Program Guidebook

Bachelor of Science and Post-Baccalaureate Certificate, Nursing (RN to MSN track)

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Students enrolled in the RN-to-MSN track will first complete the Bachelor of Science and Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Nursing (RN-MSN track) program, and will have completed the necessary bachelors course work to receive a Bachelor of Science, Nursing degree, as well as the Post-Baccalaureate certificate. Students will progress to selecting and meeting the program requirements of one of WGU's specialty graduate nursing programs. The Master of Science degree in Nursing Informatics (RN to MSN option) degree is a competency-based program that builds on the foundation of previous nursing education at the associate or diploma levels. The BSN portion of the degree focuses on contemporary nursing practice in the developing of skills and competencies using technology-based learning. The master of science portion of the degree prepares graduates for a rewarding career as a specialist in the field of Nursing Informatics. Informatics Nurse Specialists have the knowledge, skills, and expertise to design, develop, implement, and evaluate Health Information Systems that support the delivery of safe, efficient and high-quality healthcare services. Students in the WGU Master of Science Nursing Informatics program apply systems-thinking strategies to transform data to wisdom for understanding the determinants and distribution of healthcare needs in diverse populations. This program prepares students to select and use contemporary technologies to collaborate with interprofessional teams for the development and implementation of health education programs, evidence-based practices, and point-of-care policies. Through the integration of nursing science, computer science and information science, students will develop competencies for performing advanced informatics skills to improve health outcomes, such as data capture, management, mining, and analysis. This masters degree program supports students in applying their knowledge and conceptual understanding of nursing informatics to real-world situations where the use of information and communication technologies are essential for delivering and coordinating care across multiple settings. Graduates are prepared to gather, document, and analyze outcome data that will serve as a foundation for data-driven decisions that inform practice processes and the implementation of interventions or strategies to improve healthcare outcomes.

Understanding the Competency-Based Approach

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

Progress through a degree program is measured not by the amount of time you spend in class but by your ability to demonstrate competency as you complete required courses along a Standard Path. To help you acquire the knowledge and skills you need to demonstrate competency and 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 your program's requirements and help you create a plan for completing your courses. You will also work closely with course instructors as you engage in each course. As subject matter experts, course instructors will guide you through the content you must learn to demonstrate competency through 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 you possess and can demonstrate—not the number of hours spent in a classroom.

Accreditation

Western Governors University is the only university in the history of American higher education to have earned initial accreditation from multiple regional accrediting commissions at once—earning simultaneous accreditation from ACCJC, HLC, NWCCU, and WASC. The university’s accreditation from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) was reaffirmed in March of 2024. In addition to institution-level accreditation, each school has at least one program that is accredited by a programmatic accreditation. All programmatic accreditations are managed by the Academic Engagement department. Contact compliance@wgu.edu for additional information.

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 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.

You will also be assigned to a course instructor for each course. Course instructors are doctoral-level subject matter experts who will assist your learning in each individual course. When you begin a new course, your assigned course instructor will actively monitor your progress and will be in touch to offer one-on-one instruction and to provide you with information about webinars, cohort sessions, and other learning opportunities available to help you acquire the competencies you need to master the course. Your course instructor can discuss your learning for the course, help you find answers to content questions, and give you the tools to navigate the course successfully. In addition, you will communicate with course instructors by posting in the online learning community and participating in live discussion sessions such as webinars and cohorts.

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 will introduce you to the fundamentals of WGU’s competency-based education (CBE) and the expectations, policies, and protocols for students enrolled in a WGU degree program. Orientation will introduce you to WGU’s wide range of support resources and success centers.

It also will provide you with study strategies recommended by current students and faculty that will help you succeed as a WGU student. Orientation ends with your first assessment at WGU, providing an opportunity to experience WGU's performance assessment process before you begin your degree-focused coursework. 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. WGU undergraduate programs may accept transfer credits or apply a 'Requirement Satisfied' (RS) in some cases. Refer to your specific program transfer guidelines to determine what can be satisfied by previously earned college credits. 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 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 onthe 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.

Courses

Your Degree Plan includes courses needed to complete your program. To obtain your degree, you must demonstrate your skills and knowledge by completing each course's assessment(s). You may be asked to demonstrate competency in a course in several different ways, including proctored exams, projects, essays, research papers, and simulations, among others. Certifications verified through third parties may also be included in your program as a way to demonstrate competency. More detailed information about each assessment is provided in the 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.

Mobile Access 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* Bachelor of Science and Post-Baccalaureate Certificate, Nursing (RN to MSNUNI track)

Course Description	CUs	Term
Advanced Standing for RN License	50	0
Interprofessional Communication and Leadership in Healthcare	2	1
Applied Healthcare Statistics	4	1
Composition: Writing with a Strategy	3	1
Anatomy and Physiology I with Lab	4	1
Introduction to Communication: Connecting with Others	3	2
Anatomy and Physiology II with Lab	4	2
Introduction to Psychology	3	2
Introduction to Sociology	3	2
Microbiology with Lab: A Fundamental Approach	4	3
World History: Diverse Cultures and Global Connections	3	3
Human Growth and Development	3	3
Pathophysiology	3	3
Comprehensive Health Assessment	3	4
Healthcare Policy and Economics	3	4
Professional Practice Experiences for the Health of Diverse Populations	3	4
Professional Practice for Populations in Diverse Environments	4	4

Critical Thinking: Reason and Evidence	3	5
Professional Presence and Influence	2	5
Essentials of Advanced Nursing Roles and Interprofessional Practice	2	5
Informatics for Transforming Nursing Care	3	5
Leadership and Management in Complex Healthcare Systems	3	5
Advancing Evidence-Based Innovation in Nursing Practice	3	6
Quality and Safety Outcomes in Nursing Practice	2	7
Advanced Pathopharmacological Foundations	3	7
Advanced Health Assessment for Patients and Populations	3	7
Foundations in Nursing Informatics	2	8
Data Science and Analytics in Nursing Informatics	2	8
Database Design and Management in Nursing Informatics	2	8
System Development and Analysis in Nursing Informatics	2	8
Nursing Informatics Practicum I	4	9
Nursing Informatics Practicum II	4	9
Total CUs	142	

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. 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 Bachelor of Science and Post-Baccalaureate Certificate, Nursing (RN to MSN track)

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.

Nursing Core

Advanced Standing for RN License

Advanced Standing for RN License

Interprofessional Communication and Leadership in Healthcare

Interprofessional Communication and Leadership in Healthcare is designed to help students prepare for success in the online environment at Western Governors University and beyond. Student success starts with the social support and self-reflective awareness that will prepare them to handle the challenges of all academic programs. In this course, students will complete several individual assignments that are intended to give the student an opportunity to reflect on where they are and where they would like to be. The activities in the course are designed to give students several tools they can use to achieve success. This course is designed as a four-part intensive learning experience. Students will engage in activities that will help them understand their own educational journey and find support and inspiration in the journey of others. There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *The learner applies mindfulness to promote self-discovery.*
- *The learner applies mindsets, working styles, and energy dynamics to promote academic and professional success.*
- *The learner communicates effectively in both oral and written format.*
- *The learner uses communication strategies to foster a supportive peer community.*

Comprehensive Health Assessment

Comprehensive Health Assessment builds upon students' existing knowledge of nursing assessment. The course presents current and innovative assessment techniques of the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being of patients. Use of assessment data and shared decision-making are discussed throughout the course. This course also outlines the concepts of a head-to-toe assessment, providing students with an understanding of how to critically think about the different aspects of the assessment and analyze patient cues to determine the implications of findings. Students will also analyze lifestyle and cultural implications of health. All prior courses in the sequence for this program serve as 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 cultural and lifestyle implications for holistic patient assessment.*
- *The learner applies clinical judgment using current and innovative patient assessment techniques that encompass physical, mental, emotional, spiritual well-being, and social determinants of health.*
- *The learner incorporates enhanced pathophysiological concepts and assessment findings into patient care coordination.*

Healthcare Policy and Economics

Healthcare Policy and Economics is a foundational course that introduces the concepts of value-based care and the role of the nurse. This course includes concepts related to financial responsiveness, shared decision-making, preference-sensitive care, leveraging data. In this course, students learn about cost and fee-for-service in terms of value to the client and patient rather than value to the healthcare system. All prior courses in the sequence for this program serve as 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 public healthcare policies, federal and state laws, and the resulting impact to patients and healthcare delivery.*
- *The learner compares healthcare financial models to facilitate value-based care and fiscally responsible and equitable patient-centered care.*
- *The learner identifies how financial data, business-related data, and information sources inform decisions that influence healthcare.*
- *The learner integrates principles of organizational ethics to improve healthcare quality for individuals, families, and their communities.*

Professional Practice for Populations in Diverse Environments

Professional Practice for Populations in Diverse Environments prepares students for the role of the nurse in a variety of professional population health and nursing specialty areas. The course introduces planning, organization, and delivery of services for diverse populations in community and global settings, including illness prevention, disaster preparedness, and environmental health. Additionally, basic principles of epidemiology, social determinants of health (SDOH), and resource allocation through value-based care are outlined. Students explore various practice specialties, including palliative care, genetics and genomics, and others. The course provides pathways to specialized nursing practice. All prior courses in the sequence for this program serve as 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 genetic and genomic influences and risks to plan patient education that recognizes individual attitudes and values.*
- *The learner creates a personal five-year professional development plan that includes professional certification or specialized education that facilitates lifelong learning.*
- *The learner distinguishes between global, public, and population health for improved health outcomes.*
- *The learner evaluates population health solutions for environmental health effects.*
- *The learner explains interprofessional interventions that alleviate suffering, improve quality of life, and empower patients and families who have received life-limiting diagnoses.*
- *The learner identifies epidemiological data sources that inform population health interventions.*
- *The learner identifies the effect of global health trends on healthcare capacity that inform service modification decisions in healthcare.*

Professional Practice Experiences for the Health of Diverse Populations

Professional Practice Experiences for the Health of Diverse Populations prepares students for the role of the nurse in promoting, restoring, and maintaining the health of diverse populations. Students build on previous knowledge and review of population health and the nurse's role regarding health promotion, prevention, and maintenance. Additionally, the four AACN spheres of care are introduced. The course provides opportunities for simulated community-based practice environments prior to engaging in field experiences with a professional nurse. All prior courses in the sequence for this program serve as 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 differentiates between strategies used for health promotion, prevention, or maintenance to meet the needs of diverse patient populations.*
- *The learner distinguishes the use of one or more spheres of care to improve health outcomes for diverse populations across the lifespan.*
- *The learner identifies social determinants of health (SDOH) and interventions for equitable healthcare improvements.*

General Education

Applied Healthcare Statistics

Applied Healthcare Probability and Statistics is designed to help develop competence in the fundamental concepts of basic mathematics, introductory algebra, and statistics and probability. These concepts include basic arithmetic with fractions and signed numbers; introductory algebra and graphing; descriptive statistics; regression and correlation; and probability.Statistical data and probability are now commonplace in the healthcare field. This course will help candidates make informed decisions about which studies and results are valid, which are not, and how those results affect your decisions. This course will give candidates background in what constitutes sound research design and how to appropriately model phenomena using statistical data. Additionally, this course guides candidates in calculating simple probabilities based on events which occur in the healthcare profession. This course will prepare candidates for studies at WGU, as well as in the healthcare profession.

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 applies principles and methods of probability-based mathematics to explain and solve problems.*
- *The graduate applies the operations, processes, and procedures of basic algebra to evaluate quantitative expressions, and to solve equations and inequalities.*
- *The graduate applies the operations, processes, and procedures of basic arithmetic to solve expressions.*
- *The graduate applies the operations, processes, and procedures of fractions, decimals, and percentages to evaluate quantitative expressions.*
- *The graduate evaluates categorical and quantitative data pertaining to a single variable using appropriate graphical displays and numerical measures.*
- *The graduate evaluates the relationship between two quantitative variables through correlation and regression.*
- *The graduate evaluates the relationship between two variables through interpretation of visual displays and numerical measures.*

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 common standards and practices. 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.

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 constructive feedback of written texts.*
- *The learner constructs a written document with correct format, style, structure, and grammar.*
- *The learner formulates a strategy for editing and revising written text.*
- *The learner incorporates writing strategies and techniques for written communication.*
- *The learner writes with purpose for a given context and target audience.*

Anatomy and Physiology I with Lab

This is Anatomy and Physiology I, a six-section, 4 CU course that enables students to develop an understanding of the relationships between the structures and function of the integumentary, skeletal, muscular, nervous and endocrine systems in the human body. This course will involve laboratory activities, simulated dissections, textbook material, models, and diagrams. 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 40–60 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 analyzes the structures and physiological functions of the muscular system and the connections to complex systems in the human body.*
- *The learner analyzes the structures and physiological functions of the nervous system and sensory organs and the connections to complex systems in the human body.*
- *The learner describes the structures and physiological functions of the endocrine system and its regulation of complex systems in the human body.*
- *The learner describes the structures and physiological functions of the integumentary system and the connections to complex systems in the human body.*
- *The learner describes the structures and physiological functions of the skeletal system and the connections to complex systems in the human body.*
- *The learner describes the structural and basic functional organization of the human body and the terminology used to describe the orientation of bodily structures.*

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 are invaluable to strengthening a multitude of aspects of life. Specifically, this course will focus on communication in the professional setting, and present material from multiple vantage points, including communicating with others in a variety of contexts, across situations, and with diverse populations. Upon completion, you will have a deeper understanding of both your own and others' communication behaviors, and a toolbox of effective behaviors to enhance your experience in the workplace.

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 implements appropriate communication styles based on audience and setting.*
- *The learner uses communication strategies for managing conflict.*
- *The learner uses communication strategies to influence others.*

Anatomy and Physiology II with Lab

This is Anatomy and Physiology II, a six section, four CEU course that enables students to develop an understanding of the relationships between the structures and functions of the cardiovascular, respiratory, digestive, urinary, reproductive, and lymphatic systems in the human body. This course will involve laboratory activities, simulated dissections, textbook material, models, and diagrams. 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 40–60 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 describes the structures and physiological functions of the cardiovascular system and the connections to complex systems in the human body.*
- *The learner describes the structures and physiological functions of the digestive system and the connections to metabolism and complex systems in the human body.*
- *The learner describes the structures and physiological functions of the lymphatic system, immune response, and the connections to complex systems in the human body.*
- *The learner describes the structures and physiological functions of the reproductive system and the connections to complex systems in the human body.*
- *The learner describes the structures and physiological functions of the respiratory system and the connections to complex systems in the human body.*
- *The learner describes the structures and physiological functions of the urinary system and the connections to complex systems in the human body.*

Introduction to Psychology

In this course, students will develop an understanding of psychology and how it helps them better understand others and themselves. Students will learn general theories about psychological development, the structure of the brain, and how psychologists study behavior. They will gain an understanding of both normal and disordered psychological behaviors, as well as general applications of the science of psychology in society (such as personality typing and counseling).

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 concepts of personality development and social psychology.*
- *The learner explains the foundations of psychology.*
- *The learner explains the theories of learning and memory.*
- *The learner identifies psychological disorders and treatment methods.*

Introduction to Sociology

This course teaches students to think like sociologists, or, in other words, to see and understand the hidden rules, or norms, by which people live, and how they free or restrain behavior. Students will learn about socializing institutions, such as schools and families, as well as workplace organizations and governments. Participants will also learn how people deviate from the rules by challenging norms and how such behavior may result in social change, either on a large scale or within small groups.

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 explains how societies are stratified across various social statuses.*
- *The graduate explains major perspectives and key contributors to the development of sociology.*
- *The graduate explains reciprocal relationships between social institutions and individuals.*
- *The graduate explains the constructs of conformity to and deviance from social norms.*
- *The graduate identifies components of culture and socialization as they relate to individuals in society.*

Microbiology with Lab: A Fundamental Approach

Microbiology with Lab: A Fundamental Approach explores the science that microorganisms are everywhere, and they have positive and negative effects on the community. The course examines the structure and function of microorganisms, disease transmission and progression, and immune responses and other interventions, and it identifies key global diseases. The course consists of an introduction and four major sections. Each section includes learning opportunities through readings, videos, and other relevant resources. Assessment activities with feedback also provide opportunities for students to check their learning, practice, and show how well they understand course content. To assist students in developing an applied, evidence-based understanding of microbiology, this course integrates several lab experiments to help determine the specific characteristic of an unknown microbial sample and a treatment plan. Because the course is self-paced, students may move through the material as quickly or as slowly as needed to gain proficiency in the four competencies that will be covered in the final assessment. Students who have no prior knowledge of or experience with this topic can expect to spend 48–60 hours on the course content. 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 disease characteristics to inform individuals about etiologies and treatments.*
- *The learner analyzes methods to prevent and treat infectious diseases and influence positive community outcomes.*
- *The learner analyzes microbial transmission and progression and the care needed based on symptoms and environment.*
- *The learner analyzes structures and characteristics of microorganisms that inform etiologies of symptoms and diseases.*

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 analyzes the role of human actions in the spread of disease.*
- *The learner differentiates among diverse cultural and religious customs and practices.*
- *The learner explains the factors that contributed to the development of nation states.*
- *The learner explains the factors that contributed to the rise and fall of empires.*

Human Growth and Development

This is Human Growth and Development, a three-module course that examines the entire human lifetime, from conception to death. Presented chronologically, the course focuses on three key areas: physical, cognitive, and psychosocial growth, along with other important issues such as cultural influences, emotions, and resilience. 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 explains physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development from conception through early childhood.*
- *The learner explains physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development from early adulthood to the end of life.*
- *The learner explains physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development from middle childhood through adolescence.*
- *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 the influence of emotions on psychosocial development and behavior from early adulthood to the end of life.*
- *The learner explains the influence of emotions on psychosocial development and behavior from middle childhood through adolescence.*

Critical Thinking: Reason and Evidence

In this course you will learn key critical thinking concepts and how to apply them in the analysis and evaluation of reasons and evidence. The course examines the basic components of an argument, the credibility of evidence sources, the impact of bias, and how to construct an argument that provides good support for a claim. The course consists of an introduction and four major sections. 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 four 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.

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 evaluates bias and its impact.*
- *The learner evaluates evidence based on source credibility.*
- *The learner evaluates the quality of an argument.*

- *The learner makes claims based on evidence.*

Nursing Theory and Practice

Pathophysiology

Pathophysiology is a course designed for nursing students, providing an overview of the pathology and treatment of diseases in the human body, tissues, glands and membranes, the integumentary system, the sensory system, skeletal and muscular systems, the digestive system, blood, vessels and circulation, lymphatic system, immunity and disease, heart and respiratory system, nervous, urinary and endocrine systems, and male and female reproductive systems. Prerequisites include all prior courses in this programmatic sequence.

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 basic cellular responses and adaptation related to genetics, injury, aging, and congenital anomalies.*
- *The learner describes pathogenesis, manifestations, complications, and variations of the cardiovascular and lymphatic systems.*
- *The learner describes pathogenesis, manifestations, complications, and variations of the endocrine and reproductive systems.*
- *The learner describes pathogenesis, manifestations, complications, and variations of the gastrointestinal and renal systems.*
- *The learner describes pathogenesis, manifestations, complications, and variations of the muscular, skeletal, and integumentary systems.*
- *The learner describes pathogenesis, manifestations, complications, and variations of the neurologic systems.*
- *The learner describes pathogenesis, manifestations, complications, and variations of the respiratory systems.*

MSN Core

Professional Presence and Influence

Professional Presence and Influence is a masters-level course that explores the foundational elements of professional identity, presence, and influence in nursing practice. Emphasis is placed on developing self-awareness, emotional intelligence, professional communication skills, and ethical decision-making to promote effective leadership and patient-centered care. Students will learn techniques for self-care practices that result in enhanced mental and physical wellbeing and that ensure ethically generated patient care. Learners will examine the impact of personal values, professional standards, and cultural competence on their ability to build trust, advocate for patients, and foster collaborative healthcare environments. Through reflection and practical applications, students will learn to project a confident and compassionate professional presence that enhances their influence with interprofessional teams and the broader healthcare system.

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 workplace civility, well-being, and engagement using improvement science and nursing scholarship.*
- *The learner creates clear, concise, and evidence-based professional communication.*
- *The learner demonstrates a professional presence rooted in self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and mindfulness.*
- *The learner evaluates communication strategies that embody the principles of caring and belonging across diverse care environments.*

Essentials of Advanced Nursing Roles and Interprofessional Practice

Essentials of Advanced Nursing Roles and Interprofessional Practice provides an overview of the master's prepared nursing roles within the context of today's dynamic healthcare environment. Learners will explore the scope, standards, and competencies of master's prepared nurses in the role of leader, educator, practitioner, or informatics specialist. Learners will examine the nurse's role in advocating for change at the bedside as well as leading teams to advocate for health policy reform. Learners will gather and analyze data to identify patients and populations at risk and recommend policy changes to improve health outcomes in the community. ..

collaboration to improve healthcare quality, safety, and outcomes. Learners will examine team dynamics communication strategies, and systems thinking as well as explore models of collaborative practice across diverse healthcare settings.

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 data and evidence for improving healthcare outcomes.*
- *The learner applies interprofessional collaboration and communication strategies to lead a team and enhance healthcare outcomes.*
- *The learner creates a population health improvement strategy.*
- *The learner recommends legal, ethical, and regulatory policies to promote equitable health outcomes.*

Informatics for Transforming Nursing Care

Informatics for Transforming Nursing Care examines the integration of nursing science with information and analytical sciences to enhance clinical decision-making and improve health outcomes. Learners will explore advanced competencies in applying informatics principles, tools, and develop data collection processes to support interprofessional, data-driven care. The course emphasizes the strategic use of patient- and population-level data to inform high-quality nursing practice. Through theoretical and practical applications, students will explore the role of informatics in transforming care delivery and advancing health system performance.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *The learner analyzes the theoretical and conceptual foundations of informatics to enhance the patient experience and health outcomes.*
- *The learner determines strategies to optimize technology and informatics for improving patient outcomes and achieving cost-effective care.*
- *The learner develops data collection processes to gather, interpret, and communicate health metrics for improved clinical decision-making and outcomes.*
- *The learner evaluates population health data to inform public health policy and mitigate public health concerns while improving health equity.*
- *The learner integrates data from informatics systems and technologies to improve population health outcomes.*
- *The learner leverages technology and informatics to ensure safe, cost-effective, and high-quality healthcare delivery for diverse patients and populations.*

Leadership and Management in Complex Healthcare Systems

Leadership and Management in Complex Healthcare Systems is designed to prepare master's prepared nurses to excel as strategic leaders and informed decision-makers in high-performing healthcare settings. Learners will explore managing diverse teams, monitoring organizational performance, allocating resources effectively, and leading transformative change in healthcare systems. Additionally, learners will explore how to collaborate with other healthcare professionals and evaluate the essential role of nurses in delivering high-quality care to patients and populations.

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 key performance indicators to guide evidence-based interventions in managing complex healthcare environments.*
- *The learner analyzes organizational structures and processes that support the development and sustainability of effective interprofessional teams.*
- *The learner determines leadership skills required to lead diverse healthcare teams in response to organizational change.*
- *The learner develops communication and change management strategies that promote a culture of innovation and continuous improvement within healthcare organizations.*

Advancing Evidence-Based Innovation in Nursing Practice

Advancing Evidence-Based Innovation in Nursing Practice explores the intersection of evidence-based practice and healthcare innovation, preparing learners to become nurse innovators and transformational leaders who drive meaningful change. Emphasis is placed on identifying emerging evidence to inform solutions in complex healthcare environments. Learners will foster collaborative and innovative policies and practices that improve population health and enhance the patient care experience.

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 diverse, high-quality sources of evidence to guide innovation that reflects current research, stakeholder needs, and contextual relevance.*
- *The learner applies ethical considerations to practice innovations to improve health outcomes.*
- *The learner applies evidence-based research to support innovation strategies in nursing practice.*

The learner proposes innovative, evidence-based practices in collaboration with an interprofessional team to improve healthcare delivery.

Quality and Safety Outcomes in Nursing Practice

Quality and Safety Outcomes in Nursing Practice emphasizes the integration of quality and safety standards within the patient-centered healthcare model. This course explores emerging healthcare delivery models that prioritize interprofessional collaboration and the strategic sharing of patient data to enhance care coordination and facilitate the measurement of outcomes. Learners are introduced to strategies for coordinating care, utilizing patient data, and applying performance and quality improvement methods essential for advanced nursing practice.

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 appropriate data sources to support evaluation of improvement outcomes.*
- *The learner develops a small-scale quality improvement proposal, including an implementation plan, timeline, roles, and outcome measures.*
- *The learner evaluates opportunities for improvement in nursing practice using systems thinking and quality indicators.*
- *The learner recommends the next steps for improvement intervention based on analysis of quality improvement outcomes.*

Advanced Pathopharmacological Foundations

Advanced Pathopharmacological Foundations provides master's-prepared nurses with a comprehensive understanding of the pathophysiological processes underlying common health conditions encountered in contemporary clinical practice. Building from cellular mechanisms to systemic manifestations, it explores the progression and impact of disease across body systems. Emphasis is also placed on the human affective response to health alterations, fostering a holistic approach to patient care.

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 pathopharmacological concepts and mechanisms of common conditions for diverse patients across the lifespan.*
- *The learner analyzes the etiological factors contributing to pathophysiological alterations for diverse patients across the lifespan.*
- *The learner determines comprehensive interventions that support optimal patient outcomes across the lifespan.*
- *The learner integrates mechanisms of cellular function, genetics, and disease risk to promote physiologic stability and wellness for diverse patients across the lifespan.*
- *The learner integrates Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) to formulate person-centered, equitable care strategies for diverse patients across the lifespan.*

Advanced Health Assessment for Patients and Populations

Advanced Health Assessment for Patients and Populations builds upon foundational physical assessment competencies to develop advanced skills in the comprehensive health assessment of individuals and populations across the lifespan. Emphasizing the integration of biopsychosocial, cultural, and contextual factors, learners will refine their ability to conduct in-depth clinical interviews, obtain complex health histories, and apply diagnostic reasoning. Learners will enhance their skills and understanding to support health promotion, disease prevention, and health restoration in diverse patient populations.

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.*
- *he learner interprets assessment data to create health promotion plans for patients and communities.*
- *The learner analyzes epidemiologic methods to assess the health of diverse populations.*

- *The learner assesses the physical, biopsychosocial, cultural, spiritual, and environmental elements relevant to the health of patients and populations.*
- *The learner determines comprehensive assessment strategies appropriate for diverse patients across the life span.*
- *The learner performs a focused physical examination based on evidence from the collected data.*
- *The learner proposes strategies for disease prevention and outbreak control interventions for diverse populations.*

Nursing Informatics Specialty

Foundations in Nursing Informatics

Foundations in Nursing Informatics introduces core concepts related to how information and technology support nursing practice, communication, and decision-making. The course examines key ideas in documentation, workflows, problem identification, and the design of systems that contribute to effective and safe care. It also explores the role of informatics in improving quality and supporting evidence-informed practice across healthcare settings. 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 information technology concepts, including life cycle, workflow, and roles to nursing informatics contexts.*
- *The learner applies project management and change theories to nursing informatics contexts.*
- *The learner applies standardized terminologies to nursing informatics contexts.*
- *The learner identifies the evolution, standards, and best practices that inform safe and effective informatics systems.*

Data Science and Analytics in Nursing Informatics

Data Science and Analytics in Nursing Informatics explores how data is collected, organized, interpreted, and used to support decisions in healthcare environments. The course introduces foundational approaches to data analysis and emphasizes how analytical thinking contributes to quality, safety, efficiency, and equity in care. Students practice applying essential concepts from statistics and data management to address common challenges in healthcare systems. Foundations in Nursing Informatics is a recommended prerequisite 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 data using basic statistical techniques for nursing informatics contexts.*
- *The learner determines the necessary steps to assess the quality and completeness of datasets.*
- *The learner presents the outputs of data analysis to relevant stakeholders using visualization and oral communication techniques.*

Database Design and Management in Nursing Informatics

Database Design and Management in Nursing Informatics examines how information needs are translated into organized data structures that support communication, planning, and safe care delivery. The course introduces principles of designing, managing, and evaluating data systems that help guide decisions in clinical and administrative settings. Emphasis is placed on ensuring accuracy, consistency, and appropriate access to information across various points of care. Foundations in Nursing Informatics is a recommended prerequisite 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 clinical workflows and data retrieval strategies pertaining to nursing informatics.*
- *The learner applies data models and standardized clinical terminologies to support interoperability across health information systems.*
- *The learner designs clinically relevant and human-focused processes guided by informatics principles to support safe, high-quality patient outcomes.*
- *The learner evaluates informatics system compliance with relevant regulations and standards, to mitigate legal risk to the health care organization.*

System Development and Analysis in Nursing Informatics

System Development and Analysis in Nursing Informatics explores how information systems are planned, evaluated, and improved to support effective care delivery. The course examines system features related to functionality, usability, information

access, and alignment with expectations for safe and efficient practice. Learners analyze system needs and consider how regulations, reporting requirements, and quality goals influence system design. Foundations in Nursing Informatics is a recommended prerequisite 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 an implementation strategy for an informatics solution that incorporates project management methodology.*
- *The learner designs a database model that integrates research principles and key data elements to achieve a desired clinical outcome.*
- *The learner proposes a monitoring, maintaining, supporting and evaluating strategy that incorporates relevant regulations and ergonomic and environmental health principles.*
- *The learner proposes recommended outcomes based on analysis of informatics system feasibility and impact.*

Nursing Informatics Practicum I

Nursing Informatics Practicum I provides applied practice experience in professional environments where nursing informatics supports quality, safety, and decision-making. The course focuses on observing and engaging in activities that illustrate how information systems function in real-world contexts. Students assess opportunities for improvement and apply program concepts to understand system performance and outcomes. All MSN Core courses and Nursing Informatics specialty courses, excluding Nursing Informatics Practicum II, are 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 designs a system optimization project for an electronic health application that integrates evidence, technology, and the expertise of the interprofessional team.*
- *The learner proposes a system optimization project for an electronic health application based on analysis of relevant scholarly literature and organizational needs.*
- *The learner proposes an implementation strategy for a system optimization project that uses an electronic health application.*

Nursing Informatics Practicum II

Nursing Informatics Practicum II builds on prior coursework and applied practice to guide the development of a proposal for improving an information-related process or system within a healthcare setting. The course emphasizes synthesizing program concepts, evaluating system needs, and outlining practical steps for supporting, sustaining, and assessing improvements in real-world environments. Learners organize their findings into a structured, scholarly proposal that reflects program-level competencies. Nursing Informatics Practicum I and all MSN Core and Nursing Informatics specialty courses are 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 assesses the impact of a system optimization project based on interpretation of analyzed data.*
- *The learner presents a system optimization project proposal using appropriate written and visual communication techniques.*

The learner proposes an evaluation plan for a system optimization project that uses an electronic health application.

Accessibility and Accommodations

Western Governors University (WGU) is committed to providing equal access to its academic programs to all qualified students. WGU's Student Disability Services department supports this mission by providing support, resources, advocacy, collaboration, and academic accommodations in accordance with federal and state statutes and regulations to WGU students and prospective students. Potential and current students needing to request accommodation(s) are encouraged to contact Student Disability Services to initiate the request. To initiate the accommodation process, all potential and current WGU students must complete the secure online Accommodation Request Form located at' *https://www.wgu.edu/wgu/ada_form*. Potential and current students can reach the Student Disability Services team Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. MT at 1-877- 435-7948 x5922 or at *sds@wgu.edu*. Additional information on accommodations can be found in the student handbook Accommodations for Students with Disabilities po..

Need More Information? WGU Student Services

Student Support Services team members also assist with unresolved concerns to find equitable resolutions. To contact the Student Support 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., and Saturday and Sunday, 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m, mountain standard time.