

# Designing Competency-Based Articulation Agreements: A Framework for State Educational Agencies and Postsecondary Institutions

Establishing a Stakeholder Team and Defining Goals

**HANDOUTS**  
NOVEMBER 2016



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## Establishing a Stakeholder Team and Defining Goals Handouts

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**COLLEGE & CAREER  
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at American Institutes for Research ■

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## Handout 1A. Identifying the Team

Use this handout to start identifying the stakeholders from public and private organizations in the state who could provide a valuable contribution to the design and development of competency-based articulation agreements.

### Part 1: Identifying Potential Team Members

Use Table 1 to identify the different potential stakeholders to become part of the team.

**Table 1. Selected Stakeholder Groups and Points of Contact**

Stakeholder Category	Possible Stakeholder Groups	Possible Stakeholders
<i>Example: K–12</i>	<i>Member(s) of the state board of education</i>	<i>Jane Smith, member Mike Taylor, administrative assistant</i>
K–12		
Postsecondary		
Career and Technical Education		
Business/Industry/Workforce		
Policymaker/Legislator		
Individuals/Community		
Others		

## Part 2: Assigning Roles and Responsibilities

Now is the time to suggest roles and responsibilities for team members. Assignment of roles and responsibilities is a task that may be revisited many times throughout the initiative as you become more familiar with the particular skills and knowledge of the individual members of the team. Use Table 2 to indicate which stakeholders may be able to assist with specific aspects of the design and development of competency-based articulation agreements. When possible, write down notes on what aspects specific individuals can contribute to the project. After completing the table, have at least one person identified for each stage of the project. Add additional rows to the table as necessary to include all stakeholders.

**Table 2. Stakeholder Roles and Responsibilities**

Stakeholder Role	Stakeholder Category (From Table 1)	Phase			
		Process and Logistics	Policy Development	Capacity Building	Evaluation
<i>Example: Connector</i>	<i>Workforce</i>			<i>Clarisse Bishop, director, Department of Labor; can put us in touch with youth programs, businesses, and governor's office</i>	
Champions					
Connectors					
Decision Makers					
Doers					

## Handout 1B. Key Terms and Concepts

Use this handout to reference key terms and concepts related to articulation agreements and competency-based education.

**Articulation agreement:** A document that formalizes the process of transferring course credits between two or more educational institutions<sup>1</sup>

**Competencies:** The capability to apply a set of knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to complete complex tasks<sup>2</sup>

**Dual (or concurrent) enrollment/dual credit:** High school students participating in a course that will earn them credit toward a postsecondary degree<sup>3</sup>

**Learning objectives:** A brief statement that conveys what students are expected to learn throughout the school year, course, lesson, or class period<sup>4</sup>

**Personalized learning:** The modification of instruction, courses, and learning environments by or for learners with the goal of meeting their different learning needs<sup>5</sup>

**Seat time:** Refers to the use of academic credits based on the 120-hour Carnegie Unit<sup>6</sup>

**Standards-based education:** A system of academic reporting based on students' demonstration of the mastery of the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn as they advance through their education<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gorka, S., Miller, J. R., & Yoas, D. W. (2011). A competency based approach to developing articulation agreements in computing. In *Proceedings of the 2011 conference on Information technology education* (pp. 129–132). ACM.

<sup>2</sup> Blumenthal, D., & Rasmussen, J. (2015). *State approaches to competency-based education to support college and career readiness for all students*. Washington, DC: College and Career Readiness and Success Center at American Institutes for Research. Retrieved from [http://www.ccrscenter.org/sites/default/files/AsktheTeam\\_CBEbrief.pdf](http://www.ccrscenter.org/sites/default/files/AsktheTeam_CBEbrief.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Marken, S., Gray, L., Lewis, L., & Ralph, J. (2013). *Dual enrollment programs and courses for high school students at postsecondary institutions: 2010–11* (NCES 2013-002). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013002.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Blumenthal & Rasmussen, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

## Definitions of Competency-Based Education

Competency-based education is...

- Specific learning targets for what students should know and be able to do to get credit.
- Assessment, support, and monitoring of individual students' progress as they work toward meeting these targets.
- Requirement that students demonstrate mastery of competencies before they can earn credit and advance.
- Flexible pacing and progress (both extended or accelerated).<sup>8</sup>

Alternatively...

- Students advance upon demonstrated mastery.
- Competencies include explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives that empower students.
- Assessment is meaningful and a positive learning experience for students.
- Students receive timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs.
- Learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include application and creation of knowledge, along with the development of important skills and dispositions.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Haynes, E., Zeiser, K., Surr, W., Hauser, A., Clymer, L., Walston, J., Bitter, C., et al. (2016). *Looking under the hood of competency-based education: The relationships between competency-based education practices and students' learning skills, behaviors, and dispositions*. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research. Retrieved from <http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/CBE-Study%20Full%20Report.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> International Association for K–12 Online Learning. (2012). *What is competency education?* Vienna, VA: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.competencyworks.org/about/competency-education/>

## Handout 1C. Detailed Agenda for Stakeholder Convening

Agenda Item	Time	Slides	Activities	Materials Needed
Welcome, Introduction, and Agenda	15 min.	1–7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brief introductions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agenda</li> <li>Poll everywhere (optional)</li> </ul>
Build Stakeholder Knowledge of Competency-Based Education (CBE) and Articulation Agreements	30 min.	8–15	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>
Confirm Stakeholder Commitment to the Project and Their Roles	30 min.	16–24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group activity: Commitment to the work</li> </ul>	<i>N/A</i>
Explore Competency-Based Articulation Agreements Within the State Policy Landscape	45 min.	25–32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part 1 of Handout 1D: Contextualizing Competency-Based Education</li> <li>Part 2 of Handout 1D: Contextualizing Articulation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chart paper</li> </ul>
<i>Break</i>	15 min.	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>N/A</i>
Establish a Shared Vision of Competency-Based Articulation Agreements	45 min.	33–35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Handout 1E: Setting a Vision for Competency-Based Articulation Agreements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chart paper</li> </ul>
Assess the Readiness of the State to Design and Develop Competency-Based Articulation Agreements	45 min.	36–38	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Handout 1F: Competency-Based Articulation Readiness Assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chart paper</li> <li>Table on Slide 29</li> </ul>
Recap and Next Steps	15 min.	39–43	<i>N/A</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chart paper</li> </ul>

## Handout 1D. Contextualizing Competency-Based Articulation Agreements

Use the tables and following questions to identify varying approaches to developing competency-based articulation agreements. After reading through the tables in small groups, assign a note taker to record the responses to the following questions and a presenter to share the viewpoint of the small group to the entire stakeholder committee.

### Part 1: Contextualizing Competency-Based Education

**Instructions:** Read Table 1, describing varying approaches to developing competency-based articulation agreements. Record the answers to the questions on the next page and then present the small-group responses to the stakeholder committee.

**Table 1. Approaches to Developing Instructional Models and Evidence of Learning Supportive of Competency-Based Articulation Agreements**

	<b>Traditional Articulation</b>	<b>Hybrid-Flex Approach</b>	<b>Competency-Based Education Approach</b>
<b>Instructional Model(s)</b>	Traditional classroom-based experiences (e.g., all students learn at the same pace, test at the same time, etc.). Instruction ends at the end of a traditional academic calendar (e.g., at the end of a grading period).	A few selected and preapproved workplace, applied learning, online or blended-learning courses, and other personalized educational experiences may be taken in lieu of a traditional, classroom-based course. Students must still demonstrate mastery on an approved competency-based assessment before earning credit. May take place within or outside of the traditional academic calendar.	Students learn at their own pace through a range of options (e.g., traditional courses, work-based learning, applied learning, and online or blended learning environment) as they strive to gain competencies. Students can demonstrate mastery at any time.

	<b>Traditional Articulation</b>	<b>Hybrid-Flex Approach</b>		<b>Competency-Based Education Approach</b>
<b>Evidence of Learning</b>	Student performance on coursework and/or end-of-course assessments results in grades and/or credits for specified courses.	<b>Multiple Options for Earning Credit</b>		Students are assessed through a variety of preapproved assessments that may include traditional tests as well as performance tasks, portfolios, observations, and/or badges/certificates.
		Credit awarded in the form of grades and/or credits for completion of traditional or specified courses.	Students test out of a course and earn credit by demonstrating competency through demonstrating proficiency on an approved test or other type of assessment in lieu of taking the course.	
		<b>OR</b>		

1. Measured against the framework of Table 1, what is the status of CBE in your state, district, or school today?
  
2. What other state policy priorities can benefit from or be supported by furthering the adoption of CBE in your state, district, or school?
  - a. What policies would be supportive of CBE?
  
  - b. What resources would be needed to support CBE?
  
  - c. What practices or professional development would be helpful for supporting CBE?
  
3. What obstacles do you anticipate to the adoption of competency-based education?

## Part 2: Contextualizing Articulation

**Instructions:** Read Table 2, describing varying approaches to developing competency-based articulation agreements. Record the answers to the questions on the next page and then present the small-group responses to the stakeholder committee.

**Table 2. Approaches to P-20 Alignment and Transitions Supportive of Competency-Based Articulation Agreements**

	<b>Traditional Articulation</b>	<b>Hybrid-Flex Approach</b>	<b>Competency-Based Education Approach</b>
<b>P-20 Alignment</b>	Students participate in a nonduplicative sequence of courses between secondary and postsecondary levels.	Students participate in a nonduplicative sequence of courses with one or more of these courses able to be satisfied by students demonstrating competencies. The demonstration of competencies is considered the equivalent of a traditional course credit in the sequence.	Students demonstrate mastery within a nonduplicative sequence of defined competences, earning the equivalence of course credit for each competency they meet.
<b>Transitions</b>	Postsecondary institution(s) approve of courses and accept grades/credits for these courses, leading toward a degree or certificate.	Postsecondary institution(s) approve of courses and a set of assessments that can be used in lieu of courses to recognize competency equivalent to these courses. Both approved courses and approved assessments that serve as credit equivalents lead toward a degree or certificate.	Postsecondary institution(s) approve of the assessments for required competencies that serve as credit equivalents, leading toward a degree or certificate.

1. Measured against the framework of Table 2, what is the status of articulation in your state today?
  
2. What other state policy priorities can benefit from or be supported by furthering the adoption of competency-based articulation in your state?
  - a. What state policies would be supportive of competency-based articulation agreements?
  
  - b. What resources would be needed to support articulation?
  
3. What obstacles do you anticipate to designing and implementing competency-based articulation agreements?
  - a. What institutional policies do you anticipate might inhibit designing or implementing competency-based articulation agreements?
  
  - b. What industry or postsecondary, if any, might pose a challenge in designing or implementing competency-based articulation agreements?

## Handout 1E. Setting a Vision for Competency-Based Articulation Agreements

**Instructions:** In small groups, select three to six policy approaches that the group discussed during Contextualizing Competency-Based Articulation Agreements, Parts 1 and 2. For each approach:

1. Rate the approach based on importance, feasibility, and overall priority. The rating is a simple 1 to 3 scale with 1 being low and 3 being high (e.g., a score of 1 for feasibility indicates that the approach would take a significant amount of effort to be put in place).
2. In the notes section, write a short justification for the rating and identify any additional connections to existing initiatives or priorities.

Approach	Importance			Feasibility			Overall Priority		
	1 Low	2	3 High	1 Low	2	3 High	1 Low	2	3 High
<i>Example Approach: Entrance requirements will be based on course content.</i>			X		X				X
Notes: <i>Identify connections to existing initiatives or priorities.</i>	<i>The governor's education agenda includes a priority for raising the bar for high school graduation requirements. Basing secondary graduation and college entrance requirements on course content is a way to accomplish this objective.</i>			<i>Although a number of colleges and universities have prioritized CBE, only a few school districts have to date. K–12 educators and college admissions offices will need to agree on the types of competencies students will be expected to master.</i>			<i>This is a high priority for the state. The governor's education agenda includes separate priorities for developing career pathways and individualized learning. We need to find a way to accomplish both.</i>		

Approach	Importance			Feasibility			Overall Priority		
	1 Low	2	3 High	1 Low	2	3 High	1 Low	2	3 High
Approach:									
Notes: <i>Identify connections to existing initiatives or priorities.</i>									
Approach:									
Notes: <i>Identify connections to existing initiatives or priorities.</i>									
Approach:									
Notes: <i>Identify connections to existing initiatives or priorities.</i>									
Approach:									
Notes: <i>Identify connections to existing initiatives or priorities.</i>									
Approach:									
Notes: <i>Identify connections to existing initiatives or priorities.</i>									

Approach	Importance			Feasibility			Overall Priority		
	1 Low	2	3 High	1 Low	2	3 High	1 Low	2	3 High
Approach:									
Notes: <i>Identify connections to existing initiatives or priorities.</i>									
Approach:									
Notes: <i>Identify connections to existing initiatives or priorities.</i>									
Approach:									
Comments: <i>Identify connections to existing initiatives or priorities.</i>									

## Handout 1F. Competency-Based Articulation Readiness Assessment

This self-assessment tool is based on one developed by North Carolina New Schools through consultation with 2Revs, Achieve Inc., the Chief Council of State School Officers, and the Maine Department of Education. The readiness assessment is designed to be used by a state-level team in the process of furthering the competency-based education system. The tool is organized into four categories: planning, policies, practices, and partnerships. Rate each component to identify which specific resources and guidance need support prior to or during the design and development of competency-based articulation agreements.

**Table 1. Competency-Based Articulation Readiness Assessment Checklist**

Phase	Consideration	Yes	In Progress	No	Notes
Planning	Have K–12 and postsecondary education partners come to agreement on state graduation and college entrance requirements to the state system of higher education?				
	Have postsecondary programs reviewed and accepted the content of transcripts, assessments, grading, and progression of competencies?				
	Does the state have the technological capacity to share information about students’ mastery of competencies?				
	Have individual school districts conducted outreach to appropriate stakeholders (e.g., students, parents, local businesses, etc.) about the need for and adoption of competency-based education?				

Phase	Consideration	Yes	In Progress	No	Notes
	Does the state have a process for adopting articulation agreements between individual districts and institutions of higher education or at the statewide level?				
<b>Policies</b>	Has the state adopted seat-time flexibility policies at the state or individual district level?				
	Has the state conducted a review of existing policies to determine which will be likely be affected by adopting competency-based education?				
	Has the state reviewed policies of other states or individual districts that have adopted competency-based education and/or articulation agreements?				
	Does the state have a uniform approach to certifying dual or concurrent enrollment courses?				

Phase	Consideration	Yes	In Progress	No	Notes
	Have partners from K–12 and postsecondary education determined a shared definition of competency?				

Phase	Consideration	Yes	In Progress	No	Notes
Practices	Are different programs using the same approach to competency-based education (e.g., career and technical education versus general education)?				
	Have teachers been provided professional development related to competency-based education (e.g., provided differentiated instruction, conducting online and blended learning, writing and scoring rubrics, etc.)?				
	Do teachers have access to professional development on designing lessons aligned to competencies?				
	Do teachers have access to professional development on designing instructional units aligned with the district's or state's graduation standards and performance indicators?				
	Do teachers have access to professional development on aligning competencies with college- and career-ready standards (e.g., Common Core State Standards, Common Career Technical Standards, Next Generation Science Standards, etc.)?				
	Do teachers have access to professional development on developing assessments to that support competency-based education (e.g., performance or portfolio assessments)?				
	Do school districts provide opportunities for faculty to collaborate on the design of assessments aligned to competencies?				
	Have districts identified graduation standards for each content area?				
	Are graduation requirements aligned with state learning standards?				
	Have institutions of higher education reviewed and approved of state or district graduation requirements aligned with competency-based education standards?				

Phase	Consideration	Yes	In Progress	No	Notes
Partnerships	Have leaders from K–12 and postsecondary education committed to a competency-based education model for at least some students?				
	Have representatives of teacher preparation programs been included in the planning of competency-based education models and strategies?				
	Does the state or do individual school districts and institutions of higher education have communication plans for reaching out to parents, businesses, and members of the community about competency-based education?				

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