

Follow-up Q&A

THE ONLY CONSTANT IS CHANGE: AN OVERVIEW OF THE EVOLUTION OF GENETIC COUNSELING TRAINING IN NORTH AMERICA

Live webinar date: October 13, 2021, 1:00 pm ET/12:00 pm CT/11:00 am MT/10:00 am PT

Speakers:

Dawn Allain, MS, CGC – ACGC

Amanda Bergner, MS, CGC – AGCPD

During the interview or after the interview, do applicants get a good feel whether the program they interviewed would list them on the program rank???

It depends on the program, some will let all applicants know whether or not they will be ranked. Others let all applicants know that they won't be informing anyone about whether or not they will be ranked.

Do the programs pay the Match program to use its service?

NMS does charge a fee to AGCPD each year to administer the Match. Programs do not pay to register in the Match.

does that mean that our personal statement can't say things like "This school is my number one choice"?

At the point of submitting a personal statement it is fine to make a comment about a particular school being a top (or number one) choice. If you go on to interview at the program and are creating your rank list, at that point you will want to refrain from saying to the program "I intend to rank your program 1st on my list."

Are we able to know which schools were not filled through match in the past?

A list of unfilled positions each year is made available only to unmatched applicants in the post-Match period.

If a scholarship track is ranked highly by the prospective student and they have the nonscholarship track ranked low, but they are only ranked by the program as non-scholarship - would the student miss out on that program?

It's possible, it depends more on where the program ranks the applicant. If the applicant is ranked highly on the non-scholarship track, they could get matched at that program even if they rank that track lower on their list.

Does the matching website have data broken down by demographic and other diversity characteristics and rates of matching?

Yes that data is on the NMS site. Questions asked of applicants have changed over the past 4 years so not all categories available now have been available each prior year. This might make it a little harder to compare across the years of data available at this point.

You mentioned the number of programs that a student needs to interview at in order to be most likely to match with a program. Do you know the number of programs that a student needs to apply to in order to be likely to get that number of interviews? In other words, what percentage of students that apply to a program are offered interviews?

This likely depends more on the quality of the application. Some applicants receive an invitation to interview at each program to which they apply, and other applicants may only receive 1-2 invitations to interview. Each program has a different percentage of students who apply that are offered interviews, you might check with the program(s) in which you are interested.

How are unmatched students made aware of potential spots still available at programs who did not fill their available spots

Unmatched applicants have access to a list of programs who have unfilled positions starting at noon on Match Day so they can begin to contact those programs if they might be interested in being considered for one of those open positions.

More of a comment, but I worry that unless the ABGC exam is equitable for diverse students, programs will be less willing to take a risk on diverse applicants with the pass rate remediation requirements. But we need more diverse students admitted.

ACGC acknowledges this risk and genuinely hopes that programs will not use this as a reason not to diversify their cohorts. Given concerns related to small class sizes and the potential of examination bias adversely affecting graduates of diverse backgrounds, ACGC chose to look at a three year time frame. If a program has cohorts of graduates who are consistently not passing the board examination, then concern must be raised as to whether this is due to a curriculum quality issue. This is why ACGC monitors board pass rates and requires programs to assess their curriculum to determine whether the lower pass rate is related to curriculum gaps and develop a plan to address any gaps that are identified. Additionally, tracking and publishing the institutions' board examination pass rates is a Standard for Accreditation by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), an organization which ACGC is seeking to become recognized by.

Applicants are having a hard time getting GC shadowing experience due to COVID. What is program's expectations for applicants to have had shadowing experience?

Many programs have waived shadowing experience (even before COVID pandemic). Some programs are encouraging applicants to watch the Master Counselor Videos, attend virtual admission webinars, or virtual "about the profession" events, and set up informational interviews with genetic counselors.

What have been some of the draw backs of online only model, if any?

Great question, this might be better answered by some of the programs who are functioning as online only/remote programs (Boise State, BayPath) since they have more longitudinal data as the rest of us have been transitioning back to in-person/hybrid.

What is being done by the accrediting organizations to ensure that there are enough quality clinical training slots for the students?

ACGC requires programs to provide documentation related to the depth and breadth of fieldwork placements that their institution will utilize along with executed affiliation agreements. Programs must provide a fieldwork placement plan for two cohorts of students each year at the time of the Report of Current Status. ACGC then uses the peer-review process to determine if the quality of the fieldwork placements meets the Standards of Accreditation.

So...notwithstanding COVID, I have been concerned about the rapid expansion of the genetic counseling programs for a couple of reasons 1. We get constant requests from programs to take students into our clinics for instruction...giving the impression at least that there are not enough clinical opportunities to adequately serve the students. 2. We have declined to take some of these students after reviewing their previous clinical experience, as we did not feel that it was adequate to meet what would be needed to prepare the student sufficiently by their graduation date and did not want to be responsible for 'remediation' of the student.

When a candidacy, new program, reaccreditation, or report of current status application is submitted to ACGC, the program's fieldwork placements are evaluated against the Standards of Accreditation. Thus, our peer reviewers, evaluate the depth and breadth of fieldwork placements opportunities and determine if the quality, types, and quantity of fieldwork opportunities meet the Standards of Accreditation. If a program is working with another organization to develop a fieldwork opportunity for one of their learners, that process is done at the program and external placement site level and not regulated by ACGC. As such, it is at the discretion of the fieldwork site to make decisions regarding accepting students for fieldwork rotations based upon what ever information they require to render that decision.

how are we expected to evaluate a graduate student on a PBC that they don't have any experience with, like the supervision PBC?

Practice Based Competencies can be assessed in a number of different ways, not just through participation in fieldwork placements. The PBC related to supervision states: "Understand the methods, roles and responsibilities of the process of clinical supervision of trainees." As such, programs could design learning activities related to supervision (e.g. 2nd year students providing feedback on standardized patient encounters, readings and case-based discussion on supervision, role-plays), so students can learn and apply the skills. Then assessments could be done via self-reflections, examination questions, standardized patient encounters, or other assessment methods to demonstrate acquisition of this competency.

any comments about upcoming programs wanting to offer a degree in faith and genetic counseling where abortion cannot be offered by that GC?

Any program wishing to be accredited by ACGC must first submit an application for candidacy status. At that time, their application would be evaluated to assess whether the program is compliant with some of the critical standards from Section A and B of the Standards of Accreditation using ACGC's peer-review process. Once a candidacy application is approved, they would then be invited to submit a full new program application and undergo a comprehensive review process to determine whether the program is compliant with ACGC Standards of Accreditation before the ACGC Board can render an accreditation decision.