The shape and depth of competency-based education (CBE) shifts each time a college or university starts a CBE program, because each institution’s needs are different. Generally speaking, however, CBE programs distinguish themselves by “clearly defining and communicating what their graduates are required to know and be able to do,” according to a report for the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. What follow are cross-sections of postsecondary elements meant to illustrate a spectrum of CBE, from the more traditional to the more experimental. While necessarily non-exhaustive, the illustration is meant to give a quick introduction to how learning and other aspects of college and university work can differ according to how much CBE is applied.

### WHAT Competency-Based Education LOOKS LIKE

#### More conventional

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATIONAL MODEL</th>
<th>FACULTY ROLE</th>
<th>LEARNING SUPPORT</th>
<th>TECHNOLOGY</th>
<th>TYPICAL STUDENTS</th>
<th>FEE STRUCTURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Competencies embedded in courses  
  • Faculty and Textbooks | Vertically Integrated Roles: Designing and Teaching and Assessing and Advising | Faculty-based advising | Web enhancements to classroom-based course | • More traditional students  
  • May be employed part time | • Time-bound  
  • Pay per term or credit hour  
  • Title IV eligible |

#### “Middle of the Road”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATIONAL MODEL</th>
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<th>FEE STRUCTURE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Some classes  
  • Unbundled content  
  • Competencies and assessments | Partially Disaggregated Roles: Designing and/or Teaching and/or Assessing and/or Advising | High level of coaching and mentoring at the institution or through a contracted service | Online delivery | • Online mentoring  
  • Informal learning groups | • Fully competency based  
  • Title IV eligible with special approval |

#### Less conventional

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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • No formal classes  
  • Referrals to open educational resources  
  • Prior-learning assessment | Disaggregated Roles: Designing or Teaching or Assessing or Advising | • Online mentoring  
  • Informal learning groups | Adaptive learning | • Non-traditional  
  • Some postsecondary experience but no degree  
  • Some work experience  
  • School and work highly integrated | • Subscription model (all you can learn within a given time)  
  • Direct assessment  
  • Not Title IV eligible |