GERONTOLOGY — M.S.

Program director
Kimberly Freeman

Gerontology is the multidisciplinary-multidimensional study of aging and aging processes. Emphasis is placed on the knowledge and skills required for competent practice, with considerable attention given to understanding the social, cultural, and economic factors that affect services for this population.

Mission
The mission of the Gerontology Program is to provide graduate-level education for future and current professionals who are dedicated to enhancing the lives of older adults through evidenced-based interventions.

Program objectives
- Students will demonstrate the ability to integrate human behavior and developmental theories of aging, incorporating a bio-psycho-social-spiritual strength-based orientation to geriatric practice.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to use research in evaluating the effectiveness of practice and programs in achieving intended outcomes for older adults.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to integrate into practice an understanding of intersectionality and the unique needs of older adults belonging to specific racial, ethnic, socioeconomic groups; of men and women; and of those with different sexual orientations.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of professional ethics in proving assistance to older adults.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of the policies that shape and regulate the continuum of care and services available to older adults.

General overview
The 48-unit program begins with 14 units of core course work required for all students. The curriculum is further divided into three professional areas of study which include: religion and ethics, social research methods, and geriatric practice. Students also take specialized selectives to further enhance their area of interest. The curriculum allows students to develop their knowledge and skills in locating and providing resources, services, and opportunities for older adults and their families; as well as a problem-solving approach supporting the development of coping skills for older adults and their caregivers.

In addition to the above, students are given either a thesis or a nonthesis (professional practicum) option.

1. Thesis: Students who choose the thesis option complete 6 research-related units and 5 units of selectives.
2. Nonthesis: Students choosing the internship option complete a practical orientation, 540 hours of integrated practicum and seminar, and 11 units of didactic selectives.

Admissions
In addition to Loma Linda University (http://llucatalog.llu.edu/about-university/admission-policies-information/admissionrequirementstext) admission requirements, this program follows the admission requirements of the School of Behavioral Health (http://llucatalog.llu.edu/behavioral-health/#generalregulationstext), as follows:

1. Applicants must meet the minimum academic and professional compatibility criteria established by the program. These criteria include:
   - A cumulative undergraduate grade point average of 3.0 or above (on a 4.0 scale). Applicants with lower grade point averages will be considered if the last 45-quarter credits (30 semester units) of non-field practica coursework shows significant improvement or if they have additional attributes that demonstrate preparedness and an appropriate fit for graduate education in Gerontology and geriatric practice. Work and volunteer experiences must be verified by employer supervisor statements on official agency stationery. Further consideration will also be given to individuals who provide evidence of additional graduate coursework, certifications, and/or training that illustrate preliminary preparation for a career in Gerontology. Students who are admitted to the Gerontology Program with a cumulative G.P.A. below 3.0 may be required to participate in individualized academic assessment and a targeted learning assistance program.
   - Demonstration, through the application and interview processes, of compatibility with professional standards set by the Program including the ability to develop and nurture interpersonal relationships, communication skills, self-awareness, professional comportment, critical thinking skills, fit with the mission and values of Loma Linda University and the Department of Social Work and Social Ecology, and the capacity to successfully complete the Master of Science in Gerontology curriculum.

2. Submission of three letters of recommendation (one from an academic source and one from a work supervisor preferred).

Program requirements
The 48-unit curriculum for the Master of Science degree in Gerontology provides the mix of academic, experiential, and research activities essential for M.S. degree students.

Students must maintain a grade point average of 3.0 (or a letter grade of B on a 4.0 scale) in order to progress successfully though the program and complete the degree. In addition, students must meet the knowledge, skills, and professional performance competencies outlined by the program.

All course grades should meet the minimum B (3.0) standard, which by university policy indicates satisfactory performance. Courses in which a student earns a grade below a B (3.0) may need to be repeated (or may not apply to the degree) if competency in the subject area is related to practice performance with clients, and a grade less than a 3.0 represents marginal or unsatisfactory practice performance.

Core gerontology courses
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GER0 515</td>
<td>Diversity and Aging</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER0 615</td>
<td>Economics and Management Issues of Older Adult Services</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER0 617</td>
<td>Bio-psycho-social-spiritual Theories of Aging</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOWK 585</td>
<td>Legal and Ethical Aspects in Health and Behavioral Health Services</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Religion, philosophy, and ethics
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RELE 524</td>
<td>Bioethics and Society</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
or RELR 568 Care of the Dying and Bereaved

Social research methods
SOWK 548 Research Methods 5

Geriatric practice
GERO 654 Therapeutic Interventions with Older Adults 3
SOWK 647 Integrated Behavioral Health 2
SOWK 661 Psychodynamic Therapies 3
SOWK 661L Psychodynamic Practice Lab 1
SOWK 663 Crisis and Trauma Interventions 3
SOWK 681 Behavioral Health Policies and Systems 2

Degree completion options 12

Nonthesis option:
Selectives (12 units)
GERO 599 Directed Study/Special Project
PSYC 685 Drug Addiction and Therapy
PSYC 686 Child, Partner, and Elder Abuse
SOWK 513 Human Behavior in a Culturally Diverse Environment
SOWK 648 Co-occurring Processes and Interventions
SOWK 659 Recovery in Behavioral Health
SOWK 683 Advanced Policy Analysis
SOWK 684 Advanced Policy Projects

Professional Practicum 1
GERO 757A Professional Practicum and Seminar
GERO 757B Professional Practicum and Seminar
GERO 757C Professional Practicum and Seminar
SOWK 578 Field Orientation

Thesis option:
Selective (6 units from selectives listed above)
SOWK 697 Applied Research (4 units)
SOWK 698 Thesis (2 units)

Total Units 48

1 Professional practicum and seminar units are not calculated into total didactic units required for the degree.

Normal time to complete the program
2 years (7 academic quarters) based on full-time enrollment; part time permitted

Courses

GERO 515. Diversity and Aging. 3 Units.
Assists students in understanding the complexity of variables related to the aging process. Examines ethnicity, gender, social class, and culture within the context of the physical, mental, social, political, and financial effects of aging.

GERO 599. Directed Study/Special Project. 1-4 Units.
Limited to matriculating master's degree in gerontology students who wish to pursue independent investigations in criminal justice practice or policy under the direction of a department faculty member.

GERO 615. Economics and Management Issues of Older Adult Services. 4 Units.
Acquaints students with economic and management issues and their impact on social policies that direct older adult services. Uses descriptions of economic and management issues to analyze system impact on social policies related to the older adult population. Students learn how to meet the challenges inherent in a dynamic and rapidly changing environment and develop skills and competencies for meeting future challenges and bridging the gap between theory and practice.

GERO 617. Bio-psycho-social-spiritual Theories of Aging. 4 Units.
An interdisciplinary team-taught learning experience that provides an integrative understanding of the bio-psycho-social-spiritual aspects and theories of aging, and the impact of these on older adults and their families.

GERO 654. Therapeutic Interventions with Older Adults. 3 Units.
Integrates theories and practice skills needed for effective interventions with older adults and their families. Considers the significance of the individual's bio-psychosocial-spiritual history within an environmental context while also recognizing the specific needs of older adults. Assessment and evidence-based clinical intervention methods that bridge health and mental health services are also examined along with service delivery and case-management systems.

GERO 697. Research. 2-4 Units.
Supports students choosing to complete the thesis option. Provides research matriculation in the collection and analysis of data for the thesis. Students required to register for two quarters, or a total of 4 units.

GERO 698. Thesis. 2 Units.
The culminating portion of the student's independent research, under the direction of the research advisor. Students register for class during the quarter in which they defend their research and submit their final document to the department and to the School of Behavioral Health.

GERO 757A. Professional Practicum and Seminar. 3 Units.
Students complete 3 units of professional practicum during each quarter. Each 3 units require 160 hours of practicum and 20 hours of seminar.

GERO 757B. Professional Practicum and Seminar. 3 Units.
Students complete 3 units of professional practicum during each quarter. Each 3 units require 160 hours of practicum and 20 hours of seminar.

GERO 757C. Professional Practicum and Seminar. 3 Units.
Experiential learning in gerontology settings. Students placed at practicum sites that serve geriatric clients. Students must satisfactorily complete 160 practicum hours and 20 hours of concurrent seminar.

GERO 787. Advanced Professional Practicum and Seminar. 4 Units.
Experiential learning in advanced gerontology practice. Students must satisfactorily complete 200 practicum hours and 20 hours of concurrent seminar.