

CHOICE BASED CREDIT SYSTEM OF EVALUATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The education system in India has a proven history of excellence. The ability to engage in high-quality assessment has become a sine qua non for the college-level educator. CBCS (Choice Based Credit System) is the one the important and innovative method for evaluation or assessment of the students in higher education. CBCS provides flexibility in designing curriculum and assigning credits based on the course content and hours of teaching. The HEIs (Higher Educational Institutions) are currently following various methods for examination and assessment suitable for the courses and programmes as approved by their respective statutory bodies. In assessing the performance of the students in examinations, the usual approach is to award marks based on the examinations conducted at various stages in a semester. CBCS provides a cross-cultural learning environment. Implementation of CBCS has some Practical limitations. It is complicated, especially in the view of shortage of teachers or infrastructures. One subject can be repeated three times, it makes the students irresponsible. CBCS provide develop quality education. It upgrades educational and occupational aspiration of the upcoming generation.

Keywords: CBCS, HEIs, UGC, Assessment, learning, Teaching

Introduction

Indian higher education system is the second largest in the world with about 636 degree granting higher educational institutions and 33,023 numbers of colleges (Higher Education in India at a Glance, February 2012, UGC). Out of this figure 297 are state Universities, 43 Central Universities, 100 are Private Universities, 65 are Deemed Universities. The education system in India has a proven history of excellence. The ability to engage in high-quality assessment has become a sine qua non for the college-level educator. But, effective assessment requires mastering the professional knowledge and skills involved. The field of assessment and evaluation, like all other specialized disciplines, has developed many important concepts, principles, and methods to guide practice. CBCS (Choice Based Credit System) is the one the important and innovative method for evaluation or assessment of the students in higher education. This paper will briefly discuss about the CBCS.

Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment is a process of determining "what is." Assessment provides faculty members, administrators, trustees, and others with evidence, numerical or otherwise, from which they can develop useful information about their students, institutions, programs, and courses and also about themselves. This information can help them make effectual

decisions about student learning and development, professional effectiveness, and program quality.

Evaluation uses information based on the credible evidence generated through assessment to make judgments of relative value: the acceptability of the conditions described through assessment.

What is CBCS?

CBCS is an instructional package developed to suit the needs of students to keep pace with the developments in higher education and the quality assurance expected of it in the light of liberalization and globalization in higher education. CBCS essentially implies a redefining of the curriculum into smaller measurable entities with the hours required for studying/‘learning’ these - not ‘teaching’ - being at the primary focus and the development of a mechanism whereby these modules can be combined in different ways so as to qualify for a Certificate, Diploma or Degree.

Important Key Terms Used in CBCS

As per UGC norms CBCS includes the following:

1. **Academic Year:** Two consecutive (one odd + one even) semesters constitute one academic year.
2. **Choice Based Credit System (CBCS):** The CBCS provides choice for students to select from the prescribed courses (core, elective or minor or soft skill courses).
3. **Course:** Usually referred to, as ‘papers’ is a component of a programme. All courses need not carry the same weight. The courses should define learning objectives and learning outcomes.
4. **Credit Based Semester System (CBSS):** Under the CBSS, the requirement for awarding a degree or diploma or certificate is prescribed in terms of number of credits to be completed by the students.
5. **Credit Point:** It is the product of grade point and number of credits for a course.
6. **Credit:** A unit by which the course work is measured. It determines the number of hours of instructions required per week. One credit is equivalent to one hour of teaching (lecture or tutorial) or two hours of practical work / field work per week.
7. **Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA):** It is a measure of overall cumulative performance of a student over all semesters. It is expressed up to two decimal places.
8. **Grade Point:** It is a numerical weight allotted to each letter grade on a 10-point scale.
9. **Letter Grade:** It is an index of the performance of students in a said course. Grades are denoted by letters O, A+, A, B+, B, C, P and F.

10. **Programme:** An educational programme leading to award of a Degree, diploma or certificate.
11. **Semester Grade Point Average (SGPA):** It is a measure of performance of work done in a semester. It is ratio of total credit points secured by a student in various courses registered in a semester and the total course credits taken during that semester.
12. **Semester:** Each semester will consist of 15-18 weeks of academic work equivalent to 90 actual teaching days. The odd semester may be scheduled from July to December and even semester from January to June.
13. **Transcript or Grade Card or Certificate:** Based on the grades earned, a grade certificate shall be issued to all the registered students after every semester. The grade certificate will display the course details (code, title, number of credits, grade secured) along with SGPA of that semester and CGPA earned till that semester.

Semester System and Choice Based Credit System

The Indian Higher Education Institutions have been moving from the conventional annual system to semester system. Currently many of the institutions have already introduced the choice based credit system. The semester system accelerates the teaching-learning process and enables vertical and horizontal mobility in learning. The credit based semester system provides flexibility in designing curriculum and assigning credits based on the course content and hours of teaching. The choice based credit system provides a 'cafeteria' type approach in which the students can take courses of their choice, learn at their own pace, undergo additional courses and acquire more than the required credits, and adopt an interdisciplinary approach to learning, it is desirable that the HEIs move to CBCS and implement the grading system.

Types of Courses

Courses in a programme may be of three kinds: Core, Elective and Foundation.

1. Core Course

There may be a Core Course in every semester. This is the course which is to be compulsorily studied by a student as a core requirement to complete the requirement of a programme in a said discipline of study.

2. Elective Course

Elective course is a course which can be chosen from a pool of papers. It may be:

- Supportive to the discipline of study
- Providing an expanded scope
- Enabling an exposure to some other discipline/domain

- Nurturing student’s proficiency/skill.

An elective may be “Generic Elective” focusing on those courses which add generic proficiency to the students. An elective may be “Discipline centric” or may be chosen from an unrelated discipline. It may be called an “Open Elective.”

3. Foundation Course

The Foundation Courses may be of two kinds: Compulsory Foundation and Elective foundation. “Compulsory Foundation” courses are the courses based upon the content that leads to Knowledge enhancement. They are mandatory for all disciplines. Elective Foundation courses are value-based and are aimed at man-making education.

Examination and Assessment

The HEIs are currently following various methods for examination and assessment suitable for the courses and programmes as approved by their respective statutory bodies. In assessing the performance of the students in examinations, the usual approach is to award marks based on the examinations conducted at various stages (sessional, mid-term, end-semester etc.,) in a semester. Some of the HEIs convert these marks to letter grades based on absolute or relative grading system and award the grades. There is a marked variation across the colleges and universities in the number of grades, grade points, letter grades used, which creates difficulties in comparing students across the institutions. The UGC recommends the following system to be implemented in awarding the grades and CGPA under the credit based semester system.

1. Letter Grades and Grade Points:

- Two methods -relative grading or absolute grading- have been in vogue for awarding grades in a course. The relative grading is based on the distribution (usually normal distribution) of marks obtained by all the students of the course and the grades are awarded based on a cut-off marks or percentile. Under the absolute grading, the marks are converted to grades based on pre-determined class intervals.
- The UGC recommends a 10-point grading system with the following letter grades as given below:

Table 1: Grades and Grade Points

Letter Grade	Grade Point
O (Outstanding)	10
A+ (Excellent)	9
A (Very Good)	8
B+ (Good)	7
B (Above Average)	6
C (Average)	5
P (Pass)	4
F (Fail)	0
Ab (Absent)	Reappear

- A student obtaining Grade F shall be considered failed and will be required to reappear in the examination.
- For non-credit courses 'Satisfactory' or "Unsatisfactory' shall be indicated instead of the letter grade and this will not be counted for the computation of SGPA/CGPA.
- The Universities can decide on the grade or percentage of marks required to pass in a course and also the CGPA required to qualify for a degree taking into consideration the recommendations of the statutory professional councils such as AICTE, MCI, BCI, NCTE etc.,
- The statutory requirement for eligibility to enter as assistant professor in colleges and universities in the disciplines of arts, science, commerce etc., is a minimum average mark of 50% and 55% in relevant postgraduate degree respectively for reserved and general category. Hence, it is recommended that the cut-off marks for grade B shall not be less than 50% and for grade B+, it should not be less than 55% under the absolute grading system. Similarly cut-off marks shall be fixed for grade B and B+ based on the recommendation of the statutory bodies (AICTE, NCTE etc.,) of the relevant disciplines.

2. Fairness in Assessment

UGC recommends the following system of checks and balances which would enable Universities effectively and fairly carry out the process of assessment and examination.

- In case of at least 50% of core courses offered in different programmes across the disciplines, the assessment of the theoretical component towards the end of the semester should be undertaken by external examiners from outside the university conducting examination, who may be appointed by the competent authority. In such courses, the question papers will be set as well as assessed by external examiners.
- In case of the assessment of practical component of such core courses, the team of examiners should be constituted on 50 - 50 % basis. i.e. half of the examiners in the team should be invited from outside the university conducting examination.
- In case of the assessment of project reports / thesis / dissertation etc. the work should be undertaken by internal as well as external examiners.

Computation of SGPA and CGPA

The UGC recommends the following procedure to compute the Semester Grade Point Average (SGPA) and Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA):

The SGPA is the ratio of sum of the product of the number of credits with the grade points scored by a student in all the courses taken by a student and the sum of the number of credits of all the courses undergone by a student, i.e. $SGPA (S_i) = \frac{\sum (C_i \times G_i)}{\sum C_i}$,

where C_i is the number of credits of the i^{th} course and G_i is the grade point scored by the student in the i^{th} course.

The CGPA is also calculated in the same manner taking into account all the courses undergone by a student over all the semesters of a programme, i.e. $CGPA = \frac{\sum (C_i \times S_i)}{\sum C_i}$, where S_i is the SGPA of the i^{th} semester and C_i is the total number of credits in that semester.

The SGPA and CGPA shall be rounded off to 2 decimal points and reported in the transcripts.

Advantages of CBCS

- Choice Based Credit System is essential for higher education in the present context.
- CBCS system of courses helps the students to improve the interdisciplinary approach in education.
- Freedom to choose subjects which is beneficial for students.
- Respects, Learner Autonomy Allows learners to choose according to their own learning needs, interests and aptitudes.
- Facilitates Learner Mobility: Offers the opportunity to study at different times and in different places. Credits earned at one institution can be transferred to another.
- In this system students need not to repeat the full semester if there is fail in one paper.
- More autonomy is given to the students in this system.
- CBCS provides a cross-cultural learning environment.
- CBCS provide develop quality education.
- It upgrades educational and occupational aspiration of the upcoming generation.

Disadvantages of CBCS

- Implementation of CBCS has some Practical limitations.
- It is complicated, especially in the view of shortage of teachers or infrastructures.
- One subject can be repeated three times, it makes the students irresponsible.
- Student cannot plan effectively their list of students.
- It needs more punctuality from the student.
- There is no betterment system of evaluation in this system.
- Students can have only partial knowledge of any new subject chosen by the student as extra credit subject.
- Numbers of courses are imposed in the CBCS, which is an overburden for the student as well as teachers.
- Shortage of infrastructure facilities i.e. building, laboratory facilities, and practical class room affects CBCS.

Conclusion

CBCS is an instructional package developed to suit the needs of students to keep pace with the developments in higher education and the quality assurance expected of it in the light of liberalization and globalization in higher education. Choice Based Credit System is essential for higher education in the present context. In CBCS the span of time which can be allotted for increased so that course of study can be properly acquired by the student. Betterment system should be introduced because the students can better their performance.

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