

**Max Rady College of Medicine**  
**MSc Genetic Counselling Essential Skills and Abilities**

<b>Policy Name:</b>	<b>Essential Skills and Abilities (Technical Standards) for Admission, Promotion and Graduation in the MSc Genetic Counselling Program</b>
<b>Application/Scope:</b>	Candidates for Admission, Promotion or Graduation in the MSc Genetic Counselling Program
<b>Approved Date:</b>	February 2019
<b>Review Date:</b>	Upon Revision of the ACGC Practice Based Competencies
<b>Revised (Date):</b>	August 14, 2024
<b>Approved by:</b>	Genetic Counselling Program Advisory Committee (February 12, 2018) Biochemistry and Medical Genetics Department Council (March 16, 2018) Implementation Working Group for the Cooper Commission Report (May 18, 2018) Faculty Council of Graduate Studies (October 11, 2018) Senate (January 19, 2019)

**1. PURPOSE:**

1.1 The MSc in Genetic Counselling Program (GCP) at the University of Manitoba is responsible to the public and the profession of genetic counselling to ensure graduates have the knowledge, skills, professional behaviours and attitudes to enter practice as a certified genetic counsellor in Canada. Graduates must demonstrate mastery of the relevant knowledge, skills and abilities in accordance with the [Practice Based Competencies](#) as defined by the Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling (ACGC).

1.2 It is important to note that an offer of admission to the GCP is not evidence that the program has verified that an applicant has the prerequisite skills and abilities for success in the program. However, these skills and abilities are essential if students are to be successful in achieving the competency standards of the profession. In addition to obtaining an MSc in Genetic Counselling degree, an individual must pass certification examinations either through the American Board of Genetic Counseling (ABGC) and/or the Canadian Board of Genetic Counselling (CBGC) in order to practice as a certified genetic counsellor. Prospective candidates must be aware that genetics and genomics expertise, counselling and communication skills, timely critical thinking, emotional health and psychological stability and professional behaviours are examined through the duration of this program and adaptation to a changing environment is required.

**2. POLICY STATEMENTS:**

2.1 An applicant or candidate for the GCP degree must reasonably expect that while enrolled in the MSc in Genetic Counselling Program he or she will be able to demonstrate the required Skills and Abilities according to the ACGC Practice Based Competencies, which may be subject to periodic update. These skills and abilities are taught and evaluated throughout all aspects of the program (clinical, academic, research).

The skills and abilities are grouped in seven overarching competencies

**1. Genetics and Genomics Expertise: Apply knowledge of genetics and genomics principles, genetic conditions, and testing technologies to the practice of genetic counselling.**

- a. Demonstrate knowledge of genetics and genomics principles and concepts

- b. Apply knowledge of genetic conditions to the delivery of genetics services.
- c. Demonstrate knowledge of genetic testing methodologies and variant interpretation

**2. Risk Assessment: Evaluate Personalized Genetic Risk**

- a. Analyze family history to estimate genetic risk.
- b. Calculate risk using probability methods and risk models.
- c. Integrate clinical and laboratory data into risk assessment.
- d. Order genetic tests guided by client-centered risk assessment.

**3. Counselling: Promote integration of psychosocial needs and client-centered decision-making into genetic counselling interactions**

- a. Use applicable counselling skills and theories.
- b. Establish a working alliance with clients.
- c. Promote psychosocial adaptation.
- d. Facilitate client's decision-making process

**4. Communication: Communicate genetics and genomics information to clients, colleagues, and other community partners.**

- a. Tailor communication to specific individuals and audiences.
- b. Use a variety of approaches to communicate genetics and genomic information.
- c. Convey probabilities based on client's risk perception and numeracy

**5. Research: Synthesize the evidence base relevant to genetic counselling.**

- a. Critically interpret data and literature.
- b. Apply data and literature considering its strengths, weaknesses, and limitations.
- c. Demonstrate knowledge of how genetic counsellors engage and contribute to the research process.

**6. Healthcare Systems: Demonstrate how genetic counsellors fit within the larger healthcare system.**

- a. Demonstrate how disparities, inequities, and systemic bias affect access to healthcare for diverse populations.
- b. Describe the financial considerations in the delivery of genetic services.
- c. Advocate for continuity of care.
- d. Collaborate with members of the Care Team, clients, and other Community Partners

**7. Professional Identity: Embody the values of the genetic counselling profession**

- a. Adhere to the genetic counsellor scope of practice.
- b. Follow applicable professional ethical codes.
- c. Exhibit behaviours that promote an inclusive, just, equitable, and safe environment for all individuals and communities.
- d. Engage in self-reflective practice to promote ongoing growth and development

2.2 All applicants to the GCP are expected to review this document to self-assess their ability to meet these standards; all applicants offered admission must acknowledge such review and understand that they will be assessed on this set of essential skills.

- 2.3 Any candidate for the GCP degree who cannot demonstrate the required skills and abilities throughout their course of study will be recommended to withdraw from the program.
- 2.4 The Genetic Counselling Program is committed to providing appropriate assistance to help genetic counselling students succeed in the program. **Some skills may be achieved with reasonable accommodation for genetic counselling students with a documented disability, while maintaining patient safety, both from a medical and psychosocial perspective.** Where necessary, reference should be made to the Accessibility Policy and Procedure:  
[http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing\\_documents/students/accessibility.html](http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/students/accessibility.html)
- 2.5 All accommodations must be approved through Student Accessibility Services. Students who anticipate requiring accommodation are responsible for notifying Student Accessibility Services in a proactive fashion at the time of application, or at any time throughout their genetic counselling education program.
- 2.6 Students are expected to obtain an MSc in Genetic Counselling degree within two years. Students may request an extension of time within which to complete the program; such requests are considered on a case-by-case basis.

### 3. **REFERENCE**

- 3.1 This policy document is guided by the 2023 Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling [Practice Based Competencies for Genetic Counselors](#). 4400 College Blvd., Ste. 220, Overland Park, KS 66211

### 4. **POLICY CONTACT**

MSc Genetic Counselling Program Director

### 5. **STUDENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**

I acknowledge that I have read this document carefully, that I have assessed my ability to meet the essential skills and abilities outlined in this document and that I anticipate that I am able to meet the described essential skills and abilities for admission, promotion and graduation from the Genetic Counselling Program. I understand that reasonable accommodations for some skills are available to me.

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please Print)

Student # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Permanent Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_