



Foundations of Memory and Dementia Care Course Syllabus

WESTERN GOVERNORS UNIVERSITY

Foundations of Memory and Dementia Care

Hello, and welcome!

As the population ages and the number of people living with Alzheimer's and other dementia-related diseases increases, so does the need for excellent caregivers. This course equips you with the foundational skills needed to provide compassionate and person-centered dementia and memory care. You will learn how to distinguish between normal aging and dementia symptoms. You will examine screenings and assessments, and how they are used to develop and modify care plans. You will gain verbal and nonverbal communication strategies, learn best practices for behavioral support, and become familiar with therapeutic engagement techniques. You will also explore how to assess safety risks and support well-being at all stages of dementia through environmental adaptation. These skills and more will help you become a more effective caregiver—one who puts the individual who is living with dementia at the center of every interaction and decision.

We invite you to take a minute to learn about the course by reviewing the information that follows. This way, you will be better able to understand the expectations of the course as a whole. Then you can determine how to manage your time and efforts as you navigate through it.

You are in the right place. You belong here. You can do this!

Course Description and Competencies

WHAT TO EXPECT

In this course, you will work through four modules of material. Each module is broken down into smaller units. These units will give you a foundation of understanding dementia, assessment and care planning, communication and behavior, and supportive care environments.

Throughout this course, you will find readings and a variety of interactive elements. These include videos, scenarios, and ungraded practice tests to help deepen your understanding of the content. Engaging with these activities reinforces new learning. It also complements the knowledge you bring to this area of study.

This course covers the following competencies:

1. The student describes the cognitive, behavioral, and functional characteristics of dementia and related disorders.
2. The student integrates assessment findings into person-centered dementia care.
3. The student applies communication and behavioral support strategies for individuals with dementia.
4. The student plans for supportive dementia care environments.

Assessment

You must achieve a ranking of **Competent** on each assessment to pass the course. You may attempt the assessment two times before additional support is necessary. If you require further attempts, please contact your Course Instructor or Student Experience Specialist.

◆ 1 final project ◆ 3 competency units

Course Outline

Module	Upon completion of this module, you will be able to:
Understanding Dementia	A. Distinguish between normal age-related cognitive changes and pathological cognitive decline. B. Compare major dementia syndromes by their causes, symptoms, and progression. C. Explain behavioral and emotional changes associated with dementia progression. D. Differentiate dementia, delirium, and depression by onset, course, and reversibility. E. Identify cognitive symptoms of dementia in diverse cultural, social, and environmental contexts.
Assessment and Care Planning	A. Identify cognitive and functional assessment findings produced by commonly used screening and evaluation tools. B. Explain how cognitive and functional assessment findings are interpreted within ethical and legal frameworks relevant to dementia care. C. Develop person-centered care priorities and goals based on cognitive, functional, and contextual assessment findings. D. Explain how cognitive and functional assessment findings inform long-term and community-based dementia care needs.
Communication and Behavior	A. Identify effective verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that support comfort, trust, and understanding for individuals with dementia. B. Use validation, reminiscence, and orientation methods effectively to promote engagement and emotional well-being. C. Respond to distress, agitation, or confusion using strategies that ensure safety, empathy, and de-escalation. D. Select individualized behavioral support strategies that promote autonomy and dignity for individuals with dementia.

	E. Describe communication practices that support effective collaboration with families and caregivers.
Supportive Care Environments	A. Identify common safety risks present in dementia care environments. B. Describe environmental factors that support safety, orientation, and independence for individuals with dementia. C. Explain strategies that promote physical well-being in individuals with dementia, including maintaining mobility, hydration, nutrition, and sleep quality. D. Explain approaches to supporting caregiver well-being through recognition of stress, mutual support strategies, and sustainable care practices. E. Summarize collaborative approaches that strengthen supportive environments for individuals living with dementia.

Technology Requirements

We want to be sure you have the tools to succeed! Review the [Computer System and Technology Requirements](#) to learn about the technology you'll need. If you have questions about your setup, contact support@academy.wgu.edu.

You will need Adobe Acrobat Reader DC. If you haven't already, [download this free software](#). You may encounter an interactive form that contains fields that you can select or fill in. Review [how to fill in a PDF form](#).

Key Contacts

Certificate Connect

Check out this online community to take advantage of course resources, including videos and tips from your educators. You can ask and answer questions, provide feedback on your progress, and interact with fellow students. You will find this platform in the Student Resources section of the course. Log on and do some exploring!

Technical Support

If you encounter technical issues, be sure to contact the Help Desk. Just [submit a Support Request for assistance](#).

Program Support

Do you have questions about your account? Student Support has answers. They can help with billing, switching courses, and other requests. You can contact them at (888) 320-0540 or support@academy.wgu.edu.

Accommodations

WGU provides compliant and accessible learning experiences. If you require accommodation, please contact us at the start of the course. You can email support@academy.wgu.edu or call (888) 320-0540. We are committed to ensuring that all students with disabilities have equal access to WGU's services and materials. We strive to use best practices for accessibility. Our goal is to conform to existing U.S. laws. These include the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Our learning management system (LMS) platform is Open edX. Open edX's commitment to accessible content is published on their [Website Accessibility Policy](#).