

# FAQs

about

## COUNSELING & GUIDANCE MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM

at the University of Hawaii

January 2005

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**1. What is “Counseling”?**

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*Counseling* can be defined as “a relatively short-term, interpersonal, theory-based process of helping persons who are basically psychologically healthy resolve developmental and situational problems. Counseling activities are guided by ethical and legal standards and go through distinct stages from initiation to termination. Personal, social, vocational, and educational matters are all areas of concern; and the profession encompasses a number of subspecialties.”

From *Counseling: A Comprehensive Profession (third edition)*,  
by Samuel T. Gladding. Merrill-Prentice Hall, 1996, p. 8.

**2. Is the counseling program at UH accredited?**

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There are three specializations available in the program. The Rehabilitation Counseling Program is accredited by the Council for Rehabilitation Counseling. The School Counseling Program meets the requirements of the Hawaii State Department of Education and has been accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). The Community Services Counseling specialty recently received accreditation from the same agency (CACREP). Ours is the only accredited counselor education program in the State of Hawaii.

**3. How does the UH counseling program compare with similar programs on the Mainland?**

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It compares favorably on at several grounds. 1. At UH, the Counseling and Guidance master's degree program requires a considerably greater number of hours spent in internship activities than most programs on the mainland. The CACREP accredited programs prescribe a minimum of 45 semester hours in any of the specialties, while at UH, the sequence in School as well as Community counseling is 60 semester-hours long, the increase being mostly in the internship.

2. Our program benefits by being situated in a state with very diverse population, thus enabling the teaching and learning to take advantage of that natural situation. The multicultural considerations are strongly incorporated into all program courses and activities.

3. There are many counseling programs available at US universities and colleges, but only a few are CACREP accredited.

**4. For what kind of jobs and positions does the program train its students?**

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As in almost every profession, the jobs, positions, and challenges are equally present in the counseling profession, and therefore in the educational process of its aspiring members. Vocational guidance is not the only task of the school counselors; often, they are expected to help students cope with the problems of drug or substance abuse, with the less-than-perfect home situations, and with attempting to prevent violence or assisting its victims, among other needs. Counselors in community settings perform tasks peculiar to the environment in which they are situated, such as care facilities, social agencies, church-run centers, detoxication facilities, homeless shelters, and even in large industrial and commercial enterprises. The diversity of the purposes of these settings indicate the diversity of problems and issues with which community counselors must deal. Rehabilitation counselors have as their task almost anything which faces people with one or another disability, and sometime multiple disabilities or physical or mental impairments.

**5. What type of baccalaureate degree does the program require or recommend?**

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Many prospective counseling students have undergraduate degrees in psychology, sociology, or education. Usually, the type of undergraduate major does not matter, though some counseling programs might “prefer” to see on the transcripts a few psychology courses. Many, though not all, states require a teaching certificate in order to be a school counselor. Whether it is required or not, it may be an advantage for school counselors to have an undergraduate degree in education.

**6. Are there any courses required as prerequisites?**

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There is only one pre-requisite for the degree program – a course in *Introduction to Statistics*, either EDEP 429 or equivalent. While the department prefers for a student to have such a course evidenced on his/her transcript at application time, the requirement becomes actually a co-requisite as it has to be taken within the first year of the student's program.

**7. What constitutes an "equivalent" substitute for the prerequisite course listed in the catalog, and how can a student request that it be accepted by the program?**

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Equivalency of courses from other departments and/or institutions may be approved by the Department Chair on a case-by-case basis. Requests for substitutions should be made in writing to the Department Chair during the student's first semester as a classified EDCG major. Syllabus of the requested course will be necessary to judge the equivalency.

**8. Should the prerequisite course be taken for Credit/No Credit (CR/NC)?**

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This depends on the individual's situation. If individuals have not been accepted into the program and are attempting to enhance their GPA then it may be best to take the prerequisite course for a "good" grade. Other individuals could take the courses CR/NC if they believe that their GPAs are high and don't need to be enhanced. Many classified students take the prerequisite course CR/NC to make course load less stressful. Classified students who take only the prerequisite course in their first semester as classified Counseling & Guidance majors should not take the course CR/NC. CR/NC courses do not compute in the GPA, which would mean that the student would be placed on academic probation after the first semester even if the student received CR for the course.

**9. What tests are required for admission to the program?**

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All applicants must have the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) with scores not older than five (5) years. Because the Writing Skills section (now required) had not been a part of the GRE until recently, a writing example (a class paper, an article, or such) needs to be submitted in evidence of applicant's writing ability.

International students from countries where English is not a language of instruction at higher education institutions need to take the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language test (TOEFL) which includes a writing section. Desirable (minimal) scores for both the GRE and TOEFL are described in the *Program Information for Prospective Applicants* document on the departmental website.

**10. Can the requirement of the GRE be waived?**

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Categorically no. It is a requirement of all applicants, including international students.

**11. If the GPA is below 3.0 (on a 4.0 scale) or is not available, how is the application evaluated?**

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It depends on how far below 3.0 the GPA is. GPA of 2.9 is too close to 3.0 to be rejected outright, but one has to keep in mind the 3.0 is a minimal GPA for regular admission. GPA of 2.7 is the lowest one the Graduate Division would entertain as a possibility for conditional admission.

Unless the applicant's dossier includes items, which would counterbalance the below-par GPA, the Admission Committee probably would pass over the application.

GPAs are not available from institutions with non-standard grading. Application with unavailable GPA will need to be evaluated on the basis of other evidence of academic performance used by the institution with non-standard grading.

**12. What is the ratio of admissions to applications?**

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The ratio of admissions to applications has been consistently between 1 to 4 and 1 to 6, indicating that there is a surplus of strong candidates for the few openings the program has each year.

**13. Can the program be completed by attending only summer classes or by enrolling in online courses?**

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No, for varied reasons: in the first place, not every course can be taught effectively in just 3 to 6 weeks, when classes meet on almost daily basis. Such a schedule does not provide enough time for students to study, reflect, and prepare for the next session. Secondly, only a very few EDCG courses lend themselves to online or other distance education modes.

A few of our counseling courses, however, are technology-advanced, particularly through two-way video or by utilizing course management system of WebCT.

**14. Can the programs be completed by attending only late afternoon, evening, or weekend classes?**

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No, it is not possible, though some of the courses may be available in late-afternoon or early-evening classes. There are not enough classrooms and other facilities to offer all courses during the late afternoons. Students in either counseling specialty will need to be able to spend between 1 - 3 days (day-time hours) at practicum and internship sites for appropriate experiences. The seminar portions of these classes are therefore offered in late afternoons. In order to balance the scheduling, other (mostly non-clinical) classes are by necessity offered during the day-time hours, or occasionally in the 7 to 9:45 pm time slots, so careful planning is absolutely necessary. Part-time students, therefore, will benefit most from the more dependable scheduling made possible under the once-a-year admission procedure, as it may allow students to negotiate flexible hours in their outside employment situations. Most Summer Session classes are held during the day; only very few classes are offered in late afternoon and evening hours.

**15. Is all coursework for the Counseling and Guidance degree preset, or can the program be individualized?**

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Each specialization requires completion of 60 semester credit hours, but the number of true electives differs among specialties. School counseling allows, at present, five (5) courses to be chosen from a list of elective within and outside of the Counseling and Guidance program. Community counselors in training have only one (1) course available as an elective. The Rehabilitation counseling consists only of specific EDCG courses, and does not allow any electives within the 60-semester credit requirement.

**16. What is the policy on transferring course credits from other institutions?**

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Occasionally, a new student may have taken graduate course(s) in similar counselor education programs at other accredited universities. The Graduate Chair must approve the applicability of the courses to the program. Generally, **core** courses may not be substituted or transferred. Courses considered transferable should be identified as to which specific EdCG courses are to be substituted; therefore, the transferred and substituted courses must be equivalent in both level and content. A one-time written request of course transfers should be initiated by students in their first semester. Documentation regarding the courses requested to be transferred must be provided by the student to the satisfaction of the specialty and of the Graduate Chair.

**17. Is online coursework transferable?**

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Yes, provided it meets all the criteria mentioned in item #16: the course must be fully equivalent of a specific EDCG course, the student must have earned an A or B grade, and the course was offered by an accredited institution.

**18. What types of courses may be used as electives?**

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Courses from the CE Department as well as other departments such as Special Education, Psychology, Social Work, Educational Psychology, and Public Health may be used as electives. Students should consult with their advisors relative to which courses would strengthen their program of studies.

**19. May courses be taken for grade “by examination”?**

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The university rules do not allow graduate level courses to be “challenged” and taken “by examination”. Furthermore, no graduate courses may be applied to a degree program if taken for Credit/No Credit (the UH version of the Pass/Fail system).

**20. What time are classes offered?**

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During the Fall and Spring semesters, the Counseling and Guidance classes are generally offered from 9:00 - 11:30 a.m., 1:00 - 3:45 p.m. or 4:30 - 7:00 p.m. once a week. Summer courses are usually offered during the mornings, early afternoons, and Saturdays, and their length depends on the number of days of instruction. Clinical courses (EdCG 703 Practicum and EdCG 733 and 734 Internships are scheduled in late afternoon as not to interfere with the clinical activities during the daytime hours. These courses are not offered during the summer.

**21. Are all courses offered every semester?**

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No! The adoption of the once-a-year admission policy (starting in 2005) allows the courses to be offered on a more regular and non-repetitive schedule. The progress of students will be more uniform, as each year’s cohort of full-time admittees will move at the same pace. Scheduling will become simpler for the department, and much more dependable and predictable for the students.

**22. How many years does a student have to complete the program, and graduate?**

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For the master's degree, students have seven (7) years. In very extenuating circumstances, students may petition for a one-semester extension, but the department must support the request.

**23. Does the prerequisite course need to be completed within the 7-year limit?**

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This question could be misleading. Theoretically, since the course is not part of the degree requirement, it does not need to be completed within the statute of limitations. But it is a program pre-requisite, and as such it could have been completed several semesters before applying to the program, but must be completed within one year of the start of classified status.

**24. How long does it typically take to complete the program?**

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No accurate records had been kept in the prior years. From Fall 2005, **this professional degree program will require minimally 2½ years (year-round) full-time enrollment**. In practice, that will mean full-time enrollment in 5 (five) regular semesters plus 2 (two) summer sessions. See next item for explanation of “full-time” status of counseling students. Students approved for additional specialization will take considerably longer to complete the requirements of their programs.

**25. Is full-time attendance required?**

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No, you can be in the program as a part-time student. As it will require 2 ½ years to complete the degree program (one specialty) with a normal full-time graduate load, it will take a part-time student considerably longer to graduate. It will actually depend on the availability of appropriate courses. The 7-year limit should be kept in mind. Scheduling of courses will be based on a full-time students’ needs (see Item 26).

**26. What is considered full-time status?**

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There are two ways to answer this question: institutional answer says that the number of credits needed for enrollment to be considered a full-time graduate student is eight (8); however, there are exceptions. For tuition purposes, 12 credits are considered a full-time load. If a student working on thesis has completed all requirements except for the thesis, he/she can take one (1) credit of 700 and be considered a full-time student.

The CE department's answer is less ambivalent: Full-time status is based on enrollment for 9 credits (usually three [3] courses) in each of the regular fall and spring semesters; academic load in the summer session is for 3 – 9 credits each session. Courses will be scheduled based on such a full-time schedule, so "speeding up" the program will not be easily attainable.

**27. How big a course load may a student carry in a semester?**

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The UH allows a student to take up to 15 semester hours for the fall and spring semesters and up to 9 semester hours per summer session, but such student loads are considered unreasonably heavy and are strongly discouraged. (There may not be enough appropriate courses scheduled to enable an ambitious students to take more than 9 credits.) The counseling program at UH is a demanding one, and the **appropriate load for graduate students is 9 credits** (usually 3 courses) each semester and during the two summer sessions for two years plus the remaining 6 or 9 credits in the subsequent semester.

**28. What grading system do the CE faculty members use?**

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The UH policy on grades is explained in the current UH Catalog (the 04-05 volume, p.31). The traditional grades of A, B, C, D, and F have been augmented by the +/- option, which is, however, only voluntary. Not all Counselor Education faculty use the +/- option. Grade of I (Incomplete) is given to students who fail to complete a small part of a semester's work before the semester grades are determined, if the instructor believes that the failure was caused by conditions beyond the student's control and not by carelessness and procrastination. All course syllabi must contain a section on student performance evaluation and grading.

**29. Are grades of "C" acceptable?**

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You will not be dismissed from the program as long as you maintain a 3.0 GPA, and do not receive a "C" in either a practicum or internship course. When students do not maintain a 3.0 GPA, they are placed on probation to raise their GPA to 3.0 in the subsequent semester. If the expected increase of the GPA does not occur, the student is dismissed from the program. Regardless of the student's GPA, a grade of C in either Practicum or an Internship course will result in student's dismissal from the program.

**30. Does a student need to be registered in a course during the semester of graduation?**

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If all requirements (including Plan B paper) of the program have been completed by commencement of a particular semester, students will not need to register for any credits in the following one; the advisor or department chair will need to inform the Graduate Division of such students' status, and they will be able to graduate that semester without taking additional credits. Graduation means that a person is no longer a student at the UHM, unless he/she will have been admitted to another program. However, if some requirements remain unfulfilled, students in Plan B will need to enroll at least in EdCG 500 for 1 credit, as UH resources (faculty to read the Plan B papers, or the like) will have to be utilized by the "delinquent" student. Students doing a thesis (Plan A) need to sign up for at least one credit of EDCG 700 during the semester that they are graduating regardless of whether they are enrolled in any other courses.

**31. What is “Advancement to candidacy”?**

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Students admitted to the Graduate Division as regular or conditional graduate students are prospective candidates for advanced degrees. As the first step toward an advanced degree, students must be officially advanced to candidacy. This step is defined by individual degree programs, but must be preceded by clearing the conditional admission status and all undergraduate deficiencies of the student.

**32. What does it take in the C&G program to be advanced to candidacy?**

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Students who have completed the prerequisite and 24 credits in EDCG courses, including the Practicum EDCG 703, will be considered for advancement to candidacy. It is recommended that students be advanced to candidacy before submitting Plan A or B proposals.

**33. Is it possible for a student to have an additional specialization?**

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Yes, it is possible. Students will need to take additional courses to satisfy the requirements of the second specialization. The additional work ranges from 27 to 39 credits, though a few courses may be double-counted, meaning they will not have to be repeated.

**34. How does a student add a specialization?**

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Students who had been advanced to candidacy may request admission to an additional specialization. Not more than one half of transferred courses could be included in the 24 credits needed before the request is made. The rationale for the request should be in writing to the Department Chair. Permission to work eventually on a new specialization will depend on student's satisfactory progress toward the degree as determined by the Admission and Retention Committee of the faculty.

**35. May students change specialization after being admitted to one program?**

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Yes - a request for the change should be made in writing to the Department Chair.

**36. Is there an organization of Counseling students, and how can it be contacted?**

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Yes, there is an informal student group, and its contact person is always listed in the “Contact Us” section of our website. There is also a formal organization, Eta Iota, the Hawaii chapter of the International Counseling Honor Society Chi Sigma Iota (CSI), which promotes scholarship, research, professionalism, leadership and excellence in counseling.

**37. Does a student need special equipment in the program courses?**

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Yes, one requirement is a computer with access to the Internet. It is inconceivable that an applicant would consider entering a graduate program without being able to own a computer, i.e., have continuous access to a computer. The platform does not matter; the computer's capability does. E-mail being the only reliable means of communication with the department, the lack of access could be almost fatal.

Another piece of technology used in counseling is the audio recorder. Both practicum and the internship courses have built-in expectations of audio recording capturing examples of student's interviews, and interaction with clients.

**38. Is departmental equipment available to students?**

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Yes, the department has a few video cameras, which the students may borrow for purpose of recording the visual aspects of counseling activities.

**39. Are there scholarships or assistantships available?** [Back to top](#)

To start with, it is necessary to distinguish between scholarships, tuition waivers and similar awards, which are direct grants to students, and teaching or research assistantships that are awarded for specific work to be performed by the recipient.

Furthermore, the source of the funds for either type of financial assistance determines whether it is available in this program. Scholarship monies most often come from private donors, and in that category, the College of Education (CoE) has been quite successful in recent years. The deadline is well publicized, but the applicants must be enrolled as majors in one of the many programs of the College and have a recommendation by one of the college faculty.

The current distribution of state-funded assistantships at the University of Hawaii provides only one (1) 1/2 position for Counselor Education. However, some outside grants allow such appointments. When available, these are also well publicized, and qualified applicants are selected on the basis of how well suited they are for a particular grant.

Tuition waivers are state-funded grants, of which the department has been allotted two in each of the last few years. The administration of the tuition waivers allows the waivers to be split and thus provide some financial help to four rather than just two CE majors. Because in Counselor Education, awards of tuition waivers are based primarily on academic merit, only continuing students are eligible. Additionally, applicants also need to provide information on financial need.

Finally, there is the Financial Aid Office (956-7251, [www.hawaii.edu/fas](http://www.hawaii.edu/fas)) that administers campus-wide scholarships, grants, and loans, and the Student Employment and Cooperative Education Office (956-7007), which coordinates the Federal Work-Study program.

**40. What about housing on or off campus?** [Back to top](#)

The University of Hawaii has been functioning as a commuter college, not as a residential campus, though that may well change, if the current administration succeeds in bringing this ideas to fruition. For the time being, consult <http://www.housing.hawaii.edu/> for housing on campus, and <http://www.housing.hawaii.edu/och> for off-campus housing.

**41. What chance of admission is there for a foreign applicant?**

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Foreign applicants will go through the same admission process as U.S. applicants. However, the Admission Committee will expect to be provided with an explanation of what practical value a US degree in counseling will likely have for the graduate's counseling employment or practice upon his/her return to the home country.

**42. What chance of taking classes is there for an "unclassified" student at UH?**

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The matter of unclassified students is a complex one. The department will entertain requests from prospective applicants seeking to discover (through taking a CE class or two) what counseling entails and whether the field of counseling is right for them. Permission to register, however, will depend on availability of accommodation of "unclassifieds" in the appropriate class(es). There are only four (4) courses open for this purpose, and they may not be scheduled at the time the unclassified student may want to enroll; furthermore, there may be space limitations. Classified majors will always have priority of registration. (The "*Exploring*" the CE Program at UH document on this website provides additional information on this topic.)

**43. How does one become a "certified" school counselor?**

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To be certified as a school counselor, an individual must complete the master's degree in school counseling, and pass the National Counselor Examination for Licensure and Certification (NCE). In addition, non-tenured DOE teachers/personnel will need to satisfactorily complete the PRAXIS II, both the core battery and the specialty area in counseling. The results should be sent directly to the Hawaii State Department of Education from the Educational Testing Service. Information on the NCE may be obtained by accessing <http://www.nbcc.org/exams/nce.htm>.

**44. Will a graduate of school counseling specialty be able to be certified in other states?**

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In general, the answer is yes. There is some form of reciprocity with many states. However, states' certification requirements may be slightly different from one another, so you should check with the Department of Education in the states where you are interested in being certified. Some states require teaching experiences in public schools. One advantage of UH program is that school counselors are trained in K-12 environment, thus being employable in either elementary or secondary environment.

**45. How does one become certified as a rehabilitation counselor?**

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To be a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC), an individual must complete the master's degree in rehabilitation counseling, submit an application to the Counselor Certification Commission on Rehabilitation and satisfactorily complete the CRC exam. It is advantageous for rehabilitation counseling students to take the NCE (<http://www.nbcc.org/exams/nce.htm>).

**46. How does one become certified as a community services counselor?**

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To be certified as a community services counselor, an individual must complete the master's degree in school counseling, and pass the National Counselor Examination for Licensure and Certification (NCE) - <http://www.nbcc.org/exams/nce.htm>. With the appropriate master's degree and successful passing of the NCE, a person will then need to submit an application to the Hawaii State Licensing Board in order to be licensed in Hawaii as a Certified Counselor in Mental Health (CCMH).

**47. What happens to a student for whom the counseling program is not appropriate?**

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This is a rare occurrence but should a student be inappropriate for the program he/she will be referred to the Admissions and Retention Committee. The committee would then make a recommendation to the faculty. The chairperson will advise a student who has been terminated on other career options and programs.

**48. Is there a doctoral program in counseling available at UH?**

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No, and neither is there a graduate program in school psychology. Students need to go to one of the mainland universities for either degree.