



Educator Preparation Program Guide for Students

SCHOOL COUNSELING

University of Massachusetts Amherst

Brief Program Description

Administered through the Department of Student Development and Pupil Personnel Service, the School Counseling Educator Licensure Program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to preparing graduates to ensure equitable educational experiences for all students. School Counselors help create school environments that support all students to stay in school and achieve at their highest level. Our program supplements rigorous course work with a variety of in-school practical experiences.

Our major goal is to create multiculturally competent counselors who understand the child development and the contextual influences that affect learning and schooling, and who can intervene effectively in the complex systems that affect each child. Our students learn to analyze, interpret, and intervene directly with students and with the various facets of a child's life including peers, teachers, families, and communities. Our graduates are trained to implement the ASCA National Model for School Counseling Programs. The School Counselor Education program is committed to an evidence-based practice approach to school counseling. All students develop competence in data-based decision making, evaluation of the school counseling research base, and program evaluation so that they can align practices with real needs and with interventions and practices that can be expected to work.

Who May Apply

All students admitted into the School Counseling Licensure Program are admitted at the Master's/CAGS level. That is, they have the option of obtaining a Master's or completing additional course work to earn the Certificate of Advanced Study (CAGS) that is 63 credits. State licensure requirements necessitate that students earn at least 48 credit hours to obtain a terminal Masters degree in a School Counseling licensure program.

Getting Started

Students need a Bachelor's degree and it is helpful to have some experience working in schools and/or human service settings.

Admission Process and Criteria

We recruit nationally and internationally to build a student body that includes the full range of perspectives that is needed to continuously improve public education's ability to develop and educate all children.

To be considered for admission in the Fall Term, a completed application must be filed with the graduate school before January 15. Apply as early as possible before the deadline to allow receipt of all your materials. *Keep copies of everything you submit.* You may call the Graduate Admissions office at 413-545-0722 to see if your file is complete. You can also check this at www.umass.edu. Please note there are no spring semester admissions but interested students may take 1 or 2 classes as non-degree students before officially applying to the program.

Based on all the elements of your application, we will evaluate your fit with our program of study, looking at issues including your writing and thinking style, and evidence of your ability to do graduate level work. We encourage all applicants to include a resume and a detailed personal statement (3-5 pages) with their admissions application. In your personal statement, write clearly and concisely about why you want to enter the program of study, how the program of study fits into your career goals, and how your previous work and life experience relate to your professional development and readiness for graduate study.

If you do not believe your undergraduate transcripts reflect your current academic abilities, please explain why there is a gap. One of our clear programs of study priorities and strengths is the promotion of school counseling for diverse populations. In your personal statement, clearly describe your concerns and experiences with one or more current social issues (e.g. racism, sexism, learning disabilities, classism, homophobia, and bilingual education). Remember that your personal statement is the primary way we evaluate your knowledge of school counseling, your commitment to the field, and your fit with our program of study goals. We look carefully at both the content and the writing of your personal statement; ideally, your admissions application should include three letters of reference (mailed separately). At least one of these should be from someone qualified to comment on your academic potential.

Admission decisions are finalized in March and successful applicants are usually notified by mid-March by phone and letter. If your address or phone number changes, please be sure to notify the admissions office of the best way to reach you. In late February or early March, a selected group of applicants will be invited to campus for a half-day of group interviews. This offers an opportunity for applicants to ask questions of the faculty and current students. This also gives faculty a chance to observe applicants' interpersonal skills. Applicants who are invited to these interviews are encouraged to attend, if at all possible.

One of our program's great strengths is in the diversity of its students, including a number of students from outside the U.S. who enroll each year. Working together with people from other countries helps all of us understand diverse cultures and develop innovative solutions for the multi-faceted problems facing schools today. Occasionally international students have concerns that differ from those of their U.S. peers. International students are encouraged to contact the International Programs Office for Foreign Students at 413-545-2843, in 467 Hills South, for answers to questions including those concerning visas. UMass has a large body of students from many nations, and international students usually find compatriots, and artistic and social events suited to their needs. International students are encouraged to speak with their advisors and instructors about ways to make their course of study most relevant to their future work situations.

Course of Study

The University of Massachusetts School Counseling licensure program courses are organized within the CACREP eight common core areas, and pre-practica, and practica experiences:

- (a) Human Growth and Development
- (b) Social and Cultural Foundations
- (c) Helping Relationships
- (d) Groups
- (e) Career Development
- (f) Appraisal
- (g) Research and Evaluation
- (h) Professional Identity
- (i) Pre-Practicum (75 hours)
- (j) Practicum (450-600 hours).

A minimum of 48 graduate credits is required. Students in consultation with their individual advisor select all courses. The program usually takes three years to complete.

Advising

Upon admission to the program all students are assigned a temporary advisor. Students are free to keep this advisor or change advisors without penalty. Students work with their advisors to construct their course selections, and determine appropriate sites for practicum fieldwork. Advisors also work closely with students on the School of Education forms, which document progress in completing the program.

Career Opportunities & Job Placements

Students are encouraged as part of their coursework and practicum work to create a portfolio of their particular skills and expertise. They also have the option of doing a culminating project in their last semester of practicum, which is a bridge between their degree program and their new professional identity. Students who are graduating also meet with all faculty and each other in a support group, which focus on how to make networks of support outside of the University as many of them work in the geographic area.

Program Specific Information

The School Counselor Education Concentration of study is part of the Department of Student Development and Pupil Personnel Services (SDPPS). The three other programs of study housed within SDPPS are School Psychology, Social Justice Education, and Special Education. The Department is part of a diverse and dynamic School of Education, which includes departments of Educational Policy, Research and Administration, and Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies. School Counseling students typically take courses along with students from other programs of study, and benefit from the rich interchange of ideas available through cross-discipline encounters.

The School Counseling Concentration is closely connected to the National Center for School Counseling Outcome Research. Students have the opportunity to work on the Center's research projects.

For further information, please contact:

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LICENSURE INFORMATION AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL): The MTEL is required for licensure by the Department of Education of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The test has two parts: the Communication and Literacy Skills (C&LS) test and the Subject area test(s). The University's policy is that:

- Undergraduates must achieve a passing score on the C&LS test as a pre-requisite for admission.
- Post-baccalaureate and graduate students must achieve a passing score on the C&LS test in their first semester of study.
- All students must pass the Subject test(s) (if one has been developed for that licensure field) before enrolling in the practicum.

Licensure Application Process: The Educator Licensure Office (ELO) in the School of Education coordinates the licensure application process for all University Educator Preparation program students who have completed all licensing requirements. The ELO provides information to guide students in using the Electronic Licensure and Recruitment system (ELAR), a system in which students apply for educator licenses online. The ELAR system requires a student to apply for his/her license online (including the payment of license fees) and send an official copy of his/her transcript to the ELO in Room 130 Furcolo Hall (being sure that the transcript includes the "Institutional Recommendation for Educator Licensure"). After individuals have applied online, the ELO endorses/recommends candidates for licensure via ELAR. The University Licensure Officer also assists students in completing applications for licensure in other states, as necessary.

Career and Job Search Assistance: The School of Education, in collaboration with Career Services, sponsors a Job Fair for prospective educators. The Job Fair draws school districts from Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont and New Hampshire. In addition, Career Services provides information and registration for the Massachusetts Educational Recruiting Consortium (MERC), a recruitment fair attended by school districts from across the nation.

The University of Massachusetts, Amherst prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, gender, sexual preference, age, marital status, national origin, mental or physical handicap, political beliefs or affiliation, membership or non-membership in any organization, or veteran status, in any aspect of the admission or treatment of students or in employment.