

GERONTOLOGY, MASTER OF SCIENCE (M.S.)

Program goal

The Department of Gerontology serves the people of the commonwealth of Virginia and the nation by providing educational programs related to the understanding of aging and promoting optimal aging. The department encourages education through discovery of new knowledge, interdisciplinary interaction, professional behavior and service to the aging network. The department's primary focus is to prepare individuals for positions in the network of aging services. These gerontologists are educated to serve as supporters of optimal aging for older persons and families and caregivers. The master's program provides quality education leading to careers as services providers, educators and researchers. The department's assisted living administration specialty area is NAB-accredited and will prepare students who seek licensure as an assisted living administrator. The department also provides assistance and services to the community and engages in research and scholarly activities related to gerontology.

The goal of the program is to ensure that students in the program will:

1. Understand the biological, psychological and sociological underpinnings of aging in U.S. society as established by Association for Gerontology in Higher Education core competencies.
2. Gain understanding and respect for the interdisciplinary team process in effective gerontological practice.
3. Through a lifespan biopsychosocialspiritual approach, gain understanding of empirically and theoretically based components contributing to optimal quality of life and performance in late life as well as knowledge and skills in best practices to promote optimal aging across the life span.
4. Gain understanding of the existing aging network across federal, state and local levels. Thorough understanding will enable students to successfully identify their niche in the aging network, contribute to a growing field and deliver effective eldercare services.

Student learning outcomes

1. Students will demonstrate understanding and application of the biological, psychological, sociological and spiritual theories of aging to gerontology practice.
2. Students will demonstrate understanding and respect for the interdisciplinary team process in effective gerontological practice and essential role of various disciplines on the care team. Students develop a clearer understanding of eldercare through the biopsychosocial approach, lifespan perspective and the theories within the field (as implicit in AGHE's core competencies).
3. Students will demonstrate a thorough understanding of the multiple paths, methods and techniques of optimal aging in order to assist older persons, their families, program providers and policymakers toward the goal of optimal aging. A comprehensive understanding of gerontology core concepts is essential to this goal.
4. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the aging network and will be able to make contributions to community-identified needs through the successful delivery of services in the aging network. Community engagement will take the form of field work, research, grant writing, service-learning opportunities, education and training.

VCU Graduate Bulletin, VCU Graduate School and general academic policies and regulations for all graduate students in all graduate programs

The VCU Graduate Bulletin website documents the official admission and academic rules and regulations that govern graduate education for all graduate programs at the university. These policies are established by the graduate faculty of the university through their elected representatives to the University Graduate Council.

It is the responsibility of all graduate students, both on- and off-campus, to be familiar with the VCU Graduate Bulletin as well as the Graduate School website (<http://www.graduate.vcu.edu>) and academic regulations in individual school and department publications and on program websites. However, in all cases, the official policies and procedures of the University Graduate Council, as published on the VCU Graduate Bulletin and Graduate School websites, take precedence over individual program policies and guidelines.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on academic regulations for graduate students. (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs>)

Degree candidacy requirements

A graduate student admitted to a program or concentration requiring a final research project, work of art, thesis or dissertation, must qualify for continuing master's or doctoral status according to the degree candidacy requirements of the student's graduate program. Admission to degree candidacy, if applicable, is a formal statement by the graduate student's faculty regarding the student's academic achievements and the student's readiness to proceed to the final research phase of the degree program.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following degree candidacy policy as published in the VCU Graduate Bulletin for complete information and instructions.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on degree candidacy requirements. (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/candidacy>)

Graduation requirements

As graduate students approach the end of their academic programs and the final semester of matriculation, they must make formal application to graduate. No degrees will be conferred until the application to graduate has been finalized.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following graduation requirements as published in the Graduate Bulletin for a complete list of instructions and a graduation checklist.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on graduation requirements. (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info>)

Apply online at graduate.admissions.vcu.edu (<http://www.graduate.admissions.vcu.edu>).

Admission requirements

Degree:	Semester(s) of entry:	Deadline dates:	Test requirements:
M.S.	Fall	June 1	GRE or MAT
	Spring	Nov 1	
	Summer	Mar 1	

In addition to the general admission requirements of the VCU Graduate School (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/admission-graduate-study/admission-requirements>), applicants must meet the following requirements:

The program is open to qualified students who have earned a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university or the equivalent, maintained a minimum GPA of 3.0 and have satisfactory scores on the GRE or MAT. A successful work experience may strengthen the admission credentials of applicants with marginal records.

Because of the diversity of undergraduate majors, candidates for the gerontology program must present evidence of successful completion of undergraduate courses in the following areas:

1. Biological science – minimum of six credit hours
2. Psychology – minimum of three credit hours
3. Sociology, anthropology or social work – minimum of three credit hours
4. Statistics, research methods or equivalent – minimum of three credit hours (Topics covered in this undergraduate course should be equivalent to those outlined for STAT 212 in the VCU courses database.)

Candidates for admission who do not meet these requirements will be expected to complete the required undergraduate course work or to pass challenge examinations by the end of the first year.

Degree requirements

In addition to general VCU Graduate School graduation requirements (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info>), students must complete a 30-credit hour curriculum based on the core curriculum to include either a generalist area of study or one of the following optional specialty areas of study:

Assisted living administration: This specialty area will provide students with a foundation of knowledge in the long-term care continuum. Students electing this option will learn about assisted living, home and community-based services and nursing home care. Educational content is provided that informs students about the different types of services that exist. Students completing this area of study will gain the necessary skills and knowledge required to complete the assisted living administrator licensing exam. This specialty area is NAB-accredited.

Education: This specialty area is designed for students interested in teaching or training careers in gerontology. Students electing this specialty area will be prepared to provide instruction to university or community college students, the lay public, professional service providers and older people.

Health care organization and planning: (in conjunction with the Department of Health Administration) Upon completing this area of study, students will have a foundation of knowledge in health care organization, health planning, health policy and a macro perspective on the financing of health care. In addition, students will have developed skills in policy

analysis and the use of economic tools. Finally, students will broaden their understanding of the political, legal and ethical issues involved in health care organization and planning.

Psychogeriatrics: This specialty area, developed jointly with the Department of Psychology, is designed for students interested in working with those older adults and their families who are experiencing psychological difficulty. Students electing this option will be prepared to provide assistance directly to the elderly and their families as well as to consult and train professionals and paraprofessionals to provide more effective mental health services. Training is provided through a combination of specialized didactic instruction and structured field experience in providing direct services, consultation and education.

Public administration: Students who elect to pursue courses in the public administration area, developed jointly with the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, will, after completion of course work, be able to plan, organize, report and budget for public programs in aging. Grant writing and program evaluation skills will be developed as well. Students choosing the public administration option may wish to complete the Certificate in Public Management program or the Certificate in Nonprofit Management program.

Research: This specialty area is designed for students who would ultimately like to pursue a doctoral degree in the social or behavioral sciences or in one of the health-related sciences in the College of Health Professions. Students who elect the research option must complete a thesis or a paper of publishable quality. Students will obtain a strong background in experimental psychology research design and methodology and a broad background in life-span developmental theory.

Social services: This option concentrates on developing specialized knowledge and skills in the provision of services to the elderly, basic understanding and skills in at least one method of social work practice, commitment and ability to participate in the development of strategies and policies relevant to amelioration of social problems of the elderly, and the ability to integrate and use in practice knowledge of individual behavior and social structure with particular reference to the needs of the elderly.

Students should consult with their advisers for guidance with scheduling. It is required that students seek advising to determine how they will complete their five practice elective credit hours.

Curriculum requirements

Course	Title	Hours
GRTY 601	Biological and Physiological Aging	3
GRTY/PSYC 602	Psychology of Aging	3
GRTY 603	Social Gerontology	3
GRTY 604	Problems, Issues and Trends in Gerontology	4
GRTY 605	Social Science Research Methods Applied to Gerontology	3
GRTY 606	Aging and Human Values	3
GRTY 607	Field Study in Gerontology	4
GRTY 608	Grant Writing	2
Elective requirement. Select five credit hours from one of the lists below		5
Total Hours		30

Total graduate credit hours required (minimum) 30 Electives¹

Course	Title	Hours
Assisted living administration		
GRTY 638	Long-term Care Administration	3
GRTY 639	Human Resource Management and Leadership for Gerontologists	1
GRTY 640	Financial Management for Gerontological Leaders	1
Education		
ALHP 591	Special Topics	1-4
GRTY 501	Physiological Aging	3
GRTY 510	Aging	3
GRTY 609	Career Planning	1
GRTY 620	Geriatric Interdisciplinary Team Training	1
GRTY 691	Topical Seminar	3
GRTY 692	Independent Studies	1-3
GRTY 792	Independent Studies for Master's-/Ph.D.-level Students	3
GRTY 798 or GRTY 799	Thesis Thesis	3-6
Health care organization and planning		
ALHP 591	Special Topics	1-4
GRTY 510	Aging	3
GRTY 609	Career Planning	1
GRTY 620	Geriatric Interdisciplinary Team Training	1
GRTY 638	Long-term Care Administration	3
GRTY 691	Topical Seminar	3
GRTY 692	Independent Studies	1-3
GRTY 792	Independent Studies for Master's-/Ph.D.-level Students	3
GRTY 798 or GRTY 799	Thesis Thesis	3-6
Psychogeriatrics		
ALHP 591	Special Topics	1-4
GRTY 501	Physiological Aging	3
GRTY 510	Aging	3
GRTY 609	Career Planning	1
GRTY 610	Gero-pharmacology	1
GRTY 611	Death and Dying	3
GRTY 613	GLBT in Aging	2
GRTY 615	Aging and Mental Disorders	3
GRTY 616	Geriatric Rehabilitation	3
GRTY 624	Community and Community Services for the Elderly	3
GRTY 629	Spirituality and Aging	2-3
GRTY 641	Survey of Psychological Assessment and Treatment of the Older Adult	3
GRTY 642	Practicum in Clinical Geropsychology	3
GRTY 691	Topical Seminar	3
GRTY 692	Independent Studies	1-3
GRTY 792	Independent Studies for Master's-/Ph.D.-level Students	3

GRTY 798 or GRTY 799	Thesis Thesis	3-6
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Public administration

ALHP 591	Special Topics	1-4
GRTY 501	Physiological Aging	3
GRTY 510	Aging	3
GRTY 609	Career Planning	1
GRTY 620	Geriatric Interdisciplinary Team Training	1
GRTY 691	Topical Seminar	3
GRTY 692	Independent Studies	1-3
GRTY 792	Independent Studies for Master's-/Ph.D.-level Students	3

GRTY 798 or GRTY 799	Thesis Thesis	3-6
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Additional courses of interest may be available through the Certificate in Public Management.

Research

ALHP 591	Special Topics	1-4
GRTY 501	Physiological Aging	3
GRTY 510	Aging	3
GRTY 691	Topical Seminar	3
GRTY 692	Independent Studies	1-3
GRTY 792	Independent Studies for Master's-/Ph.D.-level Students	3

GRTY 798 or GRTY 799	Thesis Thesis	3-6
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Social services

ALHP 591	Special Topics	1-4
GRTY 501	Physiological Aging	3
GRTY 510	Aging	3
GRTY 609	Career Planning	1
GRTY 618	The Business of Geriatric Care Management	3
GRTY 619	Geriatric Care Management Practicum	1-3
GRTY 620	Geriatric Interdisciplinary Team Training	1
GRTY 691	Topical Seminar	3
GRTY 692	Independent Studies	1-3
GRTY 792	Independent Studies for Master's-/Ph.D.-level Students	3

GRTY 798 or GRTY 799	Thesis Thesis	3-6
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Additional electives, based on areas of interest, may be chosen in consultation with the student's adviser.

Graduate program director

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Program website: chp.vcu.edu/gerontology (<http://www.sahp.vcu.edu/gerontology>)