

MA in Aging Studies

Online MA in Aging Studies

The fully online 30-credit-hour Master of Arts in aging studies program at Wichita State University (WSU) is designed to meet the highest standards in gerontology education, equipping graduates with essential knowledge and skills to excel in the senior living industry and aging services field. Students engage with core content, a specialized concentration and culminating experience.

Concentrations bundle comprehensive coursework specific for career-readiness in advanced roles in senior living and aging services/ programs industries such as, executive directors, nursing home administrators, program managers, resident care coordinators, marketing specialists, consultants, development officers, public health coordinators and more. Students can also elect to earn a graduate certificate in any of the remaining concentration areas.

The online program provides affordable, high-quality distance education with in-state tuition rates regardless of residency, enabling students to earn their degree from anywhere in the state or across the country.

Specialized Concentrations

Senior Living

- Prepares students for a range of careers focused on supporting the aging population in residential community living settings, such as: nursing home administrator, assisted living director, executive directors or managers, resident care coordination, marketing and outreach for senior living communities, and consulting positions that help organizations optimize their services for older adults.
- Administrator-in-Training Program (AIT) (<http://catalog.wichita.edu/graduate/health-professions/health-sciences/public-health-sciences/#aitpracticumplacementtext>): Students pursuing the senior living concentration are also eligible to complete the AIT program, providing the practical experience required to become a licensed nursing home administrator.

Community-Based Aging Services

- Prepares students for a range of careers within organizations dedicated to serving older adults, such as: executive directors, program managers or development officers within the Alzheimer's Association, Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), advocacy groups, and older adult housing. Students will be prepared for career growth in areas such as fundraising, grant writing and/or policy to improve aging-related issues.

Public Health

- Prepares students for a range of careers that address the health and well-being of older adults at a population level. Career examples are: public health program coordinators or managers, health data analysts, health educators, and policy advisors or consultants who advocate for public health improvements in aging.

Interdisciplinary Study

- Interdisciplinary curriculum blends core aging principles with advanced coursework in complimentary fields to prepare students for specialized professional practice in areas such as biomedical engineering, neuroscience, health professions, human factors, community psychology, criminal justice, public administration, exercise science and innovation design.

Health Leadership

- Prepares students for the dual Master's program, allowing the transfer of all 12 concentration credit hours from the MA in aging

studies to MHA program. Students who successfully earn the MA in aging studies degree will then be eligible to transfer credits after admission to the MHA program.

Culminating Experience Requirement

All students select one program completion option. This experience will provide students with opportunities to integrate and apply the knowledge, skills and methodologies learned in class to a comprehensive, real-world experience, project or research activity. See the program requirements for the completion options.

Credit for Prior Learning

Professionals with licensed credentials may be eligible for 3-6 credit hours of Credit for Prior Learning. Review the Requirements tab for further details.

Admission and Application

1. Admission to the Graduate School at Wichita State University;
2. A grade point average of 2.750 (4.000 system); and
3. International applicants must have a score higher than 79 on the internet-based TOEFL examination, an overall minimum band score of 6.5 on the IELTS examination, or a score of 58 on the PTE-Academic examination.

Additional Supporting Documents

1. Contact information and recommendations from two professional references;
2. A personal goals essay of 500 words or less which clearly articulates the applicant's reason for seeking admission to the aging studies program. Essay should be reflective of their desire for admittance and professional goals related to the aging studies program; and
3. Include in the personal goals essay, a statement documenting computer literacy including experience with online learning, Microsoft Office and overall familiarity with online navigation. Students are highly encouraged to review the information found on the Wichita State Office of Online Learning website, paying particular attention to the Introduction to Online Learning, and Computer Skills and Preparation information.
4. **The GRE is not required for admission.**

To be reviewed for admission, applicants must submit the designated application for admission, application fee, supporting transcripts and additional supporting documents to the Graduate School via the online application portal.

The priority application deadlines for scholarship consideration are: July 15 for fall admission; December 1 for spring admission; April 15 for summer admission. Applications are reviewed when the graduate application fee and all supporting documents have been submitted and received by the program director. Applicants will be notified of their admission status by the Graduate School. Upon enrollment, they will be assessed a \$50 nonrefundable acceptance fee. For additional details, please see the aging studies program website (<https://www.wichita.edu/academics/online/publichealth/>).¹

¹ Link opens new window.

Program Requirements

Students complete 15 credit hours of core gerontology coursework, a 12-credit hour specialized concentration (p. 2), and one 3-credit hour program completion option to fulfill the culminating experience requirement. Students can also elect to earn a graduate certificate in one of the concentrations areas. Students are expected to consult with their

graduate advisor and establish a plan of study during their first semester of study.

Core Required for All Concentrations (18 credit hours)

Students complete core courses aligned with the 10 core competencies outlined by the Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE), a division of the Gerontological Society of America (GSA).

Course	Title	Hours
Required Core Courses		
PHS 512	Aging Across Cultures	3
PHS 623	Public Health and Communication in Aging	3
PHS 702	Evidence-Based Methods in Aging	3
PHS 710	Perspectives on an Aging Society	3
PHS 765	The Medicare System	3
Culminating Experience		
Select one of the following culminating experiences		3
PHS 790	Aging Studies Practicum (Practicum option) ¹	
or PHS 660	Administrator-in-Training Long-Term Care Practicum	
PHS 795	Thesis Research (Thesis option)	
PHS 500+ Elective (Coursework Option) with concurrent enrollment in PHS 799 Master's Portfolio (0 credit hours) for Applied Learning ²		
Concentration Requirements		
Total Concentration Hours (see options below)		12
Total Credit Hours		30

¹ PHS 660 Administrator-in-Training Long-Term Care Practicum available in Senior Living Concentration only.

² Any PHS graduate-level course could count as an elective with advisor approval, including PHS 877 Independent Study. Outside relevant graduate level courses may also be considered. Consult a graduate advisor for approval.

Specialized Concentrations (12 credit hours)

Senior Living

The senior living curriculum provides an in-depth exploration of daily operations across the spectrum of senior living, care coordination and hospitality principles critical to enhancing resident life and staff experiences. This concentration meets the industry's demand for well-rounded leaders prepared to serve residents, families and staff in post-acute and senior living care settings.

Course	Title	Hours
PHS 518	Healthcare Coordination	3
PHS 562	Senior Living Operations	3
PHS 626	Hospitality and Enrichment in Aging Communities	3
FA 760	Introduction to Adaptive Leadership	3
Total Credit Hours		12

Community-Based Aging Services

The community-based aging services curriculum provides an in-depth exploration of the strategic, financial and organizational skills needed to lead and drive meaningful change in the aging sector. This concentration meets the demand for well-rounded leaders prepared to serve in a growing industry.

Course	Title	Hours
Required Concentration Courses		
FA 760	Introduction to Adaptive Leadership	3
PADM 870	Fundraising and Financial Management for Nonprofit Organizations	3
PADM 873 or PHS 617	Strategic Planning in Public and Nonprofit Organizations Community Development Methods	3
Elective Course		
Select one of the following		3
PHS 543	Aging and Public Policy	
PHS 560	Care Networks and Services	
PADM 725	Public Management of Human Resources	
Total Credit Hours		12

Public Health

The public health curriculum provides an in-depth exploration of disease distribution and population health issues including health analytics, environmental considerations and community development. This concentration meets the industry's demand for well-rounded public health professionals to address complex health challenges facing aging populations.

Course	Title	Hours
PHS 617	Community Development Methods	3
PHS 618	Population Health Analytics	3
PHS 808	Managerial Epidemiology	3
PHS 816	Environmental Health	3
Total Credit Hours		12

Interdisciplinary

Interdisciplinary curriculum affords individuals with diverse professional, academic backgrounds and goals not found in the prescribed concentrations a means to blend their area of interest with aging. The application, intersection and integration of core aging principles to other fields of study is intended for professionals practicing outside typical fields of aging yet intersect with aging.

Course	Title	Hours
WSU Graduate Courses		
Curriculum is customized to meet each student's professional goals and in consultation with the student's advisors.		12

MA in Aging Studies to Master of Health Administration (MHA) (<http://catalog.wichita.edu/graduate/health-professions/health-sciences/public-health-sciences/ma-aging-studies-to-mha/Dual/Master's Through the Healthcare Leadership Concentration>)

Aging studies students who choose the 12-credit hour healthcare leadership concentration can apply all 12 credit hours toward a second master's degree in healthcare administration (<http://catalog.wichita.edu/graduate/health-professions/health-sciences/public-health-sciences/master-health-administration/>). Healthcare leadership includes: PHS 622, PHS 803, PHS 812 and PHS 815.

Credit for Prior Learning

Industry recognized field specific external credentials are valued by our faculty. Documentation of external credentials allows prospective students to enter with executive status. In accordance with the Graduate

School's Credit for Prior Learning (<http://catalog.wichita.edu/graduate/academic-information/degree-certificate-completion/credit-prior-learning/>) (CPL) policy, CPL may satisfy up to six (6) curricular credit hours. In addition, the following program policies apply:

- CPL credits are included in the total transfer credits allowed toward a degree.
- All CPL credit hours posted to academic records are always equivalent to specified courses. Future enrollment in a course designated for CPL equivalency is not permitted. CPL associated courses cannot be repeated to receive additional course credits towards the degree.
- CPL credits may be earned through credentials up until completion of 75 percent of the curriculum. This includes credentials awarded before joining the program.

Portfolio Program

The CPL Portfolio Program is a process used to compile documentation and ultimately demonstrate that earned credentials are equivalent to specific courses. Students use the Portfolio Program to request credit for learning achieved through nonacademic mechanisms. If equivocal, associated credit hours will be posted to the academic record by the registrar's office. Each portfolio will include:

- Introduction: provide an overview of how the credential/professional experience is related to the course.
- Course Information: provide the catalog course description and course learning outcomes.
- Summary: match each course learning outcome to professional experiences or credential content.
- Narrative: demonstrate how each course learning outcome was actualized.
- Documentary Evidence: include documentation to support knowledge of learning outcomes.
- Resume.

Students may submit course-specific portfolios to request CPL for verified professional credentials, certifications or licenses issued by a governmental agency or professional organization. Students are eligible to receive credit for credentials issued or valid during the effective dates, or validity period, for the credit recommendation. Pre-approved external credential equivalents:

- Assisted living/operator's license: PHS 562 Senior Living Operations
- Nursing home administrator license: PHS 562 Senior Living Operations
- Activities director certification: PHS 626 Hospitality and Enrichment in Aging Communities
- Social services designee certification: PHS 560 Care Networks and Services
- Medicare SHICK certification: PHS 765 The Medicare System
- Social work licensure: PHS 560 Care Networks and Services

Applied Learning

Students in the Master of Arts in aging studies are required to complete an applied learning or research experience to graduate from the program. The requirement can be met by completing one of the following:

1. PHS 799 Master's Portfolio;
2. PHS 660 Administrator-in-Training Long-Term Care Practicum or PHS 790 Aging Studies Practicum; or
3. PHS 795 Thesis Research.