Gerontology Graduate Programs

Graduate study in gerontology at KU consists of Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy degrees in Gerontology, along with the option for a dual-title Ph.D. in Gerontology and selected social science disciplines. They are administered through the Gerontology Program, a component of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

The Doctor of Philosophy degree in gerontology was approved by the Kansas Board of Regents during the 1996-97 academic year. KU is one of only several universities nationwide offering the Ph.D. in gerontology. KU’s gerontology graduate program is unique in that it is an interdisciplinary research degree emphasizing social and behavioral gerontology.

Faculty affiliated with the program include members of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, including the School of the Arts; and the Schools of Architecture, Design and Planning; Education; Engineering; Health Professions; Law; Medicine; Music; Nursing; Pharmacy; and Social Welfare.

The graduate program in gerontology gives students a broad, advanced educational experience in study of older adults. It provides a common focus for all students, yet allows each student to design a course of study most appropriate for her or his career objectives. Courses give students a multidisciplinary perspective on the issues and problems of aging, built on a strong foundation in basic research on aging. The program prepares students for academic and research careers in gerontology, as well as for professional careers in private and public institutions and agencies providing services to older individuals.

Students seeking a terminal M.A. in gerontology are not admitted; the M.A. is offered only to those pursuing a Ph.D.

Admission to Graduate Studies

An applicant seeking to pursue graduate study in the College may be admitted as either a degree-seeking or non-degree seeking student. Policies and procedures of Graduate Studies govern the process of Graduate admission. These may be found in the Graduate Studies (http://catalog.ku.edu/graduate-studies) section of the online catalog.

Please consult the Departments & Programs (http://catalog.ku.edu/liberal-arts-sciences) section of the online catalog for information regarding program-specific admissions criteria and requirements. Special admissions requirements pertain to Interdisciplinary Studies degrees, which may be found in the Graduate Studies section of the online catalog.

Graduate Application and Admission

Any student who has completed at least a B.A. or B.S. degree at an accredited institution of higher education may apply to the Ph.D. program. Required application materials include a résumé, a personal statement of professional and educational goals in gerontology, 1 copy of all undergraduate and graduate transcripts, list of all courses taken that are relevant to gerontology, 3 letters of recommendation, and scores from the Graduate Record Examination. Applicants whose first language is not English must submit proof of proficiency in English. GRE and other scores should be from the last two years. Further information is available from the graduate advisor or on the program’s website (http://www.gerontology.ku.edu).

Submit your graduate application online (http://www.graduate.ku.edu). Send all other requested application materials to the department:

The University of Kansas
Gerontology Program
Admissions Committee
Dole Human Development Center
1000 Sunnyside Ave., Room 3090
Lawrence, KS 66045-7561

Dual-title Ph.D. Program in Gerontology

This dual-title degree is an option available to students who have first been admitted to the doctoral program in one of these departments: Communication Studies, Psychology, and Sociology (as of January 2012). The dual-title degree allows the pursuit of a single degree that incorporates study within a traditional discipline and training in an interdisciplinary field; the student is awarded one degree (Ph.D.) with both titles identified on the diploma (e.g., “Ph.D. in Psychology and Gerontology”).

This option is designed to appeal to students who are strong in a traditional discipline but also motivated to study across disciplinary lines. In the course of study, students can avail themselves of disciplinary depth and interdisciplinary breadth. At the post-doctoral stage, dual-title graduates will have enhanced career and employment opportunities, able to claim expertise in one or both titles of their degree when seeking positions in education and research.

Plan of Study

The dual-title Ph.D. integrates two programs of doctoral study for students who enter doctoral study having earned a Master’s degree. To ensure integration of the fields in regard to coursework, examinations, and dissertation, the student’s principal faculty advisor must be a faculty member in both fields; or, if this is not possible, the student must have co-advisors from each of the two fields.

The student completes required coursework in the traditional discipline and required coursework in Gerontology. Many theory, methods, and content courses for each side of the pairing can jointly fulfill requirements for both programs in the dual-title degree. Nonetheless, the dual-title student may require an additional semester to fulfill requirements in both programs. Course requirements for doctoral study in Gerontology and the partner discipline are those described in the programs’ respective graduate student handbooks. The course requirements for the Gerontology Ph.D. are those listed in the preceding section under Gerontology Graduate Programs.

Evaluation of Satisfactory Performance

The programs’ respective graduate student handbooks likewise describe procedures for written preliminary material, the Comprehensive Oral Examination, the dissertation, and the Final Oral Examination. With the consent of advisors in both programs, any required written preliminary examinations will be harmonized between the two programs. Comprehensive oral examination: The dual-title degree student’s candidacy examination committee must be composed of faculty from the partner discipline as well as at least one faculty member from the Gerontology Program. The dual-title faculty member may be someone who is appointed in both programs. Typically, the dual-title member will
participate in constructing and grading candidacy examination questions in gerontology. The comprehensive exam requirements for both programs must be met, including a defense of the prospectus for the dissertation.

Dissertation and final oral examination: The dissertation topic should integrate both fields and be defended before graduate faculty from both programs.

**Application for Admission to the Dual-title Program**

Students must enroll in the disciplinary Ph.D. program for at least one semester and be in good academic standing before applying to the dual-title Ph.D. Program. Students may inquire further about the dual-title option and admission procedures by contacting the graduate advisor of the Gerontology Doctoral Program. Before applying, students should likewise consult with their advisor in the department that admitted them to KU.

Students apply by means of a letter to Graduate Advisor of the Gerontology Doctoral Program. This letter should describe one’s professional and educational goals in gerontology and also include one’s reasons for pursuing the dual-title option. The letter should be accompanied by a resume and by a list of all courses previously taken in relevant areas such as sociology, psychology, human development, social welfare, biology, and health services. The Gerontology program may request access to recent materials that the student filed in order to apply for graduate study at KU (undergraduate and graduate transcripts, letters of recommendation, scores from the Graduate Record Examination, and, for international applicants, proof of proficiency in the English language), or the program may request updates of these materials.

If accepted to undertake the dual-title Ph.D. option, the student will select or be assigned an advisor who is a member of both programs. If this is not possible, the student must have two advisors, one from each field. The student will work with her or his advisor(s) in both programs to draft a joint plan of study that outlines the key courses and seminars that will fulfill the course requirements for both programs, to the extent that these are foreseeable. The advisor(s) will sign the joint plan of study to indicate discussion and approval of the plan.