

Is A Self-Paced, Competency-Based Education Right For You? Here Are The Six Questions You Should Ask Yourself.

by Laurie Dodge

(NAPSA)—It seems we can't view the news today without seeing another story about technological advancements in the workplace, including Artificial Intelligence. Whether you believe that millions of jobs will be displaced or millions of new jobs will be created, the fact is the skills required to compete in a rapidly evolving employment market are changing like never before.

If you need a change in your professional environment, wish to make more money, advance in your career or organization, or even switch careers altogether, a degree is likely required for this progression. In fact, by 2020, two out of every three jobs will require a college degree.

When you've established that you need a change and decided a degree is required for career advancement, Competency-Based Education may be for you.

In 2012 there were 20 documented competency-based education programs. To date, there are 500 competency-based education programs across the nation to choose from. So where do you start on your journey to find the program that is best for you?

Start by asking yourself the following six questions as you evaluate the educational method and programs:

1. What mode of education fits your needs and your life?

Do you prefer being in a classroom with fellow students? Are you comfortable with technology and can you keep up with the pace online? Or, are you driven and focused, and have you acquired knowledge through your work and life experiences that makes a self-paced, competency-based education program the better fit? Determine which kind of teaching and learning style works best for you.

2. What is a competency-based education?

Competency-based education, also known as CBE, is a system of learning and assessment that is based on students demonstrating the knowledge they already have and the knowledge and skills they need to know. Not all competency-based programs are self-paced. Brandman MyPath is, and allows each student to set an appropriate pace for completing competencies.



You may be closer to getting a college degree than you realize.

3. How committed is the university to its self-paced, competency-based education program?

A solid CBE program has invested in the curriculum, the technology and philosophy. A dedicated staff supports CBE learners, and the qualified faculty is accessible and engaged to improve the student's academic journey. Brandman MyPath is one of the only direct-assessment CBE programs reviewed by, and deemed compliant by, the U.S. Department of Education for its consistent and substantive faculty interaction.

4. Are the required competencies clear and measurable?

The pathway to achieve your degree should be clear. You should know from the very beginning of your program what content and which topics will be covered, as well as how your learning will be assessed—be that a project or paper, an activity or an exam. The learning journey should be clearly stated as well as how you will be assessed.

5. How is your level of competency assessed?

The process should be clear, and assessed through authentic work-related projects submitted by students and graded by qualified faculty. As competencies are achieved, students receive industry-recognized certifications and badges. That way, employers know the student has achieved this milestone. With a recent Deloitte study predicting that by 2020, the skills we use at work will have a five-year shelf life, continued education and staying nimble in the workforce have never been more crucial.

6. How has the university engaged with external partners to develop the CBE program?

To ensure the CBE program has real-world relevancy and the skills learned are transferable to key industries and occupations, the university should assemble

and maintain advisory boards and partners in the fields of industry. Future employers need to join faculty in co-creating the curriculum to ensure work-ready skills and knowledge. Students will know their CBE curriculum is on point because they're able to immediately put into practice the knowledge and skills they're learning in their coursework.

Here's why Brandman MyPath may be your best option:

- **You're self-motivated.** Think about a time you completed a project from start to finish. Were you able to pace yourself to complete it? If you can set your own deadlines to tackle the work, with a level of independence that includes support if and when you choose, competency-based education is ideal.

- **You have a wealth of knowledge and want a degree.** Brandman MyPath enables you to show your level of competency with a subject matter or skill set, so you can spend time learning the information you don't know...yet.

- **You have a wealth of knowledge to move you faster through the program.** Brandman MyPath uses adaptive learning that customizes your learning materials so you spend time on the areas that you need to learn. You're still responsible for all the materials in the assessments, but the more you know, the faster you go.

- **Pace drives price.** With a flat annual tuition of \$6,400 billed every six months, the more you know and the more competencies you master, the greater value you're getting for your money. You're not tethered to a seat in a classroom or to the pace of the instructor. Because Brandman MyPath is the only truly self-paced CBE program, you earn your degree as fast as you want to. Tuition reimbursement may be available through your employer, and MyPath is VA Veteran Education Benefit approved.

- **All costs included.** All of your learning materials are embedded in Brandman MyPath. That means no extra books, no extra fees and no extra costs.

With a competency-based education program like Brandman MyPath, it's possible to earn a four-year degree in just three years. For working adults who know what they need to know, a high-quality, affordable and flexible program like Brandman MyPath can be their education solution.