

Graduate Certificate in Gerontology Curriculum: Social Work with Older Adults

The [Graduate Certificate in Gerontology \(GCG\)](#) is an interdisciplinary course of study offered through the [Institute on Aging](#) in the College of Urban and Public Affairs. The School of Social Work is a member of this consortium of disciplines and offers students the opportunity to obtain a certificate in gerontology studies while pursuing the **MSW** degree. This option is only available in the Portland-campus-based MSW program, though Distance and Online students may be able to complete the program as noted at the bottom of this document.* Students must satisfy the requirements for both the MSW degree and the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology, although some of the courses will meet the requirements for both programs.

Application to the Certificate program should be made through the Institute on Aging. It's preferable if applications are made before or during the student's first year in the MSW program, but it is also possible to apply later in the program. Please notify Cimone Schwoeffermann at cimone@pdx.edu if you are applying to the GCG program.

With careful planning, it should be possible to complete the requirements for both the MSW and GCG with 79 total credits (This is one more than the usual MSW curriculum.) Some students who are obtaining both the MSW degree and the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology choose to take a few extra courses, so that they can take more social work electives. Some students may not be able to simultaneously complete both the MSW and the Certificate; they may need an extra term to complete the requirements for the Certificate.

MSW students admitted to the program must complete the GO-19 form, which can be found on the [Graduate School Forms page](#). Please fill out the form and send it to Dr. Paula Carder for approval.

For advising, students who are completing both the MSW and the GCG programs will need to be in contact with Cimone Schwoeffermann on the social work side. The student will also maintain regular contact with their assigned MSW advisor. And on the Institute on Aging (IOA) side, the student will need to be in regular contact with the Director of IOA, Dr. Paula Carder, or her designee.

The MSW curriculum is adapted in the following ways for students who are simultaneously pursuing both the MSW and the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology:

- 1. AGE 558 Perspectives in Aging** must be taken. This course is offered in the fall as an online course and is considered the first course in the Certificate program. This course may be used as an elective in the MSW program of study and is usually taken in the fall of the second year. Occasionally this class is also offered in the spring.

2. SW 544 Midlife and Beyond must be taken. This course is usually taken in the fall of the second year.

3. SW 574 Social Work with Older Adults must be taken. This course is usually offered in the winter term only. This course is usually taken in the winter of the second year.

4. Electives. Two additional electives must be taken. The Institute on Aging can determine whether aging-specific courses not included in the list below may satisfy this requirement, as well. These can be 3-credit or 4-credit classes and satisfy elective requirements for both the Certificate and the MSW. This list is subject to change.

Course #	Course Title	# of Credits	Term Offered	Format
AGE 516	Families & Aging	3	Winter term	Online
AGE 532	523 Business & Aging	3	every other winter term in even years	Online
AGE 556	Health Aspects of Aging	4	Fall term	Online
AGE 557	National Long Term Care Policy	3	Spring term	Online
AGE 559	Economics of Aging	3	Winter term during odd years	Online
AGE 560	Mental Health and Aging		Summer term in even years	Online
AGE 562	Global Aging	3	Spring term	Online
AGE 510	Creating Age-Friendly Communities	3	Fall Term	In-Person
PSY 562	Psychology of Adult Development and Aging	4	Fall and Winter terms	
SW 569	Social Work in End-Of-Life and Palliative Care	3	usually offered winter term	
SOC 569	Sociology of Aging	4	Summer term	Online
USP 564*	Political and Administrative Issues in Aging	3	Winter term	In-Person
USP 585	Housing Environments for the Elderly	3	Winter term	In-Person

*Also available Spring term 2019.

5. Concentration Elective. Most students must also take the elective that is required by their concentration (for HAL and Clinical SW, this is SW 555 Perspectives on Mental Disorders; for PLCO, it is either Research in Racial

Disparities or Community and Organizational Research). For students in the CYF Concentration, you may take any social work elective of your choice in this slot.

6. Internship. An internship is required of students in both programs. The MSW degree requires a more substantial field placement experience than the GCG. To satisfy both programs, the second year of field placement (and preferably both years) must take place in an agency serving primarily older adults. Two credits of that field instruction are also counted toward the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology. Each program has paperwork requirements prior to and following the internship that the student must complete. For the MSW, the field placement must be made through the Field Education office of the SSW. Students and field instructors must complete and submit the field educational plan, and supervisors must complete the quarterly evaluations and records of hours. These are submitted to the student's advisor at the SSW. For the GCG, the Gerontology Certificate Internship Application and Learning Contract should be completed by the student after the student receives notification of their placement. These documents and additional details can be found on [this Institute on Aging page](#).

There is no list of approved internships on the part of the Institute on Aging (IOA); the only requirement is that the placement be in an agency that serves primarily older adults. In general agencies that contain "aging," "aged," "elder," "elderly," or "older adults" in their titles are acceptable. Other agencies may also serve predominantly older adults, such as hospice and some medical placements. Contact Cimone Schoweffermann if there is any question about the eligibility of the placement. This should be done as soon as the student becomes aware of a potential placement for the next academic year. Questionable placements will be reviewed for eligibility by the Director of IOA, Dr. Paula Carder.

Once the Certificate Internship application is completed, the student should schedule an appointment with the advisor in the Certificate Program to review the plans and the application form and also to review a list of the coursework taken to assure that requirements for the Certificate will have been met. In addition students must register for one credit for the internship requirement through IOA (AGE 504), which is separate and distinct from any other course work that is taken. Registration is handled through an online [By-Arrangement form](#).

Students register for 1 credit (non-graded) of AGE 504 with their advisor in the Certificate Program (generally Dr. Carder); usually this credit is taken in spring term. A one-page document describing the internship (one paragraph) and the learning objectives specific to working with older adults/the field of aging must accompany the "By Arrangement" form.

At the end of the internship (generally spring term), the student must have their field instructor complete a Performance evaluation (see the IOA website). Students must also complete a written report about the internship as described in the IOA guidelines. The report is generally 7-10 pages in length. Students submit the Performance evaluation and the Internship report to the IOA office coordinator at least one week prior to the end of the term.

If a student is in the combined MSW & GSG program but does not wish to have their second field placement in a setting that serves older adults, it is possible to do the GCG internship separately. Please discuss this with Cimone Schwoeffermann at cimone@pdx.edu if this is your situation.

7. Transferring Credits. Students entering the MSW program who have obtained the Gerontology Certificate within the last five years can transfer up to 12 credits into the MSW program. The courses that can be credited include PHE/AGE 558 Perspectives on Aging and two electives approved for the Certificate. Transferred credits will be used to satisfy elective requirements for the MSW. SW 544 Midlife and Beyond and SW 574 Social Work with Older Adults taken for the Certificate before entry into the MSW program can be counted as electives in the MSW program, although the maximum number of transferable credits is 12.

8. Graduation. Students must complete PSU Graduation requirements for both the MSW and the GCG. The paperwork/online work to certify eligibility for graduation is handled through the School of Social Work for the MSW and through the IOA for the GCG. If the GCG will not be completed at the time that the MSW is obtained, this must be indicated on the student's application for graduation (i.e., "Yes" must be checked in response to the question, "Are you currently admitted to another graduate program at PSU which you plan to continue after completion of this degree?" and the name of the Certificate program (Graduate Certificate in Gerontology) must be provided. This form, the Application for the Awarding of Master's Degree, Doctoral Degree, or Graduate Certificate, must be filed by the first Friday of the anticipated term of Graduation. Find more details grad application details on the [Office of the Registrar's page](#).

*Students in the Distance and Online MSW Programs may be able to also get a GCG, but it will require coming to Portland for electives, and can only be done with special approval from the MSW Distance Coordinator or MSW Online Coordinator.

CHART

Below is a chart to facilitate student course planning. Students in the Three-Year MSW Program will have a different course of study. **This chart is only one possibility, and as long as the requirements listed above are met, students can choose other courses of study.**

The **first year** of the combined MSW & GCG program is identical to the first year of the MSW program for all MSW students.

The **second year** of the combined MSW and GCG program is as follows.

Course of Study for MSW & GCG: Second Year of Two-Year MSW Program

Fall	Winter	Spring
SW 517 Health Across the lifespan I	SW 518 Health Across the lifespan II	SW 519 Health Across the lifespan III
OR SW 533 Clinical Social Work Practice I	OR SW 534 Clinical Social Work Practice II	OR SW 535 Clinical Social Work Practice III
OR SW 586 Social Work with Children, Youth & Families I	OR SW 587 Social Work with Children, Youth & Families II	OR SW 588 Social Work with Children, Youth & Families III
OR SW 593 Practice and Leadership with Communities Organizations I	OR SW 594 Practice and Leadership with Communities Organizations II	OR SW 595 Practice and Leadership with Communities Organizations III
SW 512 Field	SW 512 Field	SW 512 Field
AGE 558 Perspectives on Aging	SW 574 SW w/ Older Adults	Concentration elective (E.g., SW 555)
SW 544 Midlife and Beyond	Aging elective (E.g., SW 569; see list under #4 above)	Aging elective
		AGE 504 (1 cr.)