



College of Public Health

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY**

George Mason University®

## Spring 2026 Syllabus

**Course Information:** HAP 430: Process Improvement in Healthcare Organizations:  
DL1, DL2; Online

**Instructor:** John Cantiello, Ph.D.

**Email:** [jcantiel@gmu.edu](mailto:jcantiel@gmu.edu)

**Office Phone:** 703-993-1731

### Office Hours:

My office hours are by appointment this semester. You may schedule an in-person visit, phone call, or Zoom call with me at your convenience.

**Office Location:** Peterson Hall: Office # 4402

### Course Description:

Introduces the process of quality management in healthcare organizations. Exposes students to the principles, models, and tools of quality management. Presents guidelines for implementing total quality in healthcare. Contrasts quality assurance, quality control, quality improvement, and quality management.

## Course Outcomes:

1. Explain the evolution of the quality movement in healthcare
2. Differentiate the basic principles, guidelines, and program requirements associated with total quality management and continuous quality improvement.
3. Provide a synopsis of the different quality management philosophies.
4. Discuss the different approaches to the successful implementation of a total quality program in a health care organization.
5. Utilize the various total quality tools and models in problem-solving exercises and scenarios.
6. Discuss the fundamentals of outcome management in healthcare organizations.
7. Explain when to use performance improvement models and performance improvement tools.
8. Identify the quality assessment tools and activities to manage population health.
9. Discuss the importance of utilization management and its impact on the development of reimbursement strategies.
10. Recognize the importance of team development to drive organizational performance.

## Required Textbook(s) and/or Materials:

Spath, Patricia L. (2023). Introduction to Healthcare Quality Management, (4th Edition). Chicago, IL: Health Administration Press. ISBN: 978-1-64055-363-7

Other reading materials to be assigned at the professor's discretion.

## Assessment Methods:

- Papers
- Teamwork
- Class Discussions
- Independent Research
- Student Presentations
- Comprehension Quizzes

## Common Policies Affecting All Courses at George Mason University:

[GMU Common Course Policies - Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning](#)

## Grading:

Assignments	Points	Description
Discussion Questions (5)	100	There will be five online discussion questions this semester. Original responses to each discussion question should be at least 2 paragraphs long and include at least two references. Follow-up responses should be at least a short paragraph in length. Two follow-up responses are required for each question.
Module exercises (5)	155	These are a variety of different types of assignments that will be submitted throughout the semester.
Quizzes (4)	80	There will be four quizzes that students will be required to complete throughout the semester.
Final Exam	75	During the last week of class each student will be required to complete an online comprehensive final exam. You may use your textbooks and notes.
Final Team Project	65	Students will be assigned to small teams to prepare a presentation about quality management scenarios designed by the instructor. A team PowerPoint presentation and team member evaluation must be submitted.
Comments on Final Team Project	10	Each student is required to make at least two comments on peer projects.
Team charter	5	Your team assignment accounts for a significant portion of your grade. Early in the semester, you will agree on your role in your team and work together with your team to create a team charter.
Simulation	10	Each student will earn 10 points for completing a simulation on structure, process, and outcome measures
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	

## Turnaround Time for Grading:

All activities/assignments completed and received by the due date will have grades posted in this course's Canvas's Grade Center within 14 days of the due date.

## Grading Scale:

Grade	Percentage
A	100-94
A-	93-90
B+	89-87
B	86-84
B-	83-80
C+	79-77
C	76-74
C-	73-70
D	69-60
F	59-0

## Course Logistics:

This course will use an asynchronous, online learning format; the meeting place will be on Canvas.

In a typical week, you will:

- Read about 2-3 chapters
- Read additional assigned readings and other materials
- Participate in online learning activities such as discussion board postings, comprehension quizzes, and module assignments.
- Watch mini-lectures and videos
- Submit all written assignments through Canvas according to the assignment schedule.

Though the delivery method is different, it should take you the same amount of time as a typical undergraduate course. You should **expect to spend an average of 9 hours** each week (this includes the time you would have spent in a classroom).

- About **1–2 hours** watching mini-lectures and videos, reviewing slides, and taking notes
- About **2 hours** reading chapters and supplemental materials
- About **3 hours** completing assignments, quizzes, or scavenger hunts
- About **1–2 hours** participating in discussion boards, responding to peers, and reviewing announcements
- About **1–2 hours** collaborating with teammates to complete the final team project

## Course Expectations:

**Log-in Frequency:** Students must actively check the course Canvas site and their GMU email for communications from the instructor, class discussions, and/or access to course materials at least 4 times per week.

**Participation:** Students are expected to actively engage in all course activities throughout the semester, which includes viewing all course materials, completing course activities and assignments, and participating in course discussions and group interactions.

Under no circumstances may students participate in online class sessions (either by phone or Internet) while operating motor vehicles. Further, as expected in a face-to-face class meeting, such online participation requires undivided attention to course content and communication.

**Technical Competence:** Students are expected to demonstrate competence in the use of all course technology. Students who are struggling with technical components of the course are expected to seek assistance from the instructor and/or College or University technical services.

**Technical Issues:** Students should anticipate some technical difficulties during the semester and should, therefore, budget their time accordingly. Late work will not be accepted due to individual technical issues.

**Workload:** Please be aware that this course is not self-paced. Students are expected to meet specific deadlines and due dates listed in the Course Schedule section of this syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the weekly course schedule of topics, readings, activities, and assignments due.

**Instructor Support:** Students may schedule a one-on-one meeting to discuss course requirements, content, or other course-related issues. Those unable to come to a Mason campus can meet with the instructor via telephone or web conference. Students should email the instructor to schedule a one-on-one session, including their preferred meeting method and suggested dates/times.

## Email Policy:

It is recommended that you use the Canvas "Inbox" feature when emailing Dr. Cantiello. This will allow me to answer your questions more quickly. Please see this guide on how to use the "Inbox" feature in Canvas: [How do I use the Inbox as a student? - Instructure Community](#)

With this said, you may also contact me through your GMU email account. All students are required to activate and use their GMU email accounts.

Please keep the following issues in mind when composing an email:

1. When sending an email to the instructor, always put **the course number in the subject line**. I usually teach multiple courses each semester and knowing which course you are referring to will allow me to help you more quickly.
2. **Please do not send me the same message through both the mail.gmu.edu email system and the Blackboard Course Messages link.** Although I prefer to receive emails through Blackboard, you may choose which method you would like to use. However, there is no need to send the same message to both email addresses. I respond to all emails in the order that I received them - this takes some time. I do my best to respond to all emails on weekdays within 24 hours. I don't check email on the weekends and will respond as soon as I am able to during the week.
3. Be courteous and considerate. It is important to be honest and to express yourself freely, but being considerate of others online is just as important as it is in the classroom. Follow the netiquette rule.
4. Make every effort to be clear. Online communication lacks the nonverbal cues that fill in much of the meaning in face-to-face communication.

Do the following in every e-mail message you send during this course:

- Sign your e-mail messages with both your first and last name
- Check spelling, grammar, and punctuation
- Break up large blocks of text into paragraphs and use a space in between paragraphs

## Late Assignment / Missed Quiz Policy:

### Assignments (Including Discussion Questions)

- There is a 1-hour grace period for you to submit assignments. Assignments submitted up to 1 hour past the deadline will be accepted with no penalty.
- Assignments submitted 1–48 hours late will incur a flat **10% deduction**. After 48 hours, assignments will be **marked down by an additional 5%** for each day they are late (up to 1 week past the due date; after 1 week past the due date, no points will be awarded).
- Assignments more than one week late **will not be** accepted.

### Quizzes and Tests

- Quizzes and tests must be completed during the scheduled time window.
- Quizzes and tests cannot be made up except in cases of documented emergencies (serious illness, accident, death in the family).
- Each student will receive **one** “Quiz Pass” per semester. This allows the student to take one missed quiz within **48 hours** of the original due date and time. Please notify me as soon as

possible. This notification must be sent before the 48-hour mark. There will be a flat **10% deduction**. This does not apply to the final exam; the final exam cannot be made up.

### **Student Responsibility**

- It is the student's responsibility to manage time, technology, and deadlines. Please plan ahead and allow for unexpected issues.

## **Important Assignment Protocols:**

1. All assignments submitted to the "Assignments" link should be submitted using the Microsoft Word program. Assignments submitted in any program other than Microsoft Word will not be graded and will receive an automatic zero - this includes Microsoft Works and Adobe PDF as **unacceptable** programs to use. Also, please do not type your answer directly into the available assignment text box. If you do not have Microsoft Word on your computer, all computers on campus have Word loaded on them for your use.
2. All assignments must have 1" margins all around. Make sure you go into the page setup under file in Microsoft Word and set all your margins (top, bottom, left, and right) to 1" - they automatically default to 1.25" on the left and right so you **must** change them. Additionally, there is a way to set them to 1" and then hit the "default" button on the bottom left corner of the page setup screen so that your program will default to 1" all around.
3. Make sure all assignments contain your first name, last name, assignment name, and course name/number in either the top right corner or the header - this is so I know whose paper I am grading if I print them out to grade.
4. Make sure your answer is double-spaced, in a 12-point font (Times New Roman, Courier New, Arial, or Calibri), and not in bold font.
5. All parts of the assignments should be submitted in one document. Please do not submit two documents.
6. When you answer a question, do not just write down ideas/things from your head - cite the book, notes, an article you might have read, another textbook, etc. to back up your point and give your answer credibility. Most importantly, **do not** copy word-for-word from the book or notes, as this can be considered **plagiarism**. If you want to use a direct quote from the book, that is fine, but you must cite it properly with quotes around it and the source.
7. All assignments are due at 11:59 PM EST unless otherwise noted in the individual assignment.

**Failure to follow these directions (listed in #2-6) will result in an automatic 10-percentage point deduction from the assignment's total point value.**

## Quizzes:

Please do not discuss anything pertaining to quizzes on any of the discussion forums. The mention of a quiz will result in an automatic “0” for the student who mentioned the quiz in a forum. Asking public questions about quiz questions is unfair to the students who have not taken the quiz yet. I am always happy to answer quiz questions in person or via email.

## Discussion Question Post Due Dates:

In Canvas, I cannot set due dates for discussion posts because these weekly assignments consist of two dates: Wednesday for your original posts and Friday for follow-up posts. Therefore, discussion post due dates **WILL NOT** appear in your Canvas calendar. Not seeing a due date in your Canvas calendar **IS NOT** a valid excuse for missing these assignment due dates. I remind the class of all assignments that are due for the week every Monday via an announcement (which also gets sent to your email account). Due dates for these posts are also outlined in this syllabus and in the “Due Dates at a Glance” document.

## APA Citation Protocols:

Please make sure that your assignments are not plagiarized. Intentional and unintentional (accidental) plagiarism are both viewed the same way by George Mason University. Plagiarism is a violation of the Mason Honor Code.

### **GMU Definition of Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is defined as using another individual’s ideas or words without attribution or credit. It also includes using one’s own prior work that has been submitted for credit or published in another venue as a new submission without citation. Using the ideas of others without proper attribution or citation is unethical and a violation of the Honor Code. Subcategories of plagiarism include:

- Self-plagiarism: Intentionally or unintentionally using portions of one’s old work for new assignments without attribution
- Failure to adequately quote and/or cite sources or material
- False citation: This includes but is not limited to referencing work that does not appear in the indicated source.

If you do not know how to cite in APA format properly, I suggest you visit the APA website:

<http://www.apastyle.org/index.html>

You can also review APA guidelines at the Purdue University OWL

Website: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/apa\\_style/apa\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/general\\_format.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html)

The purpose of the questions and posting assignments you are given is to demonstrate your understanding of the topics discussed and read about. This demonstration should take the form of

you putting in your own words, your thoughts, and ideas about the topic or question asked. In addition to providing your own thoughts and ideas, you should be able to support and defend your thoughts with facts and support materials (such as textbooks, notes, journal articles, and online sources). **Opinion-based questions (Discussion Question and Otherwise) require references.** Even though your opinion is being asked, you can still back up your opinion with references or contrast your opinion with references.

When using facts, statistics, and other well-known material, you must cite them. This also applies to notes and texts used in class. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know.

## Citations vs. References:

A **citation** is what appears *inside your paper* (in the body of your writing). It is a short note that tells the reader where the information came from.

A **reference** is the *full entry* that appears at the end of your paper, in a “References” page. It gives all the details so that someone else could find the source.

Whenever you use facts, statistics, direct quotes, paraphrased material, or even notes and texts discussed in class, you must include a citation in your writing and a corresponding reference in your reference list.

### Example Paragraph with Citations:

The United States spent \$4.5 trillion on health care in 2022—17.3 percent of GDP (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2023). Despite this level of spending, the U.S. underperforms peer nations on key outcomes—most notably life expectancy, where the U.S. has long trailed and, in 2020, was about 4.5 years below the peer-country mean (Papanicolas, Woskie, & Jha, 2018; Woolf, Masters, & Aron, 2022). One practical focus for administrators is cutting preventable hospital readmissions; Medicare’s Hospital Readmissions Reduction Program links payment to quality to reduce avoidable readmissions (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2025).

### Example References:

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. (2023, December 13). National health expenditures 2022 highlights. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#)

Papanicolas, I., Woskie, L. R., & Jha, A. K. (2018). Health care spending in the United States and other high-income countries. *JAMA*, 319(10), 1024–1039. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2018.1150>

Woolf, S. H., Masters, R. K., & Aron, L. Y. (2022). Changes in life expectancy between 2019 and 2020 in the US and 21 peer countries. *JAMA Network Open*, 5(4), e227067. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.7067>

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. (2025, August 11). Hospital Readmissions Reduction Program (HRRP). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#)

## Course Policy on Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI):

While there are certainly benefits to using Generative AI, I have decided to limit its use to one specified assignment this semester. The use of generative AI is not inherently wrong or bad, but I do strongly believe that using Generative AI on other assignments would detract from your learning experiences this semester.

Some Use is Allowed: Generative AI tools are allowed on the **final presentation** only. Use of these tools on any assignment not specified will be considered a violation of the academic integrity policy. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

An AI Contract must be signed and submitted via Canvas to the instructor during the first week of class. Assignments will not be graded until this contract is signed.

AI detectors may be used to check student work at the instructor's discretion.

### Final Presentation AI Use Policy

Students may use generative AI tools only for the final presentation. Acceptable uses include:

1. **Brainstorming and Outlining**

Students may use generative AI to help generate ideas, structure their presentation, or organize content, but the final presentation must reflect their own analysis and voice.

2. **Drafting Visuals or Slides**

AI tools may be used to suggest slide layouts, design templates, or provide formatting ideas, but students must build the actual presentation themselves.

3. **Artwork and Graphics**

Students may use AI tools to create artwork, graphics, or images for their slides. All AI-generated visuals must be cited on the final slide.

4. **Editing and Polishing**

AI can be used for grammar checks, formatting suggestions, or refining wording, but not for writing the entire speaker notes or script.

5. **Citation Requirement**

Any use of AI must be clearly cited on the final slide (e.g., "Artwork and brainstorming support were generated using ChatGPT, OpenAI, 2025").

6. **Ownership of Work**

Students remain responsible for the accuracy, originality, and academic integrity of their work. AI use should supplement, not replace, their effort.

AI may not be used to write all of the speaker notes, narration script, or presentation content. Students remain responsible for ensuring accuracy, originality, and academic integrity. Any AI assistance must be cited on the final slide (e.g., "Artwork and brainstorming support generated with ChatGPT, OpenAI, 2025").

How to cite generative AI tools: [How to cite ChatGPT \(apa.org\)](https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/how-to-cite-chatgpt)

## Miscellaneous:

### **Announcements in Canvas:**

I have noticed in the past that not all students have Announcement notifications turned on in Canvas. I communicate *important* course details and content regularly using the Announcements feature each week. Please ensure your announcement notifications are turned on by following this process:

1. Click on your profile picture / "Account" on the very left-hand side of the screen.
2. Navigate to "Notifications".
3. Ensure the "Announcements" option is selected to receive notifications whenever a new announcement is posted. You can change your notifications for all courses, or on a course-by-course basis.

### **Making Comments on Assignment Submissions:**

I have noticed that students like to make comments on assignment submissions (both before they are submitted and after they are submitted). Please know this is not the best way to communicate with your professors.

In Canvas, I am not notified when you make a comment, and I do not want you to feel like I am ignoring your comment or question. Sometimes students ask follow-up questions on a grade, and I will simply not see that question if you ask it as a reply to my feedback.

My recommendation is to email me if you have a question or would like to make a comment on your assignment submission, before or after it is graded. Email is the best way to get my attention, not by leaving comments on assignments.

Week	Module Topic	Content	Activities & Assignments
1  January 20 – January 25	Introduction Module	Introduction of faculty and students  Review of course syllabus  Review of course assignments	Post Introduction to Main Discussion Forum  Take Syllabus Quiz (Opens Monday, Closes <b>Sunday</b> )  Submit AI Contract
2  January 26 – February 1	Module I: An Introduction to Quality Management	Chapter 1 – Focus on Quality	Post Discussion Question #1 Original Response ( <b>Wednesday</b> )  Post Discussion #1 Follow-up Response ( <b>Friday</b> )  Work on Module 1 Assignment (Part 1 and Part 2)
3  February 2 – February 8	Module I: An Introduction to Quality Management	Chapter 2 – Quality Management Building Blocks	Submit Module 1 Assignment (Part 1 and Part 2) <b>Sunday</b>
4  February 9 – February 15	Module II: Measuring and Evaluating Performance	Chapter 3 – Measuring Performance	Post Discussion Question #2 Original Response ( <b>Wednesday</b> )  Post Discussion #2 Follow-up Response ( <b>Friday</b> )  Work on Module II Assignment (Part 1 and Part 2)  Complete Required Simulation
5  February 16 – February 22	Module II: Measuring and Evaluating Performance	Chapter 4 – Evaluating Performance	Submit Team Charter  Take Quiz #1 (Opens Friday, Closes <b>Sunday</b> )  Submit Module II Assignment (Part 1 and Part 2) <b>Sunday</b>
6  February 23 – March 1	Module III: Performance Improvement Models and Tools	Chapter 5 – Continuous Improvement	Work on Module III Assignment
7  March 2 - March 8	Module III: Performance Improvement Models and Tools	Chapter 6 – Performance Improvement Models	Take Quiz #2 (Opens Friday, Closes <b>Sunday</b> )  Submit Module III Assignment

8 March 9 – March 15		Spring Break	
9 March 16 – March 22	Module IV: Teams and Improving Patient Safety	Chapter 7 – Improvement Project Teams	Post Discussion Question #3 Original Response <b>(Due Wednesday)</b>  Post Discussion #3 Follow-up Response <b>(Friday)</b>  Work on Module IV Assignment (Part 1 and Part 2)
10 March 23 – March 29	Module IV: Teams and Improving Patient Safety	Chapter 8 – Improving Patient Safety	Submit Module IV Assignment (Part 1 and Part 2) <b>Sunday</b>
11 March 30 – April 5	Module V: Achieving Reliable Quality and Managing Healthcare Resources	Chapter 9 - Achieving Reliable Quality and Safety	Post Discussion Question #4 Original Response <b>(Wednesday)</b>  Post Discussion #4 Follow-up Response <b>(Friday)</b>  Work on Module V Assignment (Part 1 and Part 2)
12 April 6- April 12	Module V: Achieving Reliable Quality and Managing Healthcare Resources	Chapter 10 – Managing the Use of Healthcare Resources	Take Quiz #3 (Opens Friday, Closes <b>Sunday</b> )  Submit Module V Assignment (Part 1 and Part 2) <b>Sunday</b>
13 April 13 – April 19	Module VI: Population and Organizing for Quality	Chapter 11 – Managing Quality in Population Healthcare	Post Discussion Question #5 Original Response <b>(Wednesday)</b>  Post Discussion #5 Follow-up Response <b>(Friday)</b>
14 April 20 – April 26	Module VI: Population Healthcare and Organizing for Quality	Chapter 12 - Achieving Sustainable Performance  Chapter 13 – Organizing for Quality Care	Take Quiz #4 (Opens Friday, Closes <b>Sunday</b> )  Work on Team Project
15 April 27 – May 3	Project Comment Week	Post Discussion Question #4 Original Response <b>(Wednesday)</b>  Post Discussion #4 Follow-up Response <b>(Friday)</b>	Submit Final Team Project <b>(Wednesday)</b>  Make comments on two peer presentations <b>(Friday)</b>  Study for Final Exam

16 May 6 – May 13	Final Exam Period		Take Comprehensive Final Exam ( <b>Thursday</b> )
-------------------------	-------------------	--	---