



## Program Guidebook

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### Master of Arts, English Language Learning (PreK-12)

*The Master of Arts in English Language Learning (PreK-12) is a competency-based degree program that prepares already licensed teachers both to be licensed to teach in English Language Learning (ELL) settings and to develop significant skills in ELL curriculum development, design, and evaluation. All work in this degree program is online and includes ELL Content and Methodology, Research Fundamentals, and Instructional Design. All students complete a capstone project.*

## 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 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 2017. The WGU Teachers College is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). 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.

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 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 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 calls, your program mentor is available to help you resolve questions and concerns as they arise.

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 and allow you to advance.

## 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 students.

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 materials, videos, tutorials, cohort opportunities, community discussions, and live discussions that are guided by course instructors who are experts in their field. You will access your program community

during your orientation course to network with peers who are enrolled in your program and to receive continued support through professional enrichment and program-specific chats, blogs, and discussions. WGU also provides Student Services associates to help you and your program mentor solve any special problems that may arise.

## Orientation

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." Within the Teachers College, there may be additional courses to meet state 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 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 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 items. 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.

## External Content & Basic Skills Exams

Western Governors University requires that candidates pass the state-mandated content exam that aligns 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

Many 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 resources, as needed.

Mobile Compatibility:

The following article provides additional details about the current state of mobile compatibility for learning resources at WGU. It includes a list that can be referenced to determine the mobile friendliness of all core course materials used in a program.

[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 your determination to proceed at a faster rate.

## Standard Path *for* Master of Arts, English Language Learning (PreK-12)

Course Description	CUs	Term
Culture	3	1
Language Production, Theory and Acquisition	4	1
Theories of Second Language Acquisition and Grammar	3	1
Planning, Implementing, Managing Instruction	4	2
Assessment Theory and Practice	3	2
Professional Role of the ELL Teacher	2	2
Subject Specific Pedagogy: ELL	3	3
Research Foundations	2	3
Research Questions and Literature Review	2	3
Field Experience for ELL	3	3
Teacher Work Sample in English Language Learning	1	4

### Changes to Curriculum

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 maintain the currency and relevance of WGU's competencies and programs. As these changes are implemented, WGU will ensure that the length of the student's degree program (i.e., total competency unit requirements) will not increase and that competency units already earned will be applied to the updated program version. When program requirements are updated, students readmitting after withdrawal from the university will be expected to re-enter into the most current catalog version of the program.

# Areas of Study for Master of Arts, English Language Learning (PreK-12)

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.

## English Language Learning

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### Culture

Focuses on the nature and role of culture and the importance of cultural groups and cultural identity.

*This course covers the following competencies:*

- *The graduate knows, understands, and uses knowledge of how cultural groups and students' cultural identities affect language learning and school achievement.*

### Language Production, Theory and Acquisition

Language Production, Theory and Acquisition focuses on describing and understanding language and the development of language. It includes the study of acquisition theory, grammar, and applied phonetics.

*This course covers the following competencies:*

- *The graduate understands and applies concepts, linguistic theories, research, knowledge of the structure of English, and sociolinguistics to facilitate the acquisition of new language in and out of classroom settings.*
- *The graduate understands language as a system and applies this understanding to help English Language Learning (ELL) students acquire and use English in listening, speaking, reading, and writing for social and academic purposes.*

### Theories of Second Language Acquisition and Grammar

Theories of Second Language Learning Acquisition and Grammar covers content material in applied linguistics, including morphology, syntax, semantics, and grammar. Students will explore the role of dialect in the classroom, the connections between language and culture, and the theories of first and second language acquisition.

*This course covers the following competencies:*

- *The graduate understands and applies concepts, linguistic theories, research, knowledge of the structure of English, and sociolinguistics to facilitate the acquisition of new language in and out of classroom settings.*
- *The graduate knows, understands, and uses the major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to the nature and role of culture in language development and academic achievement.*
- *The graduate understands language as a system and applies this understanding to help English Language Learning (ELL) students acquire and use English in listening, speaking, reading, and writing for social and academic purposes.*
- *The graduate knows, understands, and uses knowledge of how cultural groups and students' cultural identities affect language learning and school achievement.*

### Planning, Implementing, Managing Instruction

Planning, Implementing, Managing Instruction focuses on a variety of philosophies and grade levels of English Language Learner (ELL) instruction. It includes the study of ELL listening and speaking, ELL reading and writing, specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE), and specific issues for various grade level instruction.

*This course covers the following competencies:*



- *The graduate is familiar with a wide range of standards-based materials, resources, and technologies, and chooses, adapts, and can use them in effective ELL and content teaching.*
- *The graduate knows, develops, manages, and implements a variety of standards-based teaching strategies and techniques for developing and integrating English listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and for accessing the core curriculum.*
- *The graduate knows, understands, and applies concepts, research, and best practices to plan classroom instruction in a supportive learning environment for ELL students.*

## Assessment Theory and Practice

Assessment Theory and Practice focuses on issues central to assessment in the ELL environment, including high-stakes testing, standardized tests, placement and exit assessment, formative and summative assessments, and making adaptations in assessments to meet the needs of ELL students.

*This course covers the following competencies:*

- *The graduate knows and uses a variety of standards-based language proficiency instruments to inform instruction and understands the use of these instruments for identification, placement, and demonstration of language growth of ELL students.*
- *The graduate knows and uses a variety of performance-based assessment tools and techniques to inform instruction of ELL students.*
- *The graduate understands various issues of IQ assessment (e.g., cultural and linguistic bias; political, social, and psychological factors) and special education testing (including gifted and talented); the importance of standards; and the difference between language proficiency and other types of assessment (e.g., standardized achievement tests of overall mastery) as they affect ELL student learning.*

## Professional Role of the ELL Teacher

The Professional Role of the ELL Teacher focuses on issues of professionalism for the English Language Learning teacher and leader. This includes program development, ethics, engagement in professional organizations, serving as a resource, and ELL advocacy.

*This course covers the following competencies:*

- *The graduate demonstrates knowledge of history, legal decisions, research, and current practice in the field of ELL teaching and applies this knowledge to improve teaching and learning.*
- *The graduate collaborates with and is prepared to serve as a resource to all staff, including paraprofessionals, to improve learning for all ELL students.*
- *The graduate demonstrates knowledge of design and implementation of ELL programs and models as well as the regulations affecting them.*

## Subject Specific Pedagogy: ELL

Subject Specific Pedagogy: ELL integrates aspects of pedagogy, assessment, and professionalism in English Language Learning (ELL). A student develops and assesses aspects of language curriculum development including second language instruction, methods of second language assessment, and legal policy issues.

*This course covers the following competencies:*

- *The graduate demonstrates knowledge of history, legal decisions, research, and current practice in the field of ELL teaching and applies this knowledge to improve teaching and learning.*
- *The graduate understands the importance of acting as a professional resource, advocating for ELL students, and building partnerships with students' families.*
- *The graduate knows and uses a variety of standards-based language proficiency instruments to inform instruction and understands the use of these instruments for identification, placement, and demonstration of language growth of ELL*

students.

- *The graduate knows, develops, manages, and implements a variety of standards-based teaching strategies and techniques for developing and integrating English listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and for accessing the core curriculum.*
- *The graduate knows, understands, and applies concepts, research, and best practices to plan classroom instruction in a supportive learning environment for ELL students.*
- *The graduate knows and uses a variety of performance-based assessment tools and techniques to inform instruction of ELL students.*
- *The graduate understands various issues of IQ assessment (e.g., cultural and linguistic bias; political, social, and psychological factors) and special education testing (including gifted and talented); the importance of standards; and the difference between language proficiency and other types of assessment (e.g., standardized achievement tests of overall mastery) as they affect ELL student learning.*

## Field Experience for ELL

Field Experience for ELL is the field experience component of the English Language Learning program. In this experience, students are required to complete a minimum of 15 hours of observations at both elementary and secondary levels. Additionally, a supervised teaching experience that is face-to-face with English language learners according to the minimum time requirements of your state is required. The purpose of this course is to assess the ability of the student including their engagement in field experience activities, ability to reflect on and then plan standards-based instruction in ELL, and their ability to locate and effectively use resources for teaching ELL to meet the needs of their individual students.

*This course covers the following competencies:*

- *The graduate understands the importance of acting as a professional resource, advocating for ELL students, and building partnerships with students' families.*
- *The graduate knows, develops, manages, and implements a variety of standards-based teaching strategies and techniques for developing and integrating English listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and for accessing the core curriculum.*
- *The graduate knows, understands, and applies concepts, research, and best practices to plan classroom instruction in a supportive learning environment for ELL students.*
- *The graduate understands and applies concepts, linguistic theories, research, knowledge of the structure of English, and sociolinguistics to facilitate the acquisition of new language in and out of classroom settings.*
- *The graduate knows, understands, and uses the major concepts, principles, theories, and research related to the nature and role of culture in language development and academic achievement.*
- *The graduate understands language as a system and applies this understanding to help English Language Learning (ELL) students acquire and use English in listening, speaking, reading, and writing for social and academic purposes.*
- *The graduate knows, understands, and uses knowledge of how cultural groups and students' cultural identities affect language learning and school achievement.*

## Research

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### Research Foundations

The Research Foundations course focuses on the essential concepts of four major research approaches, including quantitative, qualitative, mixed, and action research. No original data collection or analysis will be required in this course.

*This course covers the following competencies:*

- *The graduate applies and justifies appropriate research methods and design in quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, and action research scenarios to address the research question(s).*
- *The graduate analyzes the key aspects of quantitative research and characterizes the major approaches to quantitative*

research.

- *The graduate analyzes the key aspects of mixed methods research and characterizes the major approaches to mixed methods research.*
- *The graduate analyzes the characteristics of research quality and the potential threats to the quality of results in qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods, and action research studies.*
- *The graduate analyzes the key aspects of qualitative research and characterizes the major approaches to qualitative research.*
- *The graduate analyzes different measurement scales and differentiates between reliability and validity, and their subtypes, as they relate to assessments.*
- *The graduate evaluates and selects appropriate basic data analysis techniques for quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, and action research scenarios.*
- *The graduate develops clear research questions that can be investigated and hypotheses that can be tested with empirical data.*
- *The graduate analyzes ethical issues and identifies appropriate procedures for educational research.*
- *The graduate analyzes the key aspects of action research and characterizes the major approaches to action research.*
- *The graduate describes the purpose for a literature review and develops an organized literature review relevant to educational research topics, problems, and questions.*
- *The graduate evaluates the purpose, process, and practice of the generation and justification of knowledge in educational research.*
- *The graduate differentiates among the major methods of data collection, including their strengths and limitations in the selection of an appropriate method of data collection.*
- *The graduate completes a research proposal.*

## Research Fundamentals

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### Research Questions and Literature Review

The Research Questions and Literature Reviews course focuses on how to conduct a thorough literature review that addresses and identifies important educational research topics, problems, and questions, and helps determine the appropriate kind of research and data needed to answer one's research questions and hypotheses.

*This course covers the following competencies:*

- *The graduate develops clear research questions that can be investigated and hypotheses that can be tested with empirical data.*
- *The graduate describes the purpose for a literature review and develops an organized literature review relevant to educational research topics, problems, and questions.*
- *The graduate differentiates among the major methods of data collection, including their strengths and limitations in the selection of an appropriate method of data collection.*

## Teacher Work Sample

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### Teacher Work Sample in English Language Learning

The Teacher Work Sample is a culmination of the wide variety of skills learned during your time in the Teachers College at WGU. In order to be a competent and independent classroom teacher, you will showcase a collection of your content, planning, instructional, and reflective skills in this professional assessment.

*This course covers the following competencies:*

- *The graduate integrates strategies to develop academic language that facilitates effective student participation and engagement in learning.*
- *The graduate integrates and synthesizes competencies from across the degree program, thereby demonstrating the ability to participate in and contribute value to the chosen professional field.*
- *The graduate utilizes assessment data to profile student learning, communicate information about student progress and achievement, and guide and modify instruction.*
- *The graduate evaluates the teaching context to accommodate student differences to plan for instruction and assessment.*
- *The graduate plans comprehensive learning segments of instruction and assessment that align with standards and the needs of students.*
- *The graduate evaluates teaching experiences including the planning and implementing of curriculum and instruction through ongoing reflection.*
- *The graduate plans learning environments that support individual learning, collaboration, and positive social interaction.*
- *The graduate applies instructional strategies that promote learning, engage students, and provide differentiated instruction.*

## 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 administrative or accessibility issues. 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. The Student Services team provides a formal means by which you can express your views, which in turn will inform the decisions we make.

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](mailto: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](mailto: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>.