

How PebblePad can transform competency-based education in the US higher education market

The learning and teaching experience for educators and students, both inside and outside of the classroom is evolving. Traditional methods of assessment, structured around the formal process of educators teaching large groups of students and testing their knowledge via paper assignments, are making way for competency-based education (CBE).

What is competency-based education?

You may have heard of the term competency-based education, after being implemented into US education in the 1960s, it gained traction in the early 2000s and according to [US News.com](https://www.usnews.com):

‘Today, nearly every state in the country implements CBE to some degree.’

A competency-based approach has the potential to be a fully inclusive higher education framework. It gives students of all abilities a flexible approach to learning, allowing them self-direction. At its heart, it is student-centred with support offered by educators to help them achieve their goals and ambitions.

Along with formal assessments, students complete practical tasks, via groups and workshops, that they can work through at their own pace based on material at their skill level.

A competency-based approach allows students to be awarded credits based on demonstrated learning and how they master a particular set of skills, either in or out of the classroom.

Using this framework offers students the chance to gain confidence in their abilities and obtain life skills that can be taken forward into employment.

Although this methodology is not new, having been used in vocational courses, such as nursing with the [American Association of Colleges of Nursing](https://www.aacnursing.org/), Journalist [Nhi Nguyen](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/26/us/politics/competency-based-education.html) writes:

‘CBE has attracted attention from every key stakeholder in higher education like leaders, policymakers, administrators, as a novel approach to educational transformation and innovation’.

Benefits of the approach

- Students learn at their own pace
- The learning experience is tailored to each student's abilities
- Creates a record of transferable skills
- Creates an inclusive Higher Education environment
- Encourages a growth mindset, allowing students to become self-directed learners.
- Boosts student engagement

How PebblePad can help

PebblePad can transform how competency-based education is assessed with its user-friendly workbook structure. According to [US News](#), the main problem with a competency-based structure is that:

'it's hard to measure the impact that it has on things like academic performance and closing achievement gaps'

Aside from e-portfolio capabilities, PebblePad addresses different learning and teaching methods, bridging the gaps between assessment and feedback.

Students can upload the results of their competency-based assessments, keeping a record of their marks which are then educators and employers.

This record of achievement allows both the student and the educator to understand gaps that need to be addressed while offering a comprehensive overview of the progress made.

The user-centred design offers a fully customisable experience allowing students to build a collaborative picture of their learning journey, from their first day to alumni.

Self-directed learning

Customisable workbooks and action plans allow students to think about where they are in their learning journey, where they want to be and how

they will get there. Students can reflect on how each activity connects to their overall journey, allowing them to plan for their future.

Tracking the competency framework

Students can track and record their skills, capabilities achievements and progress for programme-wide assessment. The intuitive design allows them to quickly understand how they are performing within the framework set by their educator.

Showcasing talent

Students record their learning experiences both on and offline via an easy-to-use platform, giving them a comprehensive overview of their achievements and progress.

Students can share their successes and achievements by creating an e-portfolio of work or by sharing their progress via workbook tools. These outcomes help with assessment, review or future employability.

PebblePad is helping to transform the higher education teaching and assessment model. A recent report by the [the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning](#) (CAEL), states that:

‘(86%) of higher education institutions acknowledge that postsecondary education models need to be designed around well-defined skills and competencies vital for today’s workforce’.

While the demand is there, the report continues that only 22 per cent of higher education institutions are using this model.

By demonstrating the benefits of PebblePad as a platform to support the CBE model, there is an exciting opportunity to close the learning and teaching gap, while expanding PebblePad’s global reach.