

**APPENDIX C - ICCB GUIDANCE ON APPROVAL FOR CTE CBE
(COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION) CURRICULA AND COURSES**

ICCB Guidance on Approval for CTE Competency-Based Education (CBE) Curricula and Courses

Competency-based education (CBE) is an approach to providing academic instruction that organizes content according to competencies - what a student knows and can do. Currently, ICCB supports the type of CTE CBE programs that measure progress using the clock hours equivalent to credit hours. This type of program, that is organized by competency, but measures student progress using credit hours, is what we consider a CBE-format program *not* a direct assessment program.

Following are a series of common questions regarding CBE-format programs/courses, their approval criteria and respective answers:

Curriculum

Does ICCB require a unique application for curricula that colleges hope to offer in a CBE format?

No, and Yes.

- No, there is not a unique application specific to CBE-format offerings required.
- Yes, you will need to submit to us an application for approval of a program. That could mean a Form 20 for CBE-format programs that are brand new; or that could mean a Form 21 for CBE-format programs that mirror existing traditional format curricula.

What additional information does ICCB require for CBE format programs? This is information already being asked by ICCB and is provided by CCs in existing program applications, however, please consider the following when completing the narrative response:

- Clearly defined competencies. Please include this information in the description of the Student Learning Objectives (Form 20 application) / Curriculum description for the proposed Extension (Form 21 application). Attach separately if necessary. If the competencies mirror existing industry-recognized credentialing requirements, include that information in this section. Competencies referenced at the program level should reflect what a student should know and be able to do upon completion of the CBE-format program.
- Clearly defined evaluation. Please include this information in the description of the Assessment of Student Learning Objectives (Form 20 application) / Curriculum description for the proposed Extension (Form 21 application). There should be a formalized method for evaluating students' skills (i.e. demonstration of skill mastery through physical, written, verbal performance exam(s), completion of a competency-based project, etc...) per course and for the program as a whole.
- Qualified faculty. Describe how faculty are qualified to assess students' competencies through the CBE-format (this would be outside of or in addition to the qualifications for faculty of a traditionally-formatted course/curriculum). Please include this information in the description of Faculty Requirements (Form 20 application) / Curriculum description for the proposed Extension (Form 21 application).

- Academic control. If the CC is utilizing an external entity to provide some or all of the CBE-format curriculum OR the assessment of competencies, describe how the college will maintain academic control over the program. Please include this information in the description of Academic Control (Form 20 application) / Curriculum description for the proposed Extension (Form 21 application).
- NOTE: DO NOT reference original, traditional-format program assuming staff know what you mean. Explain as if staff are reading this information for the first time.

Regarding curricula, do Colleges have to use a specialized Curriculum Prefix and/or Number or Program Title for CBE format programs?

No, and Yes.

- No, there is no requirement for CCs to use a specialized CBE curriculum prefix or number. CCs may want to be able to distinguish between traditional-format and CBE-format curriculum, and if using a specialized curriculum prefix or number makes sense locally, this is a college decision. However, it could be helpful for ICCB tracking purposes if you did so.
- Yes, please include “CBE” in the program title for now. This is the easiest way for ICCB to identify which programs are specifically offered in a CBE-format, especially when there are multiple programs with the same titles. We can search the Master File for “CBE” in the program title field and identify curricula if necessary.
- ICCB Staff have added a field on the Form 22 for tracking CBE-format curricula CBE: “Yes=CBE format only, No=Not CBE”. For programs that are being added as CBE-format only, colleges would indicate “Y” in this field. For example, an existing traditional-format Welding Certificate would be labeled with an “N” in this field; while a CBE-format Welding Certificate being added to the CC’s offerings would be labeled with a “Y” in this field.
- ICCB Staff have added this information to existing CBE-format curricula active on the Master File. Going forward, we will add the appropriate identifier in this field for each CBE-format curriculum added to the Master File. Colleges are not allowed to modify existing curriculum from existing/traditional format to CBE-format without applying for a new program either using the Form 20 or Form 21.

For programs that must meet external regulatory or licensing body requirements tied to clinical or instructional hours, how should colleges reconcile those expectations with a CBE model that is not time-bound? Please refer to the USDOE Guidelines for CBE-format programs (see link below). For now, all CBE competencies are equated to credit hours regardless of actual time required to demonstrate mastery.

Will ICCB provide guidance on aligning CBE competencies with mandated clock-hour expectations? Please refer to the USDOE Guidelines for CBE-format programs (see link below). For now, all CBE competencies are equated to credit hours regardless of actual time required to demonstrate mastery.

Courses

Regarding courses, do colleges have to use a specialized Course Prefix and/or Number for CBE format courses, or could a course have a standard section as well as a CBE section within the same Course Prefix and Number? No, CCs do not have to use a specific course prefix and/or number for CBE-format courses. For now, CCs will be creating/adding new CBE courses (i.e., 1ch increment per skill) so CCs can use special prefix/numbers if it is helpful internally. ICCB would not be able to track traditional-format vs. CBE-format students separately without this distinction.

Would any Gen Ed courses need to be rearticulated if delivered in a CBE format? Since we are asking CCs to create CBE-formatted courses as new, the college would give the course a unique prefix/number. Presumably, the baccalaureate institution would see this as a new course and need it to be articulated. This might not be the case if the CC chooses to cross-list, which may signal to the receiving institution that the courses are just different formats. ICCB System Rules Section 1501.309d)1) requires courses classified for transfer to be articulated with at least 3 baccalaureate institutions, regardless of format.

Do we need to do anything different if we hope to allow students to register to start courses or maybe even finish them at different points during the semester? No, CCs are not required to do anything different regarding multiple entry or exit points. This information should be included in the CC's application for a new program within the appropriate narrative response section.

Should we plan on providing multiple entry points to and exit points from a CBE program if it does not work for the student? Documenting a satisfactory demonstration of academic progress is a reasonable expectation for remaining enrolled in a CBE-format curriculum. How this is accomplished and whether to offer options to students if academic progress is not satisfactory, is an institutional decision. However, providing options that may assist with students' successful completion is encouraged.

How does ICCB prefer colleges document competency mastery in CBE programs, especially for programs with licensure or accreditation requirements? Are there recommended standards or models for demonstrating competency outcomes in clinical or skills-based settings?

The specific method of assessment and documentation is an institutional decision. However, it is up to the college to ensure their assessment of skill competency and documentation meets the criteria of any accrediting or credentialing body. ICCB does not provide a "form" for providing this information. This information should be included in the CC's application for approval of a CBE-format program within the narrative response section on Assessment of Student Learning (see prior question/response on this subject). Refer to ICCB System Rules Section 1501.311 Credit for Prior Learning for information regarding evaluation of skills previously acquired.

How should competencies map to:

- **Credit hour equivalents?** A CBE-format program might not require structured class sessions, but it does still require sufficient academic activity. Currently each competency/skill should be mapped to an equivalent set of credit hours. A typical 3ch course would be broken down into 3 1ch courses representing each skill/competency the

student will be assessed on. The CBE version of the program could allow this work to be completed in a more flexible manner than structured classroom sessions in a traditional-format, and at the student's desired pace, assuming satisfactory academic progress.

- Credential or degree requirements?
 - Credential equivalents must be determined according to what ICCB and the credentialing body can currently allow.
 - Refer to ICCB System Rules Section 1501.311 Credit for Prior Learning, Subsection d) If pursuing a transfer degree (Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Science (AS) or Associate in General Studies (AGS)), credit for prior learning will only be granted for the purpose of satisfying graduation requirements. These credits might not transfer to other colleges.
 - For CTE programs (AAS degrees and Certificates), students must competency-test out of each competency/skill within an individual course and thus accumulate those to complete the CBE curriculum.

Sources

https://www.iccb.org/wp-content/pdfs/manuals/ICCB_SystemRules_Manual.pdf

<https://illinoisbe.org/>

<https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/higher-education-laws-and-policy/higher-education-policy/direct-assessment-competency-based-programs>

Dated: August 2026