

Comparison of Faculty Roles Between CBE and Traditional Programs

Purpose:

This document, compiled by Ryan Specht-Boardman of the Competency-Based Education Network (December 2022), compares faculty roles in a traditional versus a competency-based program.

Developer

| | Traditional Education | CBE |
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| About This Role | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developers develop and build course content and learning delivery processes, the learning resources, assessments, syllabus, and schedule of a course. • Typically, they work alone. Faculty who build courses often consider them 'their courses' and have ownership over the developed course and materials. Faculty typically build their own courses that they will go on to then teach and assess. • Some colleges employ instructional designers who consult with faculty (e.g. such as a center for teaching and learning on campus), but more often than not faculty are responsible for building their own courses (after a course learning outcomes/description is approved through governance). • As a result, the same course on a campus might have a different design approach (e.g. different sections of English 101, developed and taught by different instructors with different assigned books and essay prompts). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just like traditional education, this is the person (or team) who is building the actual course (or competency set) a student will register for and enroll in. • As a best practice, CBE courses are instructor agnostic (i.e., developed courses should be able to have any number of instructors come into that course and teach it without modifying it) . • CBE courses have explicit focus on competencies, prevalence of rubrics, and use of evergreen learning resources. |

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| Who Fills This Role | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically, the faculty member who will teach the course. Depending on the culture of a department or college, it is not uncommon to see the development process go through some level of peer-review (e.g. a colleague reviews the developed course before it goes live), or to see teams of faculty build a specific course (this is more common in general education, where a campus may have multiple instructors in a discipline, compared to upper division courses, where a college might only have a single faculty with that specialty). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May or may not be the same person as the instructor or assessor. Differentiating developer, instructor, and assessor roles is not a requirement of CBE and a developer may be the same faculty member as the instructor and assessor, provided they follow course development standards. Course developer's credentials must align with the requirements of the college's accreditor and college policy. The anticipated cadence of course revisions (when updates will occur) might influence who is assigned this role. When selecting a developer, consider what IP agreements may need to be created if the developer is a different faculty member than the instructor or assessor. |

Instructor

| | Traditional Education | CBE |
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| About This Role | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructors teach students course materials either synchronously or asynchronously (based on program structure), directly support students' academic learning journeys, and point students toward additional resources if they're struggling. Often instructors build a close working relationship with their students. Some instructors tutor students; but not all. At some institutions tutoring is a separate role. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct instruction in CBE is based on a relationship between learner and instructor. However, because CBE programs are self-paced and asynchronous, the instructor-learner relationship tends to be more personalized. Rather than an instructor teaching a class of 25 students on a Thursday afternoon and all students receiving the same instruction, CBE programs instead rely on the instructor providing the level of instruction that each student individually requires, when they require it in their course progression. Many faculty describe this as feeling closer to teaching an independent study course, where each student is at a different learning place. |

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| Who Fills This Role | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course instructors are appropriately credentialed faculty (tenure/tenure-track), instructional academic staff, or adjuncts hired expressly to instruct a course. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course instructors can be any qualified faculty (tenure or tenure-track), instructional academic staff, or adjunct. In a bundled model, the instructor may also be the assessor as well as course developer; in an unbundled model, the instructor may be a different person. The course instructor is a key individual responsible for fulfilling <i>Regular & Substantive Interaction</i> requirements. R&SI is a requirement for distance education programs. |

Assessor

| | Traditional Education | CBE |
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| About This Role | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessor assess student learning by developing and delivering assessment instruments, evaluating student assessment submissions, grading student work, and submitting final grades to university registrar. They also ensure assessment reliability and validity, and iteratively measure the extent to which student assessment performance is aligned with course/program learning outcomes. In traditional education, use of rubrics varies widely by professors. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role here again is the same, but the emphasis on some key assessment principles is different. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rubrics are the bedrock of assessment paradigms. Rubrics also significantly improve assessor reliability which improves the academic integrity of the program and reduces bias in assessing. Competencies and assessments are always explicit, never implied: students know the course competencies, they know how their learning of those competencies will be assessed, and they know (through the rubric) exactly what elements they will need to provide to show competence. |

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| Who Fills This Role | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The assessor is almost always the course instructor. Assessment as a job function is an innate part of a traditional course instructor's responsibilities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessing student work can be done by the course instructor (bundled) or it can be done by a separate qualified faculty member/subject matter expert (unbundled). There are pros and cons to each approach. Feedback is teaching! Providing feedback on student work--positive and constructive--is an essential part of the CBE teaching & learning pedagogy. Students should never receive a grade in isolation: they should always receive constructive, substantive feedback that connects their assessment performance with the competency being assessed. Even if a student did perfectly on the assessment, still provide feedback that connects the dots to help them explicitly see how their performance did in fact demonstrate competency. |

Adviser

| | Traditional Education | CBE |
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| About This Role | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advisers determine academic plan of study; assist with transfer credit applications, course waivers, and registration permissions; support students when selecting courses; monitor degree progress; and connect students with other campus resources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This job function is almost identical in CBE: just like traditional programs, students need someone to help them with the degree planning, course selection, registration, taking care of any course waivers or transfer credit appeals, etc. |

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| Who Fills This Role | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In many universities, this is done by a central advising office (with student affairs professionals) for a student's first year and by faculty in the student's chosen major/department for their remaining years. In some cases, it's exclusively done by a central advising office 'one stop' for a student's whole career; or vice versa, done by an in-program faculty for a student's whole career. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role can be filled by either a student affairs professional (academic adviser) or by the faculty. There are pros/cons to each approach. Below are some potential challenges with having faculty serve as advisers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In self-paced, asynchronous, year-round CBE programs the cadence of this work is substantially different. Rather than a traditional 'advising season' that happens in advance of the next semester's registration, students may be adding or dropping courses 365 days in the year (depending on what decisions are made in Tier 1 about term-length and course availability). Thus, student degree planning and registration permissions is a task that requires some additional specialization and knowledge beyond typical advising. For instance, if traditional faculty at a college typically serve as academic advisers to students, but are not on contract during the summer, that would disrupt CBE students who are making course decisions throughout the year. In non-term programs, students who fail to make sufficient progress on their competencies by the end of their payment period may not be eligible for an additional disbursement; students who are disengaged in their courses (or who finish too early) may be in an R2T4 situation. Preventing loss of financial aid may require greater than-average coordination between advisers and financial aid counselors. |

Mentor

| | Traditional Education | CBE |
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| About This Role | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentorship (also called coaching) is a personalized supportive approach to student academic progression and achievement that includes, but is not limited to, working with students to set goals, improving academic readiness skills (e.g. time management, prioritization), helping students reflect on their learning and connect their learning to their profession or goals, proactively reaching out to students to check-in, helping students navigate institutional and/or community resources, serving as a triage point for student concerns, being the student's advocate in institutional processes, and/or serving as a supportive partner in the learning journey by holistically serving the student. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This job function is almost identical in CBE. However, CBE programs emphasize proactive mentorship (sometimes called intrusive advising). Because of the asynchronous, self-paced, and independent nature of most CBE programs, students are more likely to feel isolated, disconnected from the university, and/or fall off pace. CBE mentors and coaches pride themselves on proactive mentorship of students, building dedicated relationships, and oftentimes become the student's de facto university concierge who supports them and helps them navigate resources and unfamiliar territory. |
| Who Fills This Role | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In traditional education, this is rarely a dedicated person. • Mentorship responsibilities are usually dispersed across faculty, advisers, career centers, tutors, etc. All have a role to play in mentoring and coaching students. • The lack of dedicated personnel in this role can hinder proactive response. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In most direct assessment and credit-based CBE programs, the coach/mentor role is a dedicated professional position separate from instructional faculty. • It is most commonly a student affairs profession. • A college could use faculty as dedicated mentors but would need to include it as an explicit part of their role/responsibilities and caseload. • Be sure to consider what a sustainable caseload is for a mentor/coach. |