

# GERONTOLOGY – M.S.

**Program director**  
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Closed to admission for the 2023-2024 academic year.

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 current and future professionals who are dedicated to enhancing the lives of older adults through evidenced-based interventions.

## Program learning outcomes

By the end of this program, the graduate should be able to:

1. Integrate human behavior and developmental theories of aging, incorporating a bio-psycho-social-spiritual strength-based orientation to geriatric practice.
2. Use research in evaluating the effectiveness of practice and programs in achieving intended outcomes for older adults.
3. Integrate into practice 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.
4. Demonstrate professional ethics in providing assistance to older adults.
5. Effectively implement evidenced-based interventions that enhance the lives of older adults.
6. Follow policies that shape and regulate the continuum of care and services available to older adults.

## General overview

The 48-unit program provides students with a balance of academic, experiential, and research activities essential for work with older adults. The curriculum begins with 22 units of foundational coursework divided into three professional areas of study: gerontology, religion and wholeness, and social research methods. During the final year of study, students complete geriatric practice courses along with specialized selectives. 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. Students are required to have a laptop computer. For computer specifications, see the department website (<https://behavioralhealth.llu.edu/academics/social-work-and-social-ecology/social-work-msw-online-or-campus/>).

In addition to the above, students are given either a thesis or a non-thesis professional practicum option.

1. Thesis: completion of six research-related units and five units of selectives.

2. Nonthesis: completion of a practical orientation, 540 hours of integrated practicum and seminar, and 11 units of didactic selectives.

## Admissions

Closed to admission for the 2023-2024 academic year.

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

1. A four-year baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university.
2. U.S. Citizenship
3. A personal statement
4. At least three letters of recommendation—preferably one of which is from an academic source and one from a work supervisor.
5. 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. 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.

## Program requirements

Closed to admission for the 2023-2024 academic year.

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.

A grade of B or better indicates a student has mastered knowledge, skills, and professional practice performance competencies outlined by the program. In order to progress successfully through the program and complete the degree, students must meet the G.P.A. and course repeat expectations set by the School of Behavioral Health in the general regulations (<http://llucatalog.llu.edu/behavioral-health/#generalregulationstext>) section of this CATALOG.

### Core gerontology courses

GERO 515	Diversity and Aging
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GERO 615	Economics and Management Issues of Older Adult Services	4
GERO 617	Bio-psycho-social-spiritual Theories of Aging	4
SOWK 585	Legal and Ethical Aspects in Health and Behavioral Health Services	3
<b>Religion, wholeness, and relationships</b>		
RELR 540	Wholeness and Health <sup>2</sup>	3
<b>Social research methods</b>		
SOWK 548	Research Methods	5
<b>Geriatric practice</b>		
GERO 654	Therapeutic Interventions with Older Adults	3
SOWK 647	Integrated Behavioral Health Practice	3
SOWK 661	Psychodynamic Therapies	4
SOWK 663	Crisis and Trauma Interventions	3
SOWK 681	Behavioral Health Policies and Systems	2
<b>Degree completion options</b>		<b>11</b>
Nonthesis option:		
<b>Selectives (11 units)</b>		
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 684	Advanced Policy Projects	
<b>Professional Practicum <sup>1</sup></b>		
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 (5 units from selectives listed above)		
SOWK 697	Applied Research (4 units)	
SOWK 698	Thesis (2 units)	
<b>Total Units</b>		<b>48</b>

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

<sup>2</sup> Fulfills service learning requirement

## Normal time to complete the program

Two (2) years (seven [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. 1,4 Unit.

Provides experiential learning in advanced criminal justice practice. Students complete 200 practicum hours and 20 hours of concurrent seminar over one or four quarters, depending on the program option.