



Program Guidebook

Master of Science, Nursing - Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner

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

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 program mentor will set up regular telephone appointments (weekly at first) with you, which you will be expected to keep. The mentor will review program competencies with you and work with you to develop a

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.

academic standing, you must complete at least 66.67% of the units you attempt over the length of your program—including any courses you add to your term to accelerate your progress. Additionally, during your first term at WGU you must pass at least 3 competency units in order to remain eligible for financial aid. We know that SAP is complex, so please contact a financial aid counselor should you have additional questions. *Please note: The Endorsement Preparation Program in Educational Leadership is not eligible for federal financial aid.

Courses

Your Degree Plan includes courses needed to complete your program. To obtain your degree, you will be required to demonstrate your skills and knowledge by completing the assessment(s) for each course. In general there are two types of assessments: performance assessments and objective assessments. Performance assessments contain, in most cases, multiple scored tasks such as projects, essays, and research papers. Objective assessments include multiple-choice items, multiple-selection items, matching, short answer, drag-and-drop, and point-and-click item types, as well as case study and video-based. Certifications verified through third parties may also be included in your program. More detailed information about each assessment is provided in each course of study.

Learning Resources

WGU works with many different educational partners, including enterprises, publishers, training companies, and higher educational institutions, to provide high-quality and effective learning resources that match the competencies you are developing. These vary in type, and may be combined to create the best learning experience for your course. A learning resource can be an e-textbook, online module, study guide, simulation, virtual lab, tutorial, or a combination of these. The cost of most learning resources are included in your tuition and Learning Resource Fee. They can be accessed or enrolled for through your courses. Some degree-specific resources are not covered by your tuition, and you will need to cover those costs separately. WGU also provides a robust library to help you obtain additional learning resources, as needed.

Mobile Compatibility:

The following article provides additional details about the current state of mobile compatibility for learning resources at WGU.

[Student Handbook article: Can Mobile Learning Resources be Accessed on Mobile Devices?](#)



Areas of Study for Master of Science, Nursing - Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner

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 abilities required in each area of the degree. The Degree Plan and learning resources are dynamic, so you need to review your Degree Plan and seek the advice of your mentor regarding the resources before you purchase them.

MSN Core

Professional Presence and Influence

Professional Presence and Influence is a masters-level course designed to guide students towards an enhanced state of presence, where therapeutic relationships are built between nurse and patient. Students will learn techniques for self-care practices that result in enhanced mental and physical wellbeing and that ensure ethically-generated patient care. Presence is an intrapersonal and interpersonal quality that allows the nurse to relate to others and to be aware of the world around them. The characteristics of presence, which include holism, intimacy, sensitivity and adaptability, create a heightened sense of awareness that fosters therapeutic relationships between the nurse and patient. Developing a mindful, authentic presence is central to health and spiritual practices in several cultures and a major element of leadership. Students will intentionally develop a focused mindfulness practice that will influence patient outcomes and lead to conditions that create joy in the workplace.

workplace.

belonging.

organizational change designed to promote health and joy in the workplace.

communications.

Essentials of Advanced Nursing Roles and Interprofessional Practice

Essentials of Advanced Nursing Roles and Interprofessional Practice explores essential characteristics of the advanced professional nurse in the role of leader, educator, practitioner, or informatics specialist. In this course, students will apply evidence-based strategies to facilitate interprofessional collaboration on teams. Students will explore the role of nurses in advocating for change at the bedside, as well as leading teams to advocate for health policy reform. Students will gather and analyze data to identify patients and populations at risk and recommend policy change to improve health outcomes in the community.

essential for practicing as an advanced nursing professional

populations.

healthcare outcomes.

and disseminating results to a professional community.

Quality Outcomes in a Culture of Value-Based Nursing Care

Quality Outcomes in a Culture of Value-Based Nursing Care incorporates current standards of quality and safety within the context of value-based care. In a value-based healthcare system, the benefits are derived from measuring health outcomes against the cost of delivering the outcomes. These benefits are then extended to patients, providers, payers, suppliers, and society as a whole. This course introduces new healthcare delivery models, which stress a team-oriented approach to patient care and sharing of patient data so that care is coordinated, and outcomes can be measured easily. Emphasis is placed on performance and quality improvement methods that underlie value-based nursing care. The nurse in advanced practice today must exemplify the standards of quality and safety and be prepared to lead the delivery of value-based patient-centered care.

patient outcomes using a systems-thinking analytic approach.

organizational strengths and vulnerabilities.

and safety gaps in the practice setting.

strategies and initiatives.

Informatics for Transforming Nursing Care

Informatics for Transforming Nursing Care integrates nursing science with multiple information and analytical sciences to identify, define, manage, and communicate data, information, knowledge, and wisdom in nursing practice. Students will acquire knowledge and skills to apply informatics concepts, communications, and data that are critical to facilitating interprofessional data-driven decision-making. It is designed to build competence in the use of patient- and population-based applications that inform and support the transformation of nursing care delivery toward a future of value-based quality nursing care that improves health outcomes. This course aligns theoretical concepts with practical applications of informatics and is consistent with the functional areas and responsibilities of informatics nurses as defined by the American Nurses Association Scope and Standards for nursing informatics.

improve patient experience and health outcomes.

healthcare costs.

healthcare.

disease.

outcomes.

The learner refines data to visually represent, forecast, monitor, and report progress in meeting healthcare outcomes.

Leadership and Management in Complex Healthcare Systems

Leadership and Management in Complex Healthcare Systems prepares graduate nurses to be thoughtful strategists and informed decision-makers who serve as strong leaders in high-performing healthcare systems. Students develop competencies for managing diverse teams in complex systems, monitoring and measuring organizational performance, allocating financial and human resources, and leading change towards a transformed healthcare system. Additionally,

outcomes.

Advancing Evidence-Based Innovation in Nursing Practice

Advancing Evidence-Based Innovation in Nursing Practice introduces students to the dynamic union of healthcare innovation and evidence. Core competencies and behaviors required to be a nurse innovator are discussed. Strategies for measuring innovation at various system levels are presented, as well as techniques for synthesizing and disseminating evidence to advance innovation in healthcare. The skills needed to appraise the quality of diverse sources of evidence are presented within the framework of evidence-based practice. This course focuses on identifying new and emerging sources of evidence that can inform, translate, and scale the complexity of leading innovation in healthcare organizations. Students will experience building communities of practice for collaboratively developing innovative practices and policies designed to improve the health of populations and enhance the patient experience of care.

of healthcare practices and policies.

sources.

The learner evaluates innovative best practices that support outcomes-driven healthcare practices.

The learner incorporates new evidence from big data and emerging technologies to design innovative practices.

The learner applies the theory of disruption when developing innovative strategies to improve healthcare outcomes.

organizational goals and strategies, and population-based care policies.

Nurse Practitioner Core

Advanced Pathophysiology for the Advanced Practice Nurse

Advanced Pathophysiology for the Advanced Practice Nurse prepares the graduate nursing student for the role of an advanced practice nurse with the competencies and skills needed to recognize disease states, identify disease progression, and assess and evaluate symptoms for patients across the lifespan. This course will help the graduate nursing student gain a deeper understanding of pathophysiology from the cellular to the systems level and will provide graduate nursing students with the knowledge and skills to determine the etiology, underlying physiological changes, and the human affective responses to alterations in health. This course will also prepare the graduate nursing student to communicate the pathophysiology of disease processes to providers and patients.

Advanced Pharmacology for the Advanced Practice Nurse

Advanced Pharmacology for the Advanced Practice Nurse prepares the graduate nursing student for the role of an advanced practice nurse with the competencies and skills for prescribing and monitoring medication safely and effectively. This course will prepare the graduate nursing student to apply pharmacotherapeutics in primary care settings by utilizing the pivotal basis of pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics. This course will also prepare the graduate nursing student to select the correct medication, describe the rationale for that selection to the patient, family, and other providers, and to effectively monitor the patient to promote positive drug outcomes.

Advanced Health Assessment for the Advanced Practice Nurse

Advanced Health Assessment prepares the graduate nursing student to perform the role of an advanced practice nurse with the essential competencies necessary to provide primary health care to patients and families of diverse populations. Students will develop the skills needed for systematically collecting and analyzing subjective and objective patient data. Through simulation and clinical experiences, students will use data to determine current and ongoing patient health status, predict health risks, and identify health-promoting activities for patients across the lifespan. Advanced Health Assessment will prepare the nursing graduate with the critical thinking, clinical reasoning, and advanced diagnostic skills required for advanced practice nursing. Upon completion of Advanced Health Assessment, the graduate will be able to synthesize individual and systems level subjective and objective data to facilitate the differential diagnosis processes. Also, the graduate will be able to clearly describe to patients and providers the pertinent health assessment findings and rationale supporting the diagnostic process.

Psychopharmacology for Advanced Psychiatric Mental Health Practice

Psychopharmacology for Advanced Psychiatric Mental Health Practice explains the knowledge of advanced pharmacotherapeutics and why it is important to safely and appropriately prescribe agents to manage common chronic and acute mental health problems of diverse populations. This includes differences between experimental and clinical psychopharmacology. This course covers the principles of pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics in administration, along with patient education. This course discusses factors of addiction and substance use, including prevalence, clinical manifestations, and treatment of various disorders. Collaborative clinical services, such as group counseling, therapeutic communities, and medication support, are explored. The foundational information in psychopharmacology in this course guides students in planning individualized mental health drug management for individuals across the life span based on setting, context, and professional ethics. The following courses are prerequisites: all MSN Core courses, Advanced Pathophysiology for the Advanced Practice Nurse, Advanced Pharmacology for the Advanced Practice Nurse, and Advanced Health Assessment for the Advanced Practice Nurse.

Advanced Psychiatric Mental Health Care of Adults and Older Adults Across Care Settings

Advanced Psychiatric Care of Adults and Older Adults Across Care Settings prepares students to provide evidence-based mental healthcare for adults, older adults, and families. This course guides students through the application of age and developmentally appropriate advanced practice health assessment knowledge and diagnostic reasoning skills for adults, older adults, and families experiencing complex mental health issues. This course helps students develop treatment plans using psychotherapeutic treatment modalities, psychopharmacology, and community resources to manage specific mental health disorders for adults, older adults, and families. This course also includes the influences of family dynamics and societal norms on mental health progression and recovery. The following courses are prerequisites: All MSN Core courses, Advanced Pathophysiology for the Advanced Practice Nurse, Advanced Pharmacology for the Advanced Practice Nurse, and Advanced Health Assessment for the Advanced Practice Nurse.

Advanced Psychiatric Mental Health Care of Children and Adolescents Across Care Settings

Advanced Psychiatric Mental Health Care of Children and Adolescents across Care Settings prepares students to provide evidence-based mental healthcare for children, adolescents, and families. This course guides students through the application of age and developmentally appropriate advanced practice health assessment knowledge and diagnostic reasoning skills for children, adolescents, and families experiencing complex mental health issues. This course helps

Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Clinical Internship III

Through precepted clinical experiences, the learner will develop competencies needed to provide comprehensive and holistic mental health care to individuals, families, and communities across the lifespan. In the precepted clinical setting, the learner will combine competencies developed in preparatory advanced practice coursework to deliver consumer-centered mental health care. Therefore, the learner will conduct advanced mental health assessments and utilize the competencies of advanced pathophysiology, psychopharmacology, psychotherapy and health promotion for individuals and populations across the life span to build self-efficacy in individuals and groups, to determine correct diagnoses, and to establish mental health plans of care that include consumer and population preferences. All MSN Core Courses, NP Core courses, and PMHNP Specialty courses must be completed before taking this course.

