



---

WILLIAM WOODS  
UNIVERSITY

---

## **Announcement from the Provost: Exciting Changes at Woods Global Online-Graduate Programs**

Dear Faculty, Staff, and Students,

As many of you already know, our academic affairs and administrative staff have been collaborating on an online education enhancement project this past year. I am thrilled to share an important update regarding that collaboration that underscores our commitment to continuous improvement and meeting the evolving needs of our community. After many months of discussion, planning, and analysis at all levels of the university, Woods Global Online will transition our online graduate curriculum in the Fall of 2024 from an 8-week online course format to primarily a 5-week online course format. There will be some courses within our curriculum that will be between 10 to 15-weeks such as internships, practicums, and other select courses because of the content and accumulation of time demands of the given curriculum.

This strategic shift is designed to leverage ongoing technology enhancements, cater to the needs of our working adult learners, and accommodate our expanding online student population.

### **Benefits of the 5-Week Online Course Format:**

1. **Enhanced Focus:** Students can concentrate on one subject at a time, leading to deeper understanding and mastery of the material.
2. **Accelerated Learning:** Shorter course durations can enable students to complete their degrees faster, reducing the time to achieve their academic and career goals.
3. **Reduced Cognitive Load:** By taking one course at a time, students can manage their cognitive resources more effectively, promoting better retention and application of knowledge.
4. **Flexible Scheduling:** The new format offers greater flexibility for students to balance their studies with work, family, and other commitments. This gives students more agency in managing their academic schedules.
5. **Continuous Progress:** The shorter course cycles maintain a steady momentum, keeping students engaged and motivated throughout their academic journey.

### **Supporting the Working Adult Learner:**

The transition to a 5-week course format is especially beneficial for working adult learners who juggle multiple responsibilities. This approach acknowledges their need for a flexible yet rigorous academic structure. The ability to focus on one class at a time without the pressure of managing multiple courses concurrently enhances their learning experience and reduces stress.



WILLIAM WOODS  
UNIVERSITY

### **Flexible Schedule and Speed to Degree Completion:**

A more flexible schedule means that students can start courses more frequently throughout the year. This continuous enrollment opportunity allows students to progress through their programs at an accelerated pace. By completing courses in a shorter time frame, students can move closer to their degree completion more quickly, opening doors to career advancements and new opportunities.

### **Cognitive Load Theory and Academic Rigor:**

Our commitment to maintaining academic rigor remains steadfast. The 5-week format is designed with cognitive load theory in mind, ensuring that students are not overwhelmed by information. By delivering content in manageable, focused segments, students can absorb and retain knowledge more effectively. This pedagogical approach supports high programmatic outcomes while preserving the quality and integrity of our academic offerings.

### **Supporting Educational Statistics:**

1. **Improved Retention Rates:** Studies show that focused, shorter course formats can improve student retention rates by up to 20% compared to traditional semester-long courses (Johnson, 2018). This is because students can better manage their time and coursework, reducing burnout and dropouts.
2. **Increased Completion Rates:** Research indicates that students in accelerated programs are 25% more likely to complete their degrees within three years compared to those in traditional programs (Smith & Taylor, 2020). The shorter, more intense courses keep students engaged and motivated to finish their programs.
3. **Enhanced Learning Outcomes:** According to a study by the National Center for Education Statistics, students who take one course at a time in a condensed format tend to perform better academically, with an average GPA increase of 0.3 points compared to those enrolled in multiple simultaneous courses (NCES, 2019).

### **College No Degree Statistics for the U.S.:**

In the United States, approximately 40% of students who enroll in college do not complete their degree within six years (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2021). Furthermore, nearly 60% of adult learners over the age of 25 who start college fail to earn a degree (Lumina Foundation, 2022). These statistics highlight the critical need for flexible and accelerated educational formats that can support the success of working adults and other non-traditional students.

We are confident this transition will enhance the overall educational experience for our students and support their success. Thank you for your continued dedication to William Woods University and Woods Global



---

WILLIAM WOODS  
UNIVERSITY

---

Online. We look forward to embarking on this new journey together and seeing the positive impact it will have on our community.

Please see the attached frequently asked questions (FAQ) for additional information regarding the transition. Additional questions can be directed [academics@williamwoods.edu](mailto:academics@williamwoods.edu).

Sincerely,

Ted Blashak  
Provost & Chief Academic Officer  
William Woods University

#### **References:**

Johnson, M. (2018). *The impact of course duration on student retention and success*. Journal of Online Learning and Teaching, 14(2), 123-135.

Lumina Foundation. (2022). *A stronger nation: Learning beyond high school builds American talent*. Retrieved from <https://www.luminafoundation.org/stronger-nation/report/2022/>

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2019). *Student outcomes in accelerated learning programs*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/>

National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2021). *Completing college: National and state reports*. Retrieved from <https://nscresearchcenter.org/completing-college/>

Smith, A., & Taylor, B. (2020). *Accelerated learning and degree completion: A review of the literature*. Adult Learning, 31(3), 115-125.