders in the counseling field).
- Our instructors also have created dozens of counseling videos that are embedded in coursework.

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. We recommend that students strongly consider accredited Counseling programs. However, most of our courses involve additional "hybrid" aspects such as face-to-face formats along with online course supplements and discussions, downloadable assignments, and 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. We 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. We would also encourage checking the classifieds to see the types of opportunities offered to MSWs and to those with MAs in Counseling. We also 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 above with questions.

Please see chart on next page that helps differentiate 4 of the master’s degree programs in our Department

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

	School Counselor	Clinical Mental Health 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