

MA Program in Counseling Psychology
(Specialization: Clinical Mental Health Counseling)
Department of Psychology

Admission Policies and Procedures

The Master of Arts Program in Counseling Psychology (Specialization: Clinical Mental Health Counseling) is offered by the University of Hawaii at Hilo's Department of Psychology. The program began in 2005 and has been awarding degrees since 2007.

Each year, the MA in Counseling Psychology program (Specialization: Clinical Mental Health Counseling) seeks candidates who meet the UHH Graduate Council's and program's minimum requirements (see <http://counseling.uhh.hawaii.edu/admissions.htm>) and whose application materials indicate that they are a good fit for the program's goals and objectives. Successful applicants should be able to matriculate through the program's curriculum and obtain the necessary skills to become effective master's-level clinical mental health counselors. The program also recognizes that some students have a strong interest in developing their research skills and pursuing a doctoral degree in applied psychology. Given this background information, the Department of Psychology has established the following admissions policies and procedures for the MA Program in Counseling Psychology (Specialization: Clinical Mental Health Counseling).

1. Applicants are initially evaluated based on five criteria: Grade Point Average (GPA; last 60 credits), Graduate Record Examination (GRE), Letters of Recommendation, Statement of Interest, and Resume/Curriculum Vitae. Each of these criteria is equally weighted. Applicants are rated on a 5-point scale on each criterion as shown below. For the GRE Verbal and Quantitative scores, their scale scores will be added and divided by two, so that they together will be equal to each of the other four criteria.

Based on these criteria, each member of the Admissions Committee will independently complete the Applicant Rating Form (Pre-Interview); see Appendix A. Once the ratings of all completed applications are completed by each of the Admissions Committee members, the committee will convene and evaluate and discuss each applicant across the five criteria. Specifically, the total score from each committee member's Applicant Rating will be added and an overall average will be calculated. Based on the average scores, the applicants will be rank ordered. Then, the committee will determine the minimum baseline for determining which applicants will be interviewed, based on their experience with successful graduates of the program.

		Scale				
	0	1	2	3	4	5
GPA* (last 60 credits)	N/A**	2.75-3.00	3.01-3.30	3.31-3.60	3.61-3.80	3.81-4.00
GRE: Verbal Percentile	N/A	0-20	21-40	41-60	61-80	81-99
Quantitative Percentile	N/A	0-20	21-40	41-60	61-80	81-99
Letters of Recommendation	Does Not Qualify	Weak	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Statement of Interest	Does Not Qualify	Weak	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Resume/Curriculum Vita	Does Not Qualify	Weak	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent

*GPA between 0 and 2.74 does not qualify for admission consideration.

**Applicants with GPA between 2.75 and 3.00 may be admitted on a provisional status after approval by the Counseling Psychology Admissions Committee.

2. The applicants chosen for an interview in Step 1 above will be invited to participate in a telephone interview with at least two members of the admissions committee. Applicants will be asked to respond to seven predetermined questions (see Appendix B: Admission Interview Questions; *not available to the public*). The responses will be evaluated based on the following five criteria with each of the interviewers giving a score of 1 (weak), 2 (fair), 3 (satisfactory), 4 (good), or 5 (excellent) per each criterion.

Interview Response Rating Criteria:

- The applicant's goals are consistent with program's goals (see counseling.uhh.hawaii.edu)
- Clarity and maturity of professional vision
- Personal maturity and interpersonal skills
- Relevant past experiences
- Awareness of importance of human diversity in the field of mental health counseling

At the end of the telephone interview, each interviewer will complete the Applicant Interview Rating Form (Appendix C) and a recommendation to the entire committee will be made.

3. Based on the outcome of the interview, the admissions committee will determine whether or not to admit the applicant.

NOTE: If a member of the admissions committee offers a letter of recommendation for an applicant, that member must recuse her/himself from participating in the deliberation process for that applicant.

4. Appeals Process: The Department of Psychology recognizes that there may be instances in which an applicant does not agree with the admissions committee's decision to deny admission and then seeks an appeal of that decision. When an appeal request is made, the program director will convene an *ad hoc* admissions committee that will be comprised of at least three members, including the director and two persons who did not serve on the original admissions committee. The *ad hoc* committee will review the application materials to determine whether a telephone interview is merited using the same review criteria described above under #1; if the applicant was denied admission after the telephone interview, a second telephone interview may be offered. If it is determined that a telephone interview should be offered (or reoffered), the committee will then interview the applicant and make a decision also based on the decision criteria described above under #2 and #3.

All appeals request must be submitted via email to the director of the program (at bryankim@hawaii.edu) by April 22 so that there is a sufficient amount of time to review the application before the school year ends. Appeal decisions will be made by mid-May. Any questions that arise during this process should be directed to the director of the program. The decision made by the Appeals Committee will be considered final.

5. Application Materials, Timeline, and Minimum Enrollment: There may be instances in which applicants submit materials that are not required as part of the M.A. Program in Counseling Psychology application process and are not relevant to the admission review. Before the Admissions Committee members will begin reviewing the application materials, the Office of Admissions will remove such materials from applicants' files and will return them to the applicant.

The *priority* deadline for applications is January 1 and committee review will commence after January 5, with admission decisions finalized by February 1 and notifications sent soon thereafter. The accepted applicants will have a deadline of March 15 to indicate acceptance of the offer of admission. The *final* deadline for submission of applications is February 28. Applications received between January 1 and February 28 will be considered on a space available basis; notification of acceptance status will be mailed by April 15. For these applicants, they will have a deadline of May 1 to indicate acceptance of the offer of admission.

All admissions are conditional upon enrolling a cohort with a minimum of 14 students. Students will be informed by May 10, if a sufficient number of students have accepted offers of admission to offer the program in the coming academic year. Students who have been accepted into the program in years without an offering will be given first priority for admission in the next academic year.

6. Record-keeping Matters: The chair of the Admissions Committee will coordinate with the Graduate Division and Articulation Specialist to maintain all records of the committee's work, including the ratings forms, the votes taken for each applicant, and reasons for accepting or denying an applicant. For students accepted to the program, these records will be kept in the office of the Graduate Division and Articulation Specialist during the student's enrollment at UH Hilo, and thereafter in the Office of the Registrar for a period of five years. For students who are not accepted to the program, these records will be kept in the Graduate Division for two years, and thereafter will be purged.

7. Communication Issues: There may be occasions when an applicant who has been denied entrance into the program will make contact with a UHH psychology faculty member to ask why they were denied admission. When such a situation arises, the faculty member must ask the applicant to contact the Director of the MA program in counseling psychology. At no time should a faculty member communicate to the applicant why the applicant was denied.

*This policy was revised on March 16, 2017. It may be further revised without notification.

Appendix A:

**MA Program in Counseling Psychology
Application Rating Form (Pre-Interview)**

Applicant Name: _____

Based on your review of the application materials, please rate the applicant using the following rating scale. In determining the ratings for the letters of recommendation, statement of interest, and resume/CV, please base them on your assessment of how well the applicant will be able to meet the mission of the program, which is to "train students to become knowledgeable, skillful, and ethical counselors who will be able to help people in need of professional counseling services."

- 5 = Excellent
- 4 = Good
- 3 = Satisfactory
- 2 = Fair
- 1 = Weak
- 0 = Does Not Qualify

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Undergraduate GPA (last 60 credits)	N/A	2.75–3.00	3.01-3.30	3.31–3.60	3.61–3.80	3.81–4.00
GRE Verbal Percentile	N/A	0-20	21-40	41-60	61-80	81-99
GRE Quantitative Percentile	N/A	0-20	21-40	41-60	61-80	81-99
Letters of Recommendation (based on all letters)	Does Not Qualify	Weak	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Statement of Interest	Does Not Qualify	Weak	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Resume/Curriculum Vita	Does Not Qualify	Weak	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent

Total Score: _____

(Note that GRE scores should be divided by 2, so that both GRE scores together have the same weight as each of the other four categories)

Appendix B:

Admission Interview Questions

“Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today about our masters program in counseling psychology. We’re pleased that you have applied to join us, and we would like to take this opportunity today to learn more about your interests, experiences, and abilities that might be relevant to training and a career in counseling psychology. Our conversation today will last about 20 minutes. We have several structured questions to ask you, and we may have some follow-up questions as well. After that, we’ll have a chance to answer any questions you may have.”

1. What interests you about this graduate program and this career path?
2. How will your past academic and/or other life experiences help you be successful in our graduate program?
3. Are there any obstacles or barriers that you face that might make it difficult for you to complete the program? How will you meet these challenges?
4. What experiences do you have with the type of cultural diversity that exists in Hawaii and elsewhere?
5. Our program has an option for a research thesis although it’s not required for graduation or licensing. About 10-15% of our students complete a thesis and they usually base the thesis on current research by a faculty member. At this point do you have any interest in doing a thesis and if so with whom and on what topic?
6. How do you see your career developing five and ten years from now? In other words, what type of professional activities, settings, and/or clinical populations might be of interest to you?
7. We are interested to know how a student would handle a certain situation in graduate training. Please consider the following situation: You are in an internship program with a local counseling agency. After several weeks in the program, you realize that (1) your relationship with your onsite supervisor has been very difficult, (2) there are serious communication problems between you and the supervisor, and (3) you feel like you are not receiving adequate supervision from this person. In addition, you have been assigned very difficult clients with whom you are having trouble making any therapeutic progress. How would you handle this situation?
8. What questions might you have for us at this point?

Appendix C:

MA Program in Counseling Psychology

Applicant Interview Rating Form

Applicant Name: _____

Based on the interview, please rate the applicant using the following rating scale. In determining the ratings, please consider how well the responses from the interviewee meet the criteria below, which reflects the overall mission of the program: "To train students to become knowledgeable, skillful, and ethical counselors who will be able to help people in need of professional counseling services."

- 5 = Excellent
- 4 = Good
- 3 = Satisfactory
- 2 = Fair
- 1 = Weak

	1	2	3	4	5
Applicant's goals are consistent with program's goals	Weak	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Clarity and maturity of professional vision	Weak	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Personal maturity and interpersonal skills	Weak	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Relevant past experiences	Weak	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Awareness of importance of human diversity in counseling	Weak	Fair	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent

Total Score: _____

Recommendation: