

Programme Specification

Gerontology (Distance Learning) (2017-18)

This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided.

Awarding Institution	University of Southampton
Teaching Institution	University of Southampton
Mode of Study	Distance Learning - Online
Duration in years	1
Accreditation details	None
Final award	Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education
Name of award	Gerontology (Distance Learning)
Interim Exit awards	None
FHEQ level of final award	Level 7
UCAS code	N/A
Programme code	4672
QAA Subject Benchmark or other external reference	ESRC Postgraduate Training & Development Guidelines 2015
Programme Lead	Athina Vlachantoni (av1w07)

Programme Overview

Brief outline of the programme

Gerontology is the study of ageing at the individual and societal levels. It examines the changes humans undergo as they age, as well as the impact of growing proportions of older people on social institutions, labour markets, welfare systems and families. It investigates the relationships between generations and the interconnections between our older and younger selves. Insights are taken from social policy, demography, sociology, biology, healthcare sciences, psychology and economics. Gerontology is thus a fundamentally interdisciplinary subject which leads to a fascinating variety of careers.

The programme will equip you with academic knowledge in Gerontology, focusing on evidence related to the wellbeing of older people, and with policy knowledge relating to social policies aimed at preparing societies for ageing populations. In addition, the programme will offer you a range of training opportunities in research methods, both quantitative and qualitative. This programme is available through an online pathway which offers the programme by Distance Learning.

Your contact hours will vary depending on your module/option choices. Full information about contact hours is provided in individual module profiles.

Learning and teaching

The face-to-face programmes employ a variety of teaching and learning methods, including lectures that are audio-recorded, student-led seminars, computer workshops, library sessions, supervised independent research and independent study. The majority of our modules are taught in small-group seminars and workshops, which provide excellent opportunities for discussion. Students are expected to prepare oral presentations and to lead discussions, thereby developing their skills in written and oral presentation. A variety of assessment methods are employed, which include essays, oral presentations, group work, exercises, research reports and the dissertation. All programme modules have their own page on Blackboard, and all students are able to access materials (lecture slides and recordings of live lectures, coursework details, references and module updates) to supplement their classroom taught lectures. Distance learning students develop these skills through a variety of interactive online resources and software programmes. An enhanced version of Blackboard is central to their learning experience, providing comprehensive support and guidance on how to use online resources that are key to the programme. All coursework is submitted through Blackboard.

Assessment

The Gerontology programmes have no exams, but instead include a range of assessments which are designed to encourage students to reflect on their learning, and to assess their understanding of taught material. For example, students are expected to complete essays and critical reviews of literature, and to prepare short oral presentations which address specific research questions.

Special Features of the programme

The programmes include occasional guest lectures from experts in particular academic topics or who are involved in the design and implementation of local, national or international social policy related to older people.

Please note: As a research-led University, we undertake a continuous review of our programmes to ensure quality enhancement and to manage our resources. As a result, this programme may be revised during a student's period of registration; however, any revision will be balanced against the requirement that the student should receive the educational service expected. Please read our [Disclaimer](#) to see why, when and how changes may be made to a student's programme.

Programmes and major changes to programmes are approved through the University's [programme validation process](#) which is described in the University's [Quality handbook](#).

Educational Aims of the Programme

The aims of the Gerontology programme are to train you in the theories on ageing and the life course, engage you in the key debates, equip you with policy evaluation skills, enhance your knowledge and skills in research methods, their application and data such that you are prepared for a career in the field of Gerontology and applied health and social sciences.

The Gerontology (DL) Distance Learning pathway aims to train you as in the Gerontology programme but through a variety of online resources accessed via Blackboard. Lectures are audio-recorded and web-cast using specialist Camtasia/Panopto software and PowerPoint. Assignments are submitted electronically and electronic forms are used for student evaluation and feedback.

The aims of the Gerontology programmes are to provide you with:

- 1.1 Critical appreciation of the key theoretical perspectives within Gerontology and their application in the analysis of specific issues concerning ageing and the life course.
- 1.2 Knowledge and understanding of contemporary debates within Gerontology concerning the lives of older

people, their families and society, in both developed and developing countries.

1.3 The ability to evaluate policies and initiatives concerning population ageing, welfare provision and the lives of older people, their families and carers.

1.4 Knowledge of qualitative and/or quantitative research methods and the ability to apply them appropriately to investigate key research questions.

1.5 The ability to design and conduct independent research within Gerontology using appropriate research methods.

1.6 Preparation for a career in the field of Gerontology and applied health and social sciences.

Programme aim 1.5 is not fully developed in the PG Diploma Gerontology.

Programme Learning Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding

On successful completion of this programme a student will have knowledge and understanding of:

- A1. The key theoretical and conceptual approaches to the study of ageing and the life course from a multi-disciplinary perspective.
- A2. Key debates within Gerontology.
- A3. The determinants of demographic change and the consequences of population ageing.
- A4. Key changes in the life course in the last 100 years and their implications.
- A5. Health and social care policies and initiatives which impact upon the lives of older people and their families/carers.
- A6. Principles of research design and strategy and the appropriate choice of research method.
- A7. An individual research topic in the field of Gerontology (This skill is not developed fully for PGDip students).

Subject Specific Intellectual and Research Skills

On successful completion of this programme a student will be able to:

- B1. Appreciate the importance of life course transitions in shaping experiences in old age.
- B2. Critically evaluate alternative theoretical frameworks and apply them to selected issues and debates within ageing.
- B3. Critically assess policy interventions in the fields of health and social care for older people.
- B4. Critically evaluate policy options for economic and social support for older people, in both developed

and developing country contexts.

- B5. Identify and solve problems within the field of ageing and the life course.
- B6. Synthesise key library and internet resources within the field of Gerontology.
- B7. Identify appropriate methods of research design and data analysis.
- B8. Analyse and interpret data as applied to issues concerning ageing and the life course.

Transferable and Generic Skills

On successful completion of this programme a student will be able to:

- C1. Effectively communicate information through PowerPoint/ poster and oral presentations using visual aids and hand-outs.
- C2. Contribute confidently and appropriately to group discussions/ online discussion boards.
- C3. Effectively communicate information through written reports.
- C4. Think critically about new and unfamiliar ideas and concepts.
- C5. Manage time and resources in an individual research project (This skill is not developed fully for PGDip students).
- C6. Locate and use bibliographic resources for specified research purposes.

Subject Specific Practical Skills

On successful completion of this programme a student will be able to:

- D1. Appropriately apply research design and methodology to research questions within Gerontology.
- D2. Undertake the collection, analysis and interpretation of data (qualitative and/or quantitative) to investigate key research issues within Gerontology.
- D3. Access, synthesise and communicate information relevant to the study of ageing and the life course from a variety of resources.

Programme Structure

The programme structure table is below:

Information about pre and co-requisites is included in individual module profiles.

Part I

Typical programme content

The full-time PGDip Gerontology programme is studied over 12 months. The PG Diploma Gerontology is structured in the same way as the MSc Gerontology in terms of the latter's taught element, but amounts to 60 ECTS/120 CATS points as it does not include the Dissertation, which is worth 30 ECTS/60 CATS.

The PGDip Gerontology (DL) is a Distance Learning pathway, facilitating students who wish to combine paid work and family life with postgraduate study. The programme is taught using a wide range of online resources, such as audio-recording and web-casts of lectures available on Blackboard, PowerPoint lecture slides, electronic readings, embedded trigger questions, online practice exercises and quizzes, discussion boards and assessed assignments. The programme is composed of 60 ECTS/120 CATS points. Four of the six modules taken on this pathway are compulsory. There is one research methods option module from a choice of two (GERO6014 or GERO6015) and one substantive option module from a choice of three (GERO6013, GERO6022 or GERO6023). Taught sessions take place over 2 semesters each year.

Programme details

The structure of the programmes and the modules currently offered are set out below. Of the modules shown against each part of your programme, some are compulsory (ie enrolment is automatic) and others are options. Against each part, you are directed to which modules are compulsory and which are options. The optional modules listed constitute an indicative list. There will always be choice but the options might vary between parts. A list of optional modules will be available to you via the Student Record Self-Service system once you enrol at the University.

Part I Compulsory

Code	Module Title	ECTS	Type
GERO6011	Ageing Health Well-Being (DL)	10	Compulsory
GERO6012	Demographic Change, Ageing & Globalisation (DL)	10	Compulsory
GERO6010	Perspectives in Gerontology (DL)	10	Compulsory

GERO6015	Qualitative Research Methods (DL)	10	Compulsory
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Part I Optional

Code	Module Title	ECTS	Type
GERO6023	Mental Health and Ageing (DL)	10	Optional
GERO6022	Poverty and Social Protection Around The World (DL)	10	Optional
GERO6014	Quantitative Research Methods (DL)	10	Optional
GERO6013	Researching Ageing Societies (DL)	10	Optional

Progression Requirements

The programme will follow the University's regulations for [Progression, Determination and Classification of Results: Undergraduate and Integrated Masters Programmes](#) or the University's regulations for [Progression, Determination and Classification of Results: Standalone Masters Programmes](#) as set out in the General Academic Regulations in the University Calendar: <http://www.calendar.soton.ac.uk/sectionIV/sectIV-index.html>

Support for student learning

There are facilities and services to support your learning some of which are accessible to students across the University and some of which will be geared more particularly to students in your particular Faculty or discipline area.

The University provides:

- library resources, including e-books, on-line journals and databases, which are comprehensive and up-to-date; together with assistance from Library staff to enable you to make the best use of these resources
- high speed access to online electronic learning resources on the Internet from dedicated PC Workstations onsite and from your own devices; laptops, smartphones and tablet PCs via the Eduroam wireless network. There is a wide range of application software available from the Student Public Workstations.
- computer accounts which will connect you to a number of learning technologies for example, the Blackboard virtual learning environment (which facilitates online learning and access to specific learning resources)
- standard ICT tools such as Email, secure filestore and calendars.
- access to key information through the MySouthampton Student Mobile Portal which delivers timetables, Module information, Locations, Tutor details, Library account, bus timetables etc. while you are on the move.
- IT support through a comprehensive website, telephone and online ticketed support and a dedicated helpdesk in the Hartley Library.
- Enabling Services offering support services and resources via a triage model to access crisis management, mental health support and counselling. Support includes daily Drop In at Highfield campus at 13.00 – 15.00 (Monday, Wednesday and Friday out of term-time) or via on-line chat on weekdays from 14.00 – 16.00. Arrangements can also be made for meetings via Skype.
- assessment and support (including specialist IT support) facilities if you have a disability, long term health problem or Specific Learning Difficulty (e.g. dyslexia).
- the Student Services Centre (SSC) to assist you with a range of general enquiries including financial matters, accommodation, exams, graduation, student visas, ID cards
- Career and Employability services, advising on job search, applications, interviews, paid work, volunteering and internship opportunities and getting the most out of your extra-curricular activities alongside your degree programme when writing your CV

- Other support that includes health services (GPs), chaplaincy (for all faiths) and 'out of hours' support for students in Halls and in the local community, (18.00-08.00)
- A Centre for Language Study, providing assistance in the development of English language and study skills for non-native speakers.

The Students' Union provides

- an academic student representation system, consisting of Course Representatives, Academic Presidents, Faculty Officers and the Vice-President Education; SUSU provides training and support for all these representatives, whose role is to represent students' views to the University.
- opportunities for extracurricular activities and volunteering
- an Advice Centre offering free and confidential advice including support if you need to make an academic appeal
- Support for student peer-to-peer groups, such as Nightline.

Associated with your programme you will be able to access:

- Module co-ordinators' (or module convenors') support. Module co-ordinators will be available at designated times during the week to discuss issues related to the particular modules you are studying at the time. This will be in addition to class contact time.
- Personal Academic Tutor. As soon as you register on this programme, you will be allocated a personal academic tutor. S/he is a member of the academic team and will be available to discuss general academic issues related to the programme as well as offer advice and support on any personal issues which may affect your studies.
- Distance Learning students will also be able to access a Distance Learning Tutor who can assist with the induction process and can advise on any aspect of the Distance Learning programme.
- Module handbooks/outlines. These will be available at the start of each module (often in online format). The Handbook includes the aims and learning outcomes of the module, the methods of assessment, relevant background material to the module and a session-by-session breakdown of the module together with appropriate reading lists.
- Within the Faculty, administrative support is provided by your Student Office which deals with student records and related issues and with queries related to your specific degree programme.
- All students (both face to face and Distance Learning) have access to a Dissertations Supervisor who provides advice and support during the independent research. Distance learning students will also be able to access specially prepared materials covering these areas on Blackboard.

Methods for evaluating the quality of teaching and learning

You will have the opportunity to have your say on the quality of the programme in the following ways:

Distance-Learning students have the opportunity to have their say in the following ways:

- Anonymous electronic Module Surveys which are reviewed by the Module convenor(s) and the Head of Teaching.
- Mid-Semester reviews run by each Module convenor.
- Input into quinquennial PG Cert/PG Dip/MSc programme and module reviews by emailing your comments and suggestions to the designated student representative of the cohort.
- Acting as a student representative of your cohort, collecting the views and suggestions of fellow students through email and passing them on to the coordinators of the Gerontology Staff-Student Liaison Committee, the Social Sciences Staff-Student Liaison Committee, and the MSc Gerontology Programme Board.

The ways in which the quality of your programme is checked, both inside and outside the University, are:

- Regular module and programme reports which are monitored by the Faculty
- Programme validation, normally every five years.
- External examiners, who produce an annual report
- A national Research Excellence Framework (our research activity contributes directly to the quality of your learning experience)
- Institutional Review by the Quality Assurance Agency

Further details on the University's quality assurance processes are given in the [Quality Handbook](#).

Criteria for admission

The University's Admissions Policy applies equally to all programmes of study. The following are the typical entry criteria to be used for selecting candidates for admission. The University's approved equivalencies for the requirements listed below will also be acceptable.

Students with lower or not usual entry qualifications may be admitted on the basis of relevant work experience or professional qualifications with the requisite approval.

Further English Language Proficiency information can be found at:
http://www.soton.ac.uk/international/entry_reqs/index.shtml

A list of other acceptable qualifications in English can be found at:
http://www.soton.ac.uk/international/entry_reqs/english_language.shtml

A list of countries exempt from testing can be found at:
http://www.soton.ac.uk/international/join_us/countriesexemptlangtest.html

The University runs a number of English language courses to prepare international students for study. Details can be found at <http://www.southampton.ac.uk/cls/>

Qualification	Grade/GPA	Subjects requirements	Specific requirements
Bachelors Degree	The usual entry requirement for the PGCert/PGDip/MSc programme is a Bachelors Honours degree (usually 2:1 or above) or an equivalent standard in other qualifications approved by the University.		

Mature applicants

Studying for a degree later in life can be extremely rewarding and mature students are often among our most successful.

Mature applicants without formal qualifications but with relevant experience are also welcomed. Such applications will be considered on an individual basis depending on experience and background.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The University has a [Recognition of Prior Learning Policy](#)

Students are accepted under the University's recognition of prior learning policy; however, each case will be reviewed on an individual basis.

English Language Proficiency

The table below sets out the English proficiency requirements for this programme in terms of the IELTS test. We accept a range of other English proficiency tests including TOEFL and Cambridge Advanced/Proficiency. For full details of the recognised tests and the equivalent requirements in those tests please see

www.southampton.ac.uk/admissions-language.

Overall	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Listening
6.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5

Career Opportunities

Our alumni are working in a wide range of sectors related to ageing and older people: for example the health and social care public and private sectors, the medical sector and in local and national government research analysis.

External Examiner(s) for the programme

Name: Suzanne Moffatt - Newcastle University

Students must not contact External Examiner(s) directly, and external examiners have been advised to refer any such communications back to the University. Students should raise any general queries about the assessment and examination process for the programme with their Course Representative, for consideration through Staff: Student Liaison Committee in the first instance, and Student representatives on Staff: Student Liaison Committees will have the opportunity to consider external examiners' reports as part of the University's quality assurance process.

External examiners do not have a direct role in determining results for individual students, and students wishing to discuss their own performance in assessment should contact their Personal Academic Tutor in the first instance.

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information can be found in the programme handbook.

Appendix 1:

Students are responsible for meeting the cost of essential textbooks, and of producing such essays, assignments, laboratory reports and dissertations as are required to fulfil the academic requirements for each programme of study. In addition to this, students registered for this programme also have to pay for:

Additional Costs

Type	Details
Software Licenses	Licenses relating to software used in the programme (eg. SPSS, NVivo) are purchased by the University, and students can download them from the iSolutions website using their username and password.
Conference expenses	<p>Accommodation: Where students wish to attend a scientific conference during their studies, they are liable for any accommodation cost associated (as well as conference registration fees).</p> <p>Travel: Where students wish to attend a scientific conference during their studies, they are liable for any travel cost associated.</p> <p>If students incur any travel costs associated with conducting their dissertation research, they are expected to bear the cost of this themselves.</p>
Hardware	Participating in the Distance Learning programme requires the student to already have access to a PC/ laptop. Students may also wish to purchase their own PC/laptop or tablet in order to access Blackboard. Headphones are sent to the Distance Learning students in receipt of a Commonwealth Scholarship via post as part of their tuition fees at the beginning of their programme. Distance Learning students are also expected to have access to the internet, and to bear the cost of this themselves.
Stationery	You will be expected to provide your own day-to-day stationary items, e.g. pens, pencils, notebooks, etc. Any specialist stationery items will be specified under the Additional Costs tab of the relevant module profile.
Textbooks	<p>Where a module specifies core texts these should generally be available electronically on the reserve list in the library. However due to demand, students may prefer to buy their own copies. These can be purchased from any source. Please note that the vast majority of readings in Gerontology are available electronically through e-journals, as digitised text in the Online Course Collection or as e-books. Students on the DL programme receive key textbooks as part of their tuition fees at the beginning of the programme via post.</p> <p>Some modules suggest reading texts as optional background reading. The library may hold copies of such texts, or alternatively you may wish to purchase your own copies. Although not essential reading, you may benefit from the additional reading materials for the module.</p>
Printing and Photocopying Costs	<p>For all GERO modules, coursework (such as essays; projects; dissertations) is submitted on line. Distance Learning students are provided hard copies of the Student Handbook, Module Outlines and other key learning materials (eg. Module Outlines) via the post at the beginning of their programme, as part of their tuition fees.</p> <p>If students wish to print out copies of the lecture slides or electronic readings, they are expected to bear the cost of this themselves.</p>

In some cases you'll be able to choose modules (which may have different costs associated with that module) which will change the overall cost of a programme to you. Details of such costs will be listed in the Module Profile. Please also ensure you read the section on additional costs in the University's Fees, Charges and Expenses Regulations in the University Calendar available at www.calendar.soton.ac.uk.

