

Transcribing CBE and Alternative Credentials



There has been much discussion and reflection over the “transcript” or learning record in higher education in recent years. With the advent of competency-based education, prior learning assessment, accelerated credits, and alternative credentials, a movement to reform and adapt transcripts has developed. The traditional college transcript doesn’t relate skills or knowledge was needed for course completion. The focus on knowledge learned and skills obtained driven by CBE, badging, and lifelong learning experiences, has created new conversations and a rethinking of a credentialing ecosystem.

Institutions of higher education such as Elon University, Northern Arizona University, University of Wisconsin Extension, and University of Maryland University College have all ventured into the realm of showing competency measures in a learning record in a meaningful way. Various examples of competency-based transcripts include co-curricular transcripts, alternative transcripts, experiential transcripts, career transcripts, learning portfolios, digital portfolios, and of course, competency transcripts. In September 2019, AACRAO (American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers), partnering with C-BEN (Competency - Based Education Network), released a document **“Standardized Components for a Competency-Based Educational Record”** in an effort to develop standardization and best practices for transcribing competency-based education.

Elements to consider for a CBE transcript:

- Skills and assessments that are clearly outlined
- Level of proficiency or performance indicators that are clear and defined
- Measurements/assessments that consider audience, purpose and communication
- Validation that is demonstrated or documented
- Skills/courses that are portable
- Including Habits of Work (HOW) examples = attendance, participation, and effort
- Capturing Cross Curricular skills such as
 - Clear and effective communicator
 - Self-directed and lifelong learner
 - Creative and practical problem solver

Since competency-based education is based on demonstrated knowledge and skills aligned with specific standards and outcomes, attempting to crosswalk to traditional grades and credit hours defeats the goals of CBE. The advantage of a competency-based transcript is that it connects the workplace to post-secondary education with skills and needs. The focus is on learning outcomes, not time in a classroom. There is transparency in how credentials are defined and evaluated and the transcripts can provide more important information than just high performing grades.

So why isn’t everyone on the bandwagon? First of all, there is not enough information and no common language for people to evaluate and compare credentials. This causes a lot of confusion about the quality of the credential. And it makes it difficult to compare and evaluate different credentials and those who hold them. For example, evaluating the skills of a person who holds an Associate’s Degree in Computer Science versus a person with IT Certificate is complicated. One way this is being addressed is through the development of competency frameworks. Although still in a pilot stage, competency frameworks for specific industries are being developed to have a common way of describing credentialing data.



Another reason the move to competency transcripts is complicated is that credentialing records are fragmented and not “owned” by the student. A person may have a college transcript, including several at multiple institutions, employer training, military experience, and online noncredit learning badges. All of these have contributed to the person’s knowledge and skills however; there is not one comprehensive picture of a person’s learning experience. All of the credentials exist separately and the burden is upon the person to gather them all from all the different entities. Higher education is beginning to address this by working toward developing a Comprehensive Learner Record (CLR), a digital record that could link to e-portfolios, provide information on co-curricular activities, and information on learning experiences throughout life.

Effectively communicating credentials of learning continues to make strides as the number and types of credentials grows. It’s a complex road involving culture change, technology, and processes. The continued need for competency driven common language to describe the knowledge, skills and outcomes will assist higher education, employers, workers and better serve students in the future. We can do a better job communicating how and what learning occurs in a person’s life.

Interested in more? Check out these resources related to competency transcripts

- [Solutions to Build a 21st Century Connected Credentialing System](#)
- [Hurdles to Connected Credentials](#)
- [Credential Engine](#)
- [How Selective Colleges and Universities Evaluate Proficiency-Based High School Transcripts: Insights for Students and Schools](#)
- [Credentials Reform: How Technology and the Changing Needs of the Workforce Will Create the Higher Education System of the Future](#)
- [Moving from the Legacy Student Hour Toward a Comprehensive Measure of Student Learning: Examining Benefits of a Competency-Based Taxonomy of Learning.](#)
- [Major Postsecondary Education Organizations Commit to Credential Transparency](#)
- [Comprehensive Learner Record - AACRAO](#)

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For more information, visit completeflorida.org

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