

# UTRGV PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELING MASTER'S PROGRAMS - FAQs

## THEY SOUND SO SIMILAR - WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

PROGRAMS	GENERAL OVERVIEW	APPLICATION DEADLINES	CERTIFICATIONS YOU MAY APPLY FOR AFTER GRADUATION
<b>CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY</b>	The clinical psychology program prepares students to become mental health professionals who can work with diverse populations and treat a variety of mental health disorders. The program provides training in assessment, diagnosis, and delivery of evidence-based treatments. Students can choose between a thesis or non-thesis route and a LPC or LPA track. The thesis route provides additional training in research. Graduates practice in the community, help conduct research, teach at colleges/universities, or apply to PhD programs.	April 10th	BCBA, LPA, LPC
<b>CLINICAL REHABILITATION COUNSELING</b>	The CACREP-accredited clinical rehabilitation program prepares students to become rehabilitation counselors who can provide holistic services to individuals with mental health, physical health, and vocational problems. Graduates practice in the community and healthcare settings. Students may earn various certifications after graduation and passing qualification exams.	March 15th	ADC, CRC, LCDC, LPC
<b>COUNSELING</b>	The CACREP-accredited counseling program prepares students to become mental health counselors who provide therapy to individuals across the lifespan. Counselors tend to help people who experience life, social, work, and family stressors, as well as those who present with anxiety and depression. Students can specialize in school counseling or clinical mental health counseling. Graduates tend to work in independent practice or in healthcare and school settings.	March 15th October 1st	LPC
<b>EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY</b>	The experimental psychology program prepares students for careers that emphasize non-clinical research. Courses focus on statistics and research design, with electives available across sub-disciplines of experimental psychology (e.g., social psychology). Students must complete a thesis and can optionally complete BCBA courses. Graduates tend to become instructors, help conduct research, or apply to PhD programs. Graduates who pass the BCBA exam, tend to work with individuals with autism-spectrum disorder.	April 10th	BCBA
<b>SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY</b>	The school psychology program prepares students to become school psychologists who can work with youth and families from diverse backgrounds. Courses emphasize mental health and educational interventions, child development, learning, assessment, and consultation. Graduates tend to work in schools and help youth succeed across academic, social, behavioral, and emotional domains. Graduates are also tasked with improve educational outcomes, administer psychoeducational assessments, and providing school-based therapy.	April 15th	LSSP, LPA

### DID YOU KNOW?

- ALL PROGRAMS REQUIRE AT LEAST 60 COURSE CREDITS
- PROGRAM COMPLETION DOES NOT GUARANTEE CERTIFICATION; ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS MAY BE REQUIRED

## HOW DO I KNOW WHICH PROGRAM IS FOR ME?



Research the program

Look at the purpose, curriculum, and requirements for each program. Do the classes interest you? Do you want to focus on therapy, research, or a mixture of both? Do you want to do a thesis? What are your plans after you complete the program?



Focus on who you want to help

Think about which populations you've enjoyed or would enjoy serving. Do you prefer working with children, students, or adults? Would you want to work with individuals with severe or less severe mental illnesses?



Talk to a mentor or professor

Your professors likely have been in your shoes. They also might know about the programs. Ask them for guidance and what they might recommend based on your goals.

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELING?

### CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

- Could obtain a LPA or LPC license.
- Focused on clinical research and therapy approaches.
- Exposure to different evidence-based therapies.
- Heavy exposure to research methods.
- One or two statistics courses required depending on track.
- One internship required.
- Thesis required for students in LPA track; not required for LPC track.
- ~60-80+ applicants & 8-15 students accepted per year.



### COUNSELING

- Could obtain a LPC license.
- Focused on therapeutic process and how to do therapy.
- Lots of skills practice (e.g. writing therapy notes & psychotherapy).
- Some exposure to research methods; not a focus.
- Only one statistics course required.
- Two internships required.
- No thesis required.
- ~100-120+ applicants & 30-60 students accepted per year.

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COUNSELING (WITH SPECIALIZATION IN SCHOOL) AND SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY?

### COUNSELING (with Specialization in school counseling)

Prepares individuals for licensure as an LPC to provide counseling to individuals with mental health concerns, but students will take a class (COUN 6344) in this specialization that helps them understand the specific responsibilities required as a school counselor.

### BOTH

WORK IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL SETTINGS AND PROVIDE MENTAL HEALTH INTERVENTIONS TO AT-RISK STUDENTS.

### SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

Prepares individuals for licensure as an LSSP, and as school psychologists provide academic, emotional, and behavioral support. While counseling is involved, a school psychologist may also need to assess students for disabilities, host student support meetings, help create IEPs, and provide educational interventions.

## DOES IT MATTER IF I GET AN LPC OR LPA?



• In short, not really. Until recently, LPAs could not practice independently, but now they can just like LPCs! Individuals with either certifications need 3000 hours of internship before they can practice independently. In the LPC track, students tend to focus on therapeutic processes, psychotherapy, and rehabilitative services while students in the LPA track tend to focus on evaluations and diagnoses but also learn how to provide therapy. At the end of the day, both LPAs and LPCs work in similar spaces (e.g. private, clinics, hospitals, schools, etc.) and will perform similar services.

## WHAT DO I NEED TO APPLY TO A MASTER'S PROGRAM?

### THE APPLICATION PROCESS MIGHT INCLUDE YOU:



WRITING AN ESSAY ABOUT YOUR INTERESTS



SUBMITTING A CURRICULUM VITAE (RESUME)



ASKING FOR AT LEAST ONE LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION



INTERVIEWING WITH PROGRAM LEADERS



TAKING THE GRE

### TIPS:

- Ask a professor or mentor for feedback on application materials. It likely will strengthen your application.
- Some programs no longer require the GRE. Check the program website for the most up-to-date information.
- Watch out for application deadlines to know when is a good time to start preparing your materials.

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INFORMATION SOURCED FROM: [HTTPS://WWW.UTRGV.EDU/GRADUATE/FOR-FUTURE-STUDENTS/GRADUATE-PROGRAMS/](https://www.utrgv.edu/graduate/for-future-students/graduate-programs/)  
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