

*Competency-Based Education: Has This
Idea's Time Come?*

Deborah M. Seymour
American Council on Education

Ellen B. Derwin
Brandman University
2015 Assessment Institute

The credit hour as the currency for higher education

- Credit hours provide a basis for current models of exchange in higher education, including credits required for degree attainment, financial aid, transfers between institutions, and other critical functions.
- Competencies provide representations of learning outcomes that are more flexible and transparent and can be applied in multiple contexts within and outside educational institutions.

There are social, practical, and policy implications of competency-based education and credits *and* competencies both reflect important structures of value for diverse stakeholders.

Credits as Currency

A few representative examples illustrate how credits provide practical value and address some critical needs of key stakeholders in post-secondary ecosystems.

- **Government stakeholders**
- **Educational institution leader stakeholders**
- **Institutional administrator stakeholders**
- **Subject matter expert stakeholders**
- **Teaching faculty stakeholders**
- **Assessment stakeholders**
- **Student stakeholders**
- **Employer stakeholders**

Competencies as Currency

A few representative examples illustrate how competencies provide practical value and address some critical needs of key stakeholders in post-secondary ecosystems.

- **Government stakeholders**
- **Educational institution leader stakeholders**
- **Institutional administrator stakeholders**
- **Subject matter expert stakeholders**
- **Teaching faculty stakeholders**
- **Assessment stakeholders**
- **Student stakeholders**
- **Employer stakeholders**

Implications of CBE

- **Societal implications:** Competency-based models open up possibilities for long-needed renewal of higher education and institutional opportunities to participate in: (a) transitioning from an industrial to an information society; (b) restructuring the economics of higher education, and (c) democratizing access for underserved populations.
- **Practice implications:** Competency-based models may solve the issue of outcomes and achievement accountability with which institutions now struggle, as assessment and accountability are inherent in the structure of a competency framework.
- **Policy implications:** If competency-based systems are ultimately supported by federal and state policies to the extent of credit hour-based systems, the systems can inform each other and work against the forces of stagnation and obsolescence. If federal and state policy makers formally recognize the value of competency-based systems, this would encourage the potential for growth of CBE programs and hasten evolution of the currency value of competencies.

What is “authentic” assessment?

- “Authentic” assessment
- Employer voices
- Transcribing
- What does quality look like to the various stakeholders?

Challenges

- Credit/competency transferability
- Department of Ed, regulations, Title IV
- Data collection
- Other challenges

It's All Assessment



Brandman University

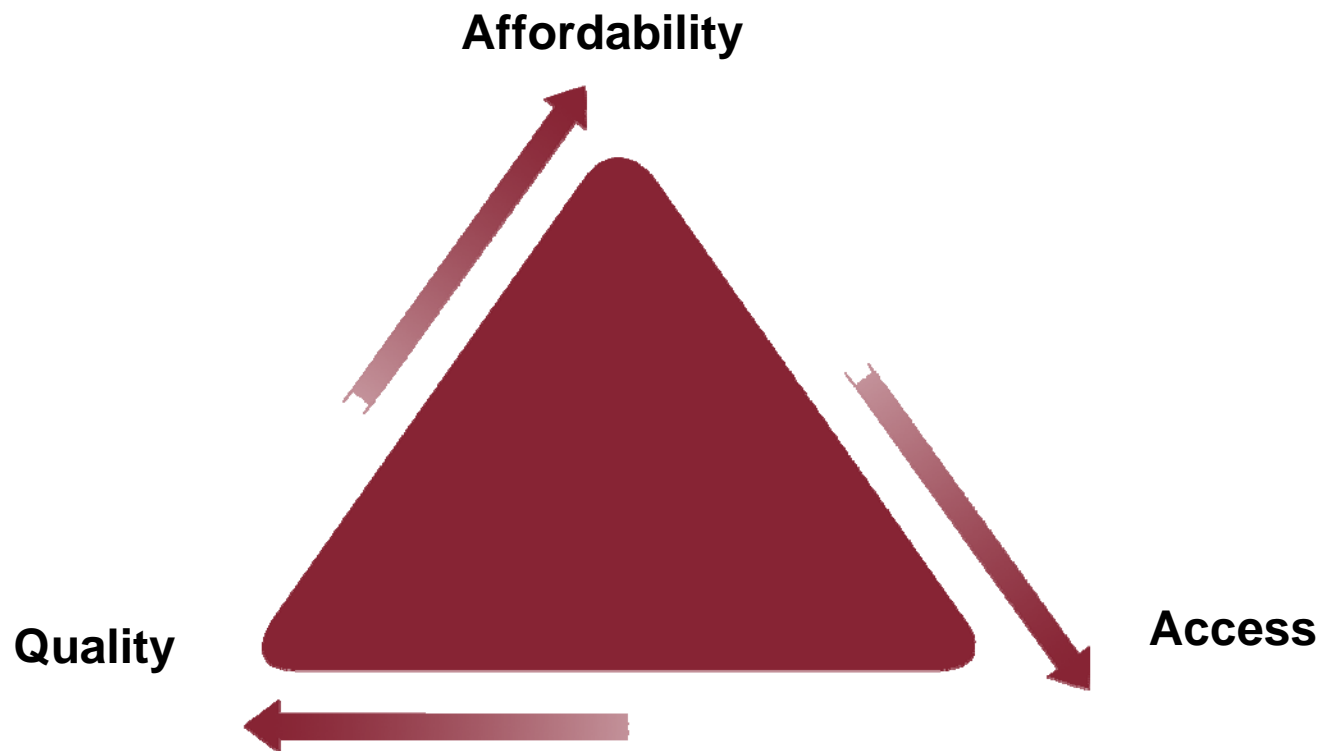
- Serves working adults, part of the Chapman University system
- Private, non-profit
- In California & Washington @ 27 campuses with Blended and Fully Online Delivery
- 7,500 students (FTE)
- 70 full-time faculty, 1,500 adjunct faculty
- 4 academic Schools
- Associate, baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral programs



Why CBE at Brandman/BBA

- **Address Iron Triangle**

- **Access:** Desire to provide access for first gen students
- **Affordability:** Seeking opportunity at lower tuition rate/
\$5,400/year (about 1/3)
- **Quality:** Assessment and Backward Design



Why CBE at Brandman/BBA

- Demand Analysis, SWOT Analysis and University Strategic Plan
 - Desire for sustainability as private/not for profit
 - Institutional Research: Existing CBE programs
 - Institutional Research: Pedagogy
 - Strong Assessment Culture



Architecture of the Players

- Program Council
- Assessment Council/Psychometrician
- Instructional Designers
- Technology Specialists
- Unbundled Faculty Model
 - Subject Matter Expert Competency Developers
 - Full-time Tutorial Faculty (SMEs)
 - Assessment Graders (Adjunct)
- Full-time Coaches (Advisors)
- Much more infrastructure (registrar, student services, etc.)



- **Eight terms of six months each**
- **Competency Introduction Module (1 month)**
- **13 General Education competencies**
- **43-48 Business competencies**
- **Five Institutional Learning Outcomes (based on DQP) threaded throughout GE and Business competencies**
- **Four to seven predetermined competencies within each term**

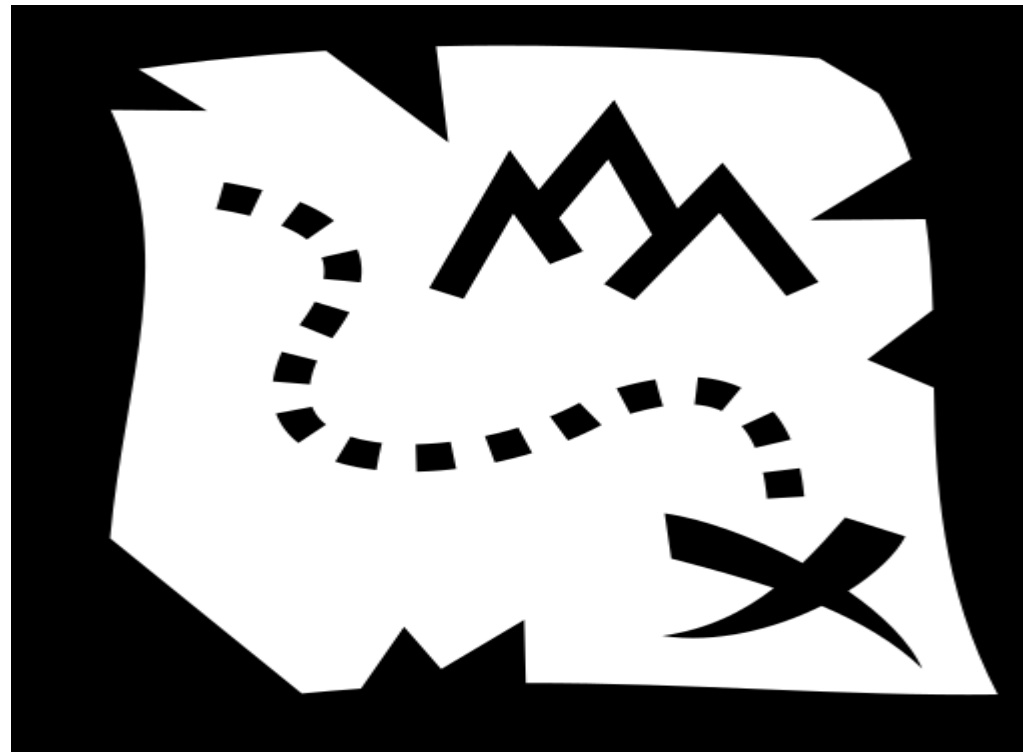


- **Faculty Collaboration**
 - Faculty from Arts & Sciences and Business worked closely together in mutual support
 - Intentional sequencing/Integration of competencies
 - Set up clear connections between General Education and Business competencies



Establishing Competencies

- Competencies derived from Dept of Labor O*NET; Lumina DQP, AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes, and professional certifications
- Relationship to credit-based
 - Deconstruction and Reconstruction
 - Mapping Competency to Credit



Backward Design (Knowledge, Skills, Abilities) Achieving Mastery

Steps	Traditional (teaching)	Backward Design (Learning)
1	Course (COMU 101): Public Speaking	Competency: Targeted Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities that are the desired results (Speak effectively in workplace/real world settings)
2	Educational Journey (formative assessments, readings, multimedia activities, reflection, self assessments)	Assessment: Evidence of Results (outlines, speech)
3	Assessment: Evidence of Results (outlines, speech)	Educational Journey (formative assessments, readings, multimedia activities, reflection, self assessments)

Assessment and Educational Journey: Backward Design

- **Competency Statement**
- **Assessment: formative and summative; Level 1 (Objective/Remote Proctoring/Student Authentication) and Level 2 (Project Based)**
- **Learning Objectives**
- **Test Blueprint (for Level 1) Rubric Criteria (for Level 2)**
- **Gap Analysis**
- **Educational Journey (formative assessments, readings, multimedia, activities, reflection, self assessments)**

Authentic, engaging projects/students learn by doing

Business

- Develop budget, conduct and document performance appraisal, create project plan, stakeholder analyses, capstone business plan

General Education

- Methods and Applications: Project applying the steps of the scientific method to solving a real world problem.
- Oral Communications: Full sentence outline, presentation outline, presentation aids, recorded presentation
- Behavior and Cognition: Personal SWOT analysis including mission statement, long term goals, values, and strengths and weaknesses; applies theories to SWOT and assesses environmental opportunities and threats in meeting mission and goals.
- Disciplinary Relationships: Topic rationale, multimedia presentation, reflection essay.

Demographics

- *71.9% are female*
- *45.7% are from under-represented groups*
- *94.8% are ages 27 and older; 63.2% are ages 37 and older.*

Beta Student Feedback

- *79.4% agree or strongly agree that before they started the program, they expected the program content to be academically challenging*
- *97.0% agree or strongly agree that they found the program content to be academically challenging*
- *Open Ended – Most students find that the flexibility/self-paced model and accessibility of the program are the best features.*

Student Experience

Mobile Ready

The screenshot shows a mobile application interface for a student named Joe Smith. The top navigation bar includes the university logo, the time (6:20 PM), and battery status (100%). The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Profile:** Joe Smith, Student Spring 2015, joe.smith@brandmanuniversity.edu
- Coursework:** A list of courses with progress bars and competency counts.
 - 1 Communications: 4/4 Competencies (+)
 - 2 Strategies: 1/3 Competencies (-)
 - Fundamentals of Marketing: 1/5 Objectives, 0%, Start
 - Marketing Planning: 3/4 Objectives, 75%, Resume
 - Written Communication: 5/5 Objectives, 100%, Review (PASSED!)
 - 3 Marketing: 0/6 Competencies (locked)
 - 4 Management: 0/4 Competencies (locked)
- Notifications:** Upcoming Deadline: Competency 1 Learning Objective 2 is due in one day.
- Pace:** A line graph showing progress over a week (Su to Sa). At your current pace, you are estimated to graduate Spring 2015!
- Achievements:** Three circular badges: FIRST TIMER, a gold shield, and QA SAVANT.
- Progress:** A circular progress indicator showing 8 Terms, with 1 Completed and 1 In Progress.

Program Overview

Let's hear from you!

