

CBCS at undergraduate level

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The UGC has adopted Choice Based Credit System in 2015 to bring a paradigm shift in higher education in the country. CBCS is widely believed to be much more student-centric than the earlier system. Bodoland University and Assam University have adopted CBCS at the undergraduate (UG) level in 2018-19. Dibrugarh and Gauhati universities have decided to introduce CBCS at the UG level from the current academic session (2019-20). Starting in August next, all the colleges of the State will be offering courses under CBCS.

CBCS is a much more flexible system under which, in addition to dedicated focus on a discipline through core papers, the students can choose intra-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary and skill-based courses. To bridge the increasing gap between an undergraduate degree and employability, CBCS gives special emphasis on ability enhancement and skill development of students through elective courses which every student is required to study. CBCS also seeks to introduce a uniform grading system in the country to assess performance of students which will benefit not only the students but also the potential employers. Inter-institutional mobility of students is another main feature of CBCS. A student during the course of pursuing his study in one institution is allowed to migrate

to another institution and the grade sheet. The UGC is currently working on the formation of a 'National Academic Credit Bank' which will give much more choice and flexibility to the students.

Under the scheme of CBCS, the courses to be studied by the students are as follows:

The Core Courses are discipline specific compulsory papers to be studied by the students. The papers under this category are to be taught uniformly across all universities in the country to bring uniformity in curriculum. Universities are allowed deviation only up to 30% from the draft syllabi given by UGC. The Elective Course consists of two types of courses under CBCS. In the Discipline Specific Elective (DSE) Courses, papers are to be chosen by the students from their core discipline(s) of study. There will be Generic Elective (GE) courses wherein the elective papers are not related to core discipline(s) chosen by a student. This will give the students exposure beyond their main discipline of choice. The Ability Enhancement Courses (AEC) are designed to enhance ability and skill of the students. Under the Ability Enhancement Compulsory Courses (AECC), all the students will have to compulsorily study one course on English/MIL

Courses (SEC), all the students will have to choose and complete some courses on skill.

Unlike the core courses, the universities have full freedom of designing the curriculum and content of the courses under DSEs, GEs or AECs. Alternately, the universities can also adopt these courses from the suggested syllabi of the UGC.

The notion of 'credit' is integral to CBCS. Credit is defined by hours of instruction in the classroom. One credit means one hour of instruction per week for theory class or one hour of instruction per

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week for tutorial class or two hours of instruction per week for practical class. All Core, DSE and GE courses will have six credits per course/paper. The ability enhancement and skill courses, on the other hand, will have four credits per course/paper. While the AECC

will be awarded an UG Honours degree if she/he completes 14 core papers from his main discipline

For an Honours degree, the minimum requirement of credit is 148 and for a Regular degree, the minimum credit requirement is 132. Under CBCS, the UGC has made provisions for the students to learn additional courses and earn extra credit. An Honours student can take up courses up to 160 credits and a regular student up to 140 credits by opting additional courses as per their choice.

Currently, there is no uniformity among the universities in the

evaluating process to assess performance of students in examinations. The UGC thought of the urgency of bringing uniformity in grading system under CBCS across the country and recommended an internationally-accepted relative grading formula for adoption by the universities. This formula is based on simple statistical techniques of 'Average or Mean' and 'Standard Deviation'. Under this, the performance of a student in a paper is judged relatively in the

closed group of students appearing in the examination of that particular paper. There will be no fixed 'pass marks' under the relative grading system and it will vary from course to course or paper to paper. If most of the students relatively do well in a paper, then the percentage of marks required to

performance of the students, sometimes it can be very low. This relative grading system, thus, takes care of the variation in the toughness of the question papers. Under this system, since the percentage of marks at which a student can pass a course/paper is not known beforehand, the students will be forced to study hard. In CBCS, the Semester Grade Point Average (SGPA) and Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) will be estimated and reflected in the semester grade sheet and final grade sheet respectively based on performance on all the courses (Core, AECC, SEC, DSE and GE) undertaken by a student. Thus, Environmental Studies, which was a non credit paper earlier, will carry credit under CBCS.

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Undoubtedly, there will be some teething problems while shifting to a new system. Apparently, the benefits of CBCS to the students will be much more and proper implementation will definitely usher in a new era in the higher education