

## Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

## MASTER OF GENETIC COUNSELLING

## Graduate Diploma in Genetic Counselling

**1 Background**

This proposal recommends the introduction of the Master of Genetic Counselling. The existing Graduate Diploma in Genetic Counselling will be nested as part of this pathway. The course content for the Graduate Diploma remains similar and forms the first year of the proposed Masters. The aim of the two year Masters is to fulfil the requirements for professional certification of genetic counsellors with the Board of Censors in Genetic Counselling, whilst increasing the research and clinical skills of the professional qualification.

The Master of Genetic Counselling is designed as a coursework program with core modules, clinical placements and supervised clinical research with a minor thesis. This is a 200 point Masters, full time over two years. The Graduate Diploma is 100 points, full time over one year. There will be 8 core subjects in each year. New subjects introduced are increased clinical placements in second year, and research modules in first and second year some selected from existing subjects through the School of Population Health. Students will be required to develop a dissertation from their clinical practice.

**2 Course/Program Objectives*****Graduate Diploma in Genetic Counselling*****Generic objectives:**

The Graduate Diploma in Genetic Counselling has been offered since 1996 and constitutes the current Australian professional qualification for entry into employment as a genetic counsellor. This program has been successful in attracting a high rate of well-qualified local, interstate and international applicants.

This course aims to provide the first part of the two part certification process for professional certification as a genetic counsellor and is the pre-requisite for obtaining employment in the field of genetic counselling. Once employed, there is a minimum two year certification process, during which time 20 long cases and a log book, are written up under supervision and submitted to the certification Board of Censors in Genetic Counselling.

Genetic counsellors work in a team, providing information about genetic conditions to enable people and families to make informed decisions and choices about their health and reproduction. They also may be involved in the areas of genetic screening, DNA and chromosome tests and prenatal testing. Teaching is by problem oriented tutorial approach using case examples with a small group of students. Learning is achieved by group discussion, individual research, group presentation and discussion with resource people.

**Specific objectives:**

It is expected that on completion of this course students will be able to:

- Identify with the professional goals, ethics and skills of the genetic counselling profession
- Establish a professional relationship with clients
- Communicate in an open, non-directive manner with families and people with genetic conditions
- Communicate clearly and understand the principles of genetic inheritance relevant to families and individuals in understanding their particular genetic condition
- Work effectively in a multi-disciplinary team, with an awareness of the roles of different professionals
- Relate to clients in a holistic manner, identifying the complex medical and psychosocial issues

that may confront people and their families who come for genetic counselling and make appropriate referrals to other professionals and to community resources

- Undertake administration tasks in co-ordination as appropriate within a genetics clinic

### ***Masters of Genetic Counselling (new course):***

#### **Generic objectives:**

The Masters in Genetic Counselling is designed to enable students to:

- Gain certification from the professional Board of Censors in Genetic Counselling (Human Genetics Society of Australasia) to practice as a professional genetic counsellor in Australasia
- Learn the scope of practice and models of practice of genetic counselling through taught theory, relevant literature, and supervised clinical placements in order to practice genetic counselling in Australia and internationally
- Learn the relevant core concepts of genetics as applied to the practice of genetic counselling
- Reflect on the ethical and personal implications of knowledge taught, to develop self awareness
- Develop the skills to formulate research projects within a clinical genetics setting
- Develop skills to communicate genetic information effectively within a genetics consultation, understanding the relevance of culture and psychosocial indicators consistent with their professional code of ethics
- Develop skills to work effectively in a multidisciplinary professional team and to understand the scope of practice and models of practice of the profession of genetic counselling
- Understand the theories and principles of counselling and to be able to effectively use these within a genetic consultation to enable decision making and the transfer of relevant genetic information
- Understand the relevance of community resources
- Understand the rationale and principles of genetic predictive testing programs, and community access to these programs

#### **Specific objectives:**

##### Research and Evaluation Skills:

- Develop skills of research methodology from the Graduate Diploma to effectively implement original supervised clinical research
- Understand the ethics committee process and develop an ethics proposal
- Undertake a critical literature review relevant to a particular topic of research
- Develop original research arising from clinical practice
- Present findings from an original research project at a professional forum
- Understand the principles of qualitative research, including research design and process in an ethical framework OR
- Understand biostatistical concepts and methods and their application in the assessment and management of health conditions OR
- Develop an understanding of the nature and purposes of health program evaluation

##### Critical Reflection and Cognition Skills

- Develop counselling skills through application of models of practice, in supervised clinical placements
- Critically evaluate different models of practice through theory, observation and participation in genetic counselling interviews
- Respect differences in cultural, religious and socioeconomic beliefs in clients, through developing a critical understanding of difference through the literature and personal contact with clients
- Develop self-awareness through reflection and active participation in the process of supervision

### Communication Skills

- Analyse the genetic counselling process and the impact on families from a cultural, ethical and psychosocial perspective
- Understand and critically analyse the process of transference and counter transference in an interview
- Critically analyse the process of communication

### Ethical skills

- Understand the ethical principles that guide and inform genetic counselling practice
- Consider personal, cultural and moral values which may impact on the individual practice of genetic counselling
- Recognise the ethical challenges that may confront clients
- Understand and identify the potential for ethical challenges in emerging new genetic technologies
- Identify possible challenges to facilitating informed consent and maintaining patient confidentiality

### Genetic skills

The curriculum is based on the genetic knowledge requirements of the Human Genetics Society of Australasia Board of Censors for Genetic Counselling, which governs the certification of genetic counsellors in Australia. In year one basic biological and genetic concepts, and genetic disease concepts will be taught via a combination of didactic and problem based learning (PBL) methods. Various human genetic conditions will be discussed to illustrate concepts. PBL will be used to facilitate the sharing of information between students and to support the development of group work-which models the work of a genetic counsellor, who works as part of a multidisciplinary team.

- Understand the principles of inheritance
- Understand chromosomal disorders and the genetic basis of disease
- Understand clinical genetic risk assessments for patients and families
- Elicit and document a family history and family pedigree, convey genetic information and discuss risk
- Understand the normal stages of human embryo development and have an awareness of how this can be disrupted
- Understand the role of genetics as the underlying cause of various disorders of the human body
- Understand the role of genetics in cancer
- Have an appreciation for the range of molecular, cytogenetic and biochemical laboratory tests utilised in clinical genetic practice
- Understand the genetic testing approach taken for specific genetic disorders
- Understand the treatment approach taken for specific genetic disorders
- Understand the issues relating to population based screening
- Understand the role of prenatal screening and testing in pregnancy management and care, and the options available when fetal abnormality is detected
- Understand the organisational and economic aspects of health care in Australia
- Understand the role of the genetic counsellor in the context of the multidisciplinary approach to clinical genetic health care
- Understand the principles of the legal and professional duties and responsibilities of genetic counsellors as health professionals and members of a health care team

### **3 Entry Requirements**

Recommended separately by Academic Board.

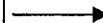
### **4 Course/Program Structure**

Full time students 200 Credit points

<b>SEMESTER ONE 50cp</b>
Students complete four core subjects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling Skills 1 (12.5cp)</li> <li>• Health Communication Skills 1 (12.5cp)</li> <li>• Research Methodology (505-948) (12.5cp)</li> <li>• Human Genetics and Genetic Counselling (12.5cp)</li> </ul>

<b>SEMESTER TWO 50cp</b>
Students complete three core subjects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genetic Counselling in the Community (12.5cp)</li> <li>• Health Communication Skills 2 (12.5cp)</li> <li>• Clinical Genetics (25 points)</li> </ul>

**EXIT POINT**  
Graduate  
Diploma in  
Genetic  
Counselling  
– 100cp



<b>SEMESTER THREE AND SEMESTER FOUR 100cp</b>
Students complete three core subjects over two semesters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical Practice (50cp)</li> <li>• Genetic Counselling Practice (12.5cp)</li> <li>• Research (37.5cp in total) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Semester 3 (note 505-921 held in summer school) <p><i>One of 505-921, 505-969, 505-509 depending on the scope of the project. (12.5cp total)</i></p> <p>Qualitative Project: 505-921 <i>Principles of research design</i></p> <p>Quantitative Project: 505-969 <i>Epidemiology &amp; Analytic Methods 1</i></p> <p>Program Evaluation: 505-509 <i>Health Program Evaluation 1</i></p> </li> <li>- Semester 3 and 4 <p><i>Ethics approval, data collection, data analysis, writing thesis, presentation of results (25cp)</i></p> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**EXIT POINT**  
Master of  
Genetic  
Counselling  
– 200cp



**5 Availability of Course**

The course is available full-time and part-time to CSP students, and to Australian and international fee-paying students, from 2008.