

# The Benefits of Using a Competency-Based Learning Approach to Career Training and Higher Education Degrees

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Article IV | First Edition | 2018

**This article reports on several findings from research conducted on using a competency-based learning approach to career training and higher education degrees.**

The general approach to competency-based learning is the system of instruction, grading, assessment, and academic reporting based on an individual's ability to demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have learned. The use of a competency-based learning system has become increasingly popular for traditional educators and online schools or companies that offer online programs for career training or higher education degrees.

## Competency-based learning is a popular alternative

In practice, competency-based learning can take on a wide variety of models but this system is generally accepted as measuring learning competencies rather than the time or length spent in a seat like traditional programs. This alternative can be ideal for the 37 million American adults with some college but no degree because it allows them to study and learn at their own pace<sup>1</sup>.

## Competency-based learning can mean a better job, higher earning potential, and a better life.

Competency-based learning makes it possible for individuals to complete a degree or career training at different rates by applying what they've learned through formal education or their work and life experience. According to the U.S. Department of Education, by enabling individuals to master their skills at their own pace, competency-based learning systems help individuals save both time and money<sup>2</sup>.

## Competency-based learning programs fulfill their value proposition

Competency-based learning programs that make it possible for individuals to earn academic credit based on their mastery of competencies rather than time, provide both more access and lower costs to students, as well as similar educational quality as traditional programs. Based on a report from the American Institute for Research, students seem to progress through these programs at a similar or faster pace than students in a traditional program, and they complete the programs at similar or higher rates<sup>3</sup>.

## Competency-based learning programs help advance careers in order to fulfill workforce shortages

Competency-based learning programs that make it possible for individuals to advance their career based on the demonstration of knowledge and mastery of workplace skills, fulfill an industry's need to address the shortages in their workforce. According to US News, the shortage of qualified advanced-level employees in an industry can be promptly responded to through competency-based programs because students will already have work experience and therefore they won't need as much time to demonstrate the practical skills of their trade<sup>4</sup>.

## There are benefits of using a competency-based learning approach to career training and higher education degrees

These findings from research on using a competency-based learning approach to career training and higher education degrees identify several benefits for students and professionals such as saving time and money, as well as providing a similar value and quality of education when compared to a traditional learning approach. Furthermore, this system of learning provides more access to individuals to advance their careers and fulfill the shortages in the workforce of an industry.

**The findings conclude that the use of a competency-based learning approach to career training and higher education degrees can provide individuals with the benefits of lower costs, less time, similar value and quality of education, and more accessibility.**

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2-U.S. Department of Education. *Competency-Based Learning or Personalized Learning*. <https://www.ed.gov/oii-news/competency-based-learning-or-personalized-learning>

3-American Institute for Research. *On the Path to Success, Early Evidence About the Efficacy of Postsecondary Competency-Based Education Programs*— Kelle Parsons, Jessica Mason, and Matthew Soldner, October 2016. <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/Path-to-Success-Postsecondary-Competency-Based-Education-Programs-Oct-2016.pdf>

4-U.S. News & World Report. *5 Signs That a Competency-Based Program Could Help Your Career*— Ian Quillen, October 27, 2015. <https://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/articles/2015/10/27/5-signs-that-a-competency-based-program-could-help-your-career>