



AAQEP Annual Report for 2024

Provider/Program Name:	University of the Virgin Islands/School Counseling Program
End Date of Current AAQEP Accreditation Term (or “n/a” if not yet accredited):	December 2029

PART I: Publicly Available Program Performance and Candidate Achievement Data

1. Overview and Context

This overview describes the mission and context of the educator preparation provider and the programs included in its AAQEP review.

The University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) School of Education (SOE) serves communities in and out of the territory. Within the territory, our partners are the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE), Virgin Islands Board of Education (VIBOE), Infants and Toddlers Program, Virgin Islands Department of Human Services, Office of Childcare Regulatory Services and Young children and families. The SOE also serves communities in neighboring Caribbean islands through partnerships with schools/colleges of education at community colleges and ministries of education. SOE services include, but are not limited to: the preparation of school counselors,

teachers, administrators, other school professionals; early care and education services; and consultation for certification requirements.

Vision, Mission, and Values

The School of Education's strategic plan, ***Enhancing School Outcomes Through a Culture of Innovation in the Preparation of Educators and Other School Professionals***, maps the route of the University of the Virgin Islands School of Education (SOE) for the years, 2019-2024. This plan was established based on the following assertions: (1) The SOE will address the challenges of low student enrollment, evidenced across Schools and Colleges of Education in the United States; (2) The SOE will be a first choice for educator and other school professional preparation in the USVI, US mainland, and the wider Caribbean; (3) The SOE will increase program offerings and innovative ways in which to instruct preservice majors, as well as in-service professionals; (4) The SOE will develop a blueprint for transforming itself into a 21st century program; (5) The SOE will prepare its candidates to become change agents for embedding 21st century knowledge and skills in every aspect of P-12 curricula in accordance with national and state standards. The assumption of leadership and faculty in the School of Education is that these assertions will be made realities only from strategic supports, such as responsible stewardship of the University, a robust faculty in expertise and size, and the contributions of alumni, current students, and collaborative partnerships.

The purpose of the Unit is to prepare professionals who are leaders that are reflective and active learners and that are committed to enabling students' academic development and success. The goal *is to produce high quality education professionals who are ethically and culturally competent to serve schools, foster innovation and change, and address social justice issues locally, regionally, and globally.*

The philosophical framework of the School of Education is rooted in the SOE's mission and is consistent with the mission of the university. The SOE believes the primary need of today's professional is a well-rounded knowledge base which provides one with the ability to deal with the complexities of the modern world. Specialization, therefore, is to supply that theoretical and practical knowledge which provides tools necessary for competent practice of the profession.

Leadership

The UVI School of Education (SOE) is a small academic unit. The Dean, Dr. Karen H. Brown, is the Unit Manager. The interim Chair, Mr. Erik Heikkila, is the Academic Supervisor. Mr. Heikkila is a tenured assistant professor and Director of Physical Education. With the retirement of the prior department chair, Dr. Magdalene Tobias, in May 2024, Dean Brown now temporarily serves as the lead of the teacher education programs (Elementary Education, Inclusive Early Childhood Education (IECE) degree programs and certificate programs in Secondary Teaching and Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). Junior, tenure-track faculty support the Dean in this role by serving as faculty advisors and assisting with curriculum development. Each graduate education program has a director or lead faculty who also serves as the faculty advisor. Dr. Clinton Valley serves as Program Director for the Master of Arts in Educational Leadership (MAEL). Dr. Xuri Maurice Allen serves as the Program Director for the Master of Arts in School Counseling (MASC). Dean Brown serves as lead for the Postbaccalaureate Certificate in Special Education and Education Specialist (EdS) in School Psychology programs.

Master of Arts in School Counseling (MASC)

Accredited by the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP), the Master of Arts in School Counseling (MASC) program at the University of the Virgin Islands is a rigorous 48-credit hour program consistent with the 2024 School Counseling Specialty Standards of the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).

Students enrolled in the MASC program preparing for positions and careers as school counselors in the US Virgin Islands, the broader Caribbean, the Continental United States, or elsewhere in the world, undergo coursework and experiential learning activities to develop and demonstrate dispositions and the professional knowledge and skills that promote development among students in the three primary school counseling domains. The three domains, as identified by CACREP and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) are academic development, career development (which includes college awareness, preparation, and selection), and social/emotional (i.e., personal) development.

The Master of Arts in School Counseling program “represents a synthesis of content and experiences that result in [MASC] students’ demonstration of the professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions articulated in [CACREP] standards needed for successful practice.” Additionally, the MASC program promotes the professional ethical standards and codes, competencies, and positions as advanced by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and the American Counseling Association (ACA). Moreover, the MASC program students are encouraged throughout their enrollment to aspire to the professional ethical standards and codes, competencies, and positions of these organizations, especially in terms of advocacy, beneficence to student counselees, diversity, inclusivity, and rights of student counselees.

Key Features

Key features of the Master of Arts in School Counseling program include:

- 48-credit hour program which includes 3 credit-hours (100 clock hours) of Practicum with host site and institutional supervision
- Accredited by the Association for Advancing Quality Educator Preparation (AAQEP)
Current certification period expires December 2029
- Satisfies Association for Advancing Quality Educator Preparation (AAQEP, 2021), Council for the Accreditation of Counseling Related Educational Programs [School Counseling Specialty] (CACREP, 2024), and Virgin Islands Board of Education (VIBOE) certification standards
- Promotes familiarity with – and knowledge of – national, regional, and local school counseling and counseling professional associations including, but not limited to: the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), the American Counseling Association (ACA) and its Divisions, the recently chartered US Virgin Islands School Counselor Association (USVISCA), and the US Virgin Islands branch of the American Counseling Association (ACAVI)

- Offered via virtual (i.e., Zoom and/or Teams) and hybrid modalities (i.e., virtual and on-ground)

Public Posting URL

Part I of this report is posted at the following web address (accredited members filing this report must post at least Part I):

<https://www.uvi.edu/academics/education/programs/master-arts-school-counseling/index.html>

2. Enrollment and Completion Data

Table 1 shows current enrollment and recent completion data for each program included in the AAQEP review.

Table 1. Program Specification: Enrollment and Completers for Academic Year 2023-2024

Degree or Certificate granted by the institution or organization	State Certificate, License, Endorsement, or Other Credential	Number of Candidates enrolled in most recently completed academic year (12 months ending 07/24)	Number of Completers in most recently completed academic year (12 months ending 07/24)
<i>Programs that lead to initial teaching credentials</i>			
Total for programs that lead to initial credentials			
<i>Programs that lead to additional or advanced credentials for already-licensed educators</i>			
Total for programs that lead to additional/advanced credentials			
<i>Programs that lead to credentials for other school professionals or to no specific credential</i>			
		15	1
Total for additional programs			

TOTAL enrollment and productivity for all programs		
Unduplicated total of all program candidates and completers	15	1

Added or Discontinued Programs

Any programs within the AAQEP review that have been added or discontinued within the past year are listed below. (This list is required only from providers with accredited programs.)

No programs were added or discontinued during the reporting period.

3. Program Performance Indicators

The program performance information in Table 2 applies to the academic year indicated in Table 1.

Table 2. Program Performance Indicators

A. **Total enrollment** in the educator preparation programs shown in Table 1. This figure is an unduplicated count, i.e., individuals earning more than one credential may be counted in more than one line above but only once here.

Total enrollment in the Master of Arts in School Counseling (MASC) program numbered 15 candidates during Academic Year 2023-2024. This total, equal to that of Academic Year 2022-2023, represents a 114% increase over the total (N = 7) reported to AAQEP within the program’s Quality Assurance Report (QAR) of May 2022.

Total enrollment included a 10-member cohort sponsored by the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) that began the program in Summer Session II, 2022. The additional candidates consisted of five continuing students who were not members of the VIDE-sponsored cohort.

In regard to total enrollment demographics, five candidates were Albert A. Sheen Campus (i.e., St. Croix) students and 10 were Orville E. Kean Campus (i.e., St. Thomas) students. No candidates were enrolled via the UVI@USM (i.e., University of the Virgin Islands at University of St. Martin) Campus during Academic Year 2023-2024. In terms of gender, females numbered 12 (80%), while males numbered 3 (20%). All of the candidates are persons of color and represent the developmental stages of early- and middle-adulthood. Practically all of the candidates were employed as either professionals or paraprofessionals within P-12 education.

B. Total number of unique completers (across all programs) included in Table 1. This figure is an unduplicated count, i.e., individuals who earned more than one credential may be counted in more than one line above but only once here.

There was one unique Master of Arts in School Counseling (MASC) program completer during Academic Year 2023-2024. This completer was an Orville E. Kean Campus (i.e., St. Thomas) student whose degree was conferred in May 2024.

C. Number of recommendations for certificate, license, or endorsement included in Table 1.

The Master of Arts in School Counseling program prepares candidates, but does not formally extend recommendations, for school counselor certification.

D. Cohort completion rates for candidates who completed the various programs within their respective program's expected timeframe **and** in 1.5 times the expected timeframe.

The cohort completion rate for candidates who completed the MASC program within its expected timeframe, **and** in 1.5 times the expected timeframe, for 2022-2023 is 100%.

E. Summary of state license examination results, including teacher performance assessments, and specification of any examinations on which the pass rate (cumulative at time of reporting) was below 80%.

N/A

F. Narrative explanation of evidence available from program completers, with a characterization of findings.

After the May 2024 conferral of the MASC degree, the lone 2023-2024 completer provided assessment of the program, the student experience, and the degree to which the program prepares students for professional school counseling via the **UVI School of**

Education Completer Exit Survey - Graduate Programs. The 32-item instrument consists of (a) three demographic items, (b) 25 four-point Likert scale items ranging from “1 – Not Observed” to “4 – Excellent,” and (c) four items that permit open-ended narrative responses. The program completer responded “4 – Excellent” to 22 of the 25 (88%) fixed-choice Likert scale items. It should be noted here that “Excellent” ratings were recorded for all items addressing the focus areas “Assessment of Performance by Instructors” and “Advisement Experience.” The remaining three fixed-choice Likert scale items received the score “3 – Satisfactory” (12%). The items for which the score of “3” were received pertained to “Quality of field experiences available,” “Use of technology to enhance learning,” and “My graduate program in the School of Education has prepared me to function in highly complex and diverse settings and to promote academic excellence and student success.”

The program completer responded to only one of the survey’s four open-ended narrative items. In response to Item 29 – “What do you see as the strengths of your program,” the completer wrote: “*Approachable faculty [and the] clear standards set*”

No answers were provided for the below open-ended narrative items which conclude the survey:

- Item 30 – “What do you see as priorities for growth in the next three to five years?”
- Item 31 – “What change(s), if any, need to be made to the program you did?”
- Item 32 – “What needs to be discontinued?”

Based upon the responses given, it appears the completer was pleased, overall, with the MASC program and believes it was educationally, professionally, and personally meaningful.

G. Narrative explanation of **evidence available from employers of program completers**, with a characterization of findings.

Subsequent to the conferral of the MASC degree to the lone program completer for 2023-2024, the **UVI School of Education Stakeholders Satisfaction Survey: MA in School Counseling** was distributed to one stakeholder, the educational leader/administrative head of the high school where the completer works. The survey consists of 29 items (i.e., three demographic items, 22 four-point Likert scale items ranging from “1 – Not Satisfied” to “4 – Very Satisfied,” and four items that allow for open-

ended narrative responses). The Likert scale items, along with those for which narrative responses can be provided, assess stakeholders' perceptions of (a) MASC program quality and (b) program completer's demonstration of knowledge, awareness, skills, competence, and professionalism in the workplace.

Survey results suggest that the stakeholder, an interim principal, was either "Very Satisfied" or "Satisfied" with the completer in all areas addressed by the 22 Likert scale items, with "Very Satisfied" at 45 percent (n = 10) and "Satisfied" at 55 percent (n =12) of the total. The items for which stakeholder responded "Very Satisfied" are

- Item 4 – "Engage in opportunities for professional growth"
- Item 5 – "Use strength and weaknesses as learning tools to modify and make appropriate adjustments"
- Item 8 – "Demonstrate high professional expectations and ethical practice"
- Item 9 – "Show respect for all students"
- Item 13 – "Construct counseling environments that are student-centered and that encourage positive social interaction, engagement, and self-motivation"
- Item 14 – "Demonstrate sensitivity and appreciation for diversity"
- Item 18 – "Engage in critical thinking and problem-solving"
- Item 22 – "Show initiative and self-motivation in leadership"
- Item 23 – "Establish cooperative partnerships with school colleagues, parents, and the community to support student learning and development"
- Item 24 – Demonstrate caring dispositions towards all students

The response to Item 26 ("What do you see as the strengths of the program?"), the first of four items that allow open-ended narrative feedback, was

- "1. *The program has a comprehensive curriculum; 2. Experienced faculty at UVI; 3. Includes practical experience*"

The response to Item 27 ("What do you see as priorities for growth in the next three to five years?") was

- “1. Prepare school counselors to more effectively address the increase in mental health challenges of students; 2. As more and more ESL (English as a Second Language) students arrive, counselors should be prepared to better serve their needs (by addressing cultural issues and systemic inequities); 3. Encourage faculty and students to engage in more research”

The response to Item 28 (“What change[s], if any, need to be made to the program?”) was

- “See response to number 27”

No response to the final survey item, (Item 29 – “What needs to be discontinued?”), was provided by the stakeholder.

H. Narrative explanation of how the program investigates **employment rates for program completers**, with a characterization of findings. This section may also indicate rates of completers’ ongoing education, e.g., graduate study.

Currently, no formal mechanism exists to investigate the employment rates for MASC program completers. Given the small size of the program, however, with most completers residing and working in the territory, program faculty have knowledge of where completers are employed and/or continue their educational pursuits. The School of Education and the Master of Arts in School Counseling program know that the single completer for 2023-2024, is gainfully employed by the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) at one of the two high schools located on St. Thomas.

4. Candidate Academic Performance Indicators

Tables 3 and 4 report on select measures of candidate/completer performance related to AAQEP Standards 1 and 2, including the program’s expectations for successful performance and indicators of the degree to which those expectations are met.

Table 3. Expectations and Performance on Standard 1: Candidate and Completer Performance

Provider-Selected Measures	Explanation of Performance Expectation	Level or Extent of Success in Meeting the Expectation
GPA for Admission and Program Entry	Minimum cumulative GPA of 2.5/4.0 for admission and program entry	100%

Student Advisement	Absence of reported grievances	90%
Comprehensive Examination	Receipt of "Pass" on first or second attempt	100%
School Counseling Field Placement (i.e., Practicum) Evaluation	Minimum score of "3 – Good, Average Performance"	100%
E-Portfolio Assessment	Minimum score of 80%	100%
Completer Exit Survey	Minimum score of "3 – Satisfactory"	100%
Stakeholders Survey	Minimum score of "3 – Satisfied"	100%
Program Completion Rate	Graduation rate of at least 80% within the program's expected timeframe and in 1.5 times the expected timeframe	90%

Table 4. Expectations and Performance on Standard 2: Completer Professional Competence and Growth

Provider-Selected Measures	Explanation of Performance Expectation	Level or Extent of Success in Meeting the Expectation
School Counseling Field Placement (i.e., Practicum) Self-Assessment or Dispositions Survey	Minimum score of "3 – Sufficient Extent"	100%

School Counseling Field Placement (i.e., Practicum) Instructor/Institutional Supervisor Evaluation	Minimum score of “3 – Good”	100%
Completer Exit Survey	Minimum score of “3 – Satisfactory”	100%
Stakeholders Survey	Minimum score of “3 – Satisfied”	100%
Program Completion Rate	Graduation rate of at least 80% within the program’s expected timeframe and in 1.5 times the expected timeframe	90%
Program Completion/Graduation GPA	Minimum GPA of 3.0/4.0	100%

5. Notes on Progress, Accomplishment, and Innovation

This section describes program accomplishments, efforts, and innovations (strengths and outcomes) to address challenges and priorities over the past year.

- Retained 100 percent of the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) sponsored cohort comprised of 10 local elementary, middle, and secondary school professionals and paraprofessionals who began the MASC program in July 2022; Also retained all other program candidates who were enrolled in Academic Year 2022-2023
- Communicated with formerly enrolled University of the Virgin Islands at University of St. Martin (UVI@USM) MASC students to reestablish contact and to encourage their re-enrollment

- Conducted student recruitment for the program on Dutch St. Maarten and French St. Martin in February 2024 in conjunction with National School Counseling Week (NSCW); Engaged with prospective new students, formerly enrolled UVI@USM school counseling students, and secondary school professional school counselors via a host of activities on the University of St. Martin campus; Also participated in meetings with University of St. Martin administration, faculty, and staff; Partook in radio interviews at three different radio stations to promote the MASC program; These efforts resulted in five formerly enrolled UVI@USM school counseling students being re-admitted and registered for the Fall 2024 semester.

 - The MASC program director was recognized in February 2024 as a Charter Member of the newly established US Virgin Islands School Counselor Association (USVI SCA), the 52nd chartered branch of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). He also was appointed to the Advisory Board of the USVI SCA due to his “*expertise, passion, and dedication to the field of school counseling,*” in addition to his influence within the territory’s professional school counseling community.

 - Held two virtual “MASC Interest and Information” recruitment sessions via Zoom on March 27, 2024 and April 18, 2024

 - Conducted qualitative program action research (PAR) in April 2024: Two focus groups (i.e., one consisting of enrolled MASC students, and the other comprised of the Professional Education Advisory Council for School Counseling [PEAC-SC]), responded to a set of questions aimed at enhancement of the MASC program.
- Members of the MASC student focus group responded to the following questions:
- How might recruitment and admissions be improved for future MASC applicants?;
 - How might the MASC program better serve you in facilitating your student success, persistence, and retention?
 - Based upon your experience, what do you believe are the strengths of the MASC program?
 - Based upon your experience, what do you believe are the shortcomings of the MASC program?
 - What would you like to see accomplished by the MASC program, its candidates, and its completers within the next . . .
 - one to two years?
 - five years?
 - more than five years?

Similarly, members of the PEAC-SC focus group addressed the questions listed below:

- How might the program maintain momentum in the recruitment, admission, enrollment, and retention of students?
 - Based upon your knowledge and observations, what do you believe are shortcomings of the MASC program?
 - Based upon your knowledge or observations, what do you believe are the strengths of the MASC program?
 - How might the MASC program better meet the school counseling needs of students and their families?
 - What would you as a stakeholder like to see accomplished by the MASC program, its candidates, and its completers within the next . . .
 - one to two years?
 - five years?
 - more than five years?
-
- Ensured that the approved new “EDC” (i.e., Education-Counseling) Subject/Discipline Prefix for counseling-specific courses replaced the “EDU” (Education) Prefix, beginning spring 2024; The “EDC” designation is In keeping with standard and best practices at US School of Education graduate counselor education/counselor preparation programs.

 - Among the accomplishments of program candidates in 2023-2024 include: (a) gaining certification as an Adult Mental Health First Aid (AMHFA) Provider, (b) becoming certified as a Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper, and (c) receiving UVI institutional and School of Education academic achievement awards, including the School of Education’s Outstanding Graduate Student Award (i.e., the honor awarded to the graduate-level candidate within the School of Education who has the highest grade point average among all SOE graduate-level candidates).