



Program Guidebook

Master of Science, Curriculum and Instruction

The Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction is a competency-based degree program designed for K-12 teachers who are interested in improving their teaching practice and leading innovation in teaching and learning. The program is built in alignment with the National Board Professional Teaching Standards and the National Education Association's Teacher Leadership Competencies. Intended to be practical and application-based, the program incorporates six pillars of curriculum and instruction: reflective practice, social-emotional learning, evidence-based practices, technology, leadership, and cultural competency. The competencies of this program focus on in-demand skills, preparing candidates for careers as instructional coaches, curriculum specialists, and distinguished teacher leaders.

Understanding the Competency-Based Approach

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

Progress through a degree program is governed not by the amount of time you spend in class but by your ability to demonstrate mastery of competencies as you complete required courses. Of course, you will need to engage in learning experiences as you review competencies or develop knowledge and skills in areas in which you may be weak. To help you acquire the knowledge and skills you need to complete your courses and program, WGU provides a rich array of learning resources. Your program mentor will work closely with you to help you understand the competencies required for your program and to help you create a schedule for completing your courses. You will also work closely with course instructors as you engage in each of your courses. As subject matter experts, course instructors will guide you through the content you must master to pass the course assessments.

The benefit of this competency-based system is that it enables students who are knowledgeable about a particular subject to make accelerated progress toward completing a degree, even if they lack college experience. You may have gained skills and knowledge of a subject while on the job, accumulated wisdom through years of life experience, or already taken a course on a particular subject. WGU will award your degree based on the skills and knowledge that you possess and can demonstrate—not the number of credits hours on your transcript.

Accreditation

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

The Degree Plan

The focus of your program is your personalized Degree Plan. The Degree Plan is a detailed blueprint of the courses you will need to complete in order to earn your degree. The Degree Plan also lays out the accompanying learning resources and assessments that compose your program. The list of courses in the Degree Plan is often referred to as the standard path. The amount of time it takes to complete your program depends on both the amount of new information you need to learn and the amount of time you plan to devote each week to study.

Students vary widely in the specific skills and information they need to learn. For example, some students may be highly knowledgeable in a particular subject matter and would not need to engage in new learning opportunities. Other students may find that portions of the program require them to learn new information and that they need to take an online class or participate in a study module to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to fulfill program competencies in that area. Some individuals may be able to devote as little as 15–20 hours per week to the program, while others may need to devote more time. For this reason,

pre-assessments are there to help your program mentor form a profile of your prior knowledge and create a personalized Degree Plan.

How You Will Interact with Faculty

At WGU, faculty serve in specialized roles, and they will work with you individually to provide the guidance, instruction, and support you will need to succeed and graduate. As a student, it is important for you to take advantage of this support. It is key to your progress and ultimate success.

Upon your enrollment, you will be assigned a program mentor—an expert in your field of study who will provide you with regular program-level guidance and support from the day you start until the day you graduate. Your program mentor will set up regular telephone appointments (weekly at first) with you, which you will be expected to keep. The mentor will review program competencies with you and work with you to develop a plan and schedule for your coursework. Your program mentor will serve as your main point of contact throughout your program—helping you set weekly study goals, recommending specific learning materials, telling you what to expect in courses, and keeping you motivated. In addition to regular calls, your program mentor is available to help you resolve questions and concerns as they arise.

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

Connecting with Other Mentors and Fellow Students

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

The learning resources in each course are specifically designed to support you as you develop competencies in preparation for your assessments. These learning resources may include reading materials, videos, tutorials, cohort opportunities, community discussions, and live discussions that are guided by course instructors who are experts in their field. You will access your program community during your orientation course to network with peers who are enrolled in your program and to receive continued support through professional enrichment and program-specific chats, blogs, and discussions. WGU also provides Student Services associates to help you and your program mentor solve any special problems that may arise.

Orientation

The WGU orientation course focuses on acquainting you with WGU’s competency-based model, distance education, technology, and other resources and tools available for students. You will also utilize WGU program and course communities, participate in activities, and get to know other students at WGU. The orientation course must be completed before you can start your first term at WGU.

Transferability of Prior College Coursework

Because WGU is a competency-based institution, it does not award degrees based on credits but rather on demonstration of competency. 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. In most cases, WGU does not accept college transfer credits at the graduate (master's) level. Students entering graduate programs must have their undergraduate degree transcripts verified before being admitted to WGU. In addition to a program's standard course path, there may be additional state-specific requirements.

[Click here for the Student Handbook](#)

WGU does not waive any requirements based on a student's professional experience and does not perform a "résumé review" or "portfolio review" that will automatically waive any degree requirements. Degree requirements and transferability rules are subject to change in order to keep the degree content relevant and current.

Remember, WGU's competency-based approach lets you take advantage of your knowledge and skills, regardless of how you obtained them. Even when you do not directly receive credit, the knowledge you possess may help you accelerate the time it takes to complete your degree program.

Continuous Enrollment, On Time Progress, and Satisfactory Academic Progress

WGU is a "continuous enrollment" institution, which means you will be automatically enrolled in each of your new terms while you are at WGU. Each term is six months long. Longer terms and continuous enrollment allow you to focus on your studies without the hassle of unnatural breaks between terms that you would experience at a more traditional university. At the end of every six-month term, you and your program mentor will review the progress you have made and revise your Degree Plan for your next six-month term.

WGU requires that students make measurable progress toward the completion of their degree programs every term. We call this "On-Time Progress," denoting that you are on track and making progress toward on-time graduation. As full-time students, graduate students must enroll in at least 8 competency units each term, and undergraduate students must enroll in at least 12 competency units each term. Completing at least these minimum enrollments is essential to On-Time Progress and serves as a baseline from which you may accelerate your program. We measure your progress based on the courses you are able to pass, not on your accumulation of credit hours or course grades. Every time you pass a course, you are demonstrating that you have mastered skills and knowledge in your degree program. For comparison to traditional grading systems, passing a course means you have demonstrated competency equivalent to a "B" grade or better.

WGU assigns competency units to each course in order to track your progress through the program. A competency unit is equivalent to one semester credit of learning. Some courses may be assigned 3 competency units while others may be as large as 12 competency units.

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) is particularly important to students on financial aid because you must achieve SAP in order to maintain eligibility for financial aid. We will measure your SAP quantitatively by reviewing the number of competency units you have completed each term. In order to remain in good academic standing, you must complete at least 66.67% of the units you attempt over the length of your program—including any courses you add to your term to accelerate your progress. Additionally, during your first term at WGU you must pass at least 3 competency units in order to remain eligible for financial aid. We know that SAP is complex, so please contact a financial aid counselor should you have additional questions. *Please note: The Endorsement Preparation Program in Educational Leadership is not eligible for federal financial aid.

Courses

Your Degree Plan includes courses needed to complete your program. To obtain your degree, you will be

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

External Content & Basic Skills Exams

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

State Licensure Requirements

This program does not lead to state licensure.

Learning Resources

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

Mobile Compatibility:

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

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

Standard Path

As previously mentioned, competency units (CUs) have been assigned to each course in order to measure your academic progress. If you are an undergraduate student, you will be expected to enroll in a minimum of 12 competency units each term. Graduate students are expected to enroll in a minimum of 8 competency units each term. A standard plan for a student for this program who entered WGU without any transfer units would look similar to the one on the following page. Your personal progress can be faster, but your pace will be determined by the extent of your transfer units, your time commitment, and your determination to proceed at a faster rate.

Standard Path *for* Master of Science, Curriculum and Instruction

Course Description	CUs	Term
Designing Curriculum and Instruction I	3	1
Learning as a Science	3	1
The Reflective Practitioner	3	1
Differentiated Instruction	3	2
Standards-Based Assessment	3	2
Designing Curriculum and Instruction II	3	2
The Collaborative Leader	3	3
Data-Informed Practices	3	3
Educational Research	3	3
MSCIN Capstone	5	4

Changes to Curriculum

WGU publishes an Institutional Catalog, which describes the academic requirements of each degree program. Although students are required to complete the program version current at the time of their enrollment, WGU may modify requirements and course offerings within that version of the program to maintain the currency and relevance of WGU's competencies and programs. When program requirements are updated, students readmitting after withdrawal from the university will be expected to re-enter into the most current catalog version of the program.

Areas of Study for Master of Science, Curriculum and Instruction

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.

Curriculum

Designing Curriculum and Instruction I

Designing Curriculum and Instruction I examines the influence that specific theories, design principles, and evaluation models have on the quality and effectiveness of a curriculum. During the course, candidates will conduct a needs analysis in order to determine the content that students need. The course requires candidates to learn how to define the scope and sequence of a curriculum to ensure vertical and horizontal alignment. This course will also teach how to map curriculum to address any gaps or unnecessary duplication within and across grade levels. 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 conducts a curriculum analysis to identify the unmet needs of learners.*
- *The learner evaluates curriculum through the application of theories, principles, and models.*
- *The learner evaluates the alignment of curriculum to relevant standards to identify gaps and avoid unnecessary duplication.*
- *The learner creates a curriculum map to demonstrate how the curriculum aligns to standards and builds on previous knowledge, skills, and experiences.*

National Board Professional Teaching Standards Pathway

Learning as a Science

Learning as a Science examines how research from the field of learning sciences can be applied to improve teaching and learning. This course explains how teachers can create a sense of community by examining personal biases and establishing a culturally inclusive learning environment. The course also provides evidence-based strategies for improving motivation, increasing understanding and retention, and teaching social-emotional skills that students need to be successful socially and academically. 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 graduate creates a supportive learning environment that fosters strong relationships and community.*
- *The graduate incorporates evidence-based strategies to improve student motivation.*
- *The graduate incorporates evidence-based strategies to increase understanding and knowledge retention.*
- *The graduate facilitates the development of social-emotional skills that students need to be successful socially and academically.*

The Reflective Practitioner

The Reflective Practitioner defines what reflective teaching is and how accomplished teachers reflect meaningfully on their pedagogical choices to improve their practice. During this course, candidates will examine their teaching to determine how they can more effectively plan, facilitate, and evaluate learning. Candidates will also develop a professional growth plan and incorporate evidence-based practices that support the achievement of their professional goals. 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 reflects on instructional practice in order to identify opportunities for professional growth in meeting the needs of all learners.*
- *The learner develops a professional growth plan that includes short- and long-term goals and actionable steps for achieving those goals to continually improve the learner's teaching practice.*
- *The learner incorporates evidence-based practices learned through research and training to continue improving their practice and achieve professional goals.*

The Collaborative Leader

The Collaborative Leader demonstrates strategies teacher leaders can use to collaborate with other professionals, families, and communities to build strong relationships and improve school effectiveness. This course examines models of collaboration and the benefits and challenges of collaboration. It also examines the characteristics of effective professional development and explains how to collaboratively design effective professional development opportunities for educators. Finally, this course demonstrates how accomplished teachers can build relationships with families and the community to create a positive learning experience for students. 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 graduate collaborates with team members to address common instructional goals and improve teaching and learning.*
- *The graduate plans professional development opportunities that address curricular or instructional needs to improve school effectiveness.*
- *The graduate collaborates with families and communities to enrich learning and build productive relationships.*

Curriculum and Instruction

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated Instruction examines how the classroom environment and students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles influence learning. K–12 educators taking this course will acquire a deep understanding of their students in order to differentiate their curriculum, instruction, and assessments in response to individual students' needs. This course will allow students to also learn how to effectively monitor and communicate students' progress toward standards and adjust their practice as needed to empower students and nurture their abilities and aptitudes. As a result of their learning in this course, K–12 teachers will be prepared to act as catalysts for differentiation within their schools and districts. 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 graduate examines the role the teacher and the learning environment play in supporting differentiated instruction.*
- *The graduate analyzes students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles so the graduate can respond effectively to individual differences.*
- *The graduate modifies content, process, and product in order to deliver instruction that takes into account individual students' differences.*
- *The graduate plans how to track ongoing learner development in order to evaluate and report individual students' progress against standards.*

Designing Curriculum and Instruction II

Designing Curriculum and Instruction II examines commonly used curriculum and instructional models and demonstrates how they can be used during the design process to achieve curricular and instructional goals. This course demonstrates how to design curriculum and instruction that leverages digital tools to facilitate deep, authentic learning and provides strategies for ensuring successful curriculum implementation. Designing Curriculum and Instruction I is a 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 applies curriculum models to inform the design process and achieve curricular goals.*
- *The learner applies instructional models to design effective and engaging learning experiences.*
- *The learner designs authentic learning activities that leverage digital tools to maximize active, deep learning.*
- *The learner develops strategies to support stakeholders in implementing curriculum for a diverse group of students.*

Assessment

Standards-Based Assessment

Standards-Based Assessment teaches candidates how to unpack academic standards to determine the essential learnings within the standards that should be assessed. This course teaches candidates how to determine, based on academic standards, which topics should be assessed and how to use proficiency statements to create and score standards-based assessments. This course also prepares candidates to analyze assessment data and develop a holistic assessment system for a specific subject and grade level. Differentiated Instruction is a 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 graduate unpacks academic standards to determine the knowledge and skills that must be assessed for a given subject and grade level.*
- *The graduate designs assessments that measure how well students have mastered specific knowledge and skills described in local, state, or national learning standards.*
- *The graduate analyzes assessment data to draw conclusions about students' progress and address any gaps in learning.*
- *The graduate develops an assessment system that outlines when and how teachers will measure student progress toward learning goals.*

Research

Data-Informed Practices

Data-Informed Practices focuses on the development of data literacy skills. This course teaches candidates about the different types of data, the benefits and limitations of those data types, and how they can use data to identify and solve problems and inform decisions. The course also teaches candidates how to locate, collect, and analyze data from relevant and credible sources, and how to draw conclusions from data in order to drive continuous improvement. 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 graduate identifies relevant types and credible sources of data required to solve an identified problem.*
- *The graduate selects appropriate methods for collecting and analyzing data to present conclusions and drive continuous improvement.*

Educational Research

Educational Research focuses on practical problem solving. This course teaches candidates to use scholarly literature and current research to inform their own practice. It also empowers candidates to recognize opportunities for improvement and engage in action research to systematically implement and evaluate changes. This course prepares candidates to conduct research for the capstone. Data-Informed Practices is a 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 graduate lays the foundation of a research project or study by identifying a topic, problem statement, the purpose*

of the investigation, anticipated obstacles, and ethical considerations.

- *The graduate examines the credibility and relevancy of various sources to assess their usefulness in addressing an educational problem.*
- *The graduate writes a literature review that identifies gaps in knowledge and unresolved problems that educational research can address.*
- *The graduate determines methodologies and data analysis techniques in order to address a research problem.*

MSCIN Capstone

The Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction Capstone is the culminating course of the degree. It unites content area knowledge with the completion of a research project or study. This course teaches candidates, under the guidance of program faculty, to apply their data literacy and research skills to topics related to curriculum and instruction and to their career goals. Projects for this course include action research or applied research through the necessary qualitative, quantitative, or mixed research methods. Prerequisites for this course include Data-Informed Practices and Educational Research, as well as all prescribed courses in the candidates' area of study. Additionally, students wishing to add the Capstone with fewer than eight weeks remaining in the term must receive permission from program leadership.

This course covers the following competencies:

- *The graduate produces a research proposal that satisfies applicable laws, policies, codes of ethics, professional standards, and appropriate Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements to advance the learning of K–12 students.*
- *The graduate writes a scholarly literature review and research methodology chapters that align with the approved research proposal after gaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.*
- *The graduate writes the results and conclusions chapters to align with the approved research proposal after collecting and analyzing the data for the research project or study.*
- *The graduate presents a completed capstone supported by a narrated multimedia presentation that could potentially contribute to knowledge in the field of curriculum and instruction.*

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. 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. 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>.