

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

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

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

Accreditation

Western Governors University is the only university in the history of American higher education to have (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 2012. The WGU is accredited at the initial-licensure level by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) and by the Association of 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

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

Students vary widely in the specific skills and information they need to learn. For example, some students may be highly knowledgeable in a particular subject matter and would not need to engage in new learning opportunities. Other students may find that portions of the program require them to learn new information and that they need to take an online class or participate in a study module to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to fulfill program competencies in that area. Some individuals may be able to devote as little 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

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 plan and schedule for your coursework. Your program mentor will serve as your main point of contact throughout your program—helping you set weekly study goals, recommending specific learning materials, telling you what to expect in courses, and keeping you motivated. In addition to regular

For many of the courses at WGU, you will be required to complete performance assessments. These include reports, papers, presentations, and projects that let you demonstrate your mastery of the required competencies. A separate group of faculty members, called evaluators, will review your work to determine whether it meets requirements. Evaluators are also subject matter experts in their field of evaluation. If your assessment needs further work before it “passes,” these evaluators, who review your work anonymously, will provide you with instructional feedback to help you meet evaluation standards

Connecting with Other Mentors and Fellow Students

As you proceed through your Degree Plan, you will have direct contact with multiple faculty members. These communications can take a variety of forms, including participation in one-on-one discussions, chats in the learning communities, and live cohort and webinar opportunities. As a WGU student, you will have access to your own personal MyWGU Student Portal, which will provide a gateway to your courses of study, learning resources, and learning communities where you will interact with faculty and other

The learning resources in each course are specifically designed to support you as you develop competencies in preparation for your assessments. These learning resources may include reading

'Requirement Satisfied' (RS) in some cases. Refer to your specific program transfer guidelines to determine what can be satisfied by previously earned college credits. In most cases, WGU does not accept college transfer credits at the graduate (master's) level. Students entering graduate programs must have their undergraduate degree transcripts verified before being admitted to WGU. In addition to a program's standard course path, there may be additional state-specific requirements.

[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

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

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-

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.

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 items. Certifications verified through third parties may also be included in your program. More

External Content & Basic Skills Exams

Western Governors University requires that candidates pass the content exam V that align with their WGU program in addition to a basic skills exam (initial licensure programs only). Specific information regarding required content and basic skills exams required for each program and state can be found in the WGU Student Handbook. In many cases, it is the candidates' responsibility to register and pay for the required exams and submit their official passing score reports to WGU.

State Licensure Requirements

6 R P H states have specific licensure requirements that are not part of WGU programs that you will have to fulfill in addition to the degree requirements of your program. These state licensure requirements might include, but are not limited to: subject-specific licensure exams, state-specific teacher performance assessments, course work related to state history, basic skills exams, and background clearances. The WGU Student Handbook outlines the credentialing requirements of each state. Teacher candidates should consult the applicable section to become familiar with their state's expectations regarding licensure.

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

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

[Student Handbook article: Can I use my mobile device for learning resources?](#)

Standard Path

As previously mentioned, competency units (CUs) have been assigned to each course in order to measure your academic progress. If you are an undergraduate student, you will be expected to enroll in a minimum of 12 competency units each term. Graduate students are expected to enroll in a minimum of 8 competency units each term. A standard plan for a student for this program who entered WGU without

any transfer units would look similar to the one on the following page. Your personal progress can be faster, but your pace will be determined by the extent of your transfer units, your time commitment, and
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Standard Path Bachelor of Arts, Educational Studies in Elementary Education

Course Description	CUs	Term
The Professional Educator	3	1
Composition: Writing with a Strategy	3	1
Introduction to Communication: Connecting with Others	3	1
Learners and Learning Science	3	1
Composition: Successful Self-Expression	3	2
Integrated Physical Sciences	3	2
Introduction to Systems Thinking and Applications	3	2
Personalized Learning for Inclusive Classrooms	3	2
Creating Positive Learning Environments	3	3
Quantitative Literacy	3	3
Technology and Ethics: Emerging Trends and Society	3	3
Planning Instructional Strategies for Meaningful Learning	3	3
Assessing and Monitoring Student Learning	3	4
Introduction to Biology	3	4
Statistical Data Literacy	3	4
Instructional Technology and Online Pedagogy	3	4
American Politics and the US Constitution	3	5
Elementary Literacy Curriculum	3	5
Early Literacy Methods	3	5
Elementary Literacy Methods	3	5
Foundations of Literacy Through Literature	3	6
Literacy Assessment and Interventions	3	6
Elementary Mathematics Curriculum	3	6
Early Mathematics Methods and Interventions	3	6
Elementary Mathematics Methods and Interventions	3	7
Elementary Science Curriculum	3	7
Elementary Science and Engineering Methods	3	7
Natural Science Lab	2	7
Elementary Social Studies Curriculum	3	7
Elementary Social Studies Methods	3	8
Elementary Health and Physical Education Methods	3	8
Elementary Fine Arts Methods	3	8
Elementary Disciplinary Literacy	3	8

Changes to Curriculum

WGU publishes an Institutional Catalog, which describes the academic requirements of each degree program. WGU may modify requirements and course offerings within that version of the program to maintain the FRPSO Ld@fcl and relevance of WGU's competencies and programs ZKLFK PD\ UHTXLUH VWXGHQWV WR FRPSOHWH WKH PRVW FXUUHQW YHUVLRQ D OLFHQVH XSRQ JUDGXDWLRQ

Areas of Study for Bachelor of Arts, Educational Studies in Elementary Education

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.

Professional Core

The Professional Educator

The Professional Educator prepares WGU students to excel in the exciting and impactful profession of being an educator. Additionally, the course addresses the importance of continuous professional development and ethical considerations in teaching through the School of Education (SOE) Professional Dispositions and Ethics. Upon completion of the course, WGU students will be equipped with the tools and insights needed to continue their professional journey of becoming effective, inspiring, and adaptive educators, capable of making a significant impact in the lives of their students and the broader educational community. (This is not a transferable course.)

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Learners and Learning Science

Learners and Learning Science provides WGU students with a deep understanding of the science behind learning processes. This course covers a broad spectrum of topics pertaining to the science of learning, including cognitive development, learning theories, neuroscience in education, and the impact of developmental milestones on learning. Students will explore how these concepts apply to diverse learning environments and educational levels, from early childhood through adolescence. The course emphasizes evidence-based practices and the practical application of learning science principles, equipping students with strategies to enhance learning outcomes and learner engagement. This course aims to empower educators to create more effective, inclusive, and engaging learning experiences for all learners.

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Personalized Learning for Inclusive Classrooms

Personalized Learning for Inclusive Classrooms empowers educators to create more inclusive and effective learning environments. This course focuses on the principles and strategies of personalized learning, emphasizing the need to value and support the unique needs, interests, and abilities of each learner. The course provides a foundation for learner characteristics of learners with exceptionalities and other unique learning needs. This course helps candidates develop skills for partnering with parents and families to advocate for all students with exceptionalities, including those impacted by provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Multitiered systems of support are addressed to prepare candidates for their future classrooms as they seek to select appropriate instructional practices and interventions to best serve their learners. These factors are also addressed in relation to online and hybrid learning environments.

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Creating Positive Learning Environments

Creating Positive Learning Environments delves into the key elements that contribute to creating and maintaining a positive learning atmosphere for educators focused on fostering supportive and productive classroom climates. The course teaches effective communication, classroom norms and routines, and positive behavior supports. Emphasizing the importance of a safe and inclusive environment, the course also explores methods to promote student engagement, collaboration, and mutual respect among all learners. It also addresses the role of mental well-being in learning, exploring trauma-informed and restorative practices, which are addressed in relation to online and hybrid learning environments. Through a blend of theoretical frameworks and practical applications including case studies, Creating Positive Learning Environments teaches learners how to develop and sustain environments that not only enhance academic performance but also support the holistic development of students.

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Planning Instructional Strategies for Meaningful Learning

Planning Instructional Strategies for Meaningful Learning is a dynamic course designed for educators seeking to deepen their understanding of instructional planning and the execution of educational strategies that foster meaningful learning experiences. This course provides candidates with the knowledge and skills necessary to create engaging and standards-aligned lessons that meet the needs of all students. This course also covers a range of high-leverage instructional practices to increase student learning, engagement, and achievement. Participants will learn to utilize assessments to inform instruction, adapt teaching to accommodate all students, and incorporate technology to enhance learning.

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Assessing and Monitoring Student Learning

Assessing and Monitoring Student Learning is a targeted course crafted for candidates who aim to enhance their skills in evaluating student progress and educational outcomes. This course provides an in-depth exploration of various assessment techniques, including formative and summative assessments, standardized tests, benchmark assessments, progress monitoring, and alternative assessment strategies. Participants will learn how to design effective assessment tools, interpret data to inform instruction, and provide meaningful feedback to students. This course also provides a foundation of data analysis that supports educators' need to understand data and present data to stakeholders. Candidates will also explore online and digital assessment tools. Assessing and Monitoring Student Learning will prepare learners to align assessments to standards to monitor student learning, assess data, and provide on time and quality feedback.

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Instructional Technology and Online Pedagogy

Technology for Instruction and Online Pedagogy is an innovative course designed to equip educators with the skills to effectively integrate technology in their teaching practices. The course also covers best practices for online pedagogy, assessment and feedback, collaborative learning, and the use of multimedia and interactive elements to enhance learning experiences. With a focus on practical application, educators will leave the course ready to create and facilitate compelling, high-quality online learning experiences that meet the needs of today’s learners. This course also provides a foundation for supporting digital literacy in K-12 education. In addition, this course prepares candidates to use technology to improve professional productivity and effectiveness in areas like data analysis and data representations. Candidates will apply evidence-based practices to adapt instruction to meet student needs.

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General Education

Composition: Writing with a Strategy

Welcome to Composition: Writing with a Strategy! In this course, you will focus on three main topics: understanding purpose, context, and audience, writing strategies and techniques, and editing and revising. In addition, the first section, will offer review on core elements of the writing process, cross-cultural communication, as well as working with words and

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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.

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Introduction to Communication: Connecting with Others

Welcome to Introduction to Communication: Connecting with Others! It may seem like common knowledge that communication skills are important, and that communicating with others is inescapable in our everyday lives. While this may appear simplistic, the study of communication is actually complex, dynamic, and multifaceted. Strong communication skills

Elementary Education

Elementary Literacy Curriculum

Elementary Literacy Curriculum is a comprehensive course that deepens an educator's knowledge of language acquisition and progressively complex concepts and skills surrounding literacy. This course explores critical elements of the science of reading and writing, including applying key theories and research used to support the development of literacy, evaluating diverse resources, and utilizing purposeful oral, written, and digital communication in elementary curriculum. Candidates

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Foundations of Literacy Through Literature

Foundations of Literacy through Literature is an enriching course designed for educators and literacy enthusiasts, focusing on the exploration and utilization of literature to foster growth in the skills and concepts necessary for reading. This course delves into the role of varied and age-appropriate literary works in the science of reading to develop reading, writing, speaking, and listening abilities in learners. Students examine a broad range of genres to understand how different texts can be used to enhance vocabulary, comprehension, and critical thinking. This analysis allows the candidate to not only successfully integrate literature into meaningful instruction, but it is designed to cultivate a deep appreciation for reading itself. The curriculum emphasizes interactive and creative teaching strategies to engage learners effectively and integrate culture into their literacy instruction. The candidate is given real-world examples for how to create an inclusive environment that respects and celebrates different perspectives through quality text. By the end of the course, students are prepared with the knowledge and practical skills to use literature as a powerful tool in the development of comprehensive literacy skills.

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Literacy Assessment and Interventions

Literacy Assessment and Interventions is an essential course for candidates to enhance their skills in identifying and addressing literacy challenges in all student populations, including students with dyslexia, through Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 multi-tiered systems of support and assessment (MTSS). This course reviews the science of reading associated with a wide range of assessments and techniques used to evaluate reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Students learn to administer and interpret assessments, using the data to identify specific literacy needs and learning gaps. A significant focus of the course is on designing and implementing targeted intervention strategies to support student learning in areas, such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary development. By exploring and implementing actionable steps to monitor student progress, candidates gain expertise in improving literacy outcomes for all learners.

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Elementary Mathematics Curriculum

Elementary Mathematics Curriculum is a detailed and practical course designed for educators who seek to expand their knowledge of the mathematics curriculum in elementary classrooms. This course provides the essential mathematical concepts suitable for young learners, including numbers, operations, and algebraic thinking, spanning through the domains of geometry, measurement, data, statistics, and probability. Emphasis is placed on engaging with a curriculum that not only aligns with educational standards but also provides a rich and meaningful learning experience for all students.

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Early Mathematics Methods and Interventions

Early Mathematics Methods and Interventions is a comprehensive course designed for educators focused on advancing mathematics education in the early elementary grades. This course emphasizes innovative and research-based teaching methods for developing mathematical understanding in young children, particularly in the crucial developmental stages in PK through the early elementary grades. Participants will explore a variety of instructional strategies to support conceptual understanding and procedural fluency in areas such as number sense, basic operations, and early problem-solving skills. A significant aspect of the course involves identifying and addressing learning needs through targeted interventions, personalized instruction, and the use of manipulatives and digital tools. The curriculum also highlights the importance of creating an engaging and inclusive learning environment that encourages exploration and curiosity in mathematics. By integrating assessment techniques and thoughtful learning experiences, this course aims to provide educators with the skills to effectively nurture early mathematical abilities and lay a strong foundation for future academic success in mathematics.

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Elementary Mathematics Methods and Interventions

Elementary Mathematics Methods and Interventions is an engaging course crafted for educators who are dedicated to strengthening and enriching the mathematics education of elementary students. This course focuses on practical, research-supported strategies for teaching essential mathematical concepts, including number operations, geometry, measurement, and data analysis. This course includes resources for all elementary grade levels with a significant focus on grades 3 to 6. Participants learn to identify and assess students' mathematical understanding, create differentiated learning experiences, and implement effective interventions for diverse learner needs. Emphasis is placed on constructing a classroom environment that promotes mathematical curiosity, problem-solving, meaningful discourse, and a growth mindset. Students acquire the skills to build authentic mathematics experiences that caters to the varied needs of all students, setting a firm foundation for their future academic success in mathematics.

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Elementary Science and Engineering Methods

Elementary Science and Engineering Methods is a dynamic and forward-thinking course designed for educators who aim to integrate science and engineering practices into their elementary classroom. This course focuses on the foundational methods of teaching science and engineering concepts, emphasizing hands-on, experiential learning. Students explore effective strategies for fostering inquiry, creativity, and critical thinking among young learners through science experiences, engineering projects, and the use of technology. The curriculum covers key topics such as the three-dimensional learning approach and scientific literacy and the nature of science. Through intentional instructional decision-making and reflective practice, educators learn to create an inclusive, stimulating, and safe learning environment that encourages students to explore, question, innovate, and participate in productive discourse in the fields of science and engineering.

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Elementary Social Studies Curriculum

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Elementary Social Studies Methods

Elementary Social Studies Methods is a specialized course designed for learning effective and innovative methods for teaching social studies at the elementary level. This course delves into the best practices for introducing young learners to the complexities of history, geography, civics, economics, and culture. It emphasizes creating engaging, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate learning experiences that foster critical thinking, empathy, and a deeper understanding of the world. This in-depth view of civic engagement fosters effective collaboration and dialogue surrounding the influence of these concepts on our world today. Students learn how to design instruction using themes, concepts, and modes of inquiry throughout the social studies disciplines. By the end of this course, educators gain the skills necessary to inspire a passion for social studies and prepare students to be informed, thoughtful citizens.

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Elementary Health and Physical Education Methods

Elementary Health and Physical Education Methods is a course designed to provide educators with the knowledge and techniques to deliver effective and comprehensive health and physical education (PE) experiences in elementary schools. This course covers a spectrum of topics, from fundamental movement skills to the promotion of lifelong health and wellness habits among young learners. Students engage with current pedagogical approaches that emphasize the integration of health and physical education across various subjects. The curriculum aims to address the needs of all students, fostering an inclusive environment that supports physical, mental, emotional, and social health. Future educators also learn how to assess student progress in physical education and incorporate technology to enhance learning experiences. By the end of this course, participants are prepared to inspire and motivate elementary students to lead active, healthy lifestyles and to implement a health and PE curriculum.

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Elementary Fine Arts Methods

Elementary Fine Arts Methods is a vibrant course designed for educators who wish to integrate the fine arts into the elementary classroom. This course examines the best practices for teaching elements of the fine arts to young learners. Educators explore a variety of instructional strategies to engage all learners, including activities developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive. The curriculum also involves using the creative process and integrating with other content areas. By the end of the course, educators are equipped to foster an enriching arts environment that encourages students to explore their creative potential.

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Elementary Disciplinary Literacy

Elementary Disciplinary Literacy is an innovative course designed for candidates seeking to deepen their understanding and application of literacy skills within specific academic disciplines. This course focuses on the unique literacy demands of content disciplines, exploring how reading, writing, speaking, and listening are used differently in each domain. Students investigate the specialized language structures and text features inherent to each discipline and learn strategies to help learners navigate and master these complexities. The curriculum emphasizes the development of skills through the science of reading that enable candidates to guide learners in critically engaging with and producing disciplinary texts. Candidates also explore ways to integrate technology and digital literacy into their teaching practices, enhancing students' ability to access, interpret, and share discipline-specific information. Through a blend of research-based evidence and authentic learning activities using structured literacy practices, this course aims to give educators the skills needed to effectively teach disciplinary literacy, thereby improving student achievement and content understanding across all areas of study.

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Accessibility and Accommodations

Western Governors University is committed to providing equal access to its academic programs to all qualified