MA Program Description

Time Limit for Completion:

Students are expected to complete their Masters degree within 9 semesters or 3 years. A 1 semester extension is available in which to defend the thesis. Further extensions may be available under extenuating circumstances and at the discretion of the Department's Graduate Program Committee.

Concentration Areas: Environment and Aging and Health and Aging

Each concentration deals with specific substantive topics, problems, and issues. The Environment and Aging concentration covers research, planning, design, policy and evaluation of a range of physical environments for older persons. The Health and Aging concentration provides knowledge that can be applied to the study of health status changes and utilization patterns over the life course including critical analysis of healthcare system, and development and evaluation of specific health promotion strategies and programs. Students may, but are not required to declare a concentration. A concentration will consist of at least two courses in one of the two areas.

Senior Supervisor & Supervisory Committee

The Senior Supervisor is the first member of the supervisory committee to be appointed. Students are usually assigned to a supervisor during the admission process; however, changes to faculty, workload and the thesis/capstone project proposal may require a change of supervisor. In addition to the senior supervisor, there will be two members on the thesis supervisory committee, while one member on the capstone project committee. At the time of the project/thesis defense, the external examiner will be identified.

Capstone Project or Thesis

Initially all students are considered to be completing a capstone project. Some students may want to complete a thesis, if they are planning to pursue a doctoral program or if the scope of the capstone project seems to require it. Students who wish to complete a thesis should consult with their senior supervisor. The factors that determine if a thesis may be undertaken are: ability/performance of the student, faculty, workload and resources, complexity of the research being undertaken.

Components of the MA Program

Students must register for a minimum of 6 FTE (full time equivalent) semesters before they can graduate. The maximum time for completion is 9 FTE semesters or within 3 calendar years of initial enrollment. A 1 semester extension is available to defend. Many of our full-time students have been able to defend after 8 or 9 semesters. Below is an overview of the basic components of the MA in Gerontology followed by a more detailed explanation of each component. There are four program components: a core methods course; electives; thesis or capstone project; and internship.

I Course Work
II Preparation of Thesis/Capstone project Proposal
III Presentation of Thesis/Capstone project Proposal
IV Research and Internship if required
V Initial Draft of Thesis/Capstone project Report
VI Revision of Thesis/Capstone project Report
VII  Approval to Schedule Thesis/Capstone project Defense
VIII Revision of Thesis/Capstone project in Preparation for Defense
IX  Thesis/Capstone project Defense
X   Final Revisions of Thesis/Capstone project
XI  Submission of Completed Thesis/Capstone project to Library
XII Convocation
I COURSE WORK (Semesters 1-3)

Course work is generally completed in semesters 1-6. Note that courses are not usually offered during the summer semester. Students are advised to complete 2-3 courses in the first and second semesters. The first summer semester may be used to complete an internship or used to prepare the thesis/capstone project proposal. Students complete seven courses (or five if you receive approval to complete a thesis rather than a capstone project). The seven courses include one required course (Ger 803) and six electives (or four for thesis students).

Core Methods Course
Completion of one core methods course is required of all students.
Ger 803-4 Analytical Techniques for Gerontological Research (note: it is recommended this course be taken in a student’s first or second semester, depending on the term it is offered)

Elective Courses from Areas of Concentration
Students select remaining courses from the concentration courses, other electives, or from outside the program if approved by the student’s senior supervisor, and may build a concentration in environment and aging or health and aging. A minimum of two courses taken from either stream is considered a concentration. Students are encouraged to take courses from both streams.

Environment and Aging
Ger 810-4 Community Based Housing for Older People
Ger 811-4 Institutional Living Environments
Ger 822-4 Families, Communities and Health
Ger 830-4 Human Factors, Technology and Safety

Health and Aging
Ger 801-4 Health Policy and Applied Issues in Gerontology
Ger 802-4 Development and Evaluation of Health Promotion Programs for the Elderly
Ger 820-4 Principles and Practices of Health Promotion
Ger 823-4 Mental Health and Illness in Later Life
Ger 840-4 Special Topics in Gerontology***
Ger 889-4 Directed Studies***
*** These courses may be used for either concentration

Elective Courses Outside of Concentration
Ger 804-4 Advanced Qualitative Methods in Gerontology
Ger 806-4 Interdisciplinary Theories in Gerontology

II PREPARATION OF THESIS OR CAPSTONE PROJECT PROPOSAL (Semesters 2-5)

Capstone Project Option: A 5 page written proposal will be submitted by the student to his/her supervisory committee for review and approval. There is no formal defense required. The proposal may be started as soon as the student has an idea of the area of research and the kind of study they would like to undertake. Students should complete the project proposal by semesters 3 – 4.

A full description of the Capstone Project is attached.
**Thesis Option:** The thesis proposal is defended orally. Students should complete the thesis proposal by the end of semester 4.

**NOTE:** STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN APPROVED FOR THE THESIS TRACK, BUT FAIL TO DEFEND THE THESIS PROPOSAL BY THE END OF THE 5TH TERM WILL BE AUTOMATICALLY MOVED TO THE CAPSTONE PROJECT OPTION.

The template style of the proposal should follow the *Regulations and Guidelines for the Preparation of Theses, Extended Essays and Capstone projects* available from the following web site: [http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/writing/theses/templates](http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/writing/theses/templates)

Please be sure to use the same format, margin size, type font etc., in order to save time making changes to the document later.

**III PRESENTATION OF THESIS PROPOSAL (Semesters 4-5)**

The Thesis Proposal presentations are designed to facilitate the development of the research topic, by providing feedback and guidance and to make certain that the thesis will meet the expectations of the committee before a significant portion of the work is undertaken.

Proposal presentations are scheduled *after* the proposal has been approved by the supervisor, but *before* any data has been collected or analyzed. The presentation will be attended by members of the supervisory committee and may be observed by other faculty and graduate students.

The student will complete the *Approval to Schedule Proposal Presentation* form three weeks in advance of the presentation. The form will be signed by the senior supervisor. The Graduate Program Assistant will then arrange the date and meeting room with the student and the other members of the committee. The thesis proposal should be sent to all of the members of the committee at least two weeks prior to the presentation so that they have sufficient time to review all of the information.

Examples of proposals submitted by other students are available in the GRC Information Centre.

The presentation will be 15-20 minutes in length and should provide details on the following:

1. Research Question
2. Theoretical/Conceptual Framework
3. Key Literature
4. Hypothesis (if applicable)
5. Data Collection and Analysis

The senior supervisor will chair the presentation by introducing the student and the members of the committee and will give the student a reminder, if the presentation begins to exceed 30 minutes.

After the presentation, each member of the committee will be given some time to ask questions and to provide their comments to the student to be incorporated into any revisions. Members of the audience may observe this process but are not invited to ask questions. The student will complete the revisions under the supervision of the supervisor and will send the revised copy of the proposal to the other members of the committee. When the revisions are completed, the members of the committee will sign the *Recommendation to Accept Thesis Proposal* form and the student may begin collecting and analyzing the data.
A full description of the thesis proposal is attached.

IV INTERNSHIP (IF REQUIRED) (Semesters 2-3)

Students will contact the graduate secretary after the sixth week of the first semester. They will arrange for a meeting with the program chair and the senior supervisor to determine if an internship is required. The students will be asked to bring their current CV or resume and a brief statement about their area of research. The internship committee will determine whether the student will be required to complete a full internship (between 300 and 350 hours or a minimum of 8 weeks of full time work); a partial internship (number of hours decided by the internship committee); or whether they receive a full waiver.

Internship Criteria

The internship is a paid or unpaid position in which the individual learns the skills related to a position of responsibility related to their gerontology program concentration. A position of responsibility is one in which the individual is in a supervisory, managerial, or other key role. Examples include: interning with a manager of health region; working with a director of a seniors centre to learn all aspects of their job; or learning the job of a VP in charge of developing senior’s complexes.

It is expected that the student play an active role in finding a suitable placement, which may include contacting agencies recommended by the IC. The IC will provide suggestions and networking support. There are also appropriate internship opportunities that arise periodically, especially in the spring and summer, that are circulated to the graduate student email list-serve by the department. The internship does not need to be a paid position, but an hourly wage is common.

Research Internships

Under special circumstances, students may be allowed to meet their internship requirements by leading a research capstone project that involves connections with one or more community agencies. This work will typically be a position of responsibility beyond a Research Assistant position, in which the student is working on a large research capstone project; is in a supervisory role; learns all phases of research (i.e., the Research Coordinator’s position); and is involved in working with community agencies working in the area of gerontology or aging.

V INITIAL DRAFT OF THESIS/CAPSTONE PROJECT REPORT (Semesters 4-6)

Students may begin drafting their thesis/capstone project report once the proposal has been accepted. Maintain regular contact with your supervisor during this process to ensure the proposal proceeds smoothly. Keep in mind that your report will require numerous revisions. It is best to begin working on this as soon as possible.
VI REVISION OF THESIS/CAPSTONE PROJECT REPORT (Semesters 5-7)

Revisions, revisions and more revisions. At this point, you may be meeting with your supervisor on a regular basis. Some students are able to write more quickly than others but eventually the recommendations from your supervisor will be fewer and fewer until the day comes when your report is ready to circulate to the other members of your committee. Check with your supervisor BEFORE circulating your report. You should also share with your supervisor any suggestions given to you by the committee in the event there are conflicting ideas or information.

VII APPROVAL TO SCHEDULE THESIS/CAPSTONE PROJECT DEFENSE (Semester 7-8)

Students should discuss the timing of their defense with their senior supervisor no later than the second week of the semester in which they intend to defend. At this point the examination committee is appointed and the external examiner should be identified. The senior supervisor will advise the Graduate Program Assistant who will then schedule the defense.

VIII REVISION OF THESIS/CAPSTONE PROJECT IN PREPARATION FOR DEFENSE (Semesters 7-9)

As always, there will be continued revisions and polishing. The senior supervisor will advise the student when they may send the report to the external examiner. This should take place no later than two weeks before the defense date.

IX THESIS/CAPSTONE PROJECT DEFENSE (Semesters 7-9)

Students may arrange for one rehearsal of their thesis presentation prior to the defense date. Friends, family and members of the public are invited to attend. The thesis presentation may be no longer than 20 minutes followed by two rounds of questions from the members of the examining committee and a few brief questions from the audience.

The possible outcomes of a MA thesis defense are:

a. Pass (technical revisions under the supervision of senior supervisor)
b. Pass with Minor Revisions (minor substantive changes such as the clarification of concepts, rewriting of a paragraph.)
c. Deferral (major revisions; substantial rewriting of content)
d. Failed (the thesis cannot be salvaged)

X FINAL REVISIONS OF THESIS/CAPSTONE PROJECT

Students may be required to complete revisions before the supervisor signs the memo indicating that the report is completed and may be sent to the library.

XI SUBMISSION OF COMPLETED THESIS/CAPSTONE PROJECT TO LIBRARY

The report is submitted to the library at Burnaby campus where it is bound and made part of the library collection. The report is due at noon on the deadline day. Late reports are not accepted and will impede graduation.
XII CONVOCATION

Takes place in June for students who graduated in the fall and spring semester and October for those who graduate during the summer semester.