STUDENT HANDBOOK & PROGRAM RESOURCE GUIDE
Master of Arts in Gerontology

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

School of Aging Studies
College of Behavioral and Community Sciences
University of South Florida
Revised, Summer 2019
The USF Graduate Catalog provides the principal authority for all policies affecting students; however, some policies set forth in the Graduate Catalog only represent minimum requirements of the State of Florida or the University. The Student Handbook is meant to be a supplement to the Graduate Catalog providing program requirements that may exceed the minimums identified in the Graduate Catalog. Students are ultimately responsible for their graduate education and assuring that they are in compliance with the requirements designated in the Graduate Catalog and the Student Handbook. The School of Aging Studies offers two graduate degree programs: the M.A. in Gerontology and the Ph.D. in Aging Studies. This handbook is intended for use by students in the M.A. program in Gerontology. The Ph.D. Program in Aging Studies has its own handbook.

Introduction

The ultimate goal of this program is to educate the next generation of practitioners and program personnel in the field of aging and gerontology and to prepare interested students for doctoral programs in aging. The demographic imperative of an increasingly older age distribution will require graduates who have acquired an integrated base of knowledge and skills to deal with the complex challenges that will confront individuals, societies, and nations in the coming decades. Students will be taught analytic skills to view issues from interdisciplinary perspectives, and to integrate new information into their area of specialization by familiarizing themselves with the terminology, methods, and approaches to meeting the challenges of older people in our society. Graduates will be practitioners and leaders who view their graduate education as providing the foundation for lifelong learning and the pursuit of professional expertise.

Gerontology is the study of the process of human aging in all its aspects: physical, psychological, and social. In the School of Aging Studies particular emphasis is placed on educating students who, in their professional careers, will work to sustain or improve the quality of life of older people. Many of our program graduates are employed in agencies providing services for older people or have pursued research careers through subsequent doctoral education.

Opportunities

The need for graduates to understand the psychological, sociological, economic, and political influences of an aging society is great and increasing. Although growth in the elderly population is challenging the entire country, Florida's demographics make us a national laboratory for aging studies as our population will continue to age and change twenty-five years ahead of the rest of the country. USF research and educational programs in Gerontology are designed to prepare graduates to make a difference in the lives of older citizens and their communities.

The graduate programs in Gerontology provide students with a broad and integrated background in the theories and growing knowledge base to support their specialization in the field of aging. The overall goal is for students to become familiar with
the many important questions and challenges as well as the terminology and the methods of research and service provision to older Americans. The graduate programs also train students to recognize that there are multiple perspectives on virtually all problems that confront individuals working in the field of aging, and that no traditional discipline has a monopoly on answers. Graduates of the program possess the background and training necessary to staff the expanding institutional and community-based programs serving the older adults in Florida, the nation, and the world, or to continue their education at the doctoral level.

The need for skilled practitioners, managers, and leaders is not limited to the local community-based providers. Local, state, and national governments will increasingly rely upon graduates of Gerontology programs to design and implement new programs to deal with the impact of an aging society. The state and the nation are undergoing health care reforms that have already set in motion changes that will impact the segment of our society with greatest use of the health care system -- the aged. Revisions in the financing and configuration of entitlement programs such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid require a cadre of professionals able to respond to new needs and demands for service. Every aspect of domestic life will be affected. The private sector will not only require a retrainable aging workforce with specialized experiences, they will also be driven by the opportunities of a maturing market. In addition, sweeping changes in the Social Security and Medicare Systems may greatly affect the ranks of retired individuals and the retirement decisions they will make. Understanding how to adapt goods and services to the needs of older persons, how to best utilize the resources of older workers, and how to tap the expertise of retirees will be important questions for the private and the public sector in the future.

Program Alumni

MA alumni are among the best aspects of the program. Because of the diversity in ways the MA degree professionally advances our students, MA alumni take positions in a variety of settings and roles. Currently, program alumni are program developers and managers, geriatric case managers, and clinical researchers.

In addition to their positions in the aging network, we are fortunate that many continue their relationship with the School as mentors, internship supervisors, and, on occasion, serve as adjunct instructors.
USF is located within a community that provides a natural laboratory for the study of aging. There is a history of outstanding programs in aging at USF, and a number of departments, centers, laboratories, and other units have concentrations in aging studies. The College of Behavioral and Community Sciences houses the School of Aging Studies, which established the first master's degree in gerontology in 1967, started undergraduate B.A. and B.S. degrees more than thirty years ago, and houses the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. program in Aging Studies, which began in 1994. The School of Aging Studies consists of faculty members with training in gerontology, sociology, psychology, economics, public policy, and human development. The School of Aging Studies includes the Florida Policy Exchange Center on Aging, which conducts policy-related research, training, and demonstration projects. It provides a unique opportunity to transmit policy information directly to Florida government officials. The Training Academy on Aging, a program within the Policy Exchange Center, provides an array of educational programs for persons engaged in the delivery of services to older adults.

As one of the Florida universities with a public medical school, USF has a strong focus on biomedical research. The College of Medicine is the home to academic divisions of Geriatric Medicine and Geriatric Psychiatry, as well as the Memory Disorder Clinic. USF’s focus on biomedical research in Alzheimer’s disease includes the USF Health Byrd Alzheimer’s Center and Research Institute and the Center for Aging and Brain Repair. The Senior Adult Oncology Program is housed at the Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute. The College of Nursing has faculty with strong interests in gerontological nursing, training the next generation of nurses who will specialize in the health needs of an aging population. The Center for Hospice, Palliative Care and End-of-Life Studies supports research and education focused on important issues for terminally ill patients and their caregivers. The College of Public Health houses aging studies faculty in the Departments of Community and Family Health, Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Health Policy and Management, and Environmental and Occupational Health. The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute offers many educational opportunities for older adults living in the Tampa Bay area, including a highly successful SeniorNet program.
M.A. in Gerontology

The School of Aging Studies offers the M.A. in Gerontology, with an optional internship program. In addition to completing a required core curriculum, students may select gerontology courses suited to their particular career goals. These include courses focused on such diverse areas as research, program administration, and direct service. An internship option is highly recommended for all students who are not already employed in the field of aging. All students in the M.A. in Gerontology program must pass a capstone project prior to graduating.

Course Requirements

The M.A. degree requires the satisfactory completion of 30 credit hours of course work, 15 hours of which must include core courses.

Core Courses (15 Credits, required of all students)

- GEY 5476 Program/Services Evaluation in Gerontology (3)
- GEY 6600 Human Development (3)
- GEY 6613 Physical Change and Aging (3)
- GEY 6626 Health, Ethnicity, and Aging (3)
- GEY 6910 Directed Research in Gerontology- MA Capstone (3)

Elective Courses (15 Credits)

- GEY 5504 Assisted Living Facility Mgmt (3)
- GEY 5630 Economics of Aging (3)
- GEY 6206 Family Caregiving/Aging & Chron. Ill (3)
- GEY 6222 Elder Abuse Assess & Intervention (3)
- GEY 6614 Aging and Mental Disorders (3)
- GEY 6616 Mental Health Assessment/ Aging (3)
- GEY 6617 Geront. Counseling/Theory Practice (3)
- GEY 5501 Health Care Operations in LTC (3)
- GEY 5642 Perspectives on Death and Dying (3)
- GEY 6321 Gerontological Case Management (3)
- GEY 6607 Alzheimer’s Disease Management (3)
- GEY 6901 Directed Readings in Gerontology (3)
- GEY 6934 Special Topics in Gerontology (3)
- GEY 6940 Internship (variable hours)
M.A. Gerontology Advising Tracking Form

The M.A. Program Advising Form is given to all students upon beginning the program for planning purposes. It helps each student view course options and make decisions regarding timing of coursework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Core Courses (12 credits) (online)</th>
<th>Semester Completed</th>
<th>Semester In-Progress</th>
<th>Future</th>
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<td>GEY 5476 Program Evaluation Aging Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEY 6934 Understand. Policy &amp; Practice LTC*</td>
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<td>GEY 6940 Internship (variable hours)*</td>
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Required Capstone Experience (3 credits)

| GEY 6910 Capstone Directed Research |

* Classroom/In Person Elective courses for students able to travel to the Tampa campus for scheduled class meetings.
Capstone Experience

All students must complete a Capstone experience prior to graduating. After completing their core courses in the final semester before graduation, the student will enroll in GEY 6910 Directed Research. The Research Project Development Capstone experience will be an individualized experience for each student. Each student will develop a project to build upon their professional experience and career goals. The project must receive a grade of Pass in order for the student to graduate.

Internships

GEY 6940 Internship/Field Placement (1-6 credit hours) is offered in the MA program, though only under special circumstances. For students residing in the USF service area, an internship or another directed research project with a faculty member may serve as the capstone experience and count towards credit for the degree. Please discuss this with the M.A. Program Director at least a semester before registering for the capstone.

Transfer of Coursework for M.A. Degree

Students may satisfy up to one quarter of the credit hours required for the M.A. program (9 credits) by transfer of graduate credits taken in other graduate programs at USF or at other universities, provided that those courses were not used toward a completed degree. Such transfer credits will be accepted only if the coursework is relevant to the course of study in the M.A. program, and is judged to be of sufficient quality to merit acceptance as graduate credit at the University of South Florida. Students in the M.A. Program who wish to transfer credits should submit a written request to the M.A. Program Director at the time of applying for admission to the program. The written request should include a description and syllabus of the course for which the student wishes to obtain transfer credit and a justification describing how the course fits into the student’s academic goals. The M.A. Program Director will make the final determination on transfer of credits for M.A. students.

Students may wish to waive requirements for one or more core courses, without transferring in an equivalent graduate course. In this case the Gerontology faculty member on the Tampa Campus who teaches the core course will determine whether the previous course is sufficient to merit its being waived. Waiving the requirements for taking a core course does not reduce the credit hour requirements of the M.A. degree. The student must replace the waived course with another course that will contribute to meeting the degree requirements.

Only six credits hours of the M.A. program coursework can be taken outside of Gerontology courses, and only with the permission of the M.A. Graduate Program Director.
Academic Probation

Masters students must maintain an academic average of 3.0 to remain in good standing in the graduate program. Students with academic averages that fall below 3.0 will be placed on academic probation. These students have one semester to bring their academic average to 3.0 or better. Students failing to raise their academic averages to 3.0 or better will be terminated from the program. Students need to be aware that any course taken while in a graduate program, even if the course is not part of the student’s graduate curriculum, will be counted in the graduate GPA. If you wish to take courses outside your major, be sure to either take them pass/fail or plan on getting at least a B in the course.

Financial Assistance

Financial Assistance may be available through the Office of Graduate Studies, the College of Behavioral and Community Sciences, the Office of Financial Aid, or external sources. It is wise to check all sources to be fully aware of the programs for which you may qualify.

The School of Aging Studies offers scholarships for students in graduate degree programs. Students wishing to apply for the following scholarships should contact the School of Aging Studies.

Scholarships

The Dr. Tom Rich Scholarship Award, sponsored by the West Florida Area Agency on Aging, provides a scholarship to a graduate level (Masters) student who is currently enrolled in an accredited university and interested in gerontology or geriatrics as a future career. The scholarship will be awarded for an “internship” or a “practicum”, (i.e., clinical or fieldwork). Applicants must submit an essay of 1,000 words on: “Integrate your interest in aging with the role of an Area Agency on Aging.”

The Harold L. Sheppard Endowed Memorial Scholarship was created in memory of Harold L. Sheppard, who was a strong supporter of the M.A. Program in Gerontology during his tenure on the Gerontology faculty. The Sheppard Scholarship provides a financial award to an M.A. student who is recognized by the faculty for outstanding academic achievement.

Graduate Teaching Assistantships

The School of Aging Studies has limited funding to support Graduate Teaching Assistantships. Graduate TA’s are awarded based on the student’s academic achievement and the School’s need for teaching assistants. For more information, contact the M.A. Graduate Program Director.
M.A. Program Resources

Key Personnel

While a number of faculty and staff contribute to the M.A. program, here are some key personnel with whom you will most directly work:

- Dr. Brianne Stanback, M.A. Program Director and Advisor
- Megan Anthony, Academic Specialist
- Ms. Kelly McCartney, M.A. Program Graduate Assistant

Academic Advising & Registration

Generally, students receive individual advising ahead of registration and ongoing advising as needed or requested. Sometimes, a plan is established at the start of the degree and it guides progress. In other cases, advising will occur over email or through a Skype meeting on a semester-by-semester basis. No matter what, academic advising is available to you with the expressed goal of helping you navigate the degree in the best way for your professional goals.

Regardless of the frequency of advising sessions, students will receive an email about their prospective registration from the M.A. program advisor and be asked to respond with their class choices. Once the student and M.A. program advisor agree on the classes, students will be directed to contact the academic program specialist for a course permit to enroll in their courses. Graduate courses in the School are only available via permit, so please be sure to check your USF email and respond in a timely manner to avoid delays and potential late enrollment fees.

USF Information Technology

USF Academic Computing is the main campus support for computer and Canvas issues. A current list of USF supported hardware and software is available for your review here: [https://www.usf.edu/innovative-education/resources/student-services/technical-requirements.aspx](https://www.usf.edu/innovative-education/resources/student-services/technical-requirements.aspx) You are also advised to periodically check the website to make sure your device and its software are updated for optimal performance.

You are required to activate and use your USF student email for USF-related correspondence. Your USF email will be your USF [NETID@mail.usf.edu](mailto:NETID@mail.usf.edu) Please see for more information: [http://www.usf.edu/it/documentation/netid.aspx](http://www.usf.edu/it/documentation/netid.aspx) You are also required to check your USF email and should get in the habit of doing so. M.A. program-specific emails will be sent to that account, and you are responsible for checking it on a regular basis.

Skype

Skype is a convenient tool to connect students to the M.A. Program Advisor on an individual basis for advising appointments or any questions that are better answered face-to-face rather than over the phone or through an email. It is a free service that is often automatically installed on devices using the Microsoft Windows 10 operating
system. Skype is available to Mac users as well. To learn more, download the application, or establish whether your device already has an account, visit https://www.skype.com/en/

**Canvas**

USF uses Canvas, a Learning Management System, to access enrolled courses. It is the platform for class discussions, turning in assignments, viewing syllabi, and communicating with instructors and other students. It can be accessed through the MyUSF website at https://my.usf.edu/. The main Canvas website provides resources and guides to help answer any questions regarding the system. It can be accessed at https://community.canvaslms.com/

**Professional Organizations**

Being a member of a professional organization is a great way to elevate students’ careers as professionals in Gerontology. Students can stay up to date with research and innovations, and network with experts in the field. A benefit to being a graduate student is that membership fees are often reduced.

**Gerontological Society of America (GSA)**

The oldest and one of the most well-known organizations is the Gerontological Society of America. GSA is a key player in gerontological research and policy. To learn more about this organization, their publications, and membership costs, please see https://www.geron.org/

Other professional organizations within Gerontology and in the field of aging are the American Geriatrics Society (AGS) and the American Society on Aging (ASA). Information can be found at https://www.americangeriatrics.org/ and http://www.asaging.org/, respectively.

**Tips for Online Success**

Being an online student can be different than previous academic experiences. To ensure success in the program, students should stay organized and wisely manage their time. Setting aside a certain timeframe each day for coursework is beneficial. It can be easy to fall behind in courses that require a large amount of self-directed learning. Keeping organized files on any electronic devices and tracking assignment due dates in a planner or an electronic calendar is also helpful. Communication is key: students should not be afraid to contact the professor with any questions or reach out to other students in the course.
# USF Student Resources

The following table includes a list of University of South Florida resources that may be helpful to both online students and those residing in the Tampa area.

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<tr>
<th>University Offices</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The School of Aging Studies Website</strong> - Details about faculty and how to contact them, information about recent graduates and alumni, and general knowledge about the various programs available within the School of Aging Studies.</td>
<td><a href="https://www.usf.edu/cbcs/aging-studies/">https://www.usf.edu/cbcs/aging-studies/</a></td>
<td>(813) 974-2414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>University Scholarships and Financial Aid Services Office</strong> - Information about the different types of available aid, enrollment requirements, and various financial forms</td>
<td><a href="https://www.usf.edu/financial-aid/">https://www.usf.edu/financial-aid/</a></td>
<td>(813) 974-4700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information Technology Office</strong> - Guidance regarding your NetID, software downloads, and access to the USF computer store</td>
<td><a href="https://www.usf.edu/it/index.aspx">https://www.usf.edu/it/index.aspx</a></td>
<td>(813) 974-1222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Office of Graduate Studies</strong> - Access to the tuition and fee calculator, Graduate Student Life Guide, and information about upcoming workshops and events</td>
<td><a href="http://www.grad.usf.edu/">http://www.grad.usf.edu/</a></td>
<td>(813) 974-2846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduate and Professional Student Council</strong> - This organization makes an effort to connect graduate students from the various graduate programs at USF by offering academic and social events or programs.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.gpsc.usf.edu/">http://www.gpsc.usf.edu/</a></td>
<td>(813) 974-7935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MyUSF</strong> - The gateway to OASIS and managing your NETID, this also provides links to important resources like Canvas, your email account, and USF Library services</td>
<td><a href="https://my.usf.edu/Pages/Home.aspx">https://my.usf.edu/Pages/Home.aspx</a></td>
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<td><strong>USF Graduate Student Life Guide</strong> – Offers helpful information about USF, student services, and the Tampa area.</td>
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