



# Geriatric Certificate Program (GCP): Interdisciplinary education improves self-perceived confidence and competence in geriatric workers



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## Background

- With a growing number of older adults, the complexity of medical problems and chronic diseases, including dementias and physical disabilities, has increased. **Health care workers (HCWs) must adapt to meet the complex needs of this population.**<sup>1</sup>
- 65% or more Ontario long term care home residents are living with dementia.** The Alzheimer Society of Ontario (ASO) has voiced the need to “strengthen [geriatric care workers] skills through more dementia-specific training across the health and social service sector.”<sup>2</sup>
- In a 2005 Ontario study, 74.3% of nurses (RNs and RPNs) reported having **no additional geriatrics education.**<sup>3</sup>
- HCWs report feeling unprepared to care for geriatric populations; citing difficulty in both understanding and responding to geriatric health conditions.<sup>3</sup>
- The health care education marketplace lacked a comprehensive education program for multidisciplinary geriatric HCWs.
- Since 2013, the GCP has offered **practicing health care providers an opportunity for quality improvement.**
- GCP offers courses developed by clinical and educational experts, and led by knowledgeable and skilled facilitators.
- GCP participants develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes in geriatrics-specific topic areas including assessment, behaviour management, and geriatric best practices.

## Objectives

- To **provide preliminary program evaluation**, examining the impact of GCP on participant self-reported changes in knowledge, skills, and competence.
- To **identify opportunities to improve geriatric education** provided to workers at the point of care.

## Methods

- 56 GCP graduates** (representing about 1 year, 9 months) completed an **online post-program evaluation survey** upon successfully completing program-specific requirements, which included multiple choice examination.
- The post-program evaluation survey included multiple self-efficacy based scaled-response questions, as well as open-ended questions intended to provide opportunities for broad feedback and identification of new or alternate learning needs.

## Results

### GCP Improves Confidence Providing Geriatric Care

- All graduates indicated **acquiring new knowledge** (n=55, 98%) and new skill (n=54, 96%) after participating in GCP (Figure 1).
- 1/3 of respondents (n=52, 93%) indicated **sharing new knowledge** to patients and families, clinical teams, or other staff (Table 1).
- 98% of graduates **sustained or improved self-perceived competence** in providing geriatric care after participating in GCP (Figure 2).
- Since implementing a post-program evaluation confidence measure<sup>1</sup>, **90% (n=10, 83%) of respondents indicated GCP increased their confidence** providing geriatric care.

<sup>1</sup>Data taken from a data subset of graduates from January 18<sup>th</sup>–March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

### GCP Graduates Acquire New Knowledge and Practical Skills

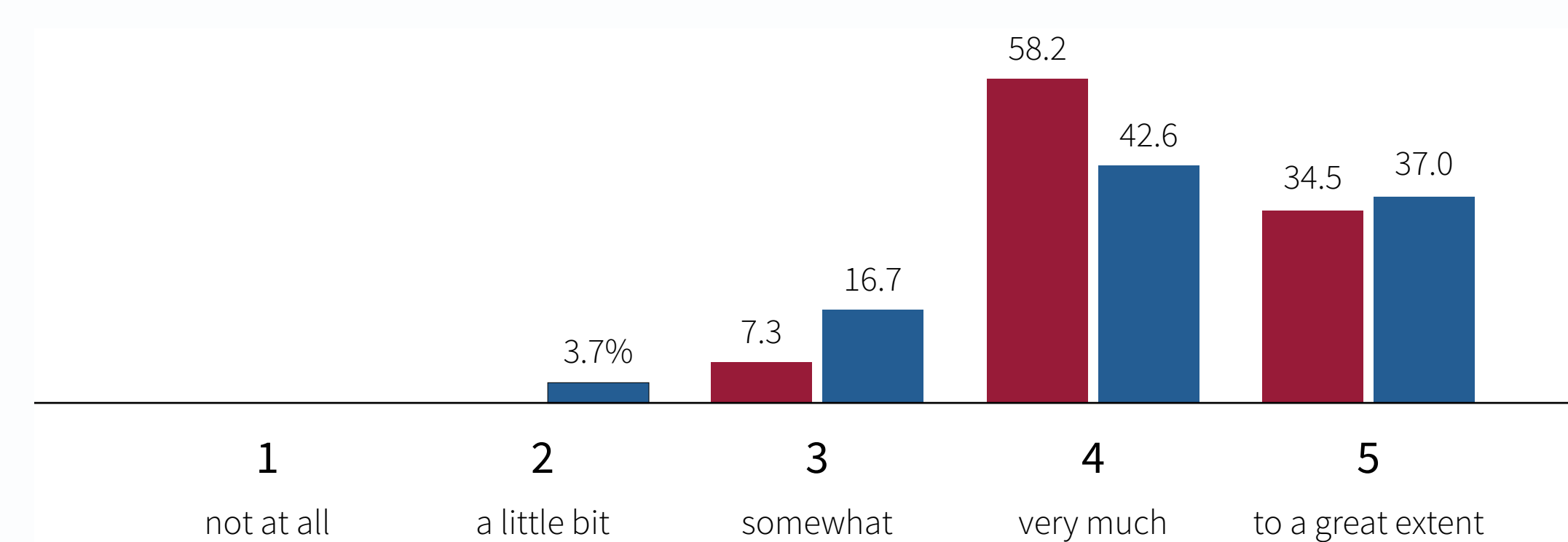


Figure 1. Self-reported new knowledge and skill acquisition by Geriatric Certificate Program graduates | Impact of Geriatric Certificate Program participation on new knowledge (n=55, 98%) and skill (n=54, 96%) acquisition was reported on a 1-5 scale. Column colours represent ■ new practical skills, and ■ new knowledge, numbers reported on columns indicate percentage of question respondents who indicated a specific rating.

Please identify at least two ways in which your clinical practice has changed as a result of your participation in the Geriatric Certificate Program:	n= 52
Assessment	93% (13)
Communication	29% (15)
Knowledge Sharing	27% (14)
Managing Behaviours	19% (10)

Table 1. Thematic analysis of clinical impact qualitative responses | Impact of GCP participation on clinical practice (n=52, 93%) was analyzed to identify themes appearing in more than 15% of responses.

### Geriatric Workers Feel More Competent After GCP

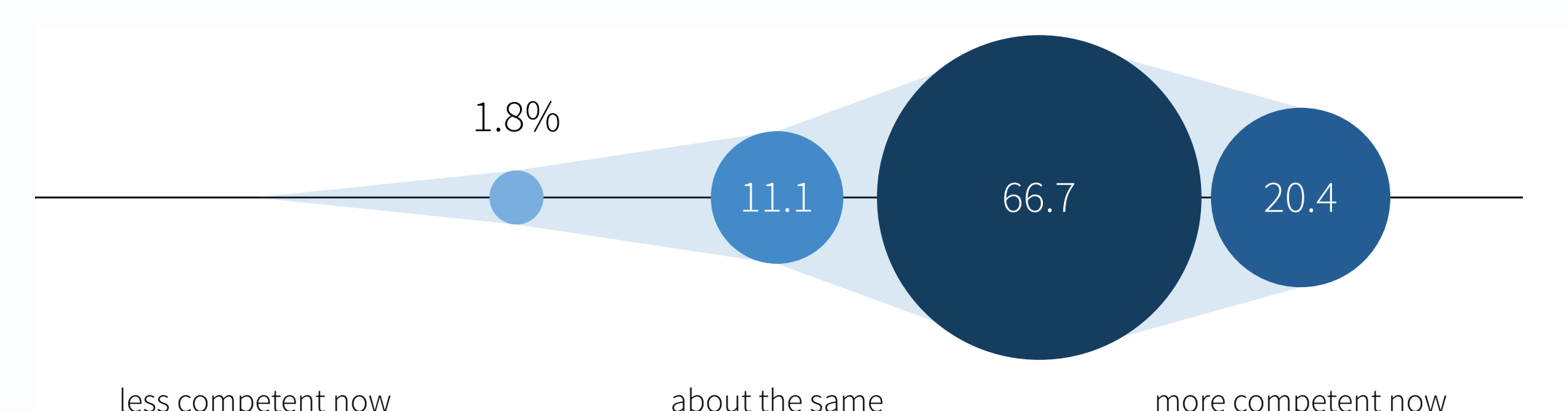


Figure 2. Self-reported change in competence due to Geriatric Certificate Program participation | Impact of Geriatric Certificate Program participation on competence (n=54, 96%) was reported on a 1-5 scale. Area of circles represents relative percentage of respondents who indicated a specific rating.

## Discussion

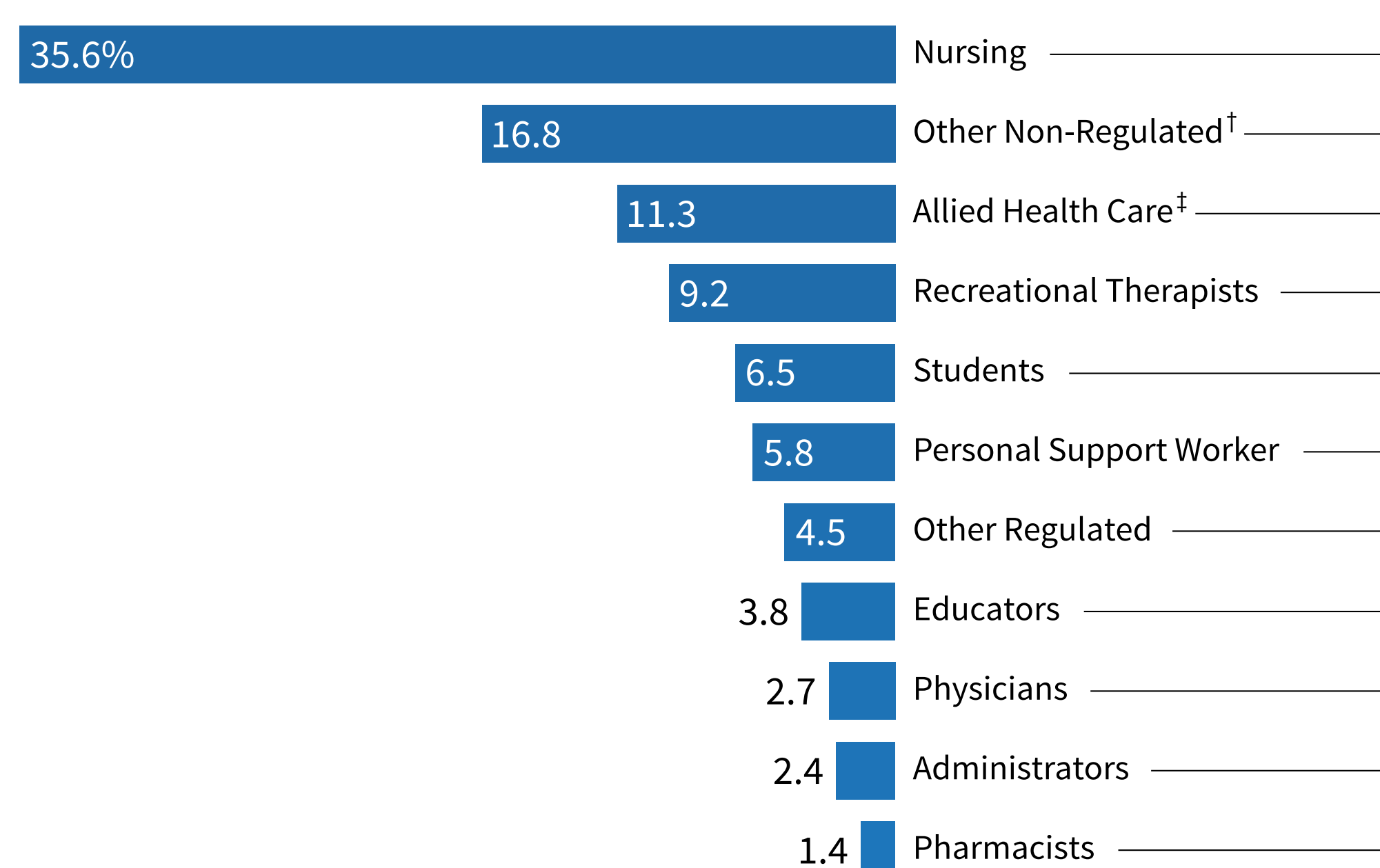
- One graduate stated, when asked how GCP impacted their clinical practice: **“My level of empathy and understanding has greatly increased.”**
- In terms of impact on clinical practice, qualitative analysis of graduate responses led to identification of three common themes: **Enhanced Communication, Assessment Use, and Managing Responsive Behaviours.**
- “I am glad I had the opportunity to go the courses and participate in the GCP. It gave me a reason [...] to get out of my comfort zone and learn new things.”** - GCP Member
- Skills learned include standardized assessment tools use, supportive evidence-based strategies for persons with responsive behaviours, therapeutic communication skills, and comprehensive care planning.
- Program and travel costs in absence of employer support was identified as a barrier. Temporal and geographical course availability was identified as an opportunity for growth.
- To address travel and cost issues, GCP has implemented a new free online course option, developed by the Waterloo-Wellington LHIN.
- To ensure course offerings are both content-rich and setting-appropriate across multiple health care sectors, a Non-Regulated Health Professional stream was introduced in January 2016 with lower-cost options.

## Limitations

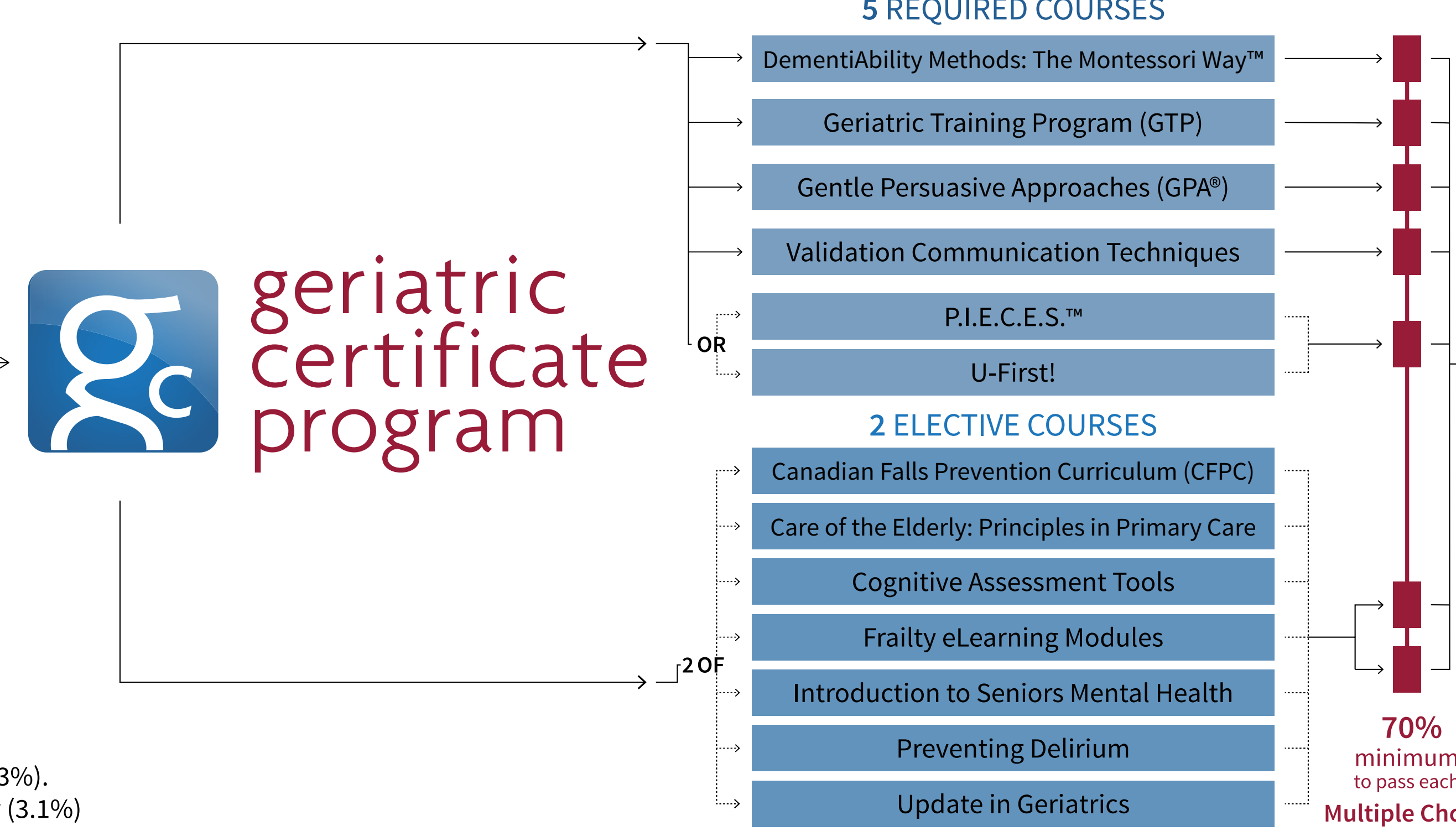
- Bias may result from intrinsic motivation of this cohort, who all completed the program at least 3 months prior to their certificate deadline.
- The GCP post-program evaluation did not assess attainment or application of any specific geriatric care competencies.
- No analysis of the impact of GCP participation at the point-of-care has been completed at this time.
- Further investment by both public and private institutions in education for non-regulated staff to bolster engagement in best practice education will allow more detailed analysis of GCP's impact on this cohort in future.

## Bottom Line

- GCP **develops a better-prepared workforce** that is able to more confidently and competently meet the needs of Canada's aging population.
- GCP provides **significant and valuable opportunities for capacity building** in geriatric health care workers, using core competencies to advance interdisciplinary best practice use.



<sup>†</sup>Other Non-Regulated includes Health Care Aides (1.0%) and Developmental Service Workers (0.3%).  
<sup>‡</sup>Allied Health Care includes Social Work (5.1%), Occupational Therapy (3.1%) and Physiotherapy (3.1%)



**98%** of graduates say GCP led to **INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES** in their geriatric career.

