



FACULTY GUIDE FOR CBE TRANSFORMATION

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What Is Competency-Based Education (CBE)?

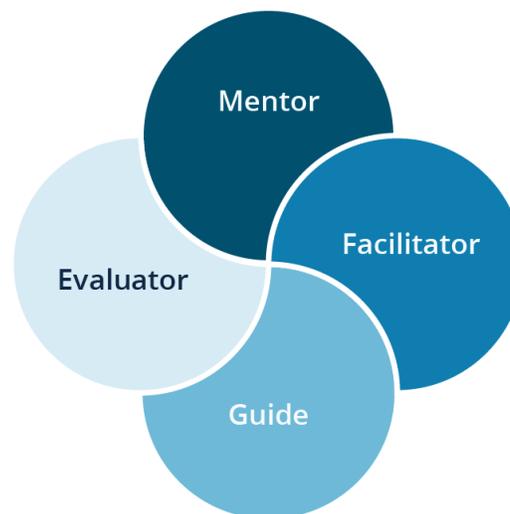
Every year, more colleges and universities transition their academic programs to a CBE curriculum to meet the demands of a competitive workforce. When this happens, there is usually:

- A shift from learner seat time to demonstrating mastery of skills and knowledge
- Alignment of competencies and program goals with industry needs
- Opportunities for flexible progression so learners advance based on their individual pace of learning
- Competency assessment based on performance, portfolios, projects, and simulations
- Data and analytics to track learner progress to provide timely feedback

What does this transition mean for faculty?

Successful CBE academic programs rely on faculty who recognize the value of CBE in promoting personalized learning experiences and preparing learners for the modern world. Faculty become more than instructors, taking on the role of mentor, facilitator, and evaluator to guide learners' learning processes, provide timely feedback, and assess learner mastery of competencies.

Faculty Roles in CBE



Differences Between Traditional and CBE Courses

Traditional education and competency-based education (CBE) courses differ in several ways. Here are some of the main differences:

TRADITIONAL INSTRUCTION	CBE
<h3>Learner Progress</h3>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Time-Based</p> <p>In traditional education, learners progress through courses based on a predetermined schedule, usually divided into semesters or academic years.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Mastery-Based Progression</p> <p>In CBE, progression is based on the mastery of specific competencies or learning outcomes. Learners advance when they demonstrate proficiency in those competencies, regardless of the time it takes.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Pre-Fixed Progression</p> <p>In traditional education, learners may advance to the next level based on a minimum passing grade or completing a specific number of credits.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Personalized Progression</p> <p>In CBE, learners must demonstrate competency in each required skill or knowledge area before progressing. This ensures that learners have a solid foundation before moving forward.</p>

Time Spent

Focus on Seat Time

Traditional education often emphasizes the number of hours spent in class or completing assignments as a measure of progress

Demonstrated Proficiency

In CBE, the focus shifts to learners demonstrating mastery of specific skills and knowledge. The emphasis is on what learners can do and how well they can do it.

Curriculum

Fixed Curriculum

Traditional education typically follows a fixed curriculum with set courses and content for all learners.

Personalized Learning

CBE allows for more personalized learning experiences. Learners have the flexibility to progress at their own pace, focus on areas where they need improvement, and pursue their individual interests and strengths.

Assessment

<p style="text-align: center;">Standardized tests, exams, and grades</p> <p>In CBE, assessments are designed to measure specific competencies and can include various forms beyond traditional tests, exams, and quizzes.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Projects, portfolios, presentations, simulations, and real-world applications</p> <p>CBE assessments are often more focused on practical skills and application of knowledge. This may be through the application of knowledge through scenarios.</p>
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Instruction Focus

<p style="text-align: center;">Teacher-Centered</p> <p>Traditional education often follows a teacher-centered approach, where the instructor primarily delivers information and learners passively receive it.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Learner-Centered</p> <p>CBE shifts to a learner-centered focus, where learners actively engage in the process, set goals, and take ownership of their learning. Faculty members serve as guides and facilitators, providing support and feedback.</p>
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Remember that while these differences highlight the contrasting features of traditional and competency-based education, there can be variations in implementation and overlaps between the two approaches in different educational contexts.



Expectations Of CBE Faculty

In a CBE model, your role as an educator doesn't change: You're still expected to provide guidance and support to learners as they progress through their educational journey. As you know, each learner possesses unique strengths, learning styles, and aspirations. By adopting CBE, faculty demonstrate their commitment to fostering an inclusive and flexible environment that accommodates diverse learners.

In CBE, you are expected to shift your focus from traditional time-based measures of progress to a more learner-centered approach. You'll also work to clearly define learning outcomes and competencies, ensuring that they have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Finally, you'll provide regular feedback and assessments to help learners gauge their progress and identify areas for improvement.

Faculty play a vital role in motivating learners to take ownership of their learning by setting goals, engaging in self-reflection, and seeking opportunities to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts. Because learner agency improves learning outcomes and prepares learners for the workplace, CBE courses prioritize learners' needs. You'll support each learner as they progress through the course and make timely decisions about interventions that may result in revisiting content.

In a competency-based education environment, active engagement, collaboration, and authentic assessments are key to preparing learners for competency mastery. You'll facilitate peer-to-peer learning, group projects, and interactive discussions that foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication skills. By creating an environment that supports collaboration, your instruction will empower learners to develop valuable interpersonal skills that are essential for success beyond the classroom. The assessments provided in your course are authentic in that they reflect many of the tasks and expectations learners will face when they pursue their careers.

Common Challenges for Learners New to CBE

Learners who are new to competency-based courses may encounter some challenges as they transition from more traditional educational models. Here are a few common challenges they might face:

1. **Shifting Mindset:** Learners may be accustomed to a time-based progression and focusing on completing assignments within set deadlines. In a competency-based

course, they need to shift their focus to mastering specific skills and demonstrating proficiency, which can require a different approach to learning.

Instructional Strategy: Provide a Q&A discussion thread to capture learners' questions about class expectations. Include a FAQ to address common concerns and questions. Tailor feedback to align with competency-based learning outcomes.

2. **Self-Regulation and Time Management:** Competency-based courses often offer more flexibility in terms of pacing and scheduling. However, this increased autonomy also requires learners to take greater responsibility for managing their time effectively. Some learners may struggle with self-regulation and need to develop strong time management skills to stay on track and meet their learning goals.

Instructional Strategy: Provide resources and recommendations on time management (e.g., apps, scheduling tips). Ask learners to share their personal experiences and best practices for staying on top of deadlines and balancing work/life/school responsibilities.

3. **Setting Realistic Goals:** Competency-based education emphasizes mastery of specific skills or learning outcomes. Setting realistic and achievable goals becomes crucial for learners to make progress effectively. Some learners may initially struggle with setting appropriate goals or understanding how to break down larger competencies into manageable smaller goals.

Instructional Strategy: Assign learners a goal chart to complete within the first two weeks of the term. Ask them to refer to it throughout the term to amend, check off accomplishments, and celebrate successes.

4. **Balancing Prior Knowledge and Skill Gaps:** Learners entering a competency-based course may have varying levels of prior knowledge and skill gaps. It can be challenging for learners to navigate their existing knowledge and address any gaps they may have. Identifying and addressing these gaps requires self-assessment and a proactive approach to seeking resources and support.

Instructional Strategy: Include reflection opportunities after formative assessments.

Encourage learners to answer open-ended questions provided in grading feedback.

5. **Managing Feedback and Assessments:** In a competency-based model, assessments are often designed to measure specific skills or competencies. Learners may need to adapt to different assessment formats, such as performance tasks, projects, or simulations, which may be different from traditional exams or quizzes. Learning to interpret feedback effectively and using it to improve is essential in a competency-based approach.

Instructional Strategy: Schedule time to talk with learners about feedback and grades. Create a video to set expectations on grading and encourage learners to discuss their grades when in doubt.

6. **Seeking Support and Collaboration:** Transitioning to competency-based education may require learners to actively seek support and collaboration. Engaging with faculty, peers, and available resources becomes important in navigating the learning process effectively. Learners who are used to a more teacher-centered approach may need to develop new strategies for seeking assistance and engaging in collaborative learning opportunities.

Instructional Strategy: Create opportunities for learners to use the learning management system to communicate with peers and faculty. Offer extra credit for scheduling time during faculty office hours. Create a separate discussion board for learners only (e.g., Learner Lounge).

These challenges are not insurmountable, and with time, support, and practice, learners can adapt and thrive in competency-based courses. You are encouraged to reach out to struggling learners by providing resources and guidance to help them overcome these challenges and succeed in their learning journey.

Checklist for Teaching your CBE Course

Timing	Actions	Best Practices
<p>Before the Semester Begins</p> <p>(1 week prior to class start)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Review the Faculty module <input type="checkbox"/> Post welcome announcement/video <input type="checkbox"/> Update the "About Your Instructor" section in the Welcome module <input type="checkbox"/> Post to introduction discussion thread <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure your contact information is current and posted <input type="checkbox"/> Publish office hours and (if applicable) live/synchronous session schedule with access links <input type="checkbox"/> Post announcements for tutoring services, academic integrity, late assignment policies, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that all third-party tools are functioning and properly configured <input type="checkbox"/> Double-check assignment due dates and ensure gradebook is correctly set up <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure textbook information is correct <input type="checkbox"/> If applicable, review team project/deliverables and begin assigning teams if possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Send email to learners confirming class meeting day, time, and location <input type="checkbox"/> Update the course shell as much as possible to provide learners with an accurate representation of the class and your expectations <input type="checkbox"/> Include encouraging comments in your announcements, not just assignments and deadlines <input type="checkbox"/> Notify your department chair or the Office of Instructional Technology about any issues with course shells, third-party tool access, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Change the number of announcements that appear on the home page to ensure that your announcements get seen <input type="checkbox"/> Add supplemental documents to appropriate location in learning management system

Timing	Actions	Best Practices
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Respond to all learner comments in Q&A discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Make initial posts to discussion threads early in the week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Post to discussion threads on at least four separate days during the week <input type="checkbox"/> Be the first to post each week to help set the tone and encourage participation <input type="checkbox"/> Instructor total posts should represent approximately 10%-20% of the total posts each week.
Weeks 2 and 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Post grades for the previous week's assignments/discussions, e.g., give learners a "0" for all missing work <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain active participation in discussion threads – post early; post often <input type="checkbox"/> Monitor Q&A discussion and respond promptly to learner questions <input type="checkbox"/> Post weekly announcements, e.g., reminders about upcoming assignments, encouraging statements/images 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Post grades for previous week's assignments by a set day of the week, e.g., Wednesday <input type="checkbox"/> Post announcement for learners if grading expectations need to be adjusted <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that detailed comments are provided along with grades, particularly when learners do not meet expectations.

Timing	Actions	Best Practices
Weeks 4-13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Post grades for the previous week's assignments/discussions, e.g., give learners a "0" for all missing work <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain active participation in discussion threads – post early; post often <input type="checkbox"/> Monitor Q&A discussion and respond promptly to learner questions <input type="checkbox"/> Post weekly announcements, e.g., reminders about upcoming assignments, encouraging statements/images) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Post grades for the previous week's assignments by set day <input type="checkbox"/> Post announcement for learners, if grading expectations need to be adjusted
Week 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure learners understand final due dates or final exam date <input type="checkbox"/> Post announcement regarding requests for Incomplete extensions <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure all learner assignments/discussions are graded, e.g., give learners a "0" for all missing work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide learners with information on professional organizations and industry-related resources <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage learners to share their overall impression of the course
Post Week 14		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If changes must be made after grades are submitted, contact your Department Chair or Dean.