

SINCLAIR COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Implementation Guide for Competency-Based Education (CBE) Courses

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Purpose

The purpose of this implementation guide is to provide faculty and staff who will be teaching or supporting competency-based education (CBE) courses a better understanding of the policies and procedures that surround this type of course.

Each course may have its own unique requirements, but this guide provides the basic information.

Understanding the Competency-Based Approach

Students in a CBE program can earn degrees and / or certificates by demonstrating their skills, knowledge, and understanding of important concepts through a series of carefully designed assessments.

Progress through the program is governed by satisfactory completion of required assessments that demonstrate a student's mastery of competencies. Of course, students will need to engage in learning experiences to brush up on competencies or develop knowledge and skills in areas that they may be weak. Students will engage with learning resources under the direction of the instructor to achieve the required competencies. Resources may vary by course, but each course will contain the following resources:

- Assignment Checklist: Provides a list of the graded assignments for the course, organized by topic/unit.
- Academic Support Services: Provides a page within the course to links with additional learning resources available at the college.

The benefit of the CBE program is that it makes it possible for students who are knowledgeable about a particular subject to make accelerated progress toward completing a program even if they lack college experience. The CBE program also makes it possible for students requiring flexibility to take courses they might normally be unable to register for because of scheduling conflicts.

SCC's Mentoring Approach

The mentoring approach is a powerful component of the CBE experience. When a student enrolls in a CBE course at SCC, they will interact with an Academic Coach, course instructors, and support staff. A major component of SCC's CBE Mentoring Approach is collaborative coaching between Academic Coach and faculty in support of the student.

Faculty-Coach Relationship

Students in CBE courses are assigned an Academic Coach who will work with the student through their successful program completion at Sinclair, and who monitors their progress in individual CBE courses. Programmatically, the Academic Coach advises and MAPs the student; and course wise, checks in with the CBE student, usually bi-weekly to discuss course progress. The Coach also reviews performance using engagement data from LMS reports to help guide these check-ins. During vital weeks of the semester (first week, midterm, week of final withdrawal deadline, week before finals, and finals week),

faculty and Coach work closely together to troubleshoot issues, discuss the student's engagement or performance if needed, and generally work for the benefit of the student (Please see the appendix for full schedule of faculty and Coach collaboration). The Coach will often have the most intensive interaction with the student over the long term, so faculty and coaches are encouraged to utilize one another as a resource for student benefit throughout the semester. The Academic Coach for a particular student can be found on the eLearn course roster in the LMS, or by emailing accelerate@sinclair.edu.

Faculty work collaboratively with CBE Academic Coaches related to their students, through the following approaches:

- Coaches are happy to meet with faculty members to discuss student progress or communication preferences.
- Coaches and faculty may Cc one another on emails sent to students.
- Coaches and faculty may forward or communicate student issues/complaints to one another.
- If a faculty knows of a problem area for students within their course, they may communicate this to the Coaches.

Student Registration

Students are required to complete a series of steps before they can register for any CBE courses. These requirements include:

- Completion of an online introduction to CBE, "Accelerate Orientation"
- Completion of Sinclair's *How to Succeed Online*
- Meeting placement test score requirements or demonstration of equivalent coursework; and
- Meeting GPA requirements set by the CBE program

For some CBE programs, students must engage in mandatory discussions with an Academic Coach, who will determine if the student is eligible to take CBE courses. If a student is unable to self-register for a CBE course, due to program structure or eligibility requirements, a CBE Academic Coach may register the student for a CBE course.

Students may register for courses bi-weekly up to the 12th week of the term during Spring or Fall semesters, and through the 8th week of the term for summer semester. An email will be sent to the student and faculty of record when a student registers for course. It is the responsibility of the faculty to identify and keep up with new students as they appear in course shells throughout the semester.

Definition of a Term

The traditional academic term is defined at Sinclair by the standard 16-week semester. Currently, students can register for most CBE courses every other Monday up until the 12th week of the 16-week semester. All students are required to complete their CBE course by the regular scheduled semester end date, regardless of their start date.

Course Shell Numbers

Although there are many course section numbers associated with each CBE course (i.e., 800, 801, 802, 803, etc... up to 806), for the most part, faculty only have to concern themselves with one section: 800. The only exception to this is when posting final grades, which should be done in the student's section of record (801, 802, 803, etc.), at the end of the semester.

All CBE students will automatically be added to the 800 shell, where course content is located, on or before the course's start date. **IMPORTANT:** Faculty are responsible for populating the 800 shell with the CBE online master course content prior to the start of the semester.

Students register into the section shells (801-806), but they are automatically filtered into the 800 shell on their start date. Faculty may choose to hide the other shells so that only the 800 shell is visible. Students will not be visible in the 800-shell until the first day of the semester. Rosters can be viewed ahead of time in Web Advisor.

Granting Final Grades

The faculty member will enter a student's final grade at the time of Sinclair's final grade deadline for the semester. Remember, *final grades are posted in the section of record shell (801-806)*; for example, if the student enrolled the first week of the term, the "section of record" is 801. If the student enrolled in the second start date of the term, usually week 3, the section of record is 802. Students' work is completed and graded in the 800 shell, but their final grades are posted to the section of record in which the student is enrolled.

A student may need a final grade before the end of term deadline so that he or she can enroll in a sequential CBE course, later in the same semester. In this case, communication between the faculty member, the coach, and the student needs to take place to make sure the student has successfully completed all required coursework. If the student successfully completed the course, the student should request that the faculty member send notification to the Academic Coach, so that the Coach can provide a registration override to the student.

If a student does not complete course requirements within the 16-week semester, they may be given a grade of *incomplete*, or *"I"*, at the faculty member's discretion. In this case, a student would have the allotted 30 days after the start of the next term to complete the course.

A student can "Opt-Out," and transition into a traditional grading scale if either the midterm, labs, or final are not successfully passed after multiple attempts with an 80% or higher. In the case of an Opt Out, the student will then only be permitted one attempt at the topic quizzes from that point forward as well as only one attempt on any remaining assignments or exams. When the course is completed, the student is then removed from the CBE program and will not be permitted to take any additional CBE courses. The process of Opt Out will be discussed in more detail later in this Guide.

In most CBE courses, the official grading scheme is as seen below. *Rounding grades and using curves is at that faculty's discretion.*

GRADING SCALE	POINTS
A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79% (ineligible to take any more Accelerate courses)
D	60-69% (ineligible to take any more Accelerate courses)
F	0-59% (ineligible to take any more Accelerate courses)

Instructions for Online Grade Submission

Students' final grades need to be posted to their sections of record (meaning 801-806) in WebAdvisor.

Important tips for faculty to successfully submit final grades online:

- **Please be prepared.** Have all grades calculated and clearly documented before sitting down to enter them into the online system.
- **Do not press "Enter" at any time while assigning grades. Doing so will tell the system that the assignment of grades is complete. Use the mouse or Tab key to navigate instead.**

How to log in and assign grades:

1. Go to [our.sinclair](http://our.sinclair.edu) on the internet. Click on my.Sinclair.edu.
2. Login to my.sinclair.edu following the login instructions.
3. Click on the [Web Advisor](#) tab at the top.
4. Under [Select Your Role](#), click on [Faculty](#). Click on [Grading](#).
5. Click on the small downward arrow by [Select Term](#), chose the term to grade, press [Submit](#).
6. Click on the small downward arrow by [Final/Non-attendance Grading](#), and click on [Final](#).
7. [Click in the box next to the class/section to be graded](#), click on [Submit](#).
8. Enter grades using the mouse or tab key to maneuver. (Hint: Press Tab to move forward down the column or Shift Tab to move in reverse).
9. Verify the assigned grades, make appropriate adjustments, and press [Submit](#). (Hint: If any ineligible grades were entered, the system will display the screen once more. Make the adjustments and press Submit.)
 - a. For all Fs, you must indicate the last date work was submitted.
10. System will process roster and show you the roster with all the grades submitted. Press [Submit](#) again and you will go back to the main page.
11. If there are more sections to grade press [Menu](#), then [Grading](#), and follow the above steps.
12. When all grading has been completed, be sure to click on [Log Out](#) to end session.

Understand that after the above steps have been completed, additional grades must be manually reported. The Web Advisor gradebook is locked after entering grades once. After the gradebook is locked, grades must then be manually reported. Please submit manual grades via email to Student Records (studentrecords@sinclair.edu) and to Tammy Tolle (tammy.tolle@sinclair.edu).

The Class Rosters function in Web Advisor has been modified to show submitted grades. Faculty will have access to their class rosters, including their submitted grades for two years. Faculty can access this information by clicking on Class Rosters.

Guidelines for an I (Incomplete) Grade

In addition to the policies for arranging an incomplete grade in the Sinclair catalog (<https://catalog.sinclair.edu/>) and www.sinclair.edu, the following policies apply for all Sinclair classes, regardless of format (face to face, online and CBE):

1. An "I" grade is given when extenuating circumstances exist at the end of a term, that prohibit a student from completing all work for the course. If requested, documentation must be provided to support the "I" grade request.
2. Students must contact their instructor (and Coach if enrolled in a CBE section) to request an "I" grade at least one week before the end of the semester.
3. The student must have made adequate progress throughout the term. At least 75% of the assignments and exams must have been submitted prior to the request.
4. The instructor will make the final decision regarding an "I" grade. The student (and Coach if enrolled in a CBE section) will be notified of the decision in writing.
5. If the instructor agrees, the student and instructor sign the "Incomplete Grade Contract".

Submitting an Official Grade Change

After the student completes the course, faculty must submit a Change of Grade Report to the Office of Registration and Student Records.

1. Go to **Forms Central > Registration > Change of Grade Report Form**
2. Open the Word Document (shown below) and complete form.
3. Get required signatures.
4. Submit to the Office of Registration and Student Records.

Student Name				
Last		First		M.I.
Tartan ID	Department	Course No.	Section	Credit Hrs.
Grade Of		Should Be Recorded Correctly As		
For The Term:		Year:		
Reason:				

APPROVALS	
Instructor's Signature:	
Date: _____	
Chairperson's Signature:	
Date _____	
OFFICE USE ONLY	
Registrar Change Date:: _____	
Initials of Person Making Change:	

Student Policies and Requirements

Attendance Policy

Within the first seven (7) days of the course (by Sunday at midnight), CBE students must complete at least one graded assignment or they will be considered non-attending. Simply logging into the course will not satisfy a record of student's attendance during this time. As with all Sinclair courses, students who are reported for non-attendance in a course are still responsible for paying the course's tuition and fees.

Reporting Non-Attendance

Faculty members are expected to take attendance and report non-attendance in CBE courses. However, the only sections a faculty member needs to report non-attendance for are the registration sections (801-806) that correspond with traditional Sinclair semester dates and flex-terms (full-term, 12-week, and B/C/D term courses). For CBE course sections/start dates that do not correspond with traditional or flex-term SCC start dates, a student's final grade in his or her CBE course will serve as attendance verification, and attendance does NOT need to be reported. For example, if a student enters a course on October 17th in section 805, and B-term also begins on October 17th, attendance should be reported for that student. Alternatively, if a student enters a course on October 31st in section 806, and there is no other "mini-term" starting on October 31st, attendance does NOT need to be reported for that student. If you have questions about reporting attendance as students enter your courses, please consult with the student's Academic Coach. Faculty members will follow Sinclair's procedure for reporting non-attendance in an online course.

Satisfactory Progress

Students must regularly make progress in a CBE course. CBE courses are flex-paced, which means students generally set the pace and deadlines, but this does not mean a student can simply stop-out in

their course for weeks at a time during the term. Students must *at least* pace themselves in Accelerate courses to finish by the end of the 16-week term. What does this mean?

- 75% of course assignments need to be completed and submitted the Friday before the final withdraw date (generally week 12).
- No more than 5 graded items may be submitted in the week prior to finals week (generally week 15).
- The first attempt at the final exam or final project must be submitted by Tuesday of finals week by 5:00 pm (generally week 16).
- Failure to meet the above rules will result in ***loss of eligibility to take future CBE courses or a failing final grade.***

Faculty members may adjust satisfactory progress policies as they see fit for their CBE course(s), as long as the adjustments are published in the course syllabus and announced to Academic Coaches.

CBE Course Formatting

There are two types of CBE courses, Topic-Based and Unit-Based. Topic-Based courses typically contain 14 topics, a midterm and a final. Students work through the content sequentially, advancing topic to topic, as they master each previous topic.

Unit-based courses are typically divided into 5 or more units, but can vary by course. Each unit has a pre-assessment, lessons or learning activities and post-assessment. Student who pass the pre-assessment with an 80% or better on the first attempt may skip over the unit's lessons/activities and advance to the next unit. Students who do not pass the pre-assessment with an 80% or better on the first attempt must complete the lessons/activities within the unit and also pass the post-assessment. **IMPORTANT:** for unit-based courses, faculty must record either the unit pre-assessment grade or the average grade for all the unit's activities in the "final grade" column in the eLearn gradebook. The presence of a grade in the Final Grade column is what allows the student to progress to the next unit.

Some CBE courses are fully online, but may require proctored testing at a Sinclair Testing Center, or at an approved proctoring location (800 – 806 sections). Some CBE courses are hybrid, meaning some of the work is done online, and some work or labs are completed on campus, at pre-determined times set by the chair and/or faculty member. Hybrid CBE courses may or may not require proctored testing.

Successful Course Completion

Students must pass each graded assignment in a competency-based course with a score of 80% or higher, unless otherwise stated. This 80% minimum score threshold applies to all graded activities in the course, including but not limited to assignments, labs, and exams. Second and third attempts are permitted on assignments and exams to allow students to achieve the prescribed 80% threshold. Generally, second attempts are granted automatically, and third (final) attempts are granted with faculty permission. If a student is unable to achieve 80% or higher on any assignment, lab or exam, he

or she can be allowed to complete the course as if it were a regular online course (also referred to as “opting out” described briefly above, and in more depth below).

Opting Out

Successful progress and completion of CBE courses requires that the student receive a score of 80% or higher on ALL assignments. (There are some exceptions in some courses, per departmental policies.) If a student is unable to achieve 80% or higher on an assignment, despite multiple attempts and mentoring, then the student can “opt out.” The Academic Coach will notify the faculty if a student chooses to opt out.

Opting out allows a student to complete the course as if it were a regular online course (with one attempt per assignment, in a structured versus flex-paced environment). The student could then “pass” the course with a grade of C or D (in accordance with departmental policies), and still receive credit for the course. In that case, though, the student will likely be dropped from the CBE program and become ineligible for future CBE course enrollment; this will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Selective Release of Content

Selective release of content is used in most CBE courses. What this means is that a student has to successfully complete certain graded assignments before he or she can go on to tackle the next assignment. In other words, students have to demonstrate their competence periodically before they can move forward in the course. Below are some common examples of how selective release might be employed in a CBE course (there may be variation in some courses, per departmental policies):

- A student usually has to pass Quiz 1 before Quiz 2 will open. (Passwords or Release Conditions are used to enable this selective release functionality. This is an automated process in the LMS, teaching faculty are not required to set any passwords or Conditions. If it appears that this process isn’t working correctly, look to see if the student achieved a score of 80% or higher on the previous quiz; if there is still a problem, contact the appropriate instructional designer).
- A student must pass all graded assignments that precede the midterm before the midterm will open up for him or her.
- A student has to pass all graded assignments that precede the final exam before the being eligible to take the final exam. **Note:** Most final exams must be proctored.

Assessments

Topic or Chapter Quizzes

Topic or chapter quizzes are used as study aids for students. Often, students are allowed unlimited attempts on quizzes. It is recommended that students retake quizzes often to study the content. Most quiz banks contain numerous questions, so that students encounter different questions each time they take a quiz.

Quizzes must be completed in the chronological order offered in the course, and subsequent quizzes will not be unlocked in the course until the previous quiz has been completed with a score of 80% or higher (for example, a student may not take quiz two until they have successfully completed quiz one). This selective release of content is achieved with Release Conditions in eLearn, which faculty should not modify. Students may be allowed unlimited attempts at these quizzes, as they are viewed as valuable learning resources and opportunities for learning reinforcement.

Passwords on Assessments

There may be passwords applied to assessments (quizzes, exams). A password should not be given to a student. In some cases, passwords, instead of Release Conditions, are used to allow selective release of content. (For example, a student has to pass Quiz 1 with a score of 80% or higher before Quiz 2 will open up for him or her.) The only time a password is needed is on the “cover sheet” to authorize a student to take a proctored exam; more about that in the next topic.

Labs and Exams

Some courses have practice midterm exams and practice final exams, which students can take as often as they wish. These practice exams are made up of the quiz questions; they do not contain the questions used in the actual midterm and final exams. The practice exams are provided so that students can study the content and measure their own progress.

Students do not have unlimited attempts at successfully completing labs, homework assignments, and exams with an 80% or better; and for hybrid courses, some labs must be completed on campus.

Multiple Attempts

- **First attempt:** Students may submit a lab, homework assignment, or exam after successfully completing each of the assignments, quizzes or labs that precede the lab or exam in question.
- **Second attempt:** If a student did not pass a lab, homework assignment, or exam with an 80% or better, and the attempt is not granted automatically, he or she may request a second attempt from the instructor. Instructors may need to set up the second attempt and notify the student when the assignment is ready. There will be a waiting period before a student may attempt a retake, during which time the student is expected, and encouraged to study further, in preparation for completing the graded activity. During this time the instructor will set up the second attempt and will notify the student when it is ready.
- **Third attempt (At the discretion of the instructor):** If a student did not pass a lab, homework assignment, or exam on the second attempt, he or she must submit a remediation plan to the instructor to be considered for a third attempt. The remediation plan is a document that fully describes how the student plans to succeed on a third attempt. For example, what will the student do differently to prepare for a third, and final, attempt? What will the student review or study to be prepared for the third attempt? A third attempt is granted at the instructor’s discretion. The instructor will determine if a third attempt is warranted by reviewing the student’s efforts on the first and second attempt. The idea is that the student is continually improving after each attempt.

- There will be a waiting period before a student may attempt a retake, during which time the student is expected, and encouraged to study further, in preparation for completing the graded activity. During this time the instructor will set up the third attempt and will notify the student when it is ready.

Proctoring

In most fully online CBE courses, the final exam will be proctored. This is to verify that the student taking the course is also the student who takes the final exam.

The method for which tests are given will vary by course. It is the responsibility of the student to make the appropriate arrangements for completing the test as required for each of his or her courses. However, it is the responsibility of the faculty member to make sure the Testing Center has the appropriate information for each student wishing to take the final exam. This is done using Sinclair's Test Management System (TMS). All instructors that are assigned to a class in Datatel (Colleague) are automatically given access to Sinclair's Test Management System (tms.sinclair.edu). This can be found on [our.Sinclair](#) under tools. Instructors can log into the TMS system using their Sinclair username and password. Scroll down to find the section titled "SUBMITTING TESTS FOR ADMINISTRATION." This section will provide step by step instructions for submitting the Final Exams.

When filling out this form, faculty will need to provide the following information:

- Student's Name
- Student Tartan ID
- Instructor of Record
- Date range for test availability
- Materials allowed
- Time allowed
- Password (provided by the instructional designers)

Turnaround Time Policies

It is important that students receive timely feedback regarding questions and grades so that they may keep momentum and accelerate through the course.

E-Mail Response Times

The instructor must respond to student e-mails within 48 business hours.

Grading Response Times

The instructor is expected to grade student exams, labs and/or homework submissions within 3 business days.

Business hours or days

Refers to Monday through Friday. Weekends and holidays are not considered business days for the purposes of this policy.

Appendix

Weekly Coaching Guide Example

Week	Responsible Party	Coaching Actions
Week 0 Preregistration	Coach	Register Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course information sheet • Payment • Pace Chart MAP/Degree Audit
Week 1	Coach	Login Prompt (<i>send first day of start of section</i>) Attendance Policy – submission during first 7 days of course
Week 4-5	Coach	Career, Future Goals, and Internship
Week 7-8	Shared: Coach/Faculty	Midterm/50% complete Prompt (<i>send Monday of week 7</i>) Midterms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty communicate to students who fail midterm exams/projects about retesting/resubmitting for second and third attempts • Faculty communicate with coaches about students who need second and third attempts on midterm exams/projects
Week 9	Shared: Coach/Faculty	Faculty and coaches plan 75% progress milestone intervention in week 12
Week 10	Coach	Motivational Vision Statements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send out beginning of week 10
Week 11	Coach	75% complete prompt and review of end of semester progress policies (<i>send Monday of week 11</i>)
Week 12	Shared: Coach/Faculty Coach	Faculty send intervention to students below 75% progress mark with deadline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friday before last day to withdraw is deadline for 75% • Coaches help with faculty to reach extreme high risk students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Extreme - below 50%, with no/low submissions in past 7 days Registration Opening (usually week 13) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normally don't discuss registration until student has 65-75% completed
Week 13-15	Shared: Coach/Faculty	Proctoring – Testing Center or Distance End of semester policies (<i>send Monday of week 13</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 submission limit in week before finals (usually week 15) • No submissions during finals week (usually week 16) • First attempt on final due Tuesday of finals week
Week 16	Faculty Coach	Finals – no assignment submissions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty communicate to students who fail final exams/projects about retesting/resubmitting for second and third attempts • Faculty communicate with coaches about students who need second and third attempts on final exams/projects Revisit MAP/Goals Clean SSP Caseload

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