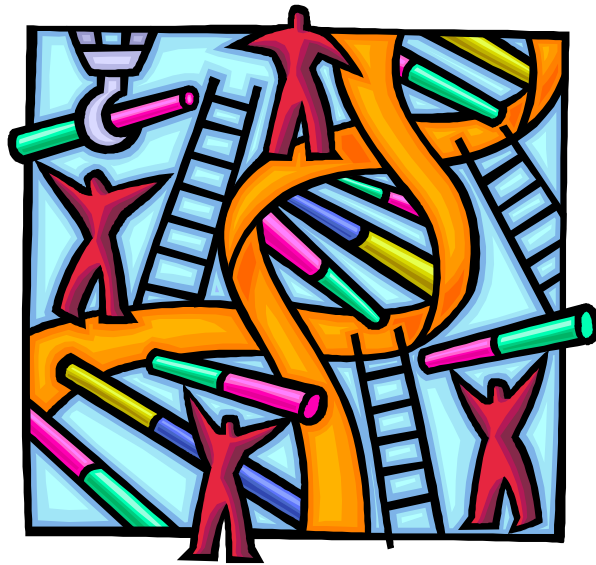


VCU MS Genetic Counseling Handbook 2023-2024

GC Program General Info



New Student's Checklist

- **Obtain your VCU eID.** Your eID is an alphanumeric set of characters. Your eID is not your student or employee number (also known as your V-number, vID, or Banner number). The VCU eID is the username used, along with a corresponding eID password, to you to access VCU resources such as myVCU Portal, VCU Mail, Canvas, VCU Libraries resources, eServices, VCU SafeNet, and other central and departmental applications. The VCU eID vision is to provide all VCU affiliates with authenticated secure access to the information they need through the web using a simple, single sign-on process. My eID allows all VCU Staff, faculty, Students, Affiliates to update personal email and mobile phone number, reset known and forgotten passwords, and retrieve your forgotten eID. To Claim your eID, visit <https://myeid.vcu.edu>
- **Obtain your VCUCard.** The VCUCard is the official identification card for the Virginia Commonwealth University. While on the Monroe Park or MCV campuses, all students, faculty and staff are required to carry their VCUCard. In addition to identification, your VCUCard can be used at select businesses for purchases, access VCU Libraries services, ride RamRide bus, to access the VCU recreational centers, and for entrance into athletic events and other activities. Many students obtain their VCUCard during orientation week. For more information on how to obtain your VCUCard, visit <https://vcucard.vcu.edu/services/vcucard/>.
- **Request after hours Sanger Hall building access.** In order to get after-hours access to Sanger Hall, a Service Desk Ticket must be entered into the system. Please contact Suzanne Finley to obtain access. Activated cards must be swiped for the first time within 2 weeks or will become inactive. Cards not used often enough will become inactive (so swipe cards every month or so).
- **Request VCU GC Student Room Access Code.** Student room access code can be requested from Suzanne Finley and/or Tahnee Causey
- **Request a VCU Health email address.** VCU students use Gmail for their university related correspondence. Gmail, however, is not HIPAA-compliant. For clinical use, VCU Health uses Outlook with encryption services. To communicate with clinical supervisors regarding protected health information, you will need to use your VCU Health Outlook email. Please see Suzanne Finley to obtain this email.
- **Request a long-distance phone code.** To make clinic-related long distance calls on the VCU GC student room phone, you can get a long distance code by filling out a long distance authorization code request form, which you can request from Suzanne Finley at 804-628-3265 or caherine.finley@vcuhealth.org.
- **Obtain Epic (VCUHS electronic medical record) Access.** Suzanne Finley will reach out to the first year class as a whole to begin the process.
- **Complete drug screen.** Suzanne Finley/Tahnee Causey will contact you to begin the process of drug screening through LabCorp.

How do I use the phone in the student room?

- VCU/MCV phone numbers are designated by one of three exchanges:
 - 804-828-#####: If you are using a VCU/MCV phone, you just have to dial 8-####.
 - 804-628-#####: If you are using a VCU/MCV phone, you just have to dial 6-####
 - 804-827-#####: If you are using a VCU/MCV phone, you just have to dial 7-####
- To dial outside of MCV/VCU, dial 9 first
- To dial long distance, dial 9, then 1 then the 10-digit number. You will hear a stutter tone, then enter the long-distance access code (See New Student Checklist for information on how to obtain long distance access code).
- There are two phones in the student room: 804-628-4081 and 804-827-9934
- To access the voicemail system in the student room, hit “Voice Mail” button on the phone, then enter the password when prompted.

What if I am off campus but need to call a patient?

- Dial *67 and then the phone number. Note – your number will come up on their caller ID as blocked
- VCUHS Telepage: 804.828.0951 → Call and ask for the operator to help you dial out. It will show up on a patient’s caller ID as a generic VCUHS phone number.

What if I need a phone interpreter?

- To access a phone interpreter for a phone call, call *944 from any VCU/MCV phone or 844-512-8698 from off campus phones. You will need to have the following information available to provide to connect with an appropriate interpreter:
 - Access code **XXXXXXX**
 - Language Needed
 - Name of Patient
 - MRN
 - Phone Number
- You can also call language services, 804.628.1116, if you need assistance.

Technology Use Guidelines—Genetic Counseling Program

Cell phone use, including texting, emailing, social networking, etc. is strongly discouraged in the classroom, clinical areas, or education conferences (e.g., Wednesday’s clinical and/or noon conference). Unless a student has been asked to check for messages or to use the internet to answer a question, cell phone should be kept at a minimum. We recognize that emergencies and exceptions do happen. In those cases, we ask that you step out of the room if necessary to accept a phone call.

Laptops should be brought to class and clinic, but again are to be used for participation in these activities only, not for personal use during academic and clinical time.

Emails from clinical supervisors and faculty should be returned promptly (within one business day if not sooner), even if you are just acknowledging receipt of the email with additional information to come. Students are not expected to respond to emails on weekends. Similarly, students should not expect supervisors or faculty to check and respond to emails on weekends.

The VCU Genetic Counseling Program has a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/VCU-Genetic-Counseling-Program/228282247218977>). This page is a way for students and faculty to post articles and links of interest. This is not a way for students and faculty to communicate with each other regarding academic or clinical issues. The Program also has a LinkedIn Page ([Virginia Commonwealth University MS Genetic Counseling Program: Overview | LinkedIn](#))

VCU Faculty and supervisors are not permitted to be “friends” with or followed by actively enrolled students on private social media accounts such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tik Tok, etc..

Genetic Counseling Student Stipend

The stipend for each GC student for 2023-2024 academic year is \$2500. This stipend will be added directly to your student account over fall and spring semesters (\$1250 each semester, not paid over summer). Year-2 students who have a stipend balance left from year 1 will be allowed to carryover and add that to year 2 award. Stipend must be used by the end of Year 2- students cannot request remaining stipend funds for after graduation.

Advising and Mentorship

Students have a variety of avenues to pursue professional and academic advising. Upon entry into the MSGC Program, Tahnee Causey will be assigned your faculty advisor of record. All program leadership, including Tahnee, John, and Heather, are available to help any student in need of assistance, however. This faculty advisor can help with questions regarding academics, clinical training, research, or general VCU information. Program leadership is available by phone (contacts previously listed), by appointment, or on a drop-in basis.

In addition to a faculty advisor of record, you will also be paired with a genetic counseling mentor. These mentors are traditionally younger genetic counselors who have volunteered to serve as a resource for new students. The mentor-mentee relationship is designed to be adapted to each student's needs. Some students prefer a standing meeting every few weeks to ask questions and receive input. Other students prefer to meet with their mentor as needed when specific questions arise. We encourage you to arrange a meeting with your mentor initially to establish a good working relationship. Given hybrid work schedules, be sure and check with your mentor about the best way to meet—you may end up meeting virtually!

Traditionally, first year genetic counseling students have also received a great deal of informal mentoring through the second-year students in daily interactions in the student room. As you know, we sent an email out in spring to put you in touch with a second-year student mentor. Second years have encountered many of the questions and issues first years will encounter, so we strongly encourage you to listen to and learn from your student peers. We realize that students will naturally form working relationships with other students with similar interests and personalities, but having a designated student as your “go-to person” is always a positive.

Finally, if a student is unable to ask a question of a faculty advisor, a genetic counseling mentor, or a second-year mentor, there is ALWAYS a genetic counselor on call for clinical situations. As these genetic counselors have worked with students for many years, the on call genetic counselor may be able to answer your question as well.

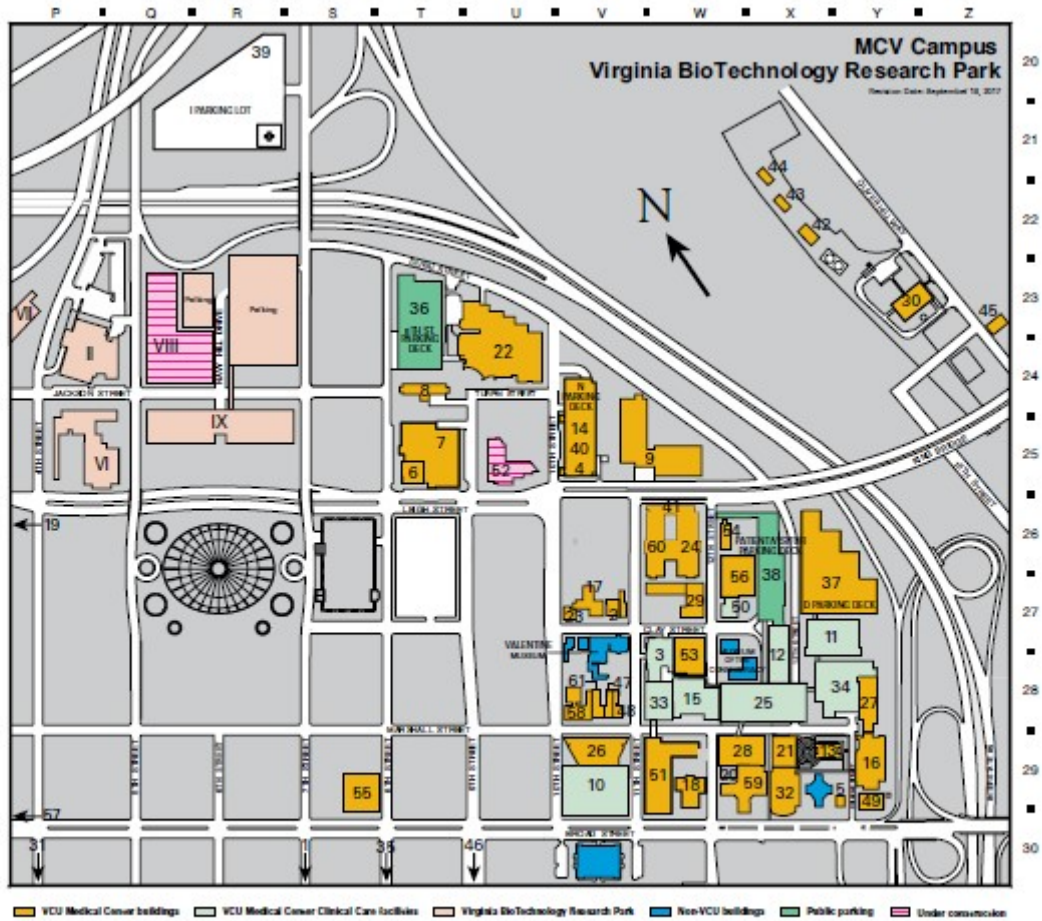
VCU General Information



VCU Campus Map

The majority of your time spent at VCU as a graduate student will be on the MCV Campus. However, you may travel to the Monroe Park classes for a variety of reasons.

Follow this link for an interactive map of both the Monroe Park and MCV Campuses, including a printable PDF. <https://maps.vcu.edu/>



MCV Campus

VCU Student Services

There are a variety of services available for students during their time at VCU. These services include:

- University Counseling Services <https://counseling.vcu.edu/>. VCU University Counseling Services offers a variety of supportive options for students, including crisis support, therapy for individuals and groups, skills and support groups, and case management and referrals. Students can speak to a crisis clinician 24/7/365 by calling 804-828-6200. For appointments, use the following address: [Appointments - University Counseling Services - Virginia Commonwealth University \(vcu.edu\)](#)
- VCU Student Health Services: <https://health.students.vcu.edu/>. VCU Student Health assists students with numerous clinical and health issues, including allergy shots, immunizations, mental Health & ADHD, and sexual health & wellness. Your student health fee covers visits to the student health clinics but does not cover the cost of referrals to specialists, medications, x-rays, hospital or ER visits.
- Hunton Student Center: [Hunton Student Center, MCV Campus - The Commons - Virginia Commonwealth University \(vcu.edu\)](#). Provides study spaces and lounge areas and is adjacent to Sanger Hall.
- Records and Registration: Visit Records and Registration for services related to course registration and academic record-keeping, including help with signing up for classes, tracking graduation progress, ordering transcripts or updating student records. www.rar.vcu.edu.
- Office for Multicultural Student Affairs: A division of Student Affairs that promotes diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice. Follow this link to find out how to get involved at VCU. <http://omsa.vcu.edu>. This office also works closely with the Office of Inclusive Excellence [Inclusive Excellence — Virginia Commonwealth University \(vcu.edu\)](#). Part of Inclusive Excellence is the Q Collective and Queer Circle ([Queer Circle at VCU – A hub for queer resources \(rampages.us\)](#)). The Queer Research and Advocacy Center, known as the Q Collective, serves as a creative and intellectual hub in support of LGBTQIA+ artistic and scholarly activities among faculty, staff, students and the Greater Richmond community. The Q Collective supports LGBTQIA+ research, scholarship and advocacy; and works to inform and serve the community.
- VCU Police/Public Safety: <https://police.vcu.edu>. Numbers to know: On-Campus Emergency: (804) 828-1234. Off-Campus Emergency: 911. Non-Emergency: (804) 828-1196
- GRTC Partnership: All VCU, VCU Health System and Virginia Premier students and employees have unlimited transportation access on GRTC's Pulse Bus Rapid Transit, local and express routes thanks to a multi-year agreement with GRTC. <https://parking.vcu.edu/transportation/grtc/>
- Life at VCU: <https://www.vcu.edu/life-at-vcu/>

Academic Systems

ACADEMIC SYSTEMS: The following systems are accessed using your VCU eID and password through the CAS.

- **SOM GradTrak**: GradTrak allows students and faculty to view your course history with grades, submit your research advisory committee, schedule your oral examination (oral defense), and view your official documents that were submitted at the time of your application.
- **DegreeWorks**: DegreeWorks is the online audit tool that the SOM/Graduate School uses to monitor a student's progress towards degree completion. DegreeWorks will track what classes you have taken, the completed grades, and will also keep track of the remaining classes and credit hours required to successfully complete the program.
- **Canvas**: Canvas is the application used for online learning for all classes at VCU. All courses will use Canvas to at a minimum post the syllabus, post readings, and make announcements. Some courses will also use Canvas for online exams and discussion boards.
- **Bulletin**: The VCU Graduate School Bulletin contains information about university policies, course descriptions, and academic requirements. The bulletin is revised annually. A class matriculating into the VCU Graduate School in Fall of 2023 will follow the 2023-2024 Bulletin throughout their entire graduate career.
- **eServices**: EServices provides self-service access to students and faculty. Banner, Make-A-Payment, and other programs may be accessed through eServices.
- **Schedule of classes**: The official list of available classes offered at VCU in a given academic term.
- **A-Z course list**: A listing of all courses offered at VCU in a given academic year, listed alphabetically by academic department.

Safety at VCU

If you are experiencing an emergency off campus, call 911.

If you are experiencing an emergency on campus, call VCU Police 804-828-1234.

Balancing school and life is not always easy, especially when the unexpected happens. The Dean of Students office can help students who are struggling with academic, personal, or emotional difficulties or who may be exhibiting worrisome or other concerning behavior. Through the Dean of Students Office, you can [report a concern about your personal safety](#), [report a concern about another student](#), or [submit other concerns](#).

Safety alerts are sent out via the VCU email system. You can check on current and recent safety advisories by clicking: www.alert.vcu.edu. You may also opt-in to receiving safety alert text messages by clicking here: <https://vcu.omnilert.net/subscriber.php>.

There are emergency phones located on both campuses that provide direct links to the VCU Police. Outdoors, these are yellow boxes with a flashing yellow light. For a map of where these phones are located, see [Emergency Phones - VCU Police](#).

RamSafe and MCV Campus Escort: RamSafe is the point-to-point evening transportation service dedicated for VCU students, faculty and staff. The program provides safe and free transportation to on-campus locations and nearby residences and buildings within defined boundaries on the Monroe Park and MCV campuses. <https://parking.vcu.edu/transportation/ramsafe/>

VCU Police provides the LiveSafe Mobile App to the VCU community. The free app is extremely user friendly and available on all [Android](#) and [iOS](#) devices. It is a powerful safety tool that allows for more efficient exchanges of information between members of the community and the VCU Police Department. Users can send VCU Police information 24/7 about [suspicious behavior](#) or circumstances, threats, crimes or ongoing incidents. Users can send in photos, screenshots, videos or audio files as evidence of what is occurring. VCU Police can also use the app to send users messages about ongoing incidents or important safety tips. Tips submitted through LiveSafe are monitored by VCU Police dispatchers 24/7, just as all emergency calls at VCU are monitored.

How to get the free LiveSafe mobile app

1. Scan the QR code, or, download “LiveSafe” from [Android](#) Google Play or the [iOS](#) App Store.
2. Register with your phone number and email.
3. Search for “Virginia Commonwealth University.” Choose your community.

Health Insurance Requirement

All School of Medicine graduate students are required to have a health insurance plan that meets the following criteria:

- The plan is provided by a company licensed to do business in the United States with U.S. claims payment office and a U.S. phone number
- The plan covers illness in the Richmond, VA area including hospitalization, surgery, mental health, medical equipment, pregnancy and physical exams. Note that coverage for emergency-only care or catastrophic care do not satisfy this criterion.
- The plan includes prescription drug coverage
- The plan is active and provides coverage through July 31 of the academic year in which the student is enrolled
- The plan provides coverage for pre-existing conditions

Note that having health insurance is a national law/obligation in the United States. Failure to hold health insurance can result in the application of penalties and a loss of visa status for international visitors.

For more information, please see: [University Student Health Services - Health Insurance](#)

Standards of Professional Behavior

These standards describe behaviors expected from all members of the School of Medicine (SOM) community, in educational, clinical, research and administrative settings. Professionalism is expected during all interactions, whether face-to-face or via telephone, video, email, or social networking technologies.

Members of the SOM Community will:

- Recognize their positions as role models for others in all settings.
- Carry out academic, clinical and research responsibilities in a conscientious manner, make every effort to exceed expectations and make a commitment to life-long learning.
- Treat everyone in the SOM community with sensitivity to diversity in culture, age, gender, disability, social and economic status, sexual orientation, and other personal characteristics without discrimination, bias or harassment.
- Maintain patient, research subject, and student confidentiality.
- Be respectful of the privacy of all members of the SOM community and avoid promoting gossip and rumor.
- Interact with all other members of the SOM community in a helpful and supportive fashion without arrogance and with respect and recognition of the roles played by each individual.
- Provide help or seek assistance for any member of the SOM community who is recognized as impaired in his/her ability to perform his/her professional obligations.
- Be mindful of the limits of one's knowledge and abilities and seek help from others whenever appropriate.
- Abide by accepted ethical standards in scholarship, research and standards of patient care.
- Abide by the guidelines of the VCU Honor System and Standards of Academic Conduct.

Informal Process for Addressing School of Medicine Concerns Regarding Professionalism

If you perceive or experience instances of personal abuse or some other form of what you view as unprofessional behavior on the part of your teachers or colleagues, you are encouraged to report such incidents through normal channels for counsel and possible rectification. If this route is awkward for you, an alternative approach is consultation with a member of the SOM Professionalism Committee.

For a full description of the latter process and the persons to contact (current members of the SOM Professionalism Committee, as well as the most up to date information on how to file a professionalism concern, please see the SOM Professional website: [VCU SOM Professionalism Committee](#)

Students' Bill of Rights and Responsibilities and Mistreatment Prevention Policies

For policies and guidelines governing many aspects of the learning environment that were developed by Virginia Commonwealth University and the VCU School of Medicine and help define student rights and responsibilities please visit the VCU Student Code of Conduct: [VCU Policy Program \(doctract.com\)](https://doctract.com). Please also refer to the Honor System and Standards of Academic Conduct: [VCU Policy Program \(doctract.com\)](https://doctract.com).

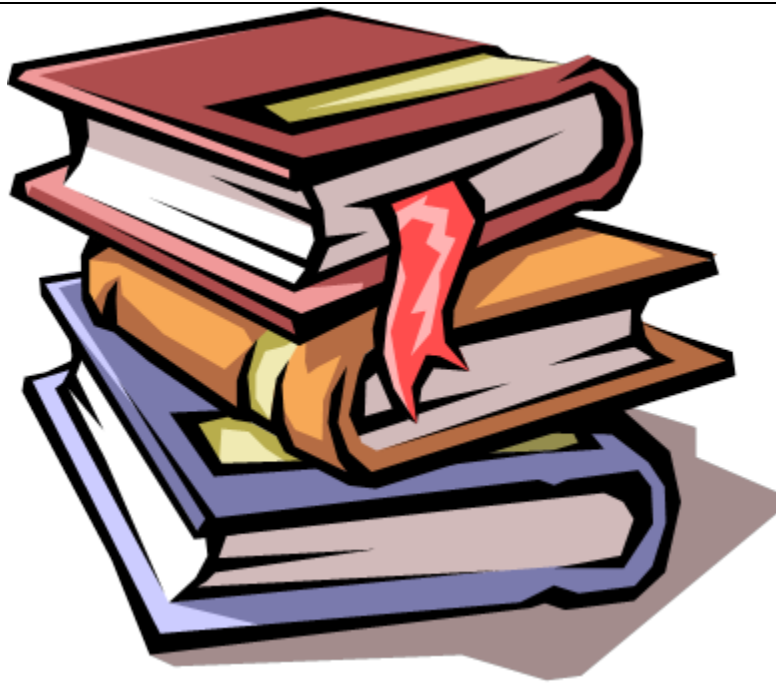
Students may also anonymously report a concern to the SOM Office of Graduate Education via the following Google form: [Students: anonymously report a concern to the SOM Office of Graduate Education \(google.com\)](https://forms.google.com).

The Office of Graduate Education has compiled many helpful resources for graduate students, as well as a list of relevant SOM and Graduate School Policies in one centralized location: [Graduate Student Resources - VCU School of Medicine](#).

Title IX

Virginia Commonwealth University is committed to providing an environment free from sexual misconduct, assault, harassment or any sex/gender discrimination that may violate Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and other state and federal laws. For more information about how to report an incident and to review the process once an incident is reported, please visit: [Title IX - Equity and Access Services - Virginia Commonwealth University \(vcu.edu\)](#) and [Title IX and Sex-Based Misconduct Reporting Form \(maxient.com\)](#)

Academics



Division for Academic Success

The Division of Academic Success offers disability and academic support services to students in the VCU Health Sciences schools. Those schools include the College of Health Professions, Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, and Pharmacy. Their mission is to create inclusive and accessible learning environments while facilitating academic success.

The Division for Academic Success (DAS) offers an array of services to students on the medical campus. Students with disabilities work with DAS to receive academic accommodations. All students, regardless of disability status, may meet with DAS to get help with learning strategies, study or test-taking skills, time management, and other issues affecting their academic performance.

Disability support services are provided for documented disabilities and can include academic and/or clinical accommodations, as well as consultations. Meetings are confidential and your specific disability information is not discussed with your professors or department.

It is important to note that academic accommodations are **NOT** retroactive. This means that any work completed or turned in prior to sharing your accommodations letter with the professor/instructor will not be included in your accommodations. This is one important reason why it is best to register with DAS early, even if you do not utilize accommodations at the beginning of the semester. If you do wish to use accommodations later in the semester, beginning the process then may take longer than you anticipate and delay any potential academic accommodations.

For more information or to register with DAS, to obtain an updated accommodation letter for the upcoming semester, or to request alternate formats for course materials, please visit <https://das.vcu.edu>.

Standards and Retention Policy: MS in Genetic Counseling Program

This document outlines the standards for academic and clinical performance and professional conduct for students in the genetic counseling program.

Student Code of Conduct

Students are required to satisfy Virginia Commonwealth University general standards of conduct, as discussed in the VCU [Student Code of Conduct](#).

In addition, genetic counseling graduate students should adhere to the Genetic Counselors Professional Code of Ethics: [NSGC Code of Ethics](#)

Student Academic Standards:

Students are required to satisfy Virginia Commonwealth University general academic requirements for graduate degrees: [VCU Satisfactory Academic Process for Graduate students](#)

For additional standards specific to the School of Medicine, please see the Guidelines: Review of Satisfactory Academic Progress at [Satisfactory Academic Progress and Review of SOM Graduate Students](#)

In addition, students must meet the following Master's in Genetic Counseling Program standards:

- 1) Students must maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of ≥ 3.00 . If a student's cumulative GPA drops below 3.0, the student has one semester to restore the GPA to ≥ 3.0 . Failure to restore the GPA represents lack of satisfactory academic progress and will result in program leadership discussing academic options with the Associate Dean of Graduate Education. Appropriate academic actions, including dismissal from the program, will be considered.
- 2) Students must exclusively receive a grade of A, B, C, Pass, or Satisfactory in all coursework. Under the Historical Repeat Policy of the VCU Graduate School, with program approval, a graduate student can apply the historical repeat policy for a didactic course in which a grade of C, D, or F is earned on the first attempt for a maximum of two graduate courses during the degree. The credits attempted and the grade points earned for all excluded historical repeats are not included in computing the cumulative and program GPA. A course can be taken as a historical repeat only once (if available) and the passing grade may be counted only once as credits presented toward all GPA calculations. Grades for all attempted courses remain on the student's permanent record. Students **may not** invoke the historical repeat policy for courses using the pass/fail (P/F), satisfactory/unsatisfactory/fail (S/U/F) or incomplete/fail (FI) grading system. Additionally, this policy cannot be used for courses in which an honor code violation grade has been assigned. A repeated course using the historical repeat policy must be completed within the approved period provided by the program and prior to graduation. The student should complete the graduate historical repeat course option form upon completion of the repeated course and prior to graduation. The program GPA will be adjusted at the end of the semester when the historical repeat form is processed. The form is available online at [Records and Registration Forms](#).
- 3) Students must successfully complete and receive a satisfactory (S) grade in all clinical training. Should a student receive a grade of unsatisfactory or fail in clinical training, then the student is subject to remediation. Failure to demonstrate satisfactory academic progress after remediation (receiving an unsatisfactory or fail), will result in program leadership discussing academic options with the Associate

Dean of Graduate Education. Appropriate academic actions, including dismissal from the program, will be considered.

- 4) Students must successfully complete a written comprehensive exam at the end of the first and second years of training. A grade of $\geq 70\%$ on the first-year comprehensive exam is required for matriculation into the second year. A grade of $\geq 70\%$ is required on the second-year comprehensive exam to be eligible for graduation. Failure to achieve $\geq 70\%$ on either comprehensive exam will result in remediation targeted to the student. If, after remediation, the student does not receive a grade of $\geq 70\%$ or higher, the student may be subject to dismissal from the program.
- 5) Students must successfully complete a capstone project and research seminar presentation of the project. A final digital copy of an accompanying written document, approved by the student's advisory committee, must be turned in to the program before graduation.
- 6) Students must successfully complete the oral exam administered by their research committee at the end of the second year of training. The research committee must vote to pass the student at the time of the oral exam. If a student fails the oral exam, the committee can decide whether they will request targeted remediation or will require the student to retake the oral exam. If a student fails the oral exam and remediation or the retake is unsuccessful, appropriate academic actions, including dismissal from the program, will be considered.
- 7) The genetic counseling program is expected to be completed within two years and cannot exceed six (6) years.
- 8) Students must practice in accordance with the [ACGC Practice Based Competencies](#).

Academic Dismissal and Appeal

Students who fail to meet and/or maintain the above academic and conduct standards are subject to VCU penalties and other disciplinary actions, including dismissal from the program. For more information about withdrawal, dismissal, and appeal processes, please see the following:

- [Dismissal from a Graduate Program and Appeal Process](#)
- [Termination of Enrollment and Appeal](#)

Leaves Of Absence/Discontinuation of Academic Study

The VCU MS in Genetic Counseling program follows the VCU School of Medicine and VCU Graduate School policies regarding the following:

- [Leave of Absence Policy](#)
- [Withdrawal Policy](#)
- [Withdrawal from a graduate program < Virginia Commonwealth University \(vcu.edu\)](#)

Evaluation of Student Progress

Leadership of the MS in Genetic Counseling program will conduct formal reviews of all students each semester in regard to academic, clinical, and research performance. The purpose of this review is to provide summative feedback to a student and ensure appropriate progression in meeting degree requirements. Three months prior to graduation, a formal review will occur to ensure that the student is meeting all degree requirements to graduate as planned. In addition to the procedures detailed above, formative assessment occurs throughout student training.

If a faculty member has reason to believe that a student is in violation of any of the student conduct of performance standards, action will be taken by the MS in Genetic Counseling program. Such action may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- 1) A Program faculty member will speak directly to the student as well as any other parties, such as program leadership, as appropriate.
- 2) Core Program faculty will be informed of the violations(s).
- 3) Program faculty will determine the steps necessary for the student to rectify or remediate the violations(s) or to terminate the student from the program. In the former case, faculty may discuss, as appropriate, additional coursework, referral to University Counseling Services, Division of Academic Success, or leave of absence. The student will receive written notification of the violation(s) and the plan to address the violation(s). In the event that a student is not terminated from the Program, a written plan of remediation detailing a plan of action and timeline for completion of the action plan will be formulated.
- 4) Disagreements about the resolution of any issue may be handled through the VCU Rules and Procedures guidelines for grievances. [Reporting Graduate Student Training Concerns](#)

Remediation

Students may be subject to remediation should they fail to meet minimum satisfactory progress requirements for academic, clinical rotation, or research. Please see satisfactory academic and clinical progress statement for additional details.

For forms related to remediation, please see the Academics Appendix.

Student Mediation

Should Mediation be required, VCU provides these services. These policies help protect students and faculty alike. <https://ombudsperson.vcu.edu/services/mediation/>

I have read and understand the above discussed academic and professional conduct standards.

Student Signature

Date

Satisfactory Academic and Clinical Progress

Satisfactory academic progress consists of maintaining a cumulative graduate GPA ≥ 3.0 , exclusively receiving grades of S in S/U/F coursework, passing any and all proposal, research and/or oral defenses, following all VCU/Graduate School/School of Medicine/Program guidelines, and meeting all program requirements in a timely fashion. Students are reviewed at multiple points throughout the graduate program, as well as at the end of each semester.

The MSGC program is a rigorous program requiring satisfactory progress in three areas: academics, clinical rotations, and research. Issues with meeting expectations in any of these areas may result in the need for formal remediation. The goal of the program is to graduate students with a solid foundation of knowledge who can successfully enter the field as a competent genetic counselor. Remediation is therefore not meant to be punitive but rather to ensure that students receive adequate mentoring and instruction to meet program requirements.

Academics

Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of ≥ 3.0 . Course instructors will identify students who are not mastering course concepts or who are performing poorly on assignments or exams. MSGC Program Leadership will be notified and appropriate remediation will be discussed with the faculty instructor. Either program leadership and/or the faculty instructor will meet with the student to create a plan for success. This remediation plan may involve additional coursework, faculty tutoring, referral to the Division for Academic Success, and/or referral to University Counseling Services. This written plan will be included in the students' file.

With the necessary program approval, a graduate student can apply the historical repeat policy for a didactic course in which a grade of C, D or F is earned on the first attempt for a maximum of two graduate courses during the degree. The credits attempted and the grade points earned for all excluded historical repeats are not included in computing the cumulative and program GPA. A course can be taken as a historical repeat only once (if available) and the passing grade may be counted only once as credits presented toward all GPA calculations. Grades for all attempted courses remain on the student's permanent record. Students may not invoke the historical repeat policy for courses using the pass/fail (P/F), satisfactory/unsatisfactory/fail (S/U/F) or incomplete/fail (FI) grading system. Additionally, this policy cannot be used for courses in which an honor code violation grade has been assigned.

A repeated course using the historical repeat policy must be completed within the approved period provided by the program and prior to graduation. The student should complete the graduate historical repeat course option form upon completion of the repeated course and prior to graduation. The program GPA will be adjusted at the end of the semester when the historical repeat form is processed. The form is available online at [Records and Registration Forms](#).

The written comprehensive exam is an assessment of the student's cumulative knowledge, administered at the end of the first year and prior to the oral defense in the second year. Failure to obtain a grade of ≥ 70 on the written comprehensive exam will result in the need for remediation. Program leadership will meet with the student and review content areas that need further evaluation. A remediation plan will be developed, which may include faculty tutoring and/or referral to appropriate support services. A date will be set by the student and program leadership for administration of a remediation exam. If the student successfully passes the remediation exam, he/she will continue as expected in the program. For first year comprehensive exams, a passing grade indicates the student can progress into the second year of the program. For second year comprehensive exams, a passing

grade indicates the student can then progress on to the oral defense, scheduled at a separate date. Failure to pass the remediation exam will require a meeting with program leadership to discuss additional academic solutions, including dismissal from the program.

Clinical Rotations

Successful completion of clinical rotations is crucial to a student's foundation as a competent genetic counselor. Students receive both formative and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation is provided after each patient encounter and at the end of a clinic. Summative evaluation is provided at mid-rotation and end of rotation for each student. In addition to student review with the lead clinical supervisor, program leadership reviews summative evaluations and meets with students as needed for further discussion. Program leadership is able to monitor supervisor feedback to students via weekly supervisor evaluation sheets, Typhon logs, and mid-rotation and final rotation evaluation forms.

Each student progresses at an individual pace through clinical training. Students are therefore not compared to each other but rather to expected performance levels appropriate to the level of training. When a student fails to demonstrate appropriate progress or fails to meet expected performance goals, program leadership will meet with clinical supervisors to discuss a plan for student success. The lead rotation supervisor and/or program leadership will then meet with the student to discuss remediation, which may include additional clinical exposure, additional mock counseling cases, altered clinical assignments, or additional written assignments to supplement clinical experience. A remediation plan will be agreed upon by the student and program leadership, and this plan will include clear time expectations by which improvement should be noted. Failure to meet the goals of the remediation plan will require another meeting with program leadership to discuss additional academic solutions. Ultimately, a student is expected to score a grade of "satisfactory" on every clinical rotation. If a student receives a score of "unsatisfactory" or "fail", a plan for remediation will be required. After remediation, if the student again receives a grade of unsatisfactory or fail, the student will meet with program leadership to discuss available academic solutions, including dismissal from the program.

Capstone Project

Students in the program are expected to complete a capstone project. While the research project is included in the course plan for each student for credit hours, grading is on a "Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory/Fail" scale. Students are expected to meet with their research advisor and committee on regular basis to establish mutually agreed upon goals and deadlines for the timely completion of the research project. Failure to meet these research expectations may result in a student receiving an unsatisfactory or failing grade. A remediation plan will then be developed in cooperation with the research advisor, student, and program leadership to ensure the student begins to meet research deadline expectations. Although the grade of U is not included in the calculation of the graduate GPA, students who receive one or more grades of U or F will be considered for remediation or possible dismissal.

Students are expected to defend their research to their committee in March/April of the second year. Students must answer committee member questions regarding their research satisfactorily. In addition, students will be expected to answer general genetics knowledge questions after presentation of the research. Failure to successfully answer either research-related or general knowledge-based questions may result in a vote of "fail" by the research committee on majority vote. In this case, students may be expected to repeat the oral defense. This remediation may include another presentation of research data, additional questions regarding general foundation knowledge, or written assignments. Students will be given clear expectations as to what will be required on

remediation and program leadership will be involved and consulted in an ongoing basis. Failure to pass the remediation will result in meeting with program leadership to review of potential academic solutions, including dismissal from the program.

Students should see the VCU Bulletin for additional [information](#).

Genetic Counseling Program Curriculum

2023-2024

1st Semester 1st Year

14 total required credits

HGEN 501	Introduction to Human Genetics	3cr
HGEN 525	Practice of Genetic Counseling	3cr
HGEN 615	Techniques in Genetic Counseling	3cr
HGEN 690	Genetics Research Seminar	1cr
HGEN 616	Cultural Diversity in Gen Counsel	1cr
OPVR 601	Scientific Integrity	1cr
HGEN 601	Research in Genetic Counseling	2cr
<i>Elective</i>	<i>Must be approved by Tahnee/Heather</i>	<i>1-3cr</i>

2nd Semester 1st Year

16 total required credits

ANAT 612	Human Embryology	2cr (January short course, starts 1/2/24)
PATH 609	Clinical Genomics	3cr
HGEN 526	Practice of Genetic Counseling	3cr
HGEN 690	Genetics Research Seminar	1cr
HGEN 600	Clinical Genetics (rotation)	3cr
HGEN 622	Cancer Genetic Counseling	3cr
HGEN 697	Directed Research	1cr
<i>Elective</i>	<i>Must be approved by Tahnee/Heather</i>	<i>1-3cr</i>

Summer

3 total required credits

HGEN 600	Clinical Genetics (rotation)	3cr
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1st Semester 2nd Year

13 total required credits

PATH 691	Special Topics Modern Instrumental Methods	2cr (short course, starts ~August 2024)
HGEN 527	Medical Genetics	3cr
HGEN 600	Clinical Genetics (rotation)	3cr
HGEN 697	Directed Research	3cr
HGEN 690	Genetics Research Seminar	1cr
HGEN 607	Processes in Genetic Counseling	1cr
<i>Elective</i>	<i>Must be approved by Tahnee/Heather</i>	<i>1-3cr</i>

2nd Semester 2nd Year

12 total required credits

HGEN 528	Medical Genetics	3cr
HGEN 690	Genetics Research Seminar	1cr
HGEN 697	Directed Research	4cr
HGEN 600	Clinical Genetics (rotation)	3cr
HGEN 608	Processes in Genetic Counseling	1cr
<i>Elective</i>	<i>Must be approved by Tahnee/Heather</i>	<i>1-3cr</i>

**** \geq 8 credit hours of research (HGEN 697) are required to graduate****

**** \geq 2 credit hours of electives are required to graduate (LEND classes fulfill requirement for these trainees)****

Total Program Credits \geq 60

First Year schedule, Fall 2023

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>11:00-11:50: HGEN 616 Diversity in GC</p> <hr/> <p>1:00-3:30: HGEN 615 Techniques of GC</p>	<p>10:00-11:20: Intro to Human Genetics HGEN 501</p> <p>12:00-12:50: Research Seminar HGEN 690</p> <hr/> <p>1-2:20: Practice of GC HGEN 525</p> <p>4pm-6:15 pm: OVPR 601 Scientific Integrity</p>	<p>9-10:20: HGEN 601 Research in GC</p> <p>11:00-12:00: Clinical Conference</p> <p>12:00-1:00: Noon Conference</p> <hr/>	<p>10:00-11:20: Intro to HG HGEN 501</p> <hr/> <p>1-2:2:0 Practice of GC HGEN 525</p>	<hr/>

First Year Schedule Spring 2024 (preliminary)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p>11-1:45: Practice of GC HGEN 525</p> <hr/> <p>2-3:50: Clinical Genomics HGEN 609</p>	<p>12:00-12:50: Research Seminar HGEN 690</p> <hr/>	<p>11:00-12:00: Clinical Conference</p> <p>12:00-1:00: Noon Conference</p> <hr/> <p>2-3:50: Cancer GC HGEN 622</p>	<hr/>	<hr/>

Genetic Counseling Comprehensive Examinations

Comprehensive exams are given at the end of the first year and early-mid March of the second year. The comprehensive exams are intended not only to assess the individual student's knowledge and synthesis of relevant topics, but also to assess the comprehensiveness of the genetic counseling curriculum.

The first-year exam is a four-hour exam generally composed of multiple-choice and matching questions.

- **The student must pass the first-year exam with a score of >70% to matriculate to the second year.**
- The first-year comprehensive exam tests students' knowledge from all academic courses (Practice of Genetic Counseling, Intro to Human Genetics, Techniques, Research, Diversity, Clinical Genomics, etc.) but also includes basic clinical information from conferences, rotations, etc.
- CALCULATORS ARE NOT ALLOWED FOR THIS EXAM.
- This exam is usually taken in mid-late May before summer rotations start.
- This exam is electronic and administered through Canvas.

The second-year exam is similarly structured but more comprehensive, including all coursework, clinical conferences, and standard clinical training. Students will have four hours to complete the multiple-choice and matching questions.

- The structure is designed to reflect the type and content of questions that you will encounter on your board exam.
- The second year written comprehensive exam is completed in early-mid March of your second year.
- An oral exam occurs later at the time of your defense of your capstone project.
- The written comprehensive exam must be successfully completed to take the oral exam.
- **You must pass both the written comprehensive exam and the oral exam during your capstone defense to be eligible to graduate.**
- CALCULATORS ARE NOT ALLOWED FOR THIS EXAM
- This exam is electronic and administered through Canvas.

Most students successfully complete their comprehensive exams on the first try. If a student does not successfully pass the exam, he/she is given another opportunity to demonstrate cumulative knowledge through individualized remediation. Please see the previous topics on remediation and academic progress.

Clinical Case Conference

Clinical Case Conference takes place each Wednesday from 11am-12pm. This meeting is to facilitate conversation about interesting cases among students, fellows, genetic counselors, and physicians. It is part of the expectations for HGEN 600, which is your clinical rotation.

During the academic year, Clinical Case Conference starts off with a quick quiz, such as with Kahoot, on one of the “100 Genetic Conditions to Know” included in this handbook. This quiz is facilitated by the Coordinator of the Week (COW). This quiz is intended to help students become more familiar with common genetic conditions throughout their training. It is anticipated that first years may not be able to answer questions initially, but as time goes by, and the foundation of knowledge grows, first years may be more readily able to answer questions. For second year students, this information can help shape improved study habits for Medical Genetics, comprehensive exams, and boards.

Following the quiz by the COW, case presentations from second years will be given. Typically, the second years will each give a verbal presentation discussing an interesting case in which they have been recently involved. The interesting aspects may be related to clinical or psychosocial specifics of the case. While not required, if relevant items need to be shown (pedigrees, test results, PowerPoint slides), please come prepared.

Clinical conference is a learning process. We strongly encourage students to present their cases with an emphasis on critical thinking for fellow learners. This means a student may focus on presenting information from a physical exam, review of systems, and family history and encouraging group participation to consider a diagnosis and appropriate testing before discussing the final impression and recommendations. Individual case presentations should last no more than 3-5 minutes. Following their presentation, faculty will often ask questions regarding the case, so be prepared to field questions and answer appropriately.

For those students not presenting, we urge you to use this time to look up terms and conditions with which you are unfamiliar. Feel free to take notes or bring Smiths or your computer to look up information.

Coordinator of the Week (COW)

The Coordinator of the Week (COW) is a role designed to help first year students become comfortable with presenting medical and scientific information to peers and faculty, as well as to expand their knowledge base on a variety of topics related to the field of genetic counseling and medical genetics.

Each week of the academic semesters (both fall and spring), a first-year genetic counseling student will be expected to take on the responsibilities of COW. **During the first week of classes in each semester, the first-year students will need to make a schedule allowing each student to participate as COW.** Each student should have about 3-4 weeks of COW responsibilities spaced throughout their first year.

During your week of COW during the fall semester, you will have two responsibilities.

1. Beginning on Monday of your designated week, you will be expected to help Aeman and Trisha coordinate clinics that week. They are on campus Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, but much of your work can also be done virtually. This can include arranging for referrals, obtaining medical records from referring physicians, calling patients prior to clinics to confirm their appointments, etc. While these tasks may not seem directly relevant to your learning process as a genetic counseling student, these processes are immensely helpful when you begin working in the “real clinic”. Knowing how the behind the scenes work of a clinic occurs provides graduates with a fundamental knowledge of the business side of healthcare and helps you begin to get comfortable with talking with patients and families. Plan to spend **NO MORE** than 2 hours during the week assisting in the week’s clinic coordination.
2. On Wednesday of your designated week, you will be expected to begin the clinical conference with a quiz on a common genetic condition/indication from the “Genetic Syndromes to Know” that you will encounter frequently both in training and as a practicing genetic counselor. Plan to ask ~5-10 questions relevant to your syndrome (you will need to do some research on your syndrome to ask questions!). These questions can be true/false, multiple choice, picture recognition, etc. Focus on important concepts to know about the condition rather than minutiae (e.g., don’t ask how many exons are in the *FGFR3* gene). Questions can be asked in a variety of ways. You can go old school and use PowerPoint or Word with questions and just ask for raised hands in the audience. Alternatively, you can Kahoot, TopHat (free for VCU students), Poll Everywhere, Google PearDeck, etc. We also ask that you present a one-page summary of the genetic condition that will be uploaded to a designated OneDrive folder for downloading by all students. By the end of the academic year, you will have summary sheets for two dozen or more different conditions! Be creative, have fun!

In the spring semester, you will have different clinical responsibilities with an assigned genetic counselor (information to be provided as part of your clinical rotation in spring of first year). For COW responsibilities in spring, you therefore do not complete hours with Aeman/Trisha, you complete those hours with your assigned GC.

You can expect to spend approximately 3 hours on the above responsibilities during the week that you are COW in both spring and fall.

**VCU Department of Human and Molecular Genetics Weekly Educational Series
AKA, Wednesday Noon Conferences**

All genetic counseling students are required to attend the weekly Wednesday noon meetings that are attended by the faculty and other learners working towards a degree in other health related fields. **Not all topics are strictly on the assigned Wednesday of the month listed below, so review the master list (color coded) carefully.**

First Wednesday of the month:

Genetic Counseling Case Conference: Generally, 2nd years present in fall semester, 1st years in spring semester. See schedule.

Second Wednesday of the month:

Visiting Speaker Rounds. A speaker from outside the department or outside of the university presents on a topic relevant to the field of genetic counseling.

Third Wednesday of the month:

Journal club. Generally, 2nd years generally present in the fall semester, 1st years in the spring semester. See schedule.

Fourth Wednesday of the month:

Laboratory/Metabolic case conference. See schedule.

Fifth Wednesday of the month: August 2023 and January 2024

Special Topics. See schedule.

These meetings are separate from the 11am clinical conference, held weekly from 11am until noon. All students are required to attend both clinical conference and noon conference unless they are in clinic or have notified Tahnee/Heather and Kaitlyn in advance about another scheduling conflict, such as clinical rotation.

A wide variety of departmental rounds, seminars and conferences take place on both VCU campuses. Students are strongly encouraged to look at online e-blasts and bulletins on at least a weekly basis and attend relevant meetings.

Genetic Counseling Case Conference
September 2023 – April 2024

The purpose of Genetic Counseling Case Conference is to highlight an interesting case you have participated in or observed in clinic. The interesting focus of the case could be a rare genetic diagnosis, a diagnostic odyssey, or psychosocial aspects that were challenging in the case. Each person is responsible for preparing a 15–20-minute presentation highlighting your case. Slides and/or handouts are expected to help contribute to your presentation. Plan to leave room for questions at the conclusion of your presentation.

Second years will present in the fall semester, second years in the spring. See schedule below. If you are unable to present at your assigned date/ time due to a clinic conflict, please arrange your own trade with someone else and notify Kaitlyn so she can update the schedule accordingly.

Month	Presenter
September	
October	
November	
December (MIXED WITH JOURNAL CLUB, SEE MASTER LIST)	
January	
February 7 and 28 (MIXED WITH JOURNAL CLUB)	
March	SPRING BREAK
April 5	

Journal Club

August 2023 – April 2024

The purpose of Journal Club is for students to gain familiarity with identifying, reviewing, and critiquing primary literature. Every journal club will have a theme and students will be asked to choose a journal article within the last 6-12 months that adheres to that theme. If you are unable to present at your assigned date/ time due to a clinic conflict, please arrange your own trade with someone else and notify Kaitlyn and Tahnee so they can update the schedule accordingly.

Presentations should be 15-20 minutes long and should include time for questions following your presentation. Slides are expected to help contribute to your presentation. For guidance on how to prepare and present for a journal club, please see [Step by Step Approach to Presenting at Journal Club](#).

PLEASE EMAIL YOUR ARTICLE BY MONDAY OF YOUR ASSIGNED WEEK TO ALL 1ST AND 2ND YEARS AND FACULTY FOR GREATER DISCUSSION AND INVOLVEMENT. For distribution list, please see Kaitlyn Paul.

The following is a list of journals that you can use for identifying your article of choice:

- Prenatal Diagnosis
- American Journal of Human Genetics
- Journal of Inherited Metabolic Disease
- Genetics in Medicine
- European Journal of Human Genetics
- American Journal of Medical Genetics Part A
- American Journal of Medical Genetics Part C
- Cancer Genetics
- Molecular Genetics and Metabolism
- Journal of Clinical Oncology
- Familial Cancer
- Journal of the National Cancer Institute
- Obstetrics and Gynecology
- Clinical Genetics
- Cancer Journal for Clinicians
- Journal of Genetic Counseling
- Journal of Medical Genetics
- Human Genetics
- American Journal of Obstetrics/Gynecology
- Pediatrics
- Journal of the American Medical Association
- New England Journal of Medicine

Note: In rare cases, you may wish to choose a journal not on the above list. Please be sure and reach out to Kaitlyn well in advance if you are looking at another journal. The above list has been curated to include the most commonly cited and important journals in the field of genetics/genetic counseling.

Month	Presenters	Theme
August		Therapeutics in Genetic Conditions
September		Supervising Students
October	NO MEETING	NSGC
November		Single Gene NIPT
December MIXED WITH CASE CONFERENCE		Metabolic Conditions
January MIXED WITH CASE CONFERENCE		Cancer Clinical Trials
February		Cancer Clinical Trials
March		Compassion Fatigue
April		Ethical Issues in Genetic Counseling

Laboratory/Metabolic Case Conference
September 2023 – April 2024

Laboratory/Metabolic rounds bring in experts from the Cytogenetics and Molecular Diagnostics Laboratories at VCU Health, as well as clinicians who specialize in inherited metabolic disease. If there is a particular topic you would like to see discussed in Laboratory/Metabolic Rounds, please notify Kaitlyn or Tahnee and she will pass it along to the speakers.

Date	Theme	Speaker
September	Metabolics	Amy Brooks, PhD, MS, CGC or designee
October	Molecular	Dr. Scott Turner or designee
November	Cytogenetics	Dr. Jackson-Cook or designee
January	Metabolics	Amy Brooks, PhD, MS, CGC
February	Molecular	Dr. Turner or designee
March	Cytogenetics	Dr. Jackson Cook or designee
April	Metabolics	Amy Brooks, PhD, MS, CGC or designee

Special Topics
2023-2024

Fifth Wednesdays this academic year: January and May

For the months that have 5th Wednesdays, we will discuss special topics. See below for schedule.

Date	Topic	Speakers
January	NSGC Presentations	
May	Genetics Jeopardy	

Clinical Rotations



CONFIDENTIALITY EXPECTATIONS (from VCU Health Code of Conduct)

We have a responsibility to deliver high quality and safe care. We are responsible for protecting patient medical information (sometimes referred to as protected health information or PHI). Patients should feel confident that we treat their sensitive medical information in accordance with federal and state privacy laws and regulations, specifically Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements and the 21st Century Cures Act. We do not tolerate breaches of confidential information and work proactively to safeguard patient information.

Our commitment to patient privacy extends to spoken, written and electronic formats. We will not access, use or disclose a patient's protected health information without the appropriate business reason (treatment, payment or healthcare operations). Protecting patient privacy is an individual commitment we must all make.

During your rotations at VCU Health, you may learn of or have access to confidential or proprietary information. Confidential and proprietary information of VCU Health are valuable assets. While you may have access, as it is related to your student responsibility, it should not be shared with others outside or internally with individuals who do not need to know the information. Confidential information includes information in any format, including in part written, electronic, verbal and other various types of media. Your obligation to safeguard this information continues even after employment here.

GUIDELINES

- All personal patient information should be kept private but generally, confidentiality pertains to information related to the patient's identity, physical or psychological condition (including tests, procedures, and outcomes), emotional status, and financial situation.
- Only discuss your patients with other health care workers who are also providing care to that same patient or who work on that unit.
- Do not share written or verbal information about a patient without first finding out if the individual asking for the information is authorized to have the information due to job duties or written consent from the patient. This includes not giving out information to the patient's family or friends.
- If the patient is a minor, written consent for release of information must be obtained from the parent or guardian.
- Do not discuss patient information or "stories" in the elevator, stairwells, waiting areas, lunchroom, etc. You never know who might be listening! Plus, VOICES carry!
- If you witness a breach of confidentiality, tell your supervisor.
- When discussing your patients in classroom activities, please use initials only and remove any information that could identify the patient such as medical record number, social security number, address, next of kin, etc. from documents.

QUESTIONS REGARDING CONFIDENTIALITY OR HIPAA

For questions related to confidentiality or the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), contact the Corporate Compliance office at 804-828-0500.

To report a HIPAA violation, call the Compliance Helpline at 1-800-620-1438.

Confidentiality Requirements for Genetic Counseling Students

- All physical patient records are to remain at Sanger Hall or the physical clinic location.
- Do not share EPIC or VCU Health Windows passwords, email passwords, long distance access codes, etc.
- Patient records should not be sent in “interoffice” envelopes or via campus mail.
- Patient records should never be placed on personal electronic devices (e.g. Smartphones or tablets) or laptop or desktop personal computers. Do not text PHI at any time.
- All electronic correspondence with patient information should be sent using your VCU Health Outlook email. VCU Mail (Gmail) does not have the same level of encryption that VCU Health uses to ensure patient confidentiality. Your VCU Health Outlook account provides access to OneDrive, which is a HIPAA compliant method of storing confidential information. Your access to Outlook and OneDrive ends upon your graduation.
- It is best to communicate patient messages and document progress notes in the appropriate electronic medical record system your clinical site is using. VCU Health uses EPIC.

Recommendations for Professional Attire (All Students)

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to encourage diversity, equity, and inclusion while promoting a professional image and fostering a positive work environment for VCU Health System team members. These guidelines apply to all settings of work and include team members who are working in person or remote. These expectations are in addition to any departmental uniform requirements and infection control risk measures. This policy is also to ensure the safety and security of all team members through proper identification in the health care work environment.

Responsibility:

This policy pertains to all team members providing services for or on behalf of VCU Health System (VCUHS) and all current or future acquired affiliate companies, including:

Guidelines

Clothing and Uniforms

The VCU Health System expects team members to present themselves at work and whenever the team member is representing VCU Health System in a professional environment (e.g., conference, seminar, career fairs) in attire and appearance that is professional, appropriate, and conducive to their job. Team members are expected to report to work free from excessive scents or body odor and to be well-groomed and neat in appearance. Hair shall be clean and worn in a manner so as not to interfere with job duties or present an infection control risk. Facial hair must be trimmed and clean and must be covered if an infection control risk exists. No offensive tattoos should be visible (e.g., profanity, violations of anti-discrimination policy, and nudity).

Examples of attire that managers may deem unacceptable IN CLINIC include, but are not limited to, the following: jeans; casual pants; t-shirts; jogging suits; sweat suits; workout attire; sportswear; beach wear; cut-offs; halter, midriff, or tank tops; shorts; very short skirts or dresses; jumpsuits; sheer clothing; and overly tight or revealing garments. Department managers/supervisors will make the final determination while considering the VCU Health System's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion as to whether attire is acceptable based on customer service contact, patient care and safety. Undergarments should be worn but should not be visible through fabric. Leg/foot coverings appropriate professional dress are essential according to departmental guidelines.

Accessories

Accessories such as jewelry, scarves, rings, etc. must be worn in moderation and should not pose a safety or infection control risk. Team members who wear religious head coverings can request disposable or medical scarves (i.e., hijabs, tichels, etc.) to comply with infection control risk measures. Piercings and jewelry should be worn in a manner consistent with safety and infection prevention practices based on the team member's role. Hats should not be worn while working unless they are a part of a VCUHS issued uniform or a religious or ethnic dress requirement. Sunglasses should not be worn while working unless

medically required. Non-business use of earphones is prohibited when providing customer services, including patient care. Shoes should be clean, intact, of correct size, appropriate to the work to be performed and consistent with departmental requirements. Shoes should be consistent with safety and infection prevention measures as guided by job role. Closed toe shoes are required in all patient care areas. Soles should be maintained to prevent slips and falls on tiled surfaces. Certain types of footwear, including, but not limited to, beach sandals, flip-flops, and spiked heels, are not allowed.

Personal protective attire and equipment must be worn as required for safe performance of job duties.

Identification Badges

Identification badges (ID badges), either temporary or permanent, must be worn at all times by team members while providing customer services, performing job duties, representing VCU Health System, or participating in an educational offering provided or sponsored by VCUHS. Temporary badges may be obtained from the Security Office if the badge office is closed. A fee will be assessed to the team member for badges not returned. Team members with more than one role at VCUHS must wear the ID badge that properly identifies the role they are currently performing. ID badges are to be displayed with picture side face out in clear view and worn in full view on the front and upper portion of the body above the waist. ID badge lanyards must be adjusted to comply with guidelines. ID badge information must be legible, and name presented according to departmental guidelines.

VCU GC students are expected to adhere to the above dress code standards at any time they may come into direct patient contact. This includes days when students are scheduled to be in clinic or are on-call.

VCU Genetic Counseling Clinical Rotation Overview

- VCU First Year Genetic Counseling Students may start observing clinics within the first weeks of the Fall Semester. VCU General and Cancer clinics are generally the easiest to observe as they do not have additional onboarding requirements.
- The first formal rotation will be spring semester of the first year.
- Students have a summer rotation. Over the summer you have 3 weeks of vacation that can be taken altogether or split up, at your convenience. You are not expected to answer emails or school correspondence during your summer vacation.
 - While the majority of students will remain on-site during the summer rotation, students who have a desire to travel to a non-VCU affiliated off-site rotation can choose to do so during this time. If you are interested in a non-VCU affiliated off-site rotation, please start planning **early** and discuss with Tahnee for approval.
- All students will have to travel to one or two VCU affiliated off-site rotations during the course of their training. Preferences on location will be taken into consideration but are not guaranteed.
- Faculty and Staff are not permitted to provide transportation for students on University Business in their personal vehicles. For more information, please see Appendix C.
- All students are expected to complete 2 of each type of rotation:
 - General Genetics, including Pediatric and Adult
 - Prenatal
 - Cancer
- Specialty clinic experiences will be available throughout the rotation experiences above. These specialty clinics may include, but are not limited to NF1 clinic, cardiology clinic, genetic ophthalmology clinic, bleeding disorders clinic, and metabolic clinic. Additional specialty clinics may be available at other rotation sites.
- Student Evaluations
 - The trainee will be evaluated verbally in an ongoing manner on individual cases.
 - Formal evaluations will occur at the midpoint and end of each rotation online in Typhon.
 - The mid-rotation evaluation serves as an initial checkpoint to identify strengths and areas which may need improvement.
 - The final evaluation is to be completed by each supervisor the student worked with during the rotation (or in some cases, a cumulative evaluation will be submitted with input from all supervisors involved). The student should reach out to the rotation lead supervisor to arrange this evaluation in person at the end of each rotation.
 - Trainees are encouraged to monitor their progress and discuss concerns with their clinical supervisors.
- Supervisor/Clinical Site Evaluations
 - We ask that each student complete an evaluation for each supervisor and each clinical site at the end of the rotation online in Typhon to enable improved experiences.
 - These evaluations are anonymous and cannot be linked back to the student completing the form. Supervisors and clinical sites receive this information in bulk after graduation of the second-year class.
- Inclement Weather
 - If VCU is closed, students are not required to attend clinical responsibilities.
 - Stay in touch with your assigned supervisor regarding inclement weather, cancellations, and attendance. VCU Health supervisors' cell phone numbers are included at the beginning of the handbook.

- You can find out about VCU closings at www.vcu.edu/alert or VCU-OPEN (828-6736). PLEASE NOTE, VCU CLOSINGS ARE NOT THE SAME AS VCUHS CLOSING—OFTEN THE ACADEMIC CAMPUS WILL CLOSE BUT THE HEALTH SYSTEM REMAINS OPEN.

For helpful resources including rotation overviews, see the Rotation Appendix.

For examples of both student and supervisor/clinical site evaluations, Sample Evaluation Appendix.

ACGC Clinical Training and Logbook Requirements

Fieldwork experiences must support the development of the practice-based competencies (PBCs) outlined by ACGC by integrating didactic and experiential training. Participatory cases refer to encounters with a client that support the development of the PBCs. “Client” can refer to individuals seen in a clinic setting; as standardized patients; or in certain research participant encounters.

Students’ participatory cases must include a minimum of 50 encounters. At least 40 of the 50 required participatory cases must be with individuals being evaluated for risk of or affected by diverse genetic conditions across the lifespan (i.e., patients; not individuals who are being consented to research; and not standardized patients). The 50 required participatory cases described above must be supervised by an experienced ABGC/ABMGG/CAGC certified genetic counselor. Participatory cases and other field experiences should be conducted across multiple specialties, including prenatal, pediatric, cancer, and other adult; in a variety of diverse settings that may include clinical, laboratory, research, industry, and/or other environments; and (3) using more than one service delivery mode, such as telephone, group, in-person, and/or telemedicine.

All participatory encounters (not just the minimum 50 required participatory cases) must be distributed across prenatal, pediatric, cancer, and other adult with no one specialty dominating and in a variety of diverse settings that may include clinical, laboratory, research, industry, and/or other environments. Cases should use more than one service delivery mode, such as telephone, group, in-person, and/or telemedicine.

Programs must use a flexible and graduated supervision plan where the level of supervision is commensurate with each student’s documented skills and competencies. A student in the early part of their training must be directly supervised at all times. After the student consistently achieves specific skills, the focus of direct supervision is expected to position the student to develop not-yet achieved or emerging skills. Programs are expected to monitor their supervisory protocols regularly and to protect students from taking on responsibilities they are not yet ready to handle or that are inappropriate for a student. The program is responsible for ensuring clients are not seen independently by a student who has not yet achieved the necessary skills to provide competent genetic counseling. Furthermore, the program must guard against students being used to compensate for inadequate genetic counselor staffing levels at given fieldwork training sites.

ACGC expects each program to determine how each student’s fieldwork training will be tracked (e.g., a traditional “logbook” format, portfolio format, etc.). This documentation must provide a complete picture of each student’s fieldwork training experiences. Documentation of fieldwork training must be maintained within each student’s record and include the entirety of the student’s fieldwork encounters, without client identifiers. These files must be available for review during site visits as part of the accreditation review process.

The collection of documents demonstrating each student’s ongoing fieldwork training must include:

- Fieldwork name
- Term and year of client encounter
- PBC(s) addressed
- The type of practice setting (e.g., clinical, laboratory, research, industry, other)
- The type of service delivery model (e.g., in person, telephone, telemedicine, group, other)
- The type of client (e.g., clinic patient, simulated patient, healthcare provider, research participant)

- Stage of lifecycle for the client (e.g., prenatal, pediatric, adult)
- The primary indication/diagnosis
- The fieldwork supervisor

ACGC revised the Standards of Accreditation in 2019, at which time they eliminated the delineation of fundamental clinical counseling roles, allowing programs and students more freedom in the determination of what is considered a logbook eligible case. VCU elected to continue to use the fundamental counseling roles, as listed below, for collection of clinical case involvement. By asking a student to complete at least one role in each of the 3 domains, a student is obtaining a great deal of broad experience across their training. When students first begin in rotations, they may only have one role in each domain, but as their experience progresses, students will often have multiple roles during any one individual case.

Fundamental Clinical Counseling Roles

a. Management Roles:

- **Case preparation** involves reviewing all relevant information about the client and the indication for genetic counseling prior to the session.
- **Collection/documentation of medical, developmental and/or pregnancy history** implies the eliciting of pertinent medical information including pregnancy, development and medical histories and environmental exposures.
- **Collection/documentation of family history/pedigree** involves the eliciting of information for and construction of a complete pedigree.
- **Risk assessment** involves pedigree analysis and evaluation of medical and laboratory data to determine recurrence/occurrence risks.
- **Evaluation/coordination of genetic testing** includes determining the appropriate genetic test(s), evaluating laboratories, and/or coordinating the testing.
- **Clinical documentation** (clinic notes, letters) implies writing clinic notes or letters about the appointment
- **Other follow-up** (calls, referrals) includes but not limited to conducting further literature review, maintaining contact with the family to address any additional concerns, or identification of other health care professionals or resources for patient care.

b. Education Roles

- **Develop** a counseling plan and agenda that includes pertinent education issues to address
- **Inheritance pattern** involves educating patients about modes of inheritance.
- **Risk counseling** involves educating patients about their personal and/or familial risks
- **Diagnosis/prognosis/natural history** includes conveying genetic, medical, and technical information about the diagnosis, etiology, natural history and prognosis of genetic conditions and/or birth defects.
- **Medical management/prevention/treatment** includes discussing current medical management, prevention, and treatment of genetic conditions and/or birth defects.
- **Genetic and/or prenatal testing options and possible results/benefits/limitations** includes explaining the technical and medical aspects of diagnostic and screening methods and reproductive options, including associated risks, benefits, and limitations.
- **Results disclosure** involves interpreting the results and discussing them with the patient; can include the development of teaching aids and the provision of

educational materials

- **Research options /consenting** involves discussion about research opportunities and/or consenting the patient for the study.

c. Counseling Roles

- **Establishing rapport/contracting** refers to initiating the genetic counseling session, eliciting client concerns and expectations and establishing the agenda.
- **Psychosocial assessment** includes eliciting and evaluating social and psychological histories and assessing clients' psychosocial needs.
- **Psychosocial support/counseling** involves providing short term, client-centered counseling, psychosocial support, and anticipatory guidance to the family as well as addressing client concerns.
- **Resource identification/referral** includes helping the client identify local, regional and national support groups and resources in the community.
- **Case processing/self-assessment/self-reflection:** involves critical thinking about the session; what was done successfully as well as areas to improve.

In order to enhance a student's acquisition of the PBCs, programs must ensure that fieldwork training for students is augmented with supplemental experiences such as, but not limited to:

- Observational experiences
- Fieldwork experiences with non-genetics providers (physicians, nurse practitioners, etc.)
- Cases seen with genetics professionals who are not certified by ABGC/CAGC or by the ABMGG, Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) in Medical Genetics and Genomics, or the Canadian College of Medical Geneticists (CCMG-CCGM) in Clinical (Medical) Genetics
- International fieldwork experiences
- Public health genetics-related activities and settings
- Experiences with genetic counselors that do participatory case standards, which may include, but are not limited to, variant interpretation; test development, implementation and performance; utilization management; customer liaison and support; sales and marketing; leadership and management; and case coordination
- Involvement with support groups and other advocacy organizations

Documentation

Students' clinical training/fieldwork experiences will be tracked online in a clinical tracking system called Typhon. **Typhon entries must be entered by students within 48 hours following the case.** The aggregate of these experiences provides a complete picture of each student's acquisition of skills and competencies over time, as well as insight into the richness and diversity of his or her clinical training experiences. Observational cases, as well as cases that include 1 or 2 counseling roles (and are therefore not countable towards core cases) should still be tracked in Typhon and documented as part of the student's clinical learning experience. Documentation of clinical training/fieldwork experiences must be maintained with the students' files and include the entirety of the students' clinical encounters, without any patient identifiers. These files must be available for review during site visits as part of the accreditation review process.

Typhon login instructions for students

1. You will receive an email from Tahnee via the Typhon group. This email will have the VCU GC Program account number (9245), URL, and your password.
2. You will come to the home page after logging in. There are four main sections: Case Log Management, Case Log Reports, Other activities and reports, and Information and setup.
3. First click on Modify Account Information. Here you can enter your address, phone number, etc.
4. Below “Your Account” is Downloads. Here you can download a pdf of a blank case log worksheet if you want to track things in writing during clinic. There is also a pdf you can download of case log procedures/skills.
5. The first category you will go to is “case log management”. This is the overall section that you will go to and enter all of your clinical cases. The first subcategory, add new case log, will allow you to enter a new case. You will have to enter the date of the clinical encounter. **YOU MUST ENTER YOUR CASES WITHIN 48 HOURS OF SEEING THE PATIENT.** Enter the date and click “save data”. You must always click save data or all info entered on the screen will be lost.
6. You will now come to the main screen where you enter your case information. At each line that has required information, there will be a red arrow. You cannot complete entry on a case for supervisor review without filling in all required fields. If you are missing data, Typhon will let you know what details are missing.
7. Some areas will be free text, while others have a drop-down box. The category “Other questions about this case” has free text fields, but these fields only allow up to 100 characters. These are not meant to be long narratives.
8. On the right side of the screen is the “Procedures/Skills” section. These are your logbook roles. Click on the boxes for the roles that you completed. Although the categories of “observed, assisted, or performed” are listed, **PLEASE ONLY CHECK OBSERVED OR PERFORMED.**
9. Below the procedures section is the Clinical Notes section. **This is where you must write more information of your self-assessment.** This should not be a reiteration of the testing you offered. This is a genuine self-reflection of how the session went, what went well, and what could be improved. It should not be pages long, but more lengthy than just short sentences. Click save data. You should now be returned to a screen where it will show whether you are missing any data. If not, click on “Go to main menu”. If you are missing details, click on the case number and it will return you to the case.
10. Click “go to main menu”. Under Other activities and reports” you will notice an exclamation point next to missing time log. You must create a time log for each clinic. You don’t have to create a time log for each individual appointment, but just for the total amount of time you were in clinic.
11. Click on “My Time logs” is the next category. Students have to document how long they spent in

clinic (e.g., 2 hours) and what time was spent doing face to face counseling, f/u, etc. You can either click “Add a time log” or you can click “Create” next to the missing time log for the clinical encounter you just entered. Some of the information will auto-populate. Click Continue. Enter the time information (to the best of your ability) and click save data.

12. It will now show in a list of your time log encounters.

13. The clinical supervisor you selected for each case will then be able to go in and approve your time log and approve each case, as well as make any comments. If the supervisor approves what you have documented, then he/she will mark the case as “approved” and the case will be locked. **You will not be able to edit a locked case.**

14. If the supervisor disagrees with something in the case, he/she will mark the case “NOT APPROVED”, and the case will come back to you as still pending until you address those concerns.

15. The supervisor is not given a reminder message that a student has completed a case log for approval, or that you have fixed an error on a case that was not approved. **IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STUDENT TO REMIND THE SUPERVISOR TO APPROVE CASES AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.**

16. In the Other activities section is the “My Portfolio” link. This allows you to customize a professional clinical portfolio that you can share with prospective employers to highlight your clinical training. You can access your portfolio in Typhon for up to 3 years after you graduate. See the online tutorial video on creating your portfolio for additional information.

17. Next in the Other Activities section is the My Evaluations and Surveys. Here you will be able to complete evaluations for your clinical supervisors and the clinical sites anonymously. The supervisors will not be able to identify who is doing the evaluation.

18. In this section will also be surveys that your supervisors have completed about you. For evaluations that supervisors have completed about you, click on them, and you will be able to enter comments.

19. Also in the Other Activities section, you can click on your schedule to see your clinical rotation placements for the academic year.

20. Finally, under Other Activities, you can also upload documents, such as mock letters, COW presentations, etc.

21. For any password or login issues, let Tahnee know.

Enrichment Experiences

The goal of the enrichment experiences is to provide the student additional opportunities for personal and professional advancement outside of the traditional clinical rotation setting. The enrichment experiences are designed to allow students to have exposures outside of a traditional genetics rotation in clinical settings where genetic counselors may function as part of the healthcare team and allow students to focus on a particular area of genetics and genetic counseling in which he/she has a particular interest.

In total, 4 enrichment experiences (approximately one each semester) are required before you graduate. The VCU metabolic enrichment rotation is optional and **should be coordinated with the general genetics supervisors to occur at the time of your VCU General Genetics rotation** (see information below). Some experiences will just be observing/participating in one clinic, and some will be longer. We encourage you to participate in one enrichment experience per semester. Although you are welcome to complete more enrichment opportunities, you are only required to turn in a written summary of four experiences. Examples of potential enrichment experiences are on the following page.

It is the student's responsibility to notify Tahnee or Heather in advance about dates/locations where you will be doing your enrichment experiences. Enrichment experiences are flexible and need not be one of the sites listed below. They can include experiences such as support group meetings, off-site non-VCU clinics, educational conferences, and lab rotations, etc. At the end of each experience, you will be expected to submit a 2-page summary of your enrichment experience. This summary should include information about the clinic or site you attended, whether you were an active participant or observing, and how this interaction was relevant to your training as a genetic counselor.

Note: The metabolic enrichment rotation does not require the 2-page summary described above.

If you had an incredibly rewarding experience at a site, let Tahnee and your fellow students know. If you encountered obstacles, you should also let Tahnee know to help improve the experience for students in the future. Remember--be creative and get the most out of your enrichment experiences!!

Metabolic Enrichment Rotation

As part of students' training, interested second year students may choose to complete a weeklong Metabolic Enrichment Rotation. The purpose of this enrichment experience is to give you more exposure to patients with inborn errors of metabolism and lysosomal storage diseases. This rotation can be completed during your General Genetics rotation at VCU and should be coordinated with the supervisors. If you choose to do this rotation while in another specialty rotation, please contact Amy.

Expectations include:

- Participate in Metabolic clinic: students will be responsible for prepping these patients and running these sessions. Metabolic clinic is currently every Thursday morning in person at CHoR or via telehealth.
- Do a mock counseling session with Amy focused on reporting an abnormal newborn screen.
- Be on-call for one day for lysosomal storage disorder and X-ALD newborn screens.
- Speak with the metabolic dietician about the job of a metabolic genetic dietitian.
- Produce a patient-friendly pamphlet on a metabolic condition of your choice. Amy will provide conditions to choose from and an example. Pamphlet will be due by the Wednesday following your weeklong enrichment rotation to Amy.
- Present one of the cases you saw in Metabolic clinic at the following week's clinical conference.
- Note: all activities above must be completed within one week.

VCU Genetic Counseling Program Student Assessment Forms



First Years' Check-in Form

First Year Students,

Frequent and open communication is key to ensuring our students feel supported. Each semester, program leadership will schedule a mid-point check-in with you. Prior to that check-in, we would like you to spend some time thinking about self-assessment and self-initiated learning. Please think about the areas listed below and share your thoughts regarding self-assessment in each. This form will be reviewed at your meeting.

Academic Performance:

Capstone Project:

Clinical Performance:

Mentoring/teaching:

Teamwork/Professionalism:

Emotional well-being?

Are there any other comments you would like to share?

New Second Years Spring Check-in Form

Rising Second Years students,

One year down and one year to go—it's gone by so quickly! You have learned a great deal this year and learn more daily. With the start of your second year, we would like you to spend some time thinking about self-assessment and self-initiated learning. Please think about the areas listed below and share your thoughts regarding self-assessment in each. This form will be reviewed at your meeting with a program leader at your fall check-in.

Academic Performance:

Project:

Clinical Performance:

Laboratory Rotations:

Comps:

Online Logbooks in Typhon:

Mentoring/teaching:

Teamwork/Professionalism:

Emotional well-being?

Are there any other comments you would like to share?

Second Years-Pre-Graduation Check-in

Graduating Second Years students,

You are almost finished! Look back proudly at how much you have learned and grown professionally. Student feedback is critical to program assessment and improvement. Please think about the areas listed below and share with me your thoughts regarding self-assessment in each. You will share this information in your pre-graduation check-in with a program leader.

Academic Performance:

Project:

Clinical Performance:

Laboratory Rotations:

Comps:

Online Logbooks in Typhon:

Mentoring/teaching:

Teamwork/Professionalism:

Emotional wellbeing/support?

Are there any other comments you would like to share?

Capstone Project



Capstone Project Guidelines

Master's Degree in Genetic Counseling

The MS Genetic Counseling degree program requires satisfactory completion of a capstone project. The purpose of the project is to give the student hands-on experience in:

- formulating a research question or problem;
- designing a study or project to address the problem; and
- systematically evaluating the results.

The project should enhance the student's professional development and represent a strong component of the student's portfolio.

In terms of scope and rigor, the capstone project is similar to a traditional master's thesis project. The Graduate School does **not** recognize this as a thesis, however. Thus, students have flexibility, with approval of their committee, in terms of the format of the final documentation and the project components. Students generally should follow all other requirements set by the Graduate School, such as providing information to GradTrak.

Academic Credit and Grading

Students earn a total of eight academic credits for effort on the project – one in the spring semester of the first year, one in the following summer session, and three credits each for the fall and spring semesters of the second year, through the HGEN 697 (Directed Research) course. For planning purposes each student should expect to devote at least six hours/week to their project during the summer and second year of training. This is an average time estimate, and it should be recognized that some projects will require more time.

Students earn either “S” (satisfactory) or “U” (unsatisfactory) for HGEN 697 each semester during which they are enrolled in the course. Please see the VCU Bulletin for more information about this grading system ([Grading and marking system \(vcu.edu\)](#)).

Project Scope

The capstone project may be classified as research or non-research.

Research-Related Capstone Projects

After settling on a project topic, the student and their advisor will determine whether the project will involve research, which is currently defined as: “A systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge”. See the VCU IRB website for guidance about what activities are considered “research”:

https://research.vcu.edu/human_research/activities.htm. Students pursuing a research project must complete the *Research Project Proposal Form*, found in the “VCU MS Genetic Counseling Handbook” and available in a shared OneDrive folder ([Research Project Proposal Form.docx](#)). This form must be approved by the student and their planned advisor and submitted to the Assistant Director of Research by **March 1st** of the 1st year (2nd semester) in the program.

Project Registration. Although not a requirement, before implementing research, we strongly encourage students to publicly register their research plans (e.g., Open Science Framework, <https://osf.io>).

Data Ownership and Publication. All data collected during the project is the intellectual property of VCU, which means that the data should be stored on a VCU computer/network or on other

approved secure media accessible to the student's advisor; de-identified data may be in the public domain as determined by the institutional review board (IRB).

We strongly encourage professional dissemination of research findings through scholarly outlets like scientific/professional society conferences and peer-reviewed publications. Typically, the student will be the first author on these publications. But, as research data is the intellectual property of VCU, if the student chooses not to publish their findings within one year of graduation, the student's research committee reserves the right to publish the research with the student invited to be a co-author as appropriate.

Non-Research Capstone Projects

Not all project endeavors meet the definition of "research". Student projects such as development of educational materials and quality-improvement activities may be of great value to the profession and/or the communities we serve, although they do not necessarily contribute to generalizable knowledge. Still, these projects are amenable to systematic rigorous processes, formal evaluation, and written description. Students choosing this type of project must complete the *Non-Research Proposal Form*, found in the "VCU MS Genetic Counseling Handbook" and available in a shared OneDrive folder ([Non-Research Project Proposal Form.docx](#)).

Advisory Committee

The student will choose an advisor and advisory committee to lend expertise to their chosen topic. Detailed information about advisory committee make up and responsibilities can be found in the "Guide for Committees" document in the "VCU MS Genetic Counseling Handbook" and in a shared OneDrive folder ([Guide for Committees.docx](#)).

All proposed committee members, including the advisor, must be submitted by the student in GradTrak for approval by the Program Director in the summer between 1st and 2nd year.

At minimum the full committee should meet twice prior to the final oral examination; one full committee meeting must occur before December 31st of the 2nd year of training, and a second full committee meeting must occur before the student's oral examination. Individual meetings between the student and their advisor will typically be much more frequent (e.g., weekly) to ensure adequate progress on the project.

Completion Requirements

The project is expected to be completed, including successful defense of the project during the oral examination and approval of the written document, by the end of the second year. In the event of the project not being complete by the end of the second year, the student may be required to extend their training until the project has been completed.

Additional Requirements and Tips

Please refer to the "Guide for Committees" document in the "VCU MS Genetic Counseling Handbook" and in a OneDrive Folder ([Guide for Committees.docx](#)) for additional information, including a suggested timeline and details about the oral exam and final written document.

Other Helpful Resources for Research Projects

- For a list Other Research Related Documents, please see Capstone Project Appendix.
 - List of Research projects by year
 - Guidance on Exempt vs. Expedited Category Guidance according to the IRB
 - Guidance on writing a manuscript for submission
 - Instructions on how to schedule your final oral defense of your research project