



## Certificate Guidebook

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### Post-Master's Certificate, Nursing - Leadership and Management (Post-MSN)

*The Post-Master's Certificate, Nursing - Leadership and Management (Post-MSN) program is a competency-based program that prepares students to be leaders and managers in diverse settings: hospitals, long term care facilities, community service agencies, governmental agencies and facilities, and corporations. Students use their organizational, analytic, strategic planning, financial, human resources, and evaluation skills across healthcare organizations. The WGU Post-Master's Certificate, Nursing - Leadership and Management (Post-MSN) program content is evidence-based, drawing on national standards and research related to creating work environments that are collaborative, interdisciplinary, and promote effective functioning in complex nursing and healthcare environments. The certificate program content and processes are consistent with the American Nurses Association (ANA) Standards for Nurse Administrators and the American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL) competencies for nursing managers and executives, and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL). The Post-Master's Certificate program is focused on the preparation of highly qualified nurse administrators (nurse managers and nurse executives). This program builds on the core knowledge developed during the student's prior MSN degree. Areas of focus for this certificate program include organizational and leadership theories, strategic planning, regulatory standards, risk management, principles of financial management, and concepts of human resource management. Graduates examine organizational, financial, and personnel issues and their resolution. The process for assessment, measurement, evaluation, and use of outcome data for improvement is presented.*

## 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 certificates based on completion of a certain number of credit hours or a certain set of required courses. Instead, you will earn your certificate by demonstrating your skills, knowledge, and understanding of important concepts.

Progress through a certificate 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 certificate 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 instructors as you engage in each of your courses. As subject matter experts, instructors will guide you through the content you must master to pass the course assessments.

The benefit of this competency-based system is that it enables students who are knowledgeable about a particular subject to make accelerated progress toward completing a certificate, 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 certificate based on the skills and knowledge that you possess and can demonstrate—not the number of credits hours on your transcript.

## Accreditation

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

## The Degree Plan

The focus of your program is your personalized Degree Plan. The Degree Plan is a detailed blueprint of the courses you will need to complete in order to earn your certificate. 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 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 complete your certificate. 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 complete your certificate. 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 an instructor for each 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 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 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 instructors by posting in the online learning community and participating in live discussion sessions such as webinars and cohorts.

You will be required to complete performance assessments to demonstrate your competency. 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 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 certificates based on credits but rather on demonstration of competency. Students entering Post-Masters Certificate programs must have completed a graduate degree from an accredited institution and their degree verified before being admitted to WGU.

[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 program requirements. Program requirements and transferability rules are subject to change in order to keep the program 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 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 completion. 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 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 certificate, 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.

## 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 is included in your tuition and Learning Resource Fee. They can be accessed or enrolled for through your courses. Some program-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. A standard plan for a student for this program would look similar to the one on the following page. Your personal progress can be faster, but your pace will be determined by your time commitment, and your determination to proceed at a faster rate.

## 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.

### **Standard Path for Post-Master's Certificate, Nursing - Leadership and Management (Post-MSN)**

<b>Course Description</b>	<b>CUs</b>	<b>Term</b>
Essentials of Academic Writing	1	1
Leading with Personal Mastery	2	1
Business Case Analysis for Healthcare Improvement	2	1
Managing Resources in an Era of Disruption	2	1
Strategically Planning the Execution of a Healthcare Improvement Project	2	1
Evidence-Based Measures for Evaluating Healthcare Improvements	2	2
Nursing Leadership and Management Field Experience	3	2
Nursing Leadership and Management Capstone	2	2

# Areas of Study for Post-Master's Certificate, Nursing - Leadership and Management (Post-MSN)

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 program. 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. Courses build upon one another, thus completing each course in the order listed below is recommended.

## Nursing Core

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### Essentials of Academic Writing

The learner will explore professional communication by applying the principles of academic writing to their discipline. Learners will incorporate these skills into the development of an evidence-based scholarly paper in their specialty area. As learners develop a scholarly paper, they will acquire a deeper understanding of the research topic selected and analyze whether initiatives and interventions have been effective or ineffective.

*This course covers the following competencies:*

- *Begin your course by discussing your course planning tool report with your instructor and creating your personalized course plan together.*
- *The learner demonstrates the steps of the writing process for integrating evidence into academic papers.*
- *The learner applies the principles of APA writing to produce clear, concise, and evidence-based written work.*

## Leadership and Management Specialty

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### Leading with Personal Mastery

Leading with Personal Mastery prepares the advanced professional nurse to demonstrate self-awareness, self-management, executive function, and social awareness skills while leading and managing in diverse healthcare settings. In this course, students will learn how to incorporate these skills when developing personal relationships and building teams. Developing both social and emotional intelligence as a nurse leader will ensure that students have the ability develop strong relationships and make wise decisions when interacting with others. Increasing personal mastery will provide students with a set of tools and strategies to improve healthcare by producing high-quality results. Understanding their strengths and weaknesses, as a leader in healthcare will help students create a vision for success that includes making choices that will help balance their work life more effectively.

*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 pathways to achieve personal mastery for leading and managing individuals and teams in diverse healthcare settings.*
- *The learner develops a vision for assuming the role of a leader and manager that includes self-awareness, self-management, interpersonal communication, executive function, and social awareness.*
- *The learner applies effective communication and consensus-building strategies when consulting with internal and external stakeholders.*
- *The learner applies the principles of scholarly writing by producing a clear, concise, and evidence-based paper for the purpose of contributing to the body of nursing knowledge.*

### Business Case Analysis for Healthcare Improvement

Business Case Analysis for Healthcare Improvement provides learning experiences that help students develop essential skills for proposing changes that improve and enhance healthcare outcomes. In this course, students will develop a business case during the early stages of a project by assessing the need for the project and the feasibility of initiating a project. Understanding the techniques used to develop a business case will provide students with the skills to obtain buy-in from key stakeholders and determine the best value strategy. Writing a strong business case presents the benefits,

challenges, costs, and risks of moving forward with the project or maintaining status quo. It compares the current situation to a future vision so key stakeholders can make data-driven decisions to move forward with the project. During the development of a business case in this course, students will collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to initiate a healthcare improvement project (HIP) that is grounded in project management principles and influenced by stakeholder perspectives.

*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 examines regulatory and compliance requirements for implementing an improvement project comprising systematic activities and processes that are organized and implemented to improve organizational quality, safety, and performance.*
- *The learner collaborates with internal and external stakeholders to assess the need and organizational readiness for a healthcare improvement project using improvement science methods and practices.*
- *The learner describes the four phases of the project management lifecycle that will guide their healthcare improvement project successfully from initiation to closure.*
- *The learner synthesizes relevant evidence, feasibility results, patient preferences, and interdisciplinary stakeholder perspectives to initiate a healthcare improvement project.*

## **Managing Resources in an Era of Disruption**

Managing Human and Financial Resources in an Era of Disruption examines the main premise of people and fiscal leadership. This includes the promotion of healthy work environments through the development of programs in support of mitigating behavior problems for the betterment of work-life balance. Students will analyze business model budgets, revenue streams, and human and financial resource allocation, develop training programs to evaluate compliance and regulatory requirement, and create team building experiences to promote high performing teams by improving engagement, establishing trust, and achieving common goals. Students will assess an organization's mission, vision, and values to establish alignment between healthcare improvement and an organization's principles for management. Changes in healthcare are inevitable, as the business success strategies used in the past are not sufficient for surviving in an era of persistent disruption. This course will help students develop the skills nurse leaders need to become partners in recommending innovative strategies that promote value-based healthcare for the future.

*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 promotes a healthy work environment by developing programs to mitigate workplace behavior problems and enhance work-life balance.*
- *The learner designs team-building experiences that promote high-performance teams where members trust each other and have the synergy to work together toward common goals.*
- *The learner collaborates with key stakeholders to plan for the use of available resources needed to achieve project aims and goals.*
- *The learner applies human resource principles and practices when developing a project charter that includes planning for adequate human resources for a healthcare improvement project.*

## **Strategically Planning the Execution of a Healthcare Improvement Project**

Strategically Planning the Execution of a Healthcare Improvement Project will help students develop the skills for systems thinking, problem-solving, and data-driven decision-making. In this course, students will plan the implementation of a healthcare improvement project by identifying people, processes, and procedures that need to be in place for implementation. In addition, sociodemographic data on the population that may be affected by the healthcare improvement project will be analyzed to determine risks and opportunities. During this phase, students will perform an assessment of the forces for and against implementing the project. They will also identify short-term objectives and create action plans to align to the vision, mission, and values of the organization where the project will be implemented. Students will also examine the evolution of existing policies, procedures, and processes at the systems level for the purpose of advocating change that will support a healthcare improvement project. During this course, students will plan the implementation of their healthcare improvement project through the use of sociodemographic and health data, strategic planning, and a comprehensive integration of quality and safety concepts.

*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 existing policies at the systems level that have the potential to influence the implementation of a healthcare improvement project.
- The learner uses sociodemographic and social determinants of health data to describe the target populations that will be affected by a healthcare improvement project.
- The learner examines the structure, processes, and outcomes of an organizational plan that may facilitate or impede the implementation of a healthcare improvement project.
- The learner leads the development of a collaborative implementation plan that includes oversight of the project and the scope of work with specific tasks, timelines, and deliverables.

## **Evidence-Based Measures for Evaluating Healthcare Improvements**

Evidence-based measures for evaluating healthcare improvements is an essential component of the planning phase of the healthcare improvement project. In this course, students will determine key performance indicators and metrics used to determine the success of a healthcare improvement project (HIP). The student will develop collaborative partnerships and build consensus with stakeholders to determine how specific data will be collected, managed, and analyzed. This is also an opportunity to discuss data issues and technologies needed for the project. To accomplish this phase, students will also determine the parameters, procedures, and technologies needed for data collection, management, analysis, and reporting.

*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 collaborates with internal and external stakeholders to identify key success indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of a healthcare improvement project.*
- *The learner determines the most effective technology and data sources for capturing data that will measure the key performance indicators (KPIs) for a health improvement project (HIP).*
- *The learner creates a data collection plan that includes specific data fields and types, collection frequency, data sources, and data security methods.*
- *The learner initiates the process of collaboratively developing a healthcare improvement evaluation plan that addresses stakeholder questions and high-priority areas to measure progress over time, and describes contextual issues that may impact the results.*

## **Nursing Leadership and Management Field Experience**

The Nursing Leadership and Management Field Experience course provides an opportunity for students to apply the knowledge and skills they developed in previous courses toward the successful implementation of their healthcare improvement project (HIP). This phase puts into action all the components of project management that were planned and developed while working collaboratively with key stakeholders to establish the need and feasibility of the HIP, analyzing the organizational readiness for change, and planning the implementation and evaluation phases. In this phase, students will develop and implement a training plan for staff, managers, and leaders. They will also implement the communication plan they developed in a previous course. They will also manage the implementation process by applying organizational standards and practices. Students will demonstrate strong leadership skills when meeting with stakeholders to report the status of the implementation phase and collaboratively problem-solve risks. Completion of the specialty courses is a pre-requisite for this course.

*This course covers the following competencies:*

- *The learner utilizes effective communication and relationship-building practices to successfully kick-off the implementation project.*
- *The learner implements the training plan for the purpose of training staff, managers, and/or leaders regarding the implementation of the health improvement project.*
- *The learner implements the training plan for the purpose of training staff, managers, and/or leaders regarding the implementation of the health improvement project.*
- *The learner leads scheduled meetings with internal and external stakeholders for the purpose of providing status updates regarding the implementation process.*

## **Nursing Leadership and Management Capstone**

The Nursing Leadership and Management Capstone provides students with an opportunity to evaluate and close their capstone project. This is the final course in the MSN Leadership and Management program. Students will evaluate the

success of their healthcare improvement project (HIP) by analyzing results, using the key performance indicators and metrics that were identified while planning the evaluation phase. Students will present the results of the improvement project in a final report and presentation with a focus on lessons learned throughout each of the phases: initiation, planning, implementation, and evaluation. Reflective and analytic thinking are essential aspects of a capstone project, as students reflect and report on the successes and challenges encountered in each phase. In this course, students will also have an opportunity to earn the Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality certification by completing and passing the National Association for Healthcare Quality (NAHQ) CPHQ Certification test. Nursing Leadership and Management Field Experience is a prerequisite for this course.

*This course covers the following competencies:*

- *The learner integrates and synthesizes competencies from across the degree program and thereby demonstrates the ability to participate in and contribute value to the chosen professional field.*

## Accessibility and Accommodations

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

## Need More Information? WGU Student Services

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

Student Services team members also assist with unresolved concerns to find equitable resolutions. To contact the Student Services team, please feel free to call 877-435-7948 or e-mail [studentservices@wgu.edu](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>.