Understanding the Competency-Based Approach

Practically speaking, how do competency-based programs like those offered at Western Governors University (WGU) work? Unlike traditional universities, WGU does not award degrees based on completion of a certain number of credit hours or a certain set of required courses. Instead, you will earn your degree by demonstrating your skills, knowledge, and understanding of important concepts.

Progress through a degree program is governed not by the amount of time you spend in class but by your ability to demonstrate mastery of competencies as you complete required courses. Of course, you will need to engage in learning experiences as you review competencies or develop knowledge and skills in areas in which you may be weak. To help you acquire the knowledge and skills you need to complete your courses and program, WGU provides a rich array of learning resources. Your program mentor will work closely with you to help you understand the competencies required for your program and to help you create a schedule for completing your courses. You will also work closely with course instructors as you engage in each of your courses. As subject matter experts, course instructors will guide you through the content you must master to pass the course assessments.

The benefit of this competency-based system is that it enables students who are knowledgeable about a particular subject to make accelerated progress toward completing a degree, even if they lack college experience. You may have gained skills and knowledge of a subject while on the job, accumulated wisdom through years of life experience, or already taken a course on a particular subject. WGU will award your degree based on the skills and knowledge that you possess and can demonstrate—not the number of credits hours on your transcript.

Accreditation

Western Governors University is the only university in the history of American higher education to have earned accreditation from four regional accrediting commissions. WGU's accreditation was awarded by (1) the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, (2) the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, (3) the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, and (4) the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. The university's accreditation status is now managed by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), which reaffirmed WGU's accreditation in February 2020. The WGU Teachers College is accredited at the initial-licensure level by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) and by the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP). The nursing programs are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). The Health Information Management program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education (CAHIIM). The College of Business programs are accredited by the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP).

The Degree Plan

The focus of your program is your personalized Degree Plan. The Degree Plan is a detailed blueprint of the courses you will need to complete in order to earn your degree. The Degree Plan also lays out the accompanying learning resources and assessments that compose your program. The list of courses in the Degree Plan is often referred to as the standard path. The amount of time it takes to complete your program depends on both the amount of new information you need to learn and the amount of time you plan to devote each week to study. Your program mentor and course instructors will help you assess your strengths and development needs to establish a study plan.

Students vary widely in the specific skills and information they need to learn. For example, some students s in

as 15–20 hours per week to the program, while others may need to devote more time. For this reason, pre-assessments are there to help your program mentor form a profile of your prior knowledge and create a personalized Degree Plan.

How You Will Interact with Faculty

At WGU, faculty serve in specialized roles, and they will work with you individually to provide the guidance, instruction, and support you will need to succeed and graduate. As a student, it is important for you to take advantage of this support. It is key to your progress and ultimate success. Upon your enrollment, you will be assigned a program mentor—an expert in your field of study who will provide you with regular program-level guidance and support from the day you start until the day you graduate. Your   At WG
Xsltdstudyset ulETBTeyelephone appoint(pre-a(houly at first)y will wothe pchenrollment, yuate. Your)277.83]TJE

The WGU orientation course focuses on acquainting you with WGU's competency-based model, distance education, technology, and other resources and tools available for students. You will also utilize WGU program and course communities, participate in activities, and get to know other students at WGU. The orientation course must be completed before you can start your first term at WGU.

Transferability of Prior College Coursework

Because WGU is a competency-based institution, it does not award degrees based on credits but rather on demonstration of competency. However, if you have completed college coursework at another accredited institution, or if you have completed industry certifications, you may have your transcripts and certifications evaluated to determine if you are eligible to receive some transfer credit. The guidelines for determining what credits will be granted varies based on the degree program. Students entering graduate programs must have their undergraduate degree verified before being admitted to WGU. To review more information in regards to transfer guidelines based on the different degree programs, you may visit the Student Handbook found at the link below and search for "Transfer Credit Evaluation."

[Click here for the Student Handbook](#)

WGU does not waive any requirements based on a student's professional experience and does not perform a "résumé review" or "portfolio review" that will automatically waive any degree requirements. Degree requirements and transferability rules are subject to change in order to keep the degree content relevant and current.

Remember, WGU's competency-based approach lets you take advantage of your knowledge and skills, regardless of how you obtained them. Even when you do not directly receive credit, the knowledge you possess may help you accelerate the time it takes to complete your degree program.

Continuous Enrollment, On Time Progress, and Satisfactory Academic Progress

WGU is a "continuous enrollment" institution, which means you will be automatically enrolled in each of your new terms while you are at WGU. Each term is six months long. Longer terms and continuous enrollment allow you to focus on your studies without the hassle of unnatural breaks between terms that you would experience at a more traditional university. At the end of every six-month term, you and your program mentor will review the progress you have made and revise your Degree Plan for your next six-month term.

WGU requires that students make measurable progress toward the completion of their degree programs every term. We call this "On-Time Progress," denoting that you are on track and making progress toward on-time graduation. As full-time students, graduate students must enroll in at least 8 competency units each term, and undergraduate students must enroll in at least 12 competency units each term. Completing at least these minimum enrollments is essential to On-Time Progress and serves as a baseline from which you may accelerate your program. We measure your progress based on the courses you are able to pass, not on your accumulation of credit hours or course grades. Every time you pass a course, you are demonstrating that you have mastered skills and knowledge in your degree program. For comparison to traditional grading systems, passing a course means you have demonstrated competency equivalent to a "B" grade or better.

WGU assigns competency units to each course in order to track your progress through the program. A competency unit is equivalent to one semester credit of learning. Some courses may be assigned 3 competency units while others may be as large as 12 competency units.

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) is particularly important to students on financial aid because you must achieve SAP in order to maintain eligibility for financial aid. We will measure your SAP quantitatively by reviewing the number of competency units you have completed each term. In order to remain in good

WGU publishes an Institutional Catalog, which describes the academic requirements of each degree program. Although students are required to complete the program version current at the time of their enrollment, WGU may modify requirements and course offerings within that version of the program to

Areas of Study for **Bachelor of Science in Psychology**

The following section includes the areas of study in the program, with their associated courses. Your specific learning resources and level of instructional support will vary based on the individual competencies you bring to the program and your confidence in developing the knowledge, skills, and

This course covers the following competencies:

Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.

The learner explains the biological perspectives of psychology.

The learner explains the theories of learning and memory.

The learner explains the concepts of personality development and social psychology.

The learner identifies psychological disorders and treatment methods.

The learner explains the foundations of psychology.

course plan together.

The learner explains physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development from conception through early childhood.

The learner explains the influence of emotions and cultural perspectives and practices on psychosocial development and behavior from birth through early childhood.

The learner explains physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development from middle childhood through adolescence.

The learner explains the influence of emotions on psychosocial development and behavior from middle childhood through adolescence.

The learner explains physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development from early adulthood to the end of life.

The learner explains the influence of emotions on psychosocial development and behavior from early adulthood to the end of life.

Applied Probability and Statistics

Applied Probability and Statistics is designed to help students develop competence in the fundamental concepts of basic statistics including: introductory algebra and graphing; descriptive statistics; regression and correlation; and probability. Statistical data and probability are often used in everyday life, science, business, information technology, and educational settings to make informed decisions about the validity of studies and the effect of data on decisions. This course discusses what constitutes sound research design and how to appropriately model phenomena using statistical data. Additionally, the content covers simple probability calculations, based on events that occur in the business and IT industries. No prerequisites are required for this course.

for a cross-cultural audience, narrowing research topics and questions, researching for content to support a topic, and referencing research sources. Each section includes learning opportunities through readings, videos, audio, and other relevant resources. Assessment activities with feedback also provide opportunities to check your learning, practice, and show how well you understand course content. Because the course is self-paced, you may move through the material as quickly or as slowly as you need to gain proficiency in the seven competencies that will be covered in the final assessment. If you have no prior knowledge or experience, you can expect to spend 30-40 hours on the course content. You will demonstrate competency through a performance assessment. There is no prerequisite for this course and there is no specific technical knowledge needed.

This course covers the following competencies:

Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.

The learner composes a written message with language appropriate for cross-cultural communication.

The learner writes in a professional manner for a given scenario.

The learner researches valid and reliable sources.

The learner writes a reference list.

The learner incorporates research to support a position or idea.

The learner writes a message using an effective communication approach for a given situation.

The learner incorporates self-expression in written communication.

Introduction to Physical and Human Geography
This is Introduction to Physical and Human Geography, a three-module course that addresses the question of what geography really is in today's complex world; how migration affects—and has been affected by—geography; and one of the biggest present problems related to geography: climate change. Because the course is self-paced, you may move through the material as quickly or as slowly as you need to, with the goal of demonstrating proficiency in the five competencies covered in the final assessment. If you have no prior knowledge of this material, you can expect to spend 30–40 hours on the course content.

Introduction to Statistics for Research covers descriptive and inferential statistics used to address research questions. Levels of measurement, central tendency and variability, probability, distributions, correlation, hypothesis testing, t-tests, analysis of variance, linear regression, and chi-square tests are examined, with a focus on their implications for research. Reading and interpreting graphically presented statistical data is included. Before taking this course, students should complete C955 Applied Probability and Statistics or an equivalent course.

 This course covers the following competencies:

 Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.

 The learner recognizes how data characteristics influence choice of descriptive statistical analysis.

 The learner interprets bivariate inferential statistical test results.

 The learner interprets bivariate inferential statistical test results.

Health, Fitness, and Wellness
Health, Fitness, and Wellness focuses on the importance and foundations of good health and physical fitness—particularly

The learner adapts communications to the basic needs and motivations of their audience.

The learner applies storytelling techniques to motivate, inform, or influence a target audience.

The learner applies visual design techniques to motivate, inform, or influence a target audience.

World History: Diverse Cultures and Global Connections

This is World History: Diverse Cultures and Global Connections. In this course, you will focus on three main topics—cultural and religious diversity; pandemics; and the relationship of empires and nation states—as well as the skills of identifying root causes, explaining causes and effects, and analyzing complex systems. This course consists of an introduction and four major sections. Each section includes learning opportunities through reading, images, videos, and other relevant resources. Assessment activities with feedback also provide opportunities to practice and check how well you understand the content. Because the course is self-paced, you may move through the material as quickly or as slowly as you need to, with the goal of demonstrating proficiency in the four competencies covered in the final assessment. If you have no prior knowledge of this material, you can expect to spend 30-40 hours on the course content.

This course covers the following competencies:

Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.

The learner differentiates among diverse cultural and religious customs and practices.

The learner analyzes the role of human actions in the spread of disease.

The learner explains the factors that contributed to the rise and fall of empires.

The learner explains the factors that contributed to the development of nation states.

Psychology

Theories of Personality

Theories of Personality describes the concepts and assumptions of significant theories of personality. The course assesses the strengths and weaknesses of each major personality theory, describes and defines the research methodology frequently used by psychologists in the study of personality, and identifies the contributions of theory and empirical research to our contemporary understanding of personality. Cultural impacts on personality are also discussed.
There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course covers the following competencies:

Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.

The learner recognizes considerations related to the study of personality.

The learner identifies the key concepts and assumptions of the psychodynamic lens.

The learner identifies the key concepts and assumptions of the humanistic perspective.

The learner identifies the key concepts and assumptions of the social-cognitive lens.

The learner identifies the key concepts, principles, and assumptions of trait theories, biological theories, and behavioral theories.

Cultural Awareness and Ethics provides students with the understanding of what it means to have personal, explicit and implicit cultural biases and how these can affect interpersonal interactions. The course will explore strategies for responding to personal biases and for promoting cultural awareness and ethical actions. Through critical readings, videos, and interactive activities, the student will gain knowledge in these essential subjects. There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course covers the following competencies:

Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.

The learner analyzes the impact of explicit and implicit biases.

The learner applies ethical strategies for responding to personal biases.

The learner proposes strategies for promoting cultural awareness and ethical responsibility.

Psychology of Learning

Psychology of Learning focuses on applying research on learning, emotion, and motivation to positively impact influence human behavior. The course presents a study of key research and theories in the areas related to learning, with a focus on applications to promote acquisition, retention, and transfer of knowledge. Students will explore evidence-based strategies to promote learning and analyze how individual and group characteristics can impact affect learning. This course will improve students' understanding of the emotional, social, and environmental factors which that shape human learning and humans' capacity for development. Introduction to Psychology is a prerequisite to this course.

The learner creates a plan for sustaining and promoting well-being in later life.

Cognitive Psychology

Cognitive Psychology examines human mental processes, including how humans sense, interpret, think about and respond to information, and integrate new information with prior experience. This course examines mental operations, attention, pattern recognition and other perceptual processes, memory, problem-solving and decision-making, categorization and concept formation, language acquisition and use, and contextual interpretation.There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course covers the following competencies:

Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.

The learner identifies basic components of human cognition, mental imagery, concepts, and language.

The learner describes basic states of consciousness.

The learner analyzes the major processes involved in attention, problem-solving, and decision-making.

The learner applies memory models and theories.

Psychopathology

Psychopathology examines historical and contemporary views and issues of abnormal behavior. Students are provided with an overview of the ways mental health practitioners explain, diagnose, and treat behavioral disorders. Sociocultural impacts on abnormal behavior, including the manifestation, categorization, and treatment of mental illness, are explored. Biases and popular depictions of mental health and mental illness are analyzed. There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course covers the following competencies:

Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.

The learner applies knowledge of historical and cultural perspectives to current definitions of abnormal behavior.

The learner analyzes depictions of neurodevelopmental, psychotic, and mood disorders.

The learner critically analyzes depictions of anxiety, feeding and eating, and personality disorders.

Career and Lifelong Learning

Career and Lifelong Learning supports students in taking their first steps in a lifelong journey of development as a professional. Students will explore career pathways, plan how best to achieve their desired professional future, and take tangible steps toward that future by creating career growth materials that adhere to today's best practices. There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course covers the following competencies:

Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.

The learner demonstrates foundational knowledge of self and of career pathways and uses that knowledge to identify potential career goals.

The learner uses specific career goal research, academic planning, and a self-analysis of their own candidacy in relation to that goal to build a career action plan that serves as a pathway to that goal.

The learner creates materials for the job application process.

The learner demonstrates their professional identity through practice for professional interactions.

Understanding Substance Abuse & Addiction

Understanding Substance Abuse and Addiction provides an overview of substance abuse causes, impact, prevention, and treatment. Students will understand the signs and symptoms of substance abuse and addiction and its impact on individuals, groups, and the community. Students will analyze relevant factors that initiate and reinforce substance abuse and addiction and describe evidence-based strategies for prevention, intervention, and treatment. There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course covers the following competencies:

Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.

The learner describes substance abuse and its impact on individuals and communities.

The learner analyzes factors relevant to the initiation and reinforcement of substance abuse and addiction.

The learner describes evidence-based strategies for substance abuse prevention, intervention, and treatment

Health Psychology

Health Psychology provides a basic overview of the biopsychosocial model of health and other holistic models of wellness. The course draws from diverse cultural perspectives as well as the theory and practice of human health behavior change to explore the relationship between psychosocial experiences and health. Topics include the impact of social and cultural factors on health, the relationship between stress and physical health and disease, the psychological experience of illness, and how lifestyle patterns and behavior influence chronic disease. There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course covers the following competencies:

Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.

The learner creates a personalized statement of health drawn from community and empirical sources.

The learner applies a framework to assess factors impacting individual well-being.

The learner applies principles of health psychology to a behavior change project.

Neuropsychology

Neuropsychology covers how brain processes relate to human cognition and behavior. Students will understand typical cognitive function in a person's everyday life, major cognitive processes and neurophysiology involved in human sensation and perception, and insights from social neurobiology on the interaction between brain processes and social behaviors. There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course covers the following competencies:

Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.

The learner analyzes the neural anatomy of the brain.

The learner describes the major cognitive processes and neurophysiology involved in human sensation, perception, and movement.

The learner distinguishes between normal and atypical cognitive function.

Mental Health Awareness and Education

Mental Health Awareness and Education is designed to help students recognize mental disorders, improve access to mental health services, support recovery, and lower the rate of death, disease, and disability among those with mental illnesses. Topics include mental health education programs, mental health stigmas,c models o empi271 nmentaesses.

personality, and learning. The course also provides an interdisciplinary perspective, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, and economics, to better evaluate and predict consumer behavior. There are no prerequisites to this course.

course plan together.

The learner connects a real-world psychosocial issue to their personal or professional interests.

The learner summarizes data relevant to a real-world psychosocial issue.

The learner connects a real-world psychosocial issue to psychological concepts or theories.

The learner proposes a strategy to address a real-world psychosocial issue.

General Science Content

Introduction to Biology

This course is a foundational introduction to the biological sciences. The overarching theories of life from biological research are explored as well as the fundamental concepts and principles of the study of living organisms and their interaction with the environment. Key concepts include how living organisms use and produce energy; how life grows, develops, and reproduces; how life responds to the environment to maintain internal stability; and how life evolves and adapts to the environment.

This course covers the following competencies:

Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.

The graduate analyzes the characteristics and classifications of living organisms.

The graduate analyzes the basic chemical composition of cells and the basic processes that happen at the cellular level.

The graduate analyzes different types of cells based on their structures and biological functions.

The graduate analyzes the biological basis for and patterns of heredity and gene expression.

The graduate analyzes inter-dependencies of organisms and their environments.

Accessibility and Accommodations

Western Governors University is committed to providing equal access to its academic programs to all qualified students. WGU's Accessibility Services team supports this mission by providing support, resources, advocacy, collaboration, and academic accommodations for students with disabilities and other qualifying conditions under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). WGU encourages student to complete the Accommodation Request Form as soon as they become aware of the need for an accommodation. Current and prospective students can reach the Accessibility Services team Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. MST at 1-877-HELP-WGU (877-435-7948) x5922 or at ADASupport@wgu.edu.

Need More Information? WGU Student Services

WGU's Student Services team is dedicated exclusively to helping you achieve your academic goals. The Student Services office is available during extended hours to assist with general questions and requests. The Student Services team members help you resolve issues, listen to student issues and concerns, and make recommendations for improving policy and practice based on student feedback.

Student Services team members also assist with unresolved concerns to find equitable resolutions. To contact the Student Services team, please feel free to call 877-435-7948 or e-mail studentservices@wgu.edu. We are available Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., Saturday from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., mountain standard time. Closed Sundays.

If you have inquiries or concerns that require technical support, please contact the WGU IT Service Desk. The IT Service Desk is available Monday through Friday, 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday, 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., mountain standard time. To contact the IT Service Desk, please call 1-877-HELP-WGU (877-435-7948) or e-mail servicedesk@wgu.edu. The support teams are generally closed in observance of university holidays.

For the most current information regarding WGU support services, please visit "Student Support" on the Student Portal at http://my.wgu.edu.