

Graduate Center for Gerontology

Doctoral Student Handbook

Essentials for Students and Faculty

August 2013 – 2014

This handbook provides essential information for graduate students pursuing the PhD in Gerontology as well as faculty serving in an advisory role to students. The Director of Graduate Studies should be contacted with any questions or comments.

Further information may be obtained from the Graduate Center for Gerontology Web Page (<http://www.uky.edu/publichealth/departments/gerontology/>) or by contacting:

Director of Graduate Studies
Graduate Center for Gerontology
J525 Kentucky Clinic
University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY 40536-0284
Tel: 859-257-1450

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Curriculum

Overview

Gerontology is a diverse field that embraces scholarship along a spectrum ranging from laboratory-based biological/biomedical sciences through physiological systems, psychology and behavior, social dynamics and societal forces. All elements along this spectrum operate within an intricate time-space canvas. Gerontology is rooted in theory and the basic research necessary to establish understanding as a foundation for application in the form of clinical and community practice and interventions. Largely as a consequence of this diversity, gerontology is naturally complex, especially when we consider the ongoing web of interactions at work between the many layers of human existence.

Becoming a gerontology scholar does NOT require becoming an expert in all facets of growing and being old. Rather, it involves development of focused expertise and, most important, the development of skills at situating one's own work within the holistic context of aging. Indeed, the ability to think critically, holistically, and in an integrative way are hallmarks of gerontology at the University of Kentucky. And using this ability to generate innovative research, practices, programs, or interventions is a hallmark of earning a doctorate in gerontology.

The PhD program in gerontology employs a curriculum designed to establish the knowledge base and especially the thinking/methodological skills necessary to successfully contribute to gerontology scholarship. The curriculum consists of 43 hours of course work plus directed studies and research within a program of study that involves six interlocking elements:

- a required core in gerontology;
- specialized coursework in a substantive thematic research domain;
- training in appropriate and supportive research methods;
- grounding in public health concepts;
- a qualifying examination, and
- a dissertation.

Gerontology Core

Particular emphasis in the gerontology core is placed on developing an understanding of the complex interrelations among the aging body, health and well-being, and social structure. In addition, core seminars explore the myriad ways that scholars in different disciplines theorize and do what they do in the field of aging. In sum, the core seminars seek to develop in students an advanced way of thinking that is at once critical, holistic, integrative, and imaginative.

The gerontology core is comprised of 5 specially designed seminars that account for 16 credit hours:

- GRN 600 A Study of the Older Person (3 hrs)
- GRN 612 Biology of Aging (3 hrs)
- GRN 620 Human Aging and Adjustment (3 hrs)
- GRN 650 Research Design in Gerontology (4 hrs)
- GRN 656 Integrative Research Seminar (3 hrs)

Area of Specialization

Students establish in-depth knowledge and understanding of their particular topical area of interest (i.e., the broad dissertation topic) through specially selected coursework. A student focusing in the social sciences, for example, might develop a program of study drawing largely from sociology, but incorporating course work in psychology, anthropology or other disciplines. In a similar manner, a student focusing in the biomedical sciences might draw their coursework from physiology, incorporating studies in anatomy, biochemistry, pharmacology and other related disciplines. Each student's area of specialization will be developed in collaboration with his or her advisor and Advisory Committee working as needed in conjunction with the appropriate department(s).

A minimum of 12 credit hours will be completed in the area of specialization over the first two to three years of the Program.

Research Methods

Students are required to complete Research Design in Gerontology (GRN 650) as part of their core. This 4 credit hour course provides a critical overview of methodological content specific to research with older people, but it is not intended to develop competence in any specific methods. Students are thus required to complete, or demonstrate

course equivalency to, basic statistical analysis (STA 570 or STA 580). Students must also take a minimum a 6 additional hours of methods-based coursework in a domain or domains that best support intended research. Such courses may include specific quantitative/statistical methods, qualitative/ethnographic methods, laboratory or instrumentation techniques, and experimental or survey design. Students should work closely with their advisor or Advisory Committee in identifying suitable additional methods training, most likely situated in other departments across campus.

Public Health Concepts

By virtue of Gerontology's position within the College of Public Health, and in accordance with accrediting policy, all students are required to complete the following public health coursework:

- CPH 663 – Survey of Public Health (3 hrs)
- CPH 605 – Epidemiology (3 hrs)

These courses provide a broad based introduction to public health content and concepts, including content in environmental health, social and behavioral science, and health services/systems for students who do not have an earned MPH from an accredited school/program. Students entering with a public health degree from an accredited institution may petition the Director of Graduate Studies to have these requirements waived.

Transferring Credits/Non-Program Coursework

The Graduate School allows up to 9 credit hours to be transferred under certain guidelines (see <http://www.research.uky.edu/gs/CurrentStudents/bulletin.html>). It is, however, not necessary to officially transfer credits to the University of Kentucky; any graduate courses taken at other universities may be used toward the degree if they exhibit relevance to the student's study plan. Such courses must be approved by the student's advisory committee and the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), with this approval being documented in the student's file.

Additionally, the policy of the Gerontology Ph.D. Program regarding the use of non-Program or non-UK coursework is as follows:

1. Courses that comprise the gerontology core (GRN 600, GRN 612, 620, 650, and GRN 656) are unique and no other coursework may be used to waive these requirements.
2. Methods courses at the graduate level taken at other institutions, or at UK prior to entry to the Gerontology Ph.D. Program, may serve as a basis for requesting a waiver to the supplemental methods requirement.
3. Graduate coursework from UK completed prior to admission to Gerontology may selectively be used toward the Ph.D. A student and her/his advisor must petition the DGS to have such courses accepted toward the degree.
4. Students may take graduate classes at other institutions while pursuing the Ph.D. at UK. Such classes must be approved by the student's advisor and the DGS, and the student must also request permission from the Graduate School, before enrolling in such classes.

Teacher Training Component

Emphasis in our doctoral program is placed on tailoring each student's curriculum and experiences to meet the specific circumstances of the individual's background and career goals. One possible--and quite common--career pathway of gerontology students is be to gain faculty positions within the nation's college and university system. The Teacher Training Component provides a formal arena for acquiring valuable teaching experience. It is based on the premise that practice is a necessary component of ability, yet it recognizes that careful and informed guidance is a staple in building true proficiency. Furthermore, this component provides the opportunity of ensuring a solid foundation in general gerontology, which is an invaluable part of preparing for qualifying exams.

Fall Semester: The Teacher Training Component involves a year of supervised work. During the fall semester (commonly the third semester of residence) students may enroll in GRN 616 – Teaching Seminar in Gerontology (2 hrs). This seminar is designed to provide a survey of the foundational elements of teaching, from content selection and syllabus preparation to lecture and interactive techniques, student and self-evaluation, advising issues, and ethics in the classroom. The seminar also provides a supervised venue for the development of an undergraduate course in gerontology. Team teaching is strongly encouraged.

Students will decide on the specific course to be taught, a course syllabus will be composed and finalized, and content research and organization will be conducted. Students will, as appropriate, be charged with advertising the course to promote adequate undergraduate enrollments at the appropriate time.

Spring Semester: Students who have completed GRN 616 – Teaching Seminar in Gerontology become eligible for team or full responsibility in teaching an undergraduate course in gerontology during a subsequent semester. The students will concurrently enroll in GRN 617– Teaching Practicum in Gerontology (3 hours). This course will be coordinated by a member of the Gerontology faculty who will meet with students to discuss progress and experiences in the undergraduate class as well as practical and theoretical issues related to undergraduate education in general. Students may elect to postpone their in-class teaching experience until later in their program, and students with prior experience may qualify to serve as sole instructor when they teach.

Completion of GRN 616 is required of all graduate instructors regardless of any prior teaching experience.

Students may also elect to participate in the University's Preparing Future Faculty opportunities, and GRN 616 fulfills a requirement of the Teaching Certificate offered through the Graduate School. For more information about this program, including requirements for the Certificate in College Teaching and Learning, visit: <http://www.research.uky.edu/gs/StudentDevelopment/CTLCertificate.html>.

Qualifying Examination

1. *Eligibility and Formal Scheduling*

A student must take a qualifying examination in order to advance to Ph.D. degree candidacy. This examination will include both a written and an oral component.

A student generally becomes eligible to sit for the qualifying examination after successfully completing minimum Program requirements for core, elective, and methods course work, and after clearing any and all incomplete coursework on record. A student on academic probation may not take the qualifying examination. A student should have made demonstrable progress in developing a dissertation proposal before sitting for the qualifying examination. The oral component of the qualifying

examination, which follows the written component, must be formally scheduled by completing the "Recommendation for Qualifying Examination" form. This form, requiring DGS approval, must be submitted no later than two weeks before the scheduled examination and preferably before the writing component begins.

2. *Content*

A student must select, with the assistance and approval of the student's Advisory Committee, three distinct thematic focus areas that serve as the context for examination items. These areas should correspond to the student's current and anticipated research interests, and will thus most likely be closely tied to the student's dissertation work. Students should expect to respond to questions regarding concepts, theories, and methods relating to each focus area, and should also be able to situate each focus area within the broader field of gerontology.

3. *Preparing for the Examination*

Students are encouraged to retain all notes and readings from all courses taken to fulfill requirements of the Program. Students should also meet with each committee member to discuss dissertation research ideas and qualifying exam focus areas, and should compose an appropriate list of readings corresponding to the chosen focus areas. At least one full committee meeting should be scheduled before the qualifying examination to allow effective guidance in both finalizing the dissertation proposal and identifying—and preparing for—the three focus areas.

4. *Format*

All members of the student's Advisory Committee contribute to the composition of the qualifying examination items. The student's committee chairperson, or advisor as designee, is responsible for soliciting and collecting possible examination items for each of the three focus areas, and for the final selection of examination items. The chairperson is also responsible for distributing copies of the dissertation proposal, as appropriate and determined by the Advisory Committee, to all committee members prior to commencement of the written component of the examination.

Students will have 72 hours to respond in writing to items pertaining to each of the three focus areas

(an examination “section”), and all three sections must be completed within a 14-day period. It is the responsibility of the student and chairperson to determine the exact scheduling of the sections within this 2-week period. It is also up to the student and chairperson to determine when, during the day, the exam sections will be conveyed to the student.

Students are expected to follow all standards of academic and professional conduct while completing the qualifying examination, which includes recognition that the examination must reflect individual effort. Students are further expected to follow the format specifications for referencing defined by the student’s Advisory Committee or by the American Psychological Association (APA).

If the schedule format presents unusual hardship for a student, then the student and advisor may petition for an alternative schedule. In no case shall the alternative schedule extend any individual section period beyond 72 hours; spacing between sections, however, may be changed to extend the overall writing component beyond two weeks. The petition for alternative scheduling may be submitted in writing to the Director of Graduate Studies at any time before completion of the writing component of the examination.

Approximately two weeks after completion of the written examination, students will sit for the oral component of the examination. Students may expect to respond to questions concerning their written examination, completed graduate coursework, and, as appropriate, to questions associated with the dissertation proposal. The oral examination counts as a formal committee meeting for Graduate School purposes; it should be scheduled at a time when classes are normally in session, and must have all advisory committee members in attendance. Students must be enrolled for credit hours (coursework or GRN 767) during the term (fall, spring, or summer) in which the oral examination is scheduled.

5. *Examination Outcomes*

The student’s Committee Chairperson and DGS will receive from the Graduate School the “qualifying examination signature form” prior to the scheduled oral examination date. This card is required for

reporting the outcome of the qualifying examination. This form, with all committee member signatures and recorded examination outcome, must be returned immediately by the student advisor to the DGS for final approval and signature, and for submission to the Graduate School.

There are two possible outcomes of the examination: Pass or Fail. Failure to submit any portion of the written qualifying exam within the allocated time will automatically constitute failure in the qualifying examination. A passing evaluation allows the student to proceed to degree candidacy without stipulation, although in some cases the student’s committee may require additional coursework to be taken as part of the post-qualifying residency requirement. If the result is failure, the advisory committee determines and records the conditions to be met before another examination. These conditions may include additional coursework, and/or both written and oral components. The minimum time between examinations is four months. A second examination must be taken within one year after taking the first examination. A third examination is not permitted.

Passing the qualifying examination advances a student to the status of “Doctoral Candidate.” The student will be so notified in writing by the Program DGS and the Dean of the Graduate School.

Residency Requirement

See the admissions year’s edition of the Graduate School Bulletin for both pre- and post-qualifying residency requirements. In general, two years of residency is required prior to the Qualifying examination, and a minimum of 1 year is required after completion of the qualifying examination. Post-qualifying residency is formalized by ongoing registration in GRN 767 (Dissertation Research) for each semester through defense of the dissertation. Students must remain actively enrolled throughout the degree program to retain “active” status and to avoid having to re-apply to the program.

The Dissertation

The culmination of all Program requirements is completion of an approved dissertation, which is the result of original research that adds to or significantly and innovatively modifies what was previously known on the subject. The

Chairperson or Advisor, whose research specialization reflects the candidate's dissertation interests, serves as the Dissertation Director. Procedures for undertaking and writing the dissertation are outlined in the Graduate School's Manual for Theses and Dissertations, which is available in printed form or from the Graduate School's web site.

1. *Proposal*

A student must submit a Dissertation Proposal for approval to the student's Advisory Committee. The format of the proposal and timing of approval is specific to each student and associated advisory committee. Regardless of format or timing of submission, a copy of the proposal approved by the advisory committee must be filed with the Director of Graduate Studies along with the date of approval.

The dissertation proposal should, at a minimum, follow basic content and length specifications for a grant proposal submitted to the National Institutes of Health.

2. *Administrative Preparation for the Defense and Graduation*

Degree candidates are expected to know and understand the administrative procedures and required forms associated with all elements of dissertation completion, degree application, final defense, and graduation as specified by the Graduate School in the Graduate School Bulletin. The candidate is further responsible for knowing deadlines and ensuring that all procedures meet such deadlines.

3. *Dissertation Format*

The content and general organization of the dissertation is left to the discretion of each student, with the approval of the student's advisor and/or Advisory Committee.

The format of the dissertation should follow guidelines established by the Graduate School and described in the web document governing theses and dissertations (http://www.research.uky.edu/gs/CurrentStudents/theses_prep.html). Referencing format should follow American Psychological Association (APA) standards unless otherwise approved by the student's advisory committee.

4. *Final Examination/Dissertation Defense*

Doctoral dissertation defenses shall be conducted in full accordance with Graduate School Guidelines. Procedure for the doctoral defense shall include the following three elements:

- Candidates will present a public seminar on their dissertation work, and is responsible for proper advertising of the seminar.
- Following this presentation, the candidate and his or her Advisory Committee shall meet for the purpose of examination of the content and contribution of the dissertation document. At the beginning of this segment of the examination, the candidate and any guests may be asked to briefly step out of the room so that the Committee may discuss any concerns with regard to the dissertation and deliberate on appropriate questions to ask the candidate.
- At the conclusion of questioning and discussion of the dissertation, the candidate and any guests will be asked to leave the room, and the Advisory Committee, together with the external examiner, will deliberate with respect to the success of the defense and the nature of needed changes, if any, in the final document. At the conclusion of these deliberations the candidate will be invited to return and will be informed of the outcome of the examination.

Summary

This summary listing indicates all requirements for the Ph.D. in gerontology. Students are encouraged to use this summary worksheet (available on the gerontology website) to track progress through their program of study, checking off requirements as they are completed, listing all courses used to fulfill requirements, and recording dates of key program milestones. Additionally, for accreditation purposes all students and degree candidates are expected to achieve certain doctoral-level competencies. These competencies for gerontology are listed in the Appendix.

Core Requirements (16 hrs)

- GRN 600 A Study of the Older Person (3 hrs)
- GRN 612 Biology of Aging (3 hrs)
- GRN 620 Human Aging and Adjustment (3hrs)
- GRN 650 Research Design in Gerontology (4 hrs)
- GRN 656 Integrative Research Seminar (3 hrs)

Public Health Concepts (6 hrs)

- CPH 605 Epidemiology (3 hrs)
- CPH 663 Survey of Public Health (3 hrs)

Research Methods (minimum 9 hrs)

- STA 570 Basic Statistical Analysis (4 hrs)
or STA 580 Biostatistics (3 hrs)
- Elective Methods (6 hrs minimum)

Qualifying Examination

Date Passed: _____

Dissertation Proposal

Date Approved: _____

Dissertation Defense

Date Passed: _____

Area of Specialization (minimum 12 hrs)

Procedures and Expectations

Student Advising

Upon admission to the Ph.D. Program in Gerontology, each student will be assigned a preliminary “Faculty Mentor” who will serve as a provisional advisor (the Director of Graduate Studies will serve as the student’s official advisor until a permanent advisor has been identified and formalized with the graduate school). This Mentor, working in collaboration with relevant departments and the student, will develop an individually tailored program of study and research within the framework of the required curriculum. By the end of the first year, each student should have selected a permanent advisor. This advisor, if serving as the sole advisor, must hold a faculty rank of Associate Professor or above. An Assistant Professor may serve as co-chair of the advisory committee if accompanied by a senior faculty member.

It is anticipated that by the end of the Fall semester of his or her second year of study, each student will have formed a four member (minimum) Advisory Committee that must include at least three Gerontology Faculty, one of whom will serve as chair. One committee member must have an appointment outside of gerontology (affiliate faculty can serve in either capacity). Finally, at least three committee members must hold the status of “Full” graduate faculty (i.e., they are tenured and have the rank of Associate Professor or higher). Students should consult with the Director of Graduate Studies when finalizing the Advisory Committee.

Each student is required to meet at least once per year with his or her Advisory Committee. The student is required to write a summary report on this meeting that should then be signed by his or her advisor and placed in the student’s file.

Students are expected to meet with their advisor on a regular basis. The advisor’s role is to assist the graduate student/degree candidate with any problems that may arise in their program of study and research, to monitor the student’s progress, and to serve as an intellectual and professional mentor during the student’s tenure in the Program.

Graduate students are not obligated to remain with or to retain their initial mentor and/or advisor. With the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies, any student may change advisor at any time during his or her tenure in the program. It is understood that changes will occur

as students define or re-define their area of interest or otherwise change focus and direction in their work. This is not, however, a license for making numerous changes to the Advisory Committee

Notification of Professional Activities

Students are required to keep a running log of all professional activities while affiliated with the gerontology program. This record is similar to the curriculum vitae and should include, but is not limited to: presentations at professional meetings, seminars presented, papers published, awards, and visits to other universities. Students should notify the DGS of all professional activities when they occur and are required to notify the DGS of all progress indicators at the close of each spring semester.

Expectations for Faculty Supervised Research

Because the Doctoral Program in Gerontology is research focused, students are expected to participate in research from entry to the program and progressively increase their research commitment and rigor as they advance. Until a student has selected a permanent advisor to direct her/his dissertation work, the Director of Graduate Studies, in consultation with the student, will assign the student to a Faculty Mentor with whom she/he will work on research activities related to the student’s interest in gerontology. In this context, care will be taken to match a given student with faculty doing research along the lines of the student’s interest.

A student, working with her/his assigned faculty research mentor, is strongly encouraged to complete a Research Mentoring Agreement containing:

1. Type of research activity (e.g., funded or non-funded);
2. A description of the project or topic;
3. The roles and responsibilities of the student and the faculty advisor; and
4. Expected time commitments (e.g., hours per week the student is expected to commit to the research, and scheduled meeting times between student and advisor. As a general rule, full time students are expected to commit 20 hours per week on research activities, and part time students approximately 5 to 7 hours per week.)

A copy of the Mentoring Agreement, signed by both the student and the faculty advisor, should be submitted prior to the mentoring arrangement (strongly recommended for completion before the semester it begins) for approval to the Director of Graduate Studies of the Program. The role of the DGS is primarily to maintain records of student research interests and/or progress and to assure fairness among individual student agreements.

Professional Organizations

Students are encouraged to join and to participate in professional organizations. The following is a sampling of organizations central to Gerontology and Public Health:

- The Gerontological Society of America
- Association for Gerontology in Higher Education
- Southern Gerontological Society
- Kentucky Association for Gerontology
- American Public Health Association
- Kentucky Geriatrics Society
- Kentucky Public Health Association

Students may also wish to build and/or maintain activity within discipline-specific organizations at regional or national levels.

Academic Progress

Our Program is based on the philosophy that faculty instruction, mentorship, and advising, along with financial support (through at least fellowships or assistantships, tuition coverage, travel allowances, dedicated office space, and ongoing technology assistance) is solely intended to promote the intellectual and professional development of students to a level deserving of a Ph.D. in Gerontology. But the true value of a doctoral education emerges, first and foremost, from each student's personal investment in intellectual and professional development. Our concept of "Academic Progress" is, therefore, based on whether a student's personal investment meets or exceeds the Program's investment, and whether students are moving expeditiously towards completion of coursework, qualifying examination, and dissertation.

Failure to Make Adequate Progress

Students in the Program are expected to maintain consistent progress in their course work and independent research activities. Any student who accumulates more than six hours of incomplete (I) grades during any regular semester, or who has less than a 3.0 cumulative grade point average, will be placed on Program Probation. In such cases the student may become ineligible for further assistantships or fellowships.

If deficiencies are found, the student will be so advised in writing along with means for remedying deficiencies. If the

deficiencies are not removed in a specified period of time, or if the student's performance reveals a persistent pattern of less-than-satisfactory performance, the Administrative Council, with the concurrence of the student's advisor, may recommend termination from the Program. Should the student wish to appeal the termination, the following procedure is to be followed:

1. An ad hoc Committee appointed by the Director of Graduate Studies will meet to discuss the situation and vote on the issue of the student's continuation. All existing information on the case will be made available to the faculty. Recommendations will then be made to the entire Graduate Faculty in Gerontology.
2. If the Graduate Faculty recommends to the Dean of the Graduate School that a student be terminated, the student will receive written notice of the decision that will clearly state the reasons for the termination and provide the student with an opportunity to meet with the Graduate Faculty of the Program. At this time, a second vote will be taken and a final recommendation will be made to the Dean of the Graduate School.

Completion of Degree

Qualifying examinations and defenses must take place during the academic year or while classes are in session. Although the defense of the dissertation (also called the "final

examination”) is the apex of doctoral studies, the degree is not complete until all revisions to the dissertation have been made and approved, and the required signed copies of the dissertation are submitted to the Graduate School.

Plagiarism and Cheating

Academic integrity is highly valued at this University, and plagiarism/cheating will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is treated as a serious offense that can lead to severe ramifications including failing grades, expulsion from the program and/or university, and lasting damage to future career prospects. It is very important that you complete your own work and carefully cite work that is not your own. If you are ever unsure whether something needs to be cited, it becomes your responsibility to consult with a faculty member. For your reference, definitions of plagiarism and cheating from Senate Rule 6.3.1 are provided below. For information regarding plagiarism disputes, please refer to: http://www.uky.edu/Ombud/ForStudents_AcademicIntegrity.php.

Plagiarism: All academic work, written or otherwise, submitted by students to their instructors or other academic supervisors, is expected to be the result of their own thought, research, or self-expression. In cases where students feel unsure about a question of plagiarism involving their work, they are obliged to consult their instructors on the matter before submission.

When students submit work purporting to be their own, but which in any way borrows ideas, organization, wording or anything else from another source without appropriate acknowledgment of the fact, the students are guilty of plagiarism.

Plagiarism includes reproducing someone else’s work, whether it be published article, chapter of a book, a paper from a friend or some file, or whatever. Plagiarism also includes the practice of employing or allowing another person to alter or revise the work which a student submits as his/her own, whoever that other person may be. Students may discuss assignments among themselves or with an instructor or tutor, but when the actual work is done, it must be done by the student, and the student alone.

When a student’s assignment involves research in outside sources or information, the student must carefully acknowledge exactly what, where and how he/she has employed them. If the words of someone else are used,

the student must put quotation marks around the passage in question and add an appropriate indication of its origin. Making simple changes while leaving the organization, content and phraseology intact is plagiaristic. However, nothing in these Rules shall apply to those ideas which are so generally and freely circulated as to be a part of the public domain.

Cheating: Cheating is defined by its general usage. It includes, but is not limited to, the wrongful giving, taking, or presenting of any information or material by a student with the intent of aiding himself/herself or another on any academic work which is considered in any way in the determination of the final grade. The fact that a student could not have benefited from an action is not by itself proof that the action does not constitute cheating. Any question of definition shall be referred to the University Appeals Board.

Procedure for Redress of Grievances

Individual students having a grievance about any aspect of the Program should first take her/his grievance to the Director of Graduate Studies of the Program. If the DGS cannot resolve the issue, the grievance should then be taken to the Director of the Program. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be obtained at this juncture, the grievance should then be taken to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the College of Public Health. The Dean of the Graduate School is the last administrative position for addressing grievances. The Academic Ombud (www.uky.edu/Ombud/) may be consulted at any time. If the Ombud cannot resolve an issue, then the student may address the University Appeals Board. (See Section 6.5 of the Student Rights and Responsibilities handbook for a description of the Appeals Board.)

Vacation and Leave Policy

Because graduate students do not accrue vacation days, the Doctoral Program has adopted a set of rules and guidelines. For each funded student, two weeks are allowed for vacation in addition to official University Holidays. Academic breaks are not vacation days (e.g., Fall Break, Spring Break).

Maternity/Paternity leave is one month with an optional two weeks (this time to be negotiated with the Faculty Mentor). For the optional two weeks, work/training may be completed in advance of requested leave or completed

during a specified time frame immediately afterward. Any student, with the consent of their Faculty Mentor, may petition the DGS for time off or deviations from these rules and guidelines. Approval of such petitions must be obtained from the DGS in writing.

Graduate courses do not necessarily follow standard undergraduate semester rules and regulations (e.g., no “Dead Week” exists for graduate level courses, and graduate seminars commonly meet for 3 hour period each week).

General Information

Admission Criteria

All applicants must meet general admission requirements as stipulated by the Graduate School. Successful applicants will have a grade point average of at least 3.0 in their major field and will have a strong background in a field relevant to health and aging. Because of its multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary focus, it is anticipated that students enrolling in the Program will include individuals with a background in medicine and the biomedical services, the social and behavioral sciences, the humanities and applied disciplines such as social work or public administration.

Candidates will be evaluated according to the following admission criteria:

1. Minimum GPA of 3.0 for BA/BS degree from an accredited college or university, or Minimum GPA of 3.2 for an MA/MS degree.
2. GRE scores (Scores of 1200 or higher on the Verbal + Quantitative components of the GRE and 5.5 on the Analytical are desirable).
3. Official academic transcripts from all colleges attended.
4. Three letters of recommendation from individuals with knowledge of the applicant’s research and/or work, and potential for success in a rigorous doctorate program.
5. Personal statement containing a description of applicant’s background and goals.
6. Applicants are encouraged to submit samples of their writing.
7. No single criterion is dominant but the combination must demonstrate the applicant’s potential for success in advanced graduate study.

Application to the Program

NOTE: Beginning in Fall of 2012, application to the Ph.D. Program must be made through the SOPHAS system. Consult the College of Public Health web site for the most updated procedures.

International students should also submit TOEFL scores to the Graduate School unless they are applying to the University of Kentucky with an MA, MS or MPH degree from a U.S. institution. Incoming students are expected to have excellent command of written and spoken English. Without the ability to speak and write clear English of professional quality, graduate students will be at a disadvantage in the Program and may not be allowed to proceed with graduate work.

Admission to the Graduate School entitles students to enroll in graduate courses provided they have the appropriate prerequisites. The University provides provisional admission for students who have not completed all formal requirements for admission. Consult the University’s Graduate School Bulletin for criteria regarding provisional admission. Students seeking a Ph.D. in Gerontology must be admitted to full graduate standing. Maintenance of full graduate standing requires a B average or higher on all graduate work completed at the University.

Students generally enter the Ph.D. Program in Gerontology in the Fall Semester. Graduate students in the Ph.D. Program in Gerontology are subject to the general rules and regulations of the Graduate School as stated in the latest issue of the Graduate School Bulletin. Incoming students should read the Graduate School Bulletin carefully, particularly those sections describing University requirements. It is the responsibility of the student to know and observe all regulations and procedures required by the Program of study they are pursuing.

Admissions Process

Applications for the Ph.D. Program in Gerontology are independently reviewed by each member of the Core Faculty. On the basis of these reviews, the Director of Graduate Studies determines a list of candidates to be submitted to the Administrative Council for consideration and recommendation. Final decisions regarding admission are made by the College of Public Health Admissions Committee.

Residency Requirements

See the admission year's Graduate School Bulletin for both pre- and post-qualifying residency requirements. Gerontology generally requires two years of pre-qualifying residency and a minimum of one year post-qualifying residency.

Academic Load

The academic year, for funding purposes, consists of two semesters—fall and spring. Financial support provided by the Center does not include tuition waivers for courses taken during summer sessions. The normal full-time load of a graduate student during each Fall and Spring Semester is 9 credit hours. Students considering enrollment for more than 12 credit hours must obtain permission from their advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies. Under no circumstances may students exceed 15 credit hours in one semester without the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School. The required minimum (and recommended) number of credit hours for students with university funding is 9 (usually 3 three credit courses).

The Gerontology Program routinely admits students who wish to study part-time for part or all of their degree program. Part-time students should work closely with the Director of Graduate Studies in determining the most efficient schedule of classes to ensure timely completion of the degree.

Financial Aid

The Graduate Center for Gerontology provides a number of scholarships and research assistantships including the Sanders-Brown Center on Aging Foundation Fellowship, the Charlotte Schmidlapp Fellowship, the Rebecca Van Meter Fellowship, a Research Challenge Incentive Fellowship, and Graduate School Research Assistantships. Students may also apply to the Graduate School for Graduate Student

Support. These funds can be requested by enrolled graduate students to assist with expenses related to their dissertation research or for travel to present research at professional conferences. Other awards include the Dissertation Enhancement Award, the Commonwealth Research Award, Multi-Year Fellowships and Presidential Fellowships, and Tuition Scholarships. These awards are more prestigious and more specific than the Graduate Student Support awards. For further information, please contact the Graduate School Fellowship Office.

Duration of Funding: The Center will make every effort to provide funding for the first two years of study based on satisfactory progress towards the degree. Subsequent funding is competitive based on performance; under most circumstances the Center extends funding for full-time Ph.D. students to four years. Continuation of funding beyond the 4th year of study may occur, contingent on budgetary conditions, in the following circumstances:

- Engagement in intellectual development and dissertation research focused within the laboratory sciences; or
- If the third or fourth year is devoted to independently funded non-residency fieldwork, then the Program of study and support is normally extended.

Expectation of Good Faith Effort to Secure External Support: All students are expected to prepare and submit proposals for external funding at least once in the course of their Program. This is considered by the Program to be a very important part of professional training and development. Faculty members are committed to supporting and assisting students in the development of such proposals.

Student Housing

Information regarding on-campus graduate and family housing options is available through the University Housing Office (<http://www.uky.edu/Housing/graduate/>) and their contact email is: ukaphousing@email.uky.edu.

Library Resources

The University of Kentucky library system consists of several decentralized libraries. The W.T. Young Library offers technologies such as E-MNet, InfoKat, Laptop Loan Program and wireless internet connectivity. Libraries most frequently used include the William T. Young Library located on the Lexington campus; the Medical Center Library (MCL),

located in the Albert B. Chandler Medical Center; and the Education Library (EDL), located in Dickey Hall. The libraries conduct tours at the beginning of each semester; check with the reference department for times and dates.

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

The Office of Research Integrity (ORI) has created a homepage on the Internet containing information and forms related to research involving human subjects, care and use of animals in research, and research misconduct. Via the homepage, (<http://www.research.uky.edu/ori/>) you may identify contact persons, access the latest applications and forms as well as view federal and local University of Kentucky regulations. Whether engaged in animal or human research, all researchers are required to completed mandatory computer-based education, which must be periodically updated. Information about this education is on the ORI website.

Other Resources - Research Subject Pool.

The Sanders-Brown Center on Aging has a pool of over 4,000 community dwelling research volunteers 60 years of age and older available to participate in research studies in aging. The Graduate Center for Gerontology maintains a database of potential subjects that is accessible by students and faculty. Human subject approval is necessary from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to gain access to these research subjects.

Computing Center

The Information Technology Help Desk (<http://www.uky.edu/ukit/help>) has available a wide variety of free software downloads, introductory guides and computer manuals to facilitate your computer work and networking connections. The Help Desk also provides free virus detection software, communications software, and other resources for which the University has site licenses. The UK Medical Center also frequently holds training workshops for various software packages (e.g., EndNote, Excel).

E-mail and Mailboxes

E-mail is an important mode of communication between faculty and students. It is imperative that students check e-mail regularly for important announcements, scholarship notices, and special events. Indeed, the assigned university email account is considered an “official” means

of communication, and all students are responsible for regularly monitoring their university email. All students have mailboxes located in in the Program offices.

Parking

A large parking area is provided for students (C sticker) at Commonwealth Stadium, with regular shuttle bus service to the Medical Center and the Lexington Campus. This parking area is within walking distance of the Graduate Center. Parking permits can be obtained from the University Parking Services; check the website <http://www.uky.edu/pts/> or call 257-5757 for additional information.

Final Notes

For additional information on University regulations and procedures regarding doctoral programs, consult the Graduate Bulletin of the University of Kentucky Graduate School (<http://www.research.uky.edu/gs/CurrentStudents/bulletin.html>).

University Governing Regulations prohibit all discrimination on the basis of sex, race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, color, creed, religion, age or political belief. Sexual harassment is an explicit violation of Administrative Regulations and should be reported. As a condition for being a student in the Graduate Center for Gerontology, you are required to attend a Program on sexual harassment during your first semester of enrollment.

Information in this Handbook is regularly updated but in the rapidly changing environment of the contemporary university, there is sometimes a lag between the implementation of changes and their inclusion in printed and on-line material. Consequently, it would be greatly appreciated if you would communicate with the DGS if you discover any aspects of the Handbook that needs to be updated. Feedback on ways in which the Handbook can be improved is also welcome at any time.

Appendix

Gerontology Ph.D. Competencies

The Council on Education for Public (CEPH) is the national accrediting body for public health. Accrediting assessments require that all degree programs establish certain “competencies” for students. You will find listed below the competencies for the gerontology Ph.D., and students are encouraged to attend to achieving these competencies as they progress towards the doctorate.

- Knowledge of and critical expertise in at least three thematic areas within gerontology and the student’s more specific topic of research.
 - Competence in written and oral communication: Students will demonstrate effective skills at presenting and defending their ideas and their research in both spoken and written formats.
 - A comprehensive appreciation of the history and interdisciplinary philosophy of gerontology.
 - Competence in thinking critically, and in ways that are holistic and integrative: Students will demonstrate ability to assess immediate and potential value of extant knowledge, and to formulate strategies for synthesizing knowledge and understanding drawn from disciplinary disparate but thematically relevant literatures.
 - Excelling in a professional academic setting: Students will demonstrate the ability to excel in a professional academic setting, as appropriate for their chosen career: Expertise in teaching practices
 - Excelling in a professional academic setting: Students will demonstrate the ability to excel in a professional academic setting, as appropriate for their chosen career: The ability to write high quality research grants and contract proposals
 - Excelling in a professional academic setting: Students will demonstrate the ability to excel in a professional academic setting, as appropriate for their chosen career: The ability to present in a clear and effective manner at professional conferences.
- A knowledge and appreciation of the strengths, weaknesses and applications of different methodologies and their associated measurement techniques: Students will demonstrate the ability to effectively and judiciously apply appropriate techniques in the context of independent and original research.
 - Expertise in theories and research design: The ability to formulate theoretically sound evidence based research problems and research questions
 - Expertise in theories and research design: The ability to design and carry out an appropriate and effective literature review and undertake original field or laboratory work for addressing the research problem and research questions;
 - Expertise in theories and research design: The ability to analyze and interpret data using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method techniques appropriate to the student’s particular research design and data.
 - A knowledge and appreciation of the strengths, weaknesses and applications of different methodologies and their associated measurement techniques: Students will demonstrate knowledge of the range of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method techniques used in gerontology research