

# **GRADUATE STUDENT GUIDELINES**



## **TULANE INTERDISCIPLINARY PhD PROGRAM IN AGING STUDIES**

**Tulane University  
New Orleans, Louisiana  
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## **Mission Statement**

Our program focuses on the processes of aging at the individual and societal level. It examines how people change over the adult life course, the interrelationships between older people and social institutions, and the societal impact of the changing age-composition of the population. We emphasize the dynamic interplay between the aging of individuals and their changing biomedical, social, and physical environments and multi-level interactions among psychological, physiological, genetic, social, and cultural domains. Our goal is integration and synthesis within and across these domains. Our faculty's teaching and research emphasizes molecular, cellular, animal and human studies and takes place in a wide range of disciplinary and departmental settings across all of the schools at the university. Our students and faculty provide the foundation for this enterprise, working to create a new generation of leaders in this interdisciplinary field who will assume key positions in academia and in the public and private sectors. The program facilitates both basic and translational research allowing program participants to design and develop working models or implement a process that will initiate viable products or services for older adults in the expanding global community.

## **History**

The Interdisciplinary Ph.D. Program in Aging Studies was established in 2009, in response to a call by the Provost's Office for interdisciplinary Ph.D. programs issued in 2008. The Program conforms to applicable University policies and regulations. The first class of students matriculated in the fall of 2010. Our Program is university-wide, encompassing all the Schools at Tulane University, and it is located in the School of Medicine. On successful completion of all program requirements, the student is awarded the "Doctor of Philosophy in Aging Studies." The University funds student stipends and provides tuition waivers.

## **Our Research Culture**

A PhD degree can only be earned by performing original and significant research that is suitable for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, in addition to any other program requirements. It cannot be earned by fulfillment of course requirements or residence for any specific period of time. We take courses to prepare us to begin to assimilate the latest findings, often prior to publication, in a variety of disciplines. Research seminars provide this new information, and they are not designed to be general in nature. An aspiring scholar must show sufficient curiosity to participate. Research seminars do not distract from research; they enhance it, which becomes only evident to a more advanced scholar. Research is a full-time activity (24/7). It involves sustained, hard work, great dedication, creativity, intellect, knowledge, and luck. One learns how to perform research by doing it under the guidance of a master, to whom the student serves as an apprentice. The PhD degree is bestowed only when the faculty determine that a student deserves the high honor of joining the fellowship of scholars, a life-long appointment that carries with it great responsibility to oneself, to the fellowship, to the university, and to society.

## **Requirements for the Doctoral Degree**

The Ph.D. is an academic degree that prepares students for careers in research and teaching. Skills in these two areas also provide the foundation for success in academia, policy planning, government, industry, and community services. The specific requirements are as follows:

## **Distribution Requirements**

- Students will complete the general sequence of studies under the guidance of the program advisor and program committee recommendations.

- 24 graduate credits in aging-associated core and elective courses
- 6 graduate credits in research methods/statistics
- 6 credits in the Introductory Seminar (Proseminar) during the first year of study
- 6 credits in the program seminar course during the first through third years or until advancement to Candidacy
- 3 to 6 credits of internship
- At least two semesters of dissertation research
- Credits in Aging Seminar are required through Year Three and thereafter until advancement to Candidacy and registration for Dissertation Research

Typical Schedule during Years One to Three

Year One Fall Semester	Year Two Fall Semester	Year Three Fall Semester
Proseminar in Aging (3) <sup>1</sup>	Biomedical Domain Elective (3)	Independent Study/Research (up to 6)
Psychosocial Core Course (3)	Psychosocial Domain Elective (3)	Internship (3 to 6)
Biomedical Core Course (3)	Independent Study/Research (up to 6)	Aging Seminar (1)
Research Methods/Statistics (3)	Aging Seminar (1)	
Research Topics in Aging (1)	Advanced Statistics (optional)	
Aging Seminar (1)		
Year One Spring Semester	Year Two Spring Semester	Year Three Spring Semester
Proseminar in Aging (3)	Biomedical or Psychosocial Domain Electives (6)	Dissertation Research
Biomedical Domain Elective (3)	Independent Study/Research (up to 6)	Aging Seminar (1)
Psychosocial Domain Elective (3)	Aging Seminar (1)	
Research Methods/Statistics (3)	Advanced Statistics (optional)	
Research Topics in Aging (1)		
Aging Seminar (1)		

<sup>1</sup> Numbers in parentheses refer to credit hours per course or within a specific domain.

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The following, nonexclusive list of courses is not a complete set of available offerings. Courses are listed under domain headings to assist in course selection. THE COURSES LISTED BELOW ARE EXAMPLES OF AVAILABLE COURSEWORK ACCEPTED FOR THIS PROGRAM. Consult the university catalog for additional selections, and seek the guidance of your program advisor.

**Biomedical**

BMEN 7030 – Anatomy and Physiology for Engineers

BMEN 6400 – Vascular Bioengineering

BMSP 6070 – Advanced Cell Biology

CELL 6160/6170 – Developmental Biology

CELL 6660 – Neurobiology of Aging<sup>1</sup>

CELL 6750 – Cell Biology<sup>1</sup>

EPID 6320 – Molecular Epidemiology

HMGN 7020 – Human Genetics

HMGN 7060 – Human Molecular Genetics

NSCI 6530 – Psychopharmacology

NSCI 7100 – Neuroanatomy and CNS Dissection

SCEN 7010 – Physical Dimensions of Aging<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>non-exclusive examples of the courses that may be used to satisfy the Biomedical Core Course requirement.

## Psychosocial

AHST 6310 – Housing and the City

GHSD 7350 – Themes in Mortality and Health<sup>2</sup>

GHSD 7120 – Health Outcomes Assessment

POLC 6100 – Politics and Health

PSYC 6330 – Neurobiology, Learning & Memory

PSYC 6530 – Psychopharmacology

PSYC 6570 – Cognitive Neuroscience

PSYC 7000 – Social Psychology

PSYC 7080 – Sensory Processes and Perception

PSYC 7400 – Developmental Psychopathology

PSYC 7470 – Cognitive Psychology<sup>2</sup>

PSYC 7710 – Intergroup Relations<sup>2</sup>

SOWK 7450 – Death, Dying, and Grieving

<sup>2</sup>non-exclusive examples of the courses that may be used to satisfy the Psychosocial Core Course requirement.

### Research Methods/Statistics<sup>3</sup>

BIOS 6030 – Introductory Biostatistics

BIOS 6040 – Intermediate Biostatistics

BUSN 7520 – Research Methods

EPID 6030 – Epidemiologic Methods I

PSYC 6090 – Psychological Applications of Univariate Statistics I

PSYC 6110 – Psychological Applications of Univariate Statistics II

PSYC 6130 – Psychological Applications of Multivariate Analysis

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<sup>3</sup>Additional offerings are available in the School of Business and the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine

- In addition, students are required to take an approved course in Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR). Several such courses are offered at Tulane. (See Vice President for Research website.) The course offered through the Office of Research consists of about six lectures and offers a certificate of completion. A similar course is offered for credit by the Master's in Clinical Research Program at the School of Medicine. There is also an online CITI course (See Vice President for Research website.) Students must complete one of these courses before the end of the second year. Documentation of completion must be provided to the program office. Ideally, this course is taken in the fall semester of the second year.
- All students are expected to regularly attend the activities included in the Seminar (AGST 7100), even though credit is not awarded after the third year or after advancement to Candidacy, whichever is later. This includes presentations of their work-in-progress. The Program Office schedules students for their work-in-progress seminars throughout the year, and each student must present at least once each year to remain in good standing in the program. These presentations and presence of all students at the work-in-progress seminars is mandatory.
- Graduate work is a full-time effort. The number of credit hours does not indicate the amount of time that the student devotes to this effort. Students are required to spend all of their time outside the classroom to study/research.

## Program Courses

- Courses organized directly by the Program (AGST) are scheduled according to the University Academic Calendar. The exception is Topics in Aging Research II (AGST 7080). This course begins immediately following the New Year's Holidays (<https://hr.tulane.edu/content/2018-2019-university-holiday-schedule>), to facilitate completion of the Rotations described below.
- Other courses follow the schedule for the School in which they are located.

## Incompletes

- Students should remove incomplete grades from their record as soon as possible. Students who have an 'I' or an 'F' still on their record by the start of the fall semester each year, and who fail to demonstrate good cause why, will have their stipend withheld until these grades are removed. It is the student's responsibility to make certain that incompletes are removed. Thus, a student should monitor his/her status regularly online. Students must maintain an overall B average or better.

## Prerequisites and Remediation

- Many courses have prerequisites. For students who cannot satisfy the prerequisites for required courses, lower level courses may be taken with the approval of the program committee to allow subsequent enrollment in the required course. Remediation for unsatisfactory grades in required courses may also be approved by the program committee. Courses may be taken during summer session.
- Students must maintain an overall B average. Students will be evaluated at the end of each spring semester by the program committee. The committee will recommend appropriate remedial action on the part of the student. It may, in its discretion, impose probation, suspension, or dismissal from the program, if circumstances warrant. It is the responsibility of the student to fulfill program committee requirements, under the guidance of their advisor.

## Student Rotations

- First year students will rotate with program faculty to aid them in the selection of their advisor and co-advisor. During the fall semester, they will attend sessions at which one or more faculty will present their research and answer questions posed by the students. This exercise will help the students to identify three program faculty with whom they will spend approximately six weeks each during the spring semester to help hone in on their area of research interest; however, rotations are not limited to the faculty who presented in the aforementioned sessions. The purpose of the rotation is to become acquainted in broad terms with the research of a particular faculty member, including subject matter, research methods, and laboratory personnel. It is not the purpose of rotations to perform a complete research project or to become acquainted with several techniques, although some elements related to these may constitute part of the rotation.
- The three rotations must be completed before the end of the grading period for the spring semester. In very unusual circumstances a fourth rotation is allowed, but it must be completed by the end of June. The approval of the program committee is required for the student to embark on a fourth rotation. Students should not expect to be permitted to take a fourth rotation. It is expected that students will dedicate all of their time outside the classroom and preparation for classes to their rotations. Prior to each rotation, the student and faculty member with whom the

student will rotate will prepare a written plan outlining the goals of the rotation, the methods and procedures to be used, and the schedule of the rotation, with inclusive dates. This plan will be signed by both the student and the faculty member with whom the student will rotate. It must be filed with the program office prior to commencement of the rotation. Students will be evaluated on the basis of the rotation plan. After each rotation, the student must insure that the faculty member with whom he/she rotated sends the evaluation to the program office in a timely manner, so that grades can be assigned. Rotations are graded as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory.

- Students are expected to devote all of their time outside courses and preparation for tests to the rotation, regardless of the number of credits earned. Students should set their first rotation before winter break, and their next rotations before completion of their current ones.

## **Advising and Program Mentorship**

- The program director will appoint an interim advisor for each student. The interim advisor will serve in this capacity until such time as the student has a dissertation advisor approved by the program committee.
- The student is required to obtain approval of coursework for which the student intends to register each semester. The interim advisor/dissertation advisor will provide this approval, with endorsement by the program committee. This approval, among other things, is documented on the official program tracking sheet, which is signed for each student each semester by his/her advisor and returned to the program office. Tracking sheets are due in the program office by the last day of the examination period each semester. This is an absolute requirement, and the student is responsible for having the advisor fulfill the requirement. Lack of compliance will result in automatic probation, and, if the probation is not remedied within 30 days, the student will be automatically suspended without stipend support. Tracking sheets are provided directly to advisors on their request.
- The interdisciplinary nature of the program requires a co-advising process to assure adequate support from each domain (biomedical and psychosocial). Biomedical means of or relating to biology and medicine or biomedicine. Psychosocial means of or relating to processes or factors that are both social and psychological in origin.
- New students will meet with prospective mentors during the first year and petition to work with a participating faculty member. Curricular guidance will be directed by co-advisors selected from faculty in each of the two program domains.
- Throughout the degree program each student must consult with their dissertation advisor and co-advisor about the composition of their doctoral committee. The student then meets with the individual faculty to see if they are willing and able to serve on the committee. It is recommended that the student supply each member with abstracts of original research conducted and or presented related to their dissertation work. He or she should discuss with each committee member the expected level of knowledge and the amount of reading a student should have completed.
- Advisors, co-advisors, and students' committee members must be aware of the time and effort necessary to fulfill these functions. Advisors advise the student on all aspects of their graduate work. This is aided by the student tracking sheet, which is updated regularly and submitted to the



program office. The program office does not advise students. It responds to queries from the student's advisor only with regard to program policy and requirements. The Program Committee monitors students' progress each semester, based on student transcripts, the tracking sheets, and reports on progress submitted by the advisor in writing towards the end of each semester, as detailed on the tracking sheets. It is the student's responsibility to make certain that their advisors provide these materials to the program office.

- Advisors must assure the student has the resources necessary for completion of his/her dissertation research. This includes laboratory space, equipment, supplies, fees, animal costs, and travel expenses. The Program only provides stipends and tuition waivers. In selecting an advisor and co-advisor, students should weight the ability of the faculty member to provide these resources.

## **Program Milestones**

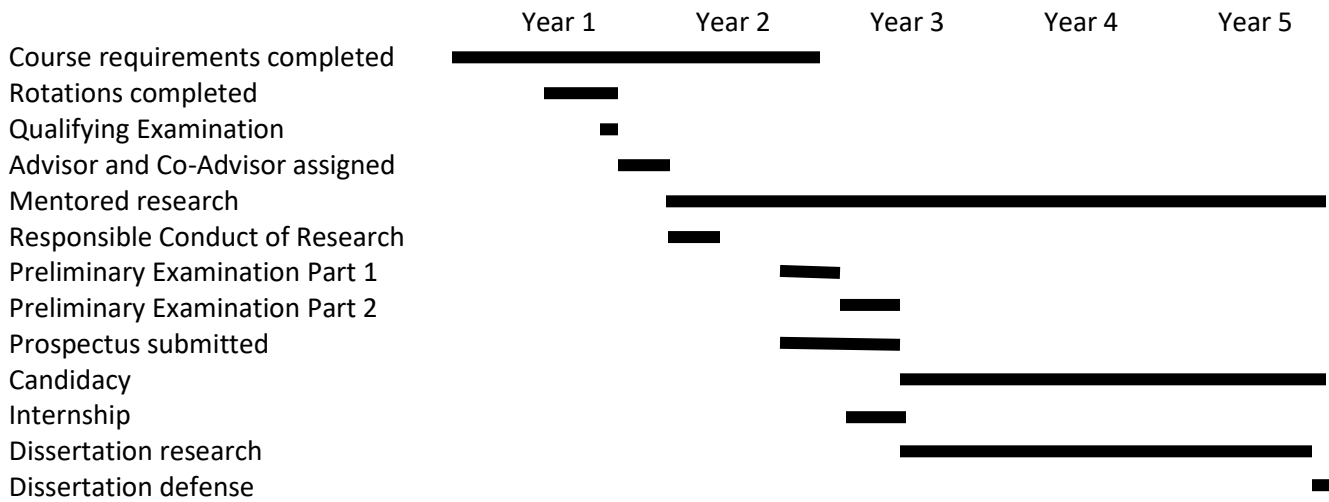
- At the end of the first year, students must pass a Qualifying Examination to continue in the program. The qualifying exam will be comprehensive and integrative of the Interdisciplinary Seminar in Aging I and II (AGST 7020 and 7040). The course directors of AGST 7020 and 7040 will assign each student two research articles to critically review, one in the biomedical and the other in the psychosocial domain. A critical review is not simply a rendition of the material presented in the article. Instead, it analyzes this material pointing out its strengths and weaknesses from the conceptual, logical, and technical point of view. It arrives with a determination of the validity of the article and its conclusions, and places the article within the background of a selection of associated literature on the topic. Students will prepare each critical review as a written paper. Each paper will be 10 numbered pages long, single-spaced, with one-inch margins all around on 8.5" x 11" white paper. This page limit will include up to one-half page of literature references. Illustrations, tables and graphs may not occupy more than two pages. An additional cover sheet will be attached to the paper. The cover sheet will include the student's name, the date, and the title of the paper that includes reference to the assigned article, under the heading "Qualifying Exam."
  - The articles for critical review will be assigned to the student three weeks before the beginning of the examination period following the spring semester of the first year. The paper must be turned in to the program office by the last day of the semester prior to the examination period for grading. The student will at that time indicate which of the two papers they wish to present orally. The oral presentation will be scheduled before a faculty committee and open to the public during the examination period. The oral presentation will consist of a 30-minute presentation by the student, including questions. Students will be graded on both the written papers and the oral presentation. The examining committee will consist of program committee members and instructors in AGST 7020 and 7040. The outcome will be either "pass" or "fail." A "pass" is needed for continuation in the program. A "fail" can be remediated only once. Successful completion of the Qualifying Examination is necessary for continuation in the program.
- By the beginning of the second year, students will have declared their major domain within the program and selected their major domain advisor and minor domain co-advisor. For this purpose, students will submit to the program office the fully-executed Petition to Assign Dissertation Advisor and Co-Advisor (Appendix I). (This form is available as a Word document from the program office.) This form must be submitted by the first day of instruction in the fall semester of the second year. These selections, and/or any changes, will be made with the approval of the program committee, which is not automatic.

- Major advisors must be members of the Tulane Center for Aging.
- By the end of the fall semester of the third year, students will have completed all coursework and have taken the preliminary exam. The **Preliminary Examination** consists of two distinct and separate parts.
  - **Preliminary Exam Part 1**
    - Part 1 is a Comprehensive Examination. It is administered during the summer, after the second year in the program; i.e., between the spring semester of the second year and the fall semester of the third year. It is based on the Interdisciplinary Seminar in Aging (AGST 7020 and 7040). Part 1 is a proctored, written examination. Each student will draw blindly two questions each from the biomedical and the psychosocial domains. The student will answer all four questions in an essay format. Each answer will be handwritten on up to two sides of a loose-leaf, ruled sheet of paper, which will be provided. The entire examination will last no more than two hours. The questions will be formulated by faculty who taught in the psychosocial and biomedical areas of AGST 7020 and 7040. Students taking this examination are subject to the Student Honor Code.
    - Preliminary Examination Part 1 will be scheduled by the Program Office. The examination will place during the summer after the second year in the program at the same sitting, for all students who matriculated at the same time.
    - The students' answers to the questions are graded "pass" or "fail" by the faculty member who formulated the question. For the student to pass, the grade "pass" must be received for all four questions the student draws. Otherwise, the student "fails" the examination. The results are tabulated by the Program Office and conveyed to both the student and to his/her adviser. The student's advisor later meets with the student to discuss the results of the exam.
    - The Preliminary Examination Part 1 (Comprehensive Examination) may be retaken once. The procedure for retaking Part 1 follows exactly the description provided above. Scheduling of the retake by the Program Office occurs as described above, during the fall semester of the third year.
    - Successful completion of Preliminary Examination Part 1 is required for the student to continue in the program.
  - **Preliminary Examination Part 2**
    - Part 2 consists of a written research proposal that is defended orally. It must be taken by the end of the fall semester of the third year. The research proposal must be entirely distinct and independent of the student's dissertation research. Its subject matter must be in the student's minor domain. This means that if the major domain of the student's dissertation research is biomedical that this research proposal must be in the psychosocial domain, and vice versa.
      - The format is that of an NIH R21 grant application Research Plan. See the NIH website for details, including the required formatting which must be strictly adhered to for the research proposal to be acceptable. (Ability to find the instructions and adhere to them is part of this examination.) NIH form PHS 398 is used. The Research Plan will contain Specific Aims, Significance, Innovation, and Approach sections, followed by Literature Cited. The length of each section must follow NIH guidelines. A cover page is included that has the title of the research proposal, the student's name, date, and a one paragraph abstract of the proposal, all of which are under

- the heading “Preliminary Examination Part 2.” The written proposal must include a substantial and significant, critical review of the pertinent literature. It will include the identification of gaps in knowledge that will be addressed by the student’s hypothesis-driven research, statement of these hypotheses and a description of the manner in which they will be tested, a discussion of the expected results, and a discussion of the direct impact of the research across disciplinary boundaries, all within the R21 format.
- The student presents electronically a preliminary Specific Aims page for perusal by his/her committee prior to any further preparation of the Research Plan. The committee decides within one week whether the topic chosen by the student is suitable, by indicating to the student’s advisor that this is the case. This decision is communicated by the advisor to the student, who then has no more than six weeks to complete and submit the final draft of the written proposal to the committee. There are no exceptions to this timeline. There may be no consultations between the student and others during the preparation of the written proposal; this is governed by the Student Honor Code.
  - This written research proposal will be defended orally before the dissertation committee. At least two weeks prior to the oral defense of Preliminary Examination Part 2, the student will submit to the program office a request to schedule this Part 2 (Appendix II). (This form is available as a Word document from the program office.) The petition will be signed by the student and the dissertation advisor. The request must include a copy of the candidate’s transcript and a copy of the written proposal. Concurrently, the proposal and transcript are submitted to the dissertation committee members, along with the instructions for Part 2 contained herein.
    - The exam is a rigorous test of scholarly competence and knowledge. It is based on the written proposal. However, it will include any other material that committee members feel is necessary. The student will present his/her research proposal for 20-30 minutes. The committee then discusses this proposal with the student and asks questions. The oral defense may last up to two hours. The chair for this oral defense is chosen by vote of the dissertation committee. The oral portion of the exam is used to identify a student’s ability to defend his/her written research proposal, respond to questions and reveal the depth of understanding.
    - The committee discusses the student’s performance in executive session. Based on this discussion, the committee votes. For the student to pass, the vote to “pass” must be unanimous. Otherwise, the student “fails.” No other choice is available. The result of the exam is reported on the Preliminary Examination Part 2 Protocol (Appendix III). (This form is available as a Word document from the program office.) After the student returns, the committee chair conveys the result of the exam. The student’s advisor later meets separately with the student to discuss the results of the exam. Signatures by the student, advisor, co-advisor, and committee members on the Protocol explicitly certify that the examination proceeded in strict adherence to the guidelines contained herein. The protocol also indicates the student’s cumulative GPA, and the certification that all course requirements have been satisfied for the Ph.D. in Aging Studies. This

- Protocol is submitted to the program office within two days of the examination.
- Passing the exam requires the unanimous vote of the dissertation committee. If the examination is failed, it may be retaken once only, following exactly the same procedures as described above for the first attempt. Re-taking the exam requires a substantial re-write of the research proposal or an entirely new proposal. A substantial rewrite is one in which at least 50 percent of the specific aims are new; e.g., two out of the three specific aims. A student who fails the exam twice will not continue in the program.
    - Successful completion of Preliminary Examination Part 2 is required for the student to continue in the program.
- Between the end of the spring semester of the second year and the end of the fall semester of the third year, students will have written and presented their **Prospectus**.
    - The dissertation topic must be aging-related and demonstrate an integration of the Biomedical and Psychosocial domains. Students should schedule a meeting with their advisor and co-advisor prior to writing their Prospectus.
    - The Ph.D. Prospectus should be five pages in length. It should consist of a cover page, listing the title of the proposed dissertation and the names of the student and the dissertation committee members; three pages describing the proposed dissertation; and a final page (1 page maximum) of a select bibliography of secondary works. The description of the dissertation research on pages two to four should be about 600-800 words, typed, double-spaced. It should briefly summarize the main work in the area, explain the proposed research, including hypotheses to be tested, the main sources/methods to be used, and outline the expected results. The cover page of the prospectus (Appendix IV) must be signed and dated by the student and by the members of his/her dissertation committee. (This form is available as a Word document from the program office.) After acceptance by the student's dissertation committee, the Prospectus is submitted to the program office. The program committee will approve the Prospectus prior to submission to the Dean of the School of Medicine. Special attention is paid by the program committee to the integrity of the interdisciplinary component of the proposed research as outlined in the Prospectus, which forms the basis for the student's dissertation research.
    - The student publicly presents and defends his/her proposed dissertation research, as outlined in the Prospectus, at a work-in-progress seminar. This seminar is scheduled by the program office during regularly scheduled seminar hours, either during the spring or the fall semester, but not during the summer. Following this presentation, the student's dissertation committee will meet to accept the Prospectus.
  - **Doctoral candidate**
    - Advancement to candidacy is achieved by successfully completing all required coursework, passing the Preliminary Exam Part 1 and Part 2, and submitting a Prospectus that is approved by the student's dissertation committee and the program committee. Once all documents have been submitted, requirements validated, and necessary approvals obtained, the Program Office will prepare a petition for advancement of the student to candidacy. After it is signed by the Program Director, it will be submitted to the Office of the Dean. Students will be notified about their candidacy status by U.S. mail through the

Registrar's Office. The student's research has no official status until submission and approval of the Prospectus and advancement to candidacy.



## Dissertation and Defense

- The dissertation not only is an essential part of the candidate's degree work but is the appropriate culmination of work towards the Ph.D. degree. It must demonstrate not only mastery of the literature of the subject, but also the ability to conduct independent research that results in a genuine contribution to knowledge or an original interpretation of existing knowledge. The dissertation committee shall determine the acceptability of the dissertation by unanimous vote before it is submitted to the Program Office in final form. This acceptance will be based on the evaluation of the written dissertation and on its oral defense publicly and before the committee.
  - Detailed instructions for preparation of the written dissertation are available from the Program Office.
- The dissertation is an original contribution to the field. The entire dissertation, or parts of the dissertation, should be of a quality suitable for publication. It must be based on clear hypotheses and tests of these hypotheses. The candidate must pass the final, public oral examination, which is a presentation and a defense of the dissertation. The program office will assist in scheduling the public portion of the defense, which should occur during normal program seminar hours.
- Immediately following the public seminar during which the student presents and defends the dissertation, the dissertation committee meets to administer the Final Examination.
  - Acceptability of the dissertation does not constitute final approval. This is determined by the Final Examination, whose requirement is not waived. All candidates must take the Final Examination for the Ph.D. degree. Normally, this examination consists primarily of an oral defense of the dissertation, but it may extend to include any other material at the discretion of the examining committee. This examination should be scheduled only after the dissertation is in its final form and reviewed and approved by the dissertation committee. The Final Examination is scheduled through the Program Office by submission of the Final Exam Request form available from the Office.

- The Final Examination Committee consists of the student's dissertation committee and any other members of the Graduate Faculty appointed by the Program Director and the Dean of the School of Medicine. This committee decides on a unanimous basis, and its conclusions are submitted in writing to the Program Office in the format approved (consult with the program office).
  - This examination should be scheduled after the dissertation is in its final form and reviewed and approved by the committee but not later than the deadline for submission of the dissertation to the Program Office.
- Before the deadline dates for dissertation submission, the student must hand into the Program Office the original copy of the final dissertation (unbound), in the form finally approved by the dissertation committee and one abstract of the dissertation (not more than 350 words). The title page of both the abstract and the dissertation must contain the subject of the dissertation, the date on which it was submitted, and the signature of the candidate, with the candidate's full legal name typed underneath. Signatures of the examining committee members should be listed in the lower right-hand corner, along with their names and departmental affiliation typed underneath; the full name of the committee chair must be typed under the signature and identified as the chair. A full list of authorities and books consulted and a short biographical sketch must be appended.

Students must complete the following forms: 1) Application for Degree (available online or in the Program Office); 2) Final Exam/Oral Defense Form (available in the Program Office); 3) Survey of Earned Doctorates (online); Students should also submit their final thesis, with signatures, to the ProQuest MNI website (<http://www.etdadmin.com/cgi-bin/school?siteId=61>) and to the Tulane Howard Tilton Thesis Archive:

([https://digitallibrary.tulane.edu/user/login?destination=islandora/object/tulane%3Astudent\\_submission\\_collectio n/manage/overview/ingest](https://digitallibrary.tulane.edu/user/login?destination=islandora/object/tulane%3Astudent_submission_collectio%20n/manage/overview/ingest)). Two unbound copies of the thesis, one on archival quality paper with original signatures of the committee (for binding) and one on regular paper (for the Matas Library), should be submitted to the Program Office. The student should also keep a copy of the dissertation and submit another copy to any dissertation committee member requesting it. The decision to copyright the dissertation must be made at the time the student submits the material. If students want a personal bound copy of their thesis, they may submit an additional copy to the Program Office and pay the binding fee (~\$65) at that time.

Ph.D. graduation requires the following fees: Graduation fee, \$55.00, paid by check or money order to the Program Office and made out to Tulane University.

- The student should keep a copy of the dissertation and submit another copy to the Program Office. Additional copies may be requested by dissertation committee members.
- Applications for Degree must be filed for the current term on or before the deadline date for graduation. Applications filed in previous terms are not valid.

## Transfer Students

- Students transferring to Tulane may transfer a maximum of 24 graduate credits, subject to approval of the program committee, and must complete at least 18 in-class credit hours of graduate study at Tulane University.

## Transfer of Grades

- Transfer of up to six graduate credits will be considered by the program committee after satisfactory completion of the qualifying examination. Students will submit their request for transfer of credit to the program office accompanied by relevant transcripts, syllabi, and course descriptions.

## Teaching Experience

- In addition to the coursework and research requirements, all students pursuing a Ph.D. in Aging Studies must demonstrate teaching competence as part of their training toward the degree. This competence is obtained by regular presentations at program seminars. All doctoral students – regardless of their financial support package – are encouraged to serve as an unofficial TA for one semester prior to completion of their Ph.D. program.
- Teaching Assistantship duty should not exceed a nominal number of lectures. Our students are classified as Fellowship/TA (Job Code: 990000), under which their stipends are issued. They cannot be paid for additional service. Any arrangements to serve as TA should be made by the student with approval of his/her advisor, and they may not take place before completion of course requirements.

## Internships

- Students will complete a one-semester internship in the community at an approved and contracted site. These internships require registration and will satisfy between 3 and 6 credits during the fall semester of the third year. The internship is considered primarily community outreach/service, but it may further the research and/or career goals of the student in certain cases. Students must make arrangements for their internship before the end of the spring semester for the fall semester of a given year. The student will request the program office to place him/her and his/her advisor in contact with the preceptor at the internship site to schedule a meeting to formulate the formal internship plan, which is signed by all three parties. This plan will outline the objectives and goals of the internship, the methods to achieve these goals, the schedule of the internship, and the student evaluation criteria. The student is graded by the onsite Preceptor. Students must ensure that the grade is filed with the program office by the Preceptor by the due date for filing grades. Students will report on their internship experience on completion at a regularly scheduled aging interest group meeting.

Internships are completed only at approved and contracted internship sites. The University has a formal contract with these sites, which requires students to maintain appropriate professional standards. Preceptors at the internship sites complete an evaluation of the student, based on these standards, at the end of the internship.

## Graduate Committees

- Program committee
  - The Program Committee for the Interdisciplinary PhD Program in Aging Studies is representative of the diverse faculty research and teaching resources at Tulane University's uptown campus, the Health Sciences campus, and the Tulane National Primate Research Center. Although they are from various disciplines, they all share a strong interest in the field of aging. Membership changes from time to time. This committee does not function

in an advisory fashion to program students. It has a supervisory role. This committee meets regularly, once each, after the fall and spring semester, as well as other times, as needed. The Program Director is the executive of this committee. The relationship between students and the Program and its Program Committee is an academic one; it is not contractual.

- The Program Office assists the Program Director.
- Dissertation committees
  - Dissertation committees are comprised of a student's advisor, co-advisor, and a minimum of two additional members. The major advisor must be a faculty member in the Tulane Center for Aging and represent a discipline reflective of the student's selected major domain. The co-advisor represents the other (biomedical or psychosocial) domain from the student's program. At least three of the members must be from Tulane University. These committees perform an advisory role to the students. They meet at least semi-annually with the student, and more frequently as needed. The committee members are a resource to the student, as well, so the student should approach committee members as often as needed.

## Graduation

- In addition to completing the doctoral candidacy requirements all program graduates will complete a written dissertation, present a public defense of their work, and pass the final examination.
- Commencement/graduation exercises are held at the end of the spring and fall semesters, but not after the summer semester. An application for graduation must be filled out at the beginning of the semester in which the student plans to graduate. (Deadlines can be provided by the Program Office.) This application can be obtained in the program office. Any outstanding debt with an office in the university must be paid no later than 10 days prior to the date of commencement or award of the degree will be denied. Students should check with Accounts Receivable to be sure their accounts are cleared.
- Students should order academic regalia at the Downtown Bookstore as soon as possible, but not later than one month prior to the ceremony. Students are responsible for checking their Tulane issued email accounts at least weekly because all graduation information will be sent to them via these accounts.

## Technical Standards

- Technical Standards are non-academic requirements essential for meeting the academic requirements of certain graduate programs in the School of Medicine of Tulane University. Within any area of specialization, students must demonstrate competence in those intellectual and physical tasks that together represent the fundamentals of research in their chosen discipline. The PhD degree programs and some MS degree programs at the Tulane University School of Medicine require a dissertation or thesis based on independent research. Granting of those degrees implies the recipient has demonstrated a base of knowledge in their chosen field of study and possesses the ability to independently apply that knowledge to form hypotheses, design and conduct experiments, interpret experimental results, and communicate these findings to the scientific community. Thus, a candidate for the PhD or some of the MS degrees in the health sciences must



possess abilities and skills that allow for observation, intellectual and conceptual reasoning, motor coordination, and communication. The use of a trained intermediary is not acceptable. The following technical skills are required of the successful student:

**Observation:** The candidate must be able to acquire knowledge by direct observation of demonstrations, experiments, and experiences within the research and instructional setting.

**Intellectual/Conceptual Abilities:** The candidate must be able to measure, calculate, analyze, reason, integrate and synthesize information to solve problems.

**Motor Skills:** The candidate must possess motor skills necessary to perform procedures required for experimentation within the chosen discipline. Those individuals with physical challenges are encouraged to contact the appropriate administration to determine their educational options within the chosen discipline.

**Communication:** The candidate must be able to communicate and discuss his or her experimental hypotheses and results to the scientific community.

**Behavioral and Social Attributes:** The candidate must possess the emotional and mental health required for appropriate utilization of his or her intellectual abilities, the exercise of good judgment, the prompt completion of responsibilities inherent in managing a scientific setting, the ability to function under the stress inherent in research, and the ability to understand and comply with ethical standards for the conduct of research.

## Dissertation Research Fellowships

- Students receive tuition waivers and stipend support, throughout their graduate career for up to five years, based on maintenance of full-time graduate status in the program and satisfactory progress towards the degree. This support is the only support for which the Program receives funds on an annual basis. A student's stipend support ceases on June 30<sup>th</sup> of the fifth year in the program. Any arrangements for further support, up to the total of seven years allowed by Tulane University for completion of the Ph.D. degree, must be made by the student with his/her advisor.
- Full-time status requires registration for a minimum of 9 credits. After advancement to Candidacy, the student may register Dissertation Research (AGST 9990) to fulfill this requirement.
- Students devote full time to their studies and research; outside employment is not permitted. Full-time status requires registration for at least 9 credits during the fall and spring semesters. The number of credits registered is not an indication of the time that must be spent on study and research. As indicated earlier, graduate studies require a time commitment that far exceeds that devoted to a typical full-time job.

## Probation, Suspension, Dismissal

- It is expected that Probation, Suspension, and Dismissal of students will be extremely rare events, if they occur at all. A student may be placed on probation for lack of completion of a program requirement in a timely fashion. This includes, for example, not taking the Preliminary Exam by the deadline specified. This results in an automatic probation. Students will be notified, usually by email when they are placed on probation, its duration, and the means by which they will be removed from this status. If this remediation does not occur by the specified deadline, the student will be suspended. Suspension results in a hold on stipend support. If a student does not rectify

the situation by the means indicated in the suspension notice, that student will be dismissed from the program. Dismissal also occurs for serious violation of the Student Honor Code. Students who are dismissed may institute an appeal/grievance procedure, according to established university policies which involve a formal submission to the Dean of the School of Medicine.

## Leave of Absence

- A Leave of Absence may be, but is not automatically, granted on the basis of a written petition submitted to the Division of Student Affairs (<https://tulane.edu/life-tulane/campus-life/division-student-affairs>), along with suitable documentation. Concurrently, the student informs the Program Office in writing of intent to request leave of absence. Also see below.
  - Medical Leave of Absence  
In addition to the written petition, the student must provide valid documentation from a licensed healthcare provider. This documentation must detail the nature of the medical leave, its necessity, and its expected duration. During medical leave, the student can maintain university-provided health insurance. The student may request in writing the continuation of stipend support during medical leave, but this is not necessarily granted. This request is submitted to the Program Office. However, continuation of stipend support, if granted, does not extend the total period during which the student will receive stipend support. Return from medical leave requires submission of a written petition, along with suitable documentation from a licensed healthcare provider that documents the resolution of the medical issue and the ability of the student to return to full-time graduate work.
  - Leave of Absence for other reasons  
Requests for Leave of Absence for any other reason are processed in the same way as requests for Medical Leave. The student will document the necessity of the leave in a way that is adequate and appropriate. The granting of this leave is not automatic. This is because the leave is not a withdrawal from the program. A student on such leave does not receive stipend support or university-provided health insurance. Return from this leave requires a petition, as above.
- Withdrawal  
A student may withdraw from the Program for any reason and in writing. The intent to withdraw is filed with the Program Office. An exit interview is scheduled, if possible.

## Holidays and Vacations

- The Program adheres to the University Holiday Schedule, which is found at <https://hr.tulane.edu/content/2018-2019-university-holiday-schedule>
- Our students collect stipends on a twelve month basis, during which they remain in residence at the University. They are expected to be engaged in their studies and research full time, throughout the year, and not simply for the limited number of credit hours for which they register. They are allowed reasonable sick leave and vacation leave by prior, explicit arrangement with their advisor. The general guideline for accrual of vacation leave is no more than 15 days per year for each full year of residence.

## External Dissertation Grants

- Students are strongly encouraged to submit applications for external fellowship support. Such applications can most appropriately be prepared upon satisfactory submission of the Prospectus.

## **Travel Money for Conferences or Research**

- Students will be encouraged to attend at least one extramural research conference. Although not guaranteed, sources of support for this may be available. Students may visit the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies website (<https://ogps.tulane.edu/>) for more information.

## **Language Requirements**

- English is the language of this program. There are no additional language requirements. However, it is recognized that in certain cases the dissertation research of a particular student may require facility with a foreign language.

## **Student Contact Information**

- It is essential that students maintain current and up to date contact information with the Program Office. This includes permanent and temporary physical address, university location and phone, private landline and cell phone, university email address, as well as alternate email address. This information is not given out to anyone. It is used for official university business. A variety of notifications must be sent to students. The lack of timely delivery of this information cannot be assured if any part of the information listed above is not current. The program office generally uses the student's university email account for routine communication, so students should check these accounts frequently.

## **Orientation**

- Our students attend orientation organized by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (<https://ogps.tulane.edu/>) during the week before the start of classes. (OGPS holds a special orientation for international students, additionally.) In addition, they receive an orientation packet from the Program Office, and they meet with the Program Director to complete the orientation process. Incoming students may also contact our other students for information, keeping in mind that authoritative information is provided by the Program Office. Incoming students should arrive up to two weeks before the beginning of the fall semester, to find housing, complete registration, and to take part in orientation.
- Incoming students should be aware that their first stipend check will be issued after matriculation later in September. They should be prepared to pay for housing, as well as student fees (approx. \$1,000), from existing savings.
- There is limited graduate student housing available currently at Tulane. The Program Office can provide more information.

## **Application Information**

- Application Deadline: First day of business in February, annually
- GRE and TOEFL (for those whose native language is not English) Scores
- Official transcripts of all college work, including graduate studies
- Curriculum vitae
- Writing samples
  - may include but are not limited to
    - an original sample of applicant's writing/research
    - manuscript or published article

- substantial paper such as a review of literature
  - paper given at a professional meeting
  - grant proposal
- Personal Statement of Goals
- 3 Letters of Recommendation

## Admission Requirements

- Applicants for the Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in Aging Studies will need to meet the following requirements:
  - Applicants must demonstrate academic promise as evidenced by above average achievement in previous undergraduate and graduate education. A minimum GPA of 3.25 on all prior graduate work is required. In addition, a 3.1 GPA must be posted in an appropriate undergraduate major and documented completion of a baccalaureate degree.
  - TOEFL®
    - Internet-based Test (iBT) Total Score: 80, with the following minimum section requirements
      - Reading: 21
      - Listening: 18
      - Speaking: 22
      - Writing: 19
    - Paper-based Test (PBT) Total Score: 600
  - GRE
    - Satisfactory performance on the Graduate Record Examinations is required. Existing test scores may be submitted if the GRE has been completed no more than five years prior to the date of application. A satisfactory score on the Verbal and Quantitative GRE (a combined score of at least 1200; 310 new scale) is required.

## Fees

- There are no fees for applying to this program.

\*\*Online application: <https://medicine.tulane.edu/centers-institutes/tulane-center-aging/aging-studies-interdisciplinary-phd-program/application>\*\*

## Contact

Ms. Chasity Pugh, Program Coordinator  
 Tulane Center for Aging  
 1430 Tulane Avenue, MBC 8513  
 New Orleans, LA 70112  
 E-mail: [aging-studies@tulane.edu](mailto:aging-studies@tulane.edu)  
 Phone: 504-988-3369; Fax: 504-988-8835

**Note**

- The Student Guidelines are amended from time to time, to account for changes in University policies and regulations as well as program requirements, and to remove discrepancies and incorporate clarifications. These Guidelines are not a contract.

**Appendix I**

**PETITION TO ASSIGN DISSERTATION ADVISOR  
AND CO-ADVISOR**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's name (typed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's signature and date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor's name and department (typed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor's signature and date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Co-Advisor's name and department (typed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Co-Advisor's signature and date

Comments:

This request must be submitted to the Interdisciplinary PhD Program in Aging Studies Program Office for approval by the Program Committee before the commencement of dissertation research and submission of the Prospectus. This assignment of the advisors should normally take place by the beginning of the second full year of graduate studies, but not before completion of the first year. Any changes in advisors should also be requested by submission of this form for approval with an explanation in writing of the reason for such changes in the Comments section above. The signed form should be delivered in person to the program office. Official notification of approvals will be provided by the program office and is required before the assignment takes effect. The advisor is the dissertation mentor in the primary domain (biomedical/psychosocial), while the co-advisor is in the other domain of the two.

**Appendix II**

**Request to Schedule Preliminary Examination Part 2**

Title of written proposal (typed):

Dissertation committee members' names (typed):

Scheduled date and time (typed):

Scheduled location (typed):

Student's name (typed)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dissertation advisor's name (typed)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix III**

**Interdisciplinary Ph.D. Program in Aging Studies**

**Preliminary Examination Protocol (Part 2)**

\*\*Title of written proposal (typed):

Date and time:

Location:

Student's name (typed)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Cumulative GPA\*\*\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Dissertation advisor: (name typed) (department) (signature) (date) Pass/Fail

Dissertation co-advisor: (name typed) (department) (signature) (date) Pass/Fail

Dissertation committee member: (name typed) (department) (signature) (date) Pass/Fail

Dissertation committee member: (name typed) (department) (signature) (date) Pass/Fail

This student has by unanimous vote before his/her Dissertation Committee, as evidenced by the committee members' signatures above, passed/failed the Preliminary Examination Part 2, according to all the requirements and stipulations as provided in the Student Guidelines for this program.

\*\*\*For the Part 2 Examination, the entry of the cumulative GPA signifies that the student has completed all course requirements.



**Appendix IV**

**Interdisciplinary Ph.D. Program in Aging Studies**

**Ph.D. Dissertation Prospectus**

Title:

Submitted by: (student's name typed) (signature) (date)

Dissertation advisor: (name typed) (department) (signature) (date)

Dissertation co-advisor: (name typed) (department) (signature) (date)

Dissertation committee member: (name typed) (department) (signature) (date)

Dissertation committee member: (name typed) (department) (signature) (date)