Program Overview

Doctoral students must take five graduate courses from the Gerontology Program, but may be required to take one or two additional courses (a total of up to seven) if deemed necessary by the Admissions Committee. Two courses will be related to one of two streams selected as the candidate’s area of expertise – Environment and Aging or Health and Aging; two will be methods/statistics courses; and one will be a required theory course. After completion of coursework, students will complete two comprehensive exams and write and defend a dissertation.

Time Limit for Completion:

Students are expected to complete their Doctoral degree within 18 semesters or 6 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.

Supervisory Committee

A senior supervisor will be assigned to each student upon admission. Two departmental committee members and one external member will be added to the committee by the end of the first year. At least two members will be part of the Department of Gerontology

Components of the PhD Program

Students must register for a minimum of 5 FTE (full time equivalent) semesters before they can graduate. The maximum time for completion is 8 calendar years from the date of first enrollment. However, it is expected that most students will complete their doctoral program in 3 – 4 years.

I Course Work
II First comprehensive exam, defended orally
III Second comprehensive exam, defended orally
IV Research
V Draft of Dissertation Prospectus
VI Oral Defence of Dissertation Prospectus
VII Officially admitted to candidacy for the PhD
VIII Continue Research and prepare final Dissertation
IX Dissertation Defence
X Final Revisions of Dissertation
XI Submission of Completed Dissertation to Library
XII Convocation

I COURSE WORK (Semesters 1-4)

Course work is generally completed in semesters 1-4. 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 taken as on-leave or used to prepare for comprehensive exams or work on the dissertation. Students complete five to seven courses, chosen from the following:

Environment and Aging
GERO 810-4 Community Based Housing for Older People
GERO 811-4 Institutional Living Environments  
GERO 822-4 Families, Communities and Health  
GERO 830-4 Human Factors, Technology and Safety  
**Health and Aging**  
GERO 801-4 Health Policy and Applied Issues in Gerontology  
GERO 820-4 Principles and Practices of Health Promotion  
GERO 823-4 Mental Health and Illness in Later Life  

**Methods/Statistics (any two)**  
GERO 802-4 Development and Evaluation of Health Promotion Programs for Older Adults  
GERO 803-4 Analytical Techniques for Gerontological Research, or equivalent course  
GERO 804-4 Advanced Qualitative Methods in Gerontology  
GERO 805-4 Advanced Statistics for Behavioural Analysis in Gerontology  

**Theory**  
GERO 806-4 Interdisciplinary Theories in Gerontology

If students have taken required courses, or their equivalent, they may also substitute up to three courses from other programs (especially the Faculty of Health Sciences) with departmental approval and may take one Directed Studies (GERO 889-4) course.

II  
**COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS (Semesters 4-6)**

After completion of all course work with a GPA of at least 3.25, students will write two comprehensive examinations based on reading lists developed with their supervisory committee. These are to be defended orally. One exam will cover the substantive literature in the dissertation field. The second will be determined by the supervisory committee based on the current and anticipated research needs of the student. A student who fails a comprehensive exam will have one chance for re-examination. Failure to pass a second time will result in immediate withdrawal from the program.

III  
**DEVELOPMENT AND PRESENTATION OF DISSERTATION PROSPECTUS (Semesters 5-7)**

The dissertation prospectus development and presentation are designed to facilitate advancement of the research topic, by providing feedback and guidance and to make certain that the dissertation will meet the expectations of the committee before a significant portion of the work is undertaken. The dissertation prospectus should present a focused and manageable topic and place it within the existing literature. The written statement will normally be between 25 and 40 pages in length (double-spaced) with enough detail for the examining committee to evaluate it on its academic merit (topic, theoretical/research/practical contributions, methodological rigor); scope; and feasibility (see attached Dissertation Prospectus Checklist).

Prospectus presentations are scheduled after the prospectus 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 senior supervisor will advise the Graduate Program Assistant that the student is ready to defend his/her prospectus. The Graduate Program Assistant will then arrange the date and meeting room with the student and the other members of the committee. The prospectus 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.

The presentation will be 30-40 minutes in length and should provide details on the following:

1. Research Question
2. Theoretical/Conceptual Framework
3. Key Literature
4. Hypothesis
5. Data Collection, Design and Methodological Issues
6. Significance

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 45 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 Dissertation Proposal form and the student may begin collecting and analyzing the data.

It is at this time that the student is formally admitted to candidacy for a PhD.

IV INITIAL DRAFT OF THE DISSERTATION (Semesters 8-10)

Students may begin drafting their dissertation 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. Make the initial draft as accurate and complete as possible. The language should be clear and concise and free of grammar and spelling errors. Do not spend hours searching for that perfect word or phrase, there will be plenty of time for that later, when you get to the revising stage.

V REVISION OF THE DISSERTATION (Semesters 8-11)

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.

VI DISSERTATION DEFENCE (Semester 10-12)

The senior supervisor should advise the Graduate Program Assistant that the student will be defending their dissertation 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 Graduate Program Assistant then schedules the defence and ensures that the necessary paperwork is in the hands of the Dean of Graduate Studies at least four weeks prior to the defence. She will also advertise the defence to the university at large.

VII FINAL REVISIONS OF DISSERTATION (Semesters 10-12)

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.

VIII SUBMISSION OF COMPLETED DISSERTATION TO LIBRARY (Semesters 10-12)

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.

IX CONVOCATION (Semester 10-12)

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