

Institute on Aging
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Options for the Final Requirement **Internship or Independent Research Project**

To fulfill the final requirement for the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology, students may do an internship at an aging services agency or an independent research project. Credit earned for either the Internship or the Independent Research Project must be separate and distinct from any other course work for which the participant may also be earning academic credit. Internships are considered the normal route for most students. Students who wish to complete an independent research project instead must receive approval from the Director of IOA.

Internship

The internship can be one of two general types:

- career exploration, where experience is gained to deepen the student's understanding of a particular specialization (e.g., housing, transportation, mental health) within the field of gerontology; or
- advanced internship, in which one or more projects are conducted, enabling the student to apply, test, and further develop skills learned in the graduate Certificate in Gerontology program.

Students must complete **an internship application** with IOA, requiring the signature of the student, the agency supervisor, and the director of IOA prior to beginning the internship. Accompanying this form should be:

- Specific learning objectives which will ultimately be used as a component of the internship paper
- Career objectives statement
- Required experience and skills for the internship
- Description of the final product of the internship, including an estimate of when the report will be submitted
- Student's resume

Students are expected to spend a minimum of eight hours per week for the term at the agency. Upon completion of the internship, the field supervisor will complete a written **performance evaluation** of the student's effort, proficiency in work skills, and overall estimate of the student's suitability for occupation in that area of practice. IOA will provide the evaluation form. Evaluations should be submitted by students with their internship report.

Upon completion of the internship, the student must submit a written report to IOA. The paper ***The Art of Reflective Practice: Making the Most of Your Internship Experience*** provides the student with

guidelines for the internship experience report. As stated in the paper, the student should address the following factors:

- Internship experience: describe the internship experience, its goals and activities
- Aging theory and the internship experience: observe how theories of adult development and aging are reflected between theory and practice
- Describe the aging service agency in which the student worked
- Personal meaning of professional practice: cultivate the habit of reflective practice
- Share the lessons of experience

Along with the internship report, the student will submit field notes/diary and any other documentation that will add to or provide further documentation validating the internship report.

Independent Research Project (IRP)

In conjunction with a faculty member serving as the IRP director, students who choose to complete an independent research project will select a specific topic of immediate relevance to aging.

The student must identify a faculty member to serve as the IRP director and ask that faculty person to serve in this capacity. This will include scheduling meeting times with the director, who, in turn, will define more completely the expectation for the quality of the final paper that will serve as the basis for grading the independent research project.

The project director and student will negotiate a mutually agreeable agency relationship or placement setting in which the student can research a particular topic. The agency or organization selected must be primarily concerned with aging-related activities (i.e. a long-term care facility, local area agency on aging, or senior center), and will serve as the context through which the student examines the topic (for example, satisfaction survey of participants in adult day care programs, evaluation of committee and task force effectiveness).

If needed, IOA can assist in identifying possible placements. It is legitimate, even desirable, to select the student's place of employment or concurrent internship for the purposes of the independent study if the director deems it relevant to the field of aging and determines the independent study topic can be investigated adequately.

The final paper will be at least 15 double-spaced pages, excluding appendices or references. The student should address the following factors:

- Describe the independent study topic, indicating the rationale for the choice
- Review literature relevant to the topic and the student's observations and placement experience
- Evaluate the topic and reach conclusions about future directions/ issues for gerontology in terms of that topic

Registering for the internship or independent research project

Students use a By-Arrangement form to register for 3-credit hours (1-credit hour for MSW students).

Download the file from the Registration and Records website

http://www.pdx.edu/sites/www.pdx.edu.registration/files/media_assets/by_arrangement.pdf

Students occasionally have difficulty completing section 2 of the form correctly. In section two, the student is writing essentially the PSU Bulletin course description tailored to their specific internship or IRP.

- Department: PHE

- Course number: 504 (internship), or 501 (IRP)
- Course title: this will be the academic record entry, and is limited to 20 characters. Students taking the internship will preface the title with “INTERN:”, while IRP students will use “RES:” The remaining characters should be specific to *your* internship or IRP.
- Course Name: Expand the course title into a proper name.
- Course description: One or two sentences specifically describing your course intentions. These are not the required learning objectives.

Examples follow:

Course number: PHE 504

Course title: INTERN: INTER LNG CR

Course name: Internship: Intermediate/Long-Term Care

Course Description: Observe the relevance of current aging and development theories in an intermediate/long-term care facility. Determine the future and successful development of recruitment and retention processes in this field.

Course number: PHE 504

Course title: INTERN: SPEECH PATHO

Course name: Internship: Speech Pathology

Course Description: Work with the Department of Speech Pathology at Portland Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Work will include screening, diagnostic evaluation and management of speech, language, voice and swallowing disorders in the elderly.

Course number: PHE 501

Course title: RES: HOSPICE CARE

Course name: Research: Hospice Care: Philosophy and History

Course Description: Trace the history of and philosophy of hospice care and compare current administrative variations.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

1. Decide whether you wish to do an internship or an independent research project as your culminating experience for the program (the internship is by far the most commonly selected option).
2. Identify a possible internship site (for the internship) or research topic (for the independent research project).
3. Meet with the potential field supervisor (at the internship agency) or the PSU faculty person who will supervise your independent research project to determine the scope of work and learning objectives.
4. Contact the IOA Office Coordinator to obtain the IOA Director’s tentative approval for the internship/research project by the IOA Director.
5. For the internship: Complete the internship application form and a separate sheet containing detailed learning objectives. For the independent research project: Submit a written description

detailing the proposed project and listing the PSU faculty person who will supervise the project.

6. Register for the appropriate course (PHE 504 for the internship; PHE 501 for the independent research project) by completing and submitting the By Arrangement Form to the IOA Office Coordinator. Your registration must be approved at several levels; please be patient as it can take a week for your registration to post.
7. Conduct the internship or independent research project (8 hours per week for 10 weeks). If doing an internship, keep field notes or a diary to record your experiences and thoughts.
8. Write the final paper. Most students doing an internship require an additional two to three weeks following the end of the term to write their final paper. These students will receive an IP (in process) grade until their paper is submitted and read.
9. Submit the final paper to the IOA Director or PSU instructor (for the internship, submit the field supervisor's evaluation as well).
10. After two weeks, check to see that your final grade has posted; if not, contact the IOA Office Coordinator.
11. If this is the last course to complete your certificate, you must apply for the awarding of the certificate. Directions and application are on the Graduate Studies website at this link:
http://www.gsr.pdx.edu/application_cert.php
12. IOA checks certificate student activity after grades have posted at the end of term, and forwards the program completion form to Graduate Studies. They must receive both the student application and the program completion form to process your certificate. Deadlines can be found here:
http://www.gsr.pdx.edu/ogs_general_deadlines.php