



RETROSPECTIVE INVESTIGATION OF CHOICE BASED CREDIT SYSTEM AT UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL: A STUDY

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Introduction:

Given the shortcomings of the conventional approach, which places a strong emphasis on the teacher and emphasises rote memory and distances students from using their cognitive abilities, CBCS adopts an interdisciplinary approach and integrates ideas, theories, methods, and perspectives from two or more disciplines in order to advance basic understanding and address issues (Kelkar, 2014). In order to guarantee quality in higher education, India also adopted the CBCS (UGC: 2008). Prior to the CBCS, the higher education curriculum in India was unable to adequately impart the skills that would make the students employable, the system lacked an interdisciplinary approach, and there was very little opportunity for value-based courses to be taught (Wanchoo, 2015). While the CBCS aims to introduce a multidisciplinary approach to undergraduate and postgraduate curricula, it also gives students a wide range of mobility opportunities by enabling them to transfer credits earned in one school to another (Hanchinalkar, 2008). The CBCS gives students the opportunity to select courses from among a variety of courses that are evaluated using unusual grading criteria in order to improve their performance on examinations. According to UGC, students using this method can choose the courses they want to take, study at their own pace, enrol in extra courses, and earn more credit than is necessary. It has also recommended that it is desirable for all institutions of Higher Education in the country to move to a CBCS and, together with it, implement a uniform grading system. This mechanism will make it easier for students to move between educational institutions both inside and outside of the country.

Genesis of Choice Based Credit System in Gauhati University

In its most recent initiative, Gauhati University introduced the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS), which enables a student to obtain a degree by accruing the necessary number of credits prescribed for that degree. This method's origins can be linked to the "Cafeteria system," which was popular in the West. The grading method is thought to be "better" and "preferred" because it will help students move around more easily. It is clear that the primary goals of the Choice Based Credit System are to assure regular curriculum updates, implement a course credit system, increase reliance on internal evaluation, promote research, and improve institutional governance. Gauhati University implemented the CBCS system at under graduate level from the academic session of 2019 across all disciplines by following the Regulations of the Under Graduate Choice Based Credit System (UGCBCS) Gauhati University, 2019.

Basic structure of Choice Based Credit System

Under the UGCBCS Regulations, 2018, Gauhati University has adopted the undergraduate Choice Based Credit System. The institution has made every effort to follow the Instructional Template made available by UGC. The programmes that Gauhati University offers will adhere to the following standards.

- ❖ Gauhati University shall follow the UGC-established common minimum curriculum and core paper syllabi. The content of the core papers may deviate up to 30% from the norm.
- ❖ The university will create its own syllabi for the elective papers through the Under Graduate Committee of Courses and Studies (UG-CCS). The UG-CCS may select elective courses from the UGC's list or, alternatively, frame courses autonomously in accordance with their areas of expertise and infrastructure.
- ❖ As per University guideline Ability Enhancement Courses will be divided into two categories: Ability Enhancement Compulsory Courses of one paper each in the twosemesters consisting of
 - (i) English/MIL Communication
 - (ii) Environmental Science.

Skill Enhancement Courses will be offered by affiliated colleges from the UGC list. Alternately colleges may develop these courses on the basis of local expertise and market demand and these courses must have prior approval of the Academic Council.

Basic Features of CBCS include the Following

- **Semesters:** Each year is separated into two semesters, and student evaluations are completed semester by semester. The calculation of a student's progress is based on the courses taken rather than the length of time required to finish them, such as three years for science, arts, and commerce or four years for engineering, etc. There will be 15–18 weeks of academic instruction and evaluation in each semester, or 90 teaching days. The curriculum can be made up anyway you choose, and credits can be given depending on teaching hours and course material.
- **Credit System:** Each course is given a specific number of credits. The student receives the credits for that course when he successfully completes it. A student does not have to retake a course if they pass it once throughout the semester. Students can earn credits at their own pace by taking as much time as they need.
- **Provision of Credit Transfer:** Students have the option to study fewer courses and earn less credits in order to make up the difference in the next semester if, for whatever reason, they are unable to manage their course load or if they become ill. The remaining credits may potentially be taken at another college by the student.
- **Comprehensive Continuous Assessment:** Through assignments, open-book exams, and semester-ending exams, students are continuously evaluated by teachers as well as by themselves.
- **Credit Counting:** In the credit system, one credit is equal to one hour of instruction per semester, which may comprise a lecture (L), a tutorial (T), or two hours of practical work or fieldwork (P). A study course may contain all L components, all T components, all P components, a combination of any two components, or all three components. Each semester, a student earns L+T+P credits in total.
- **Allotment of Grading:** UGC has introduced a 10-point grading system in CBCS to allot grading as shown in the following table 1.

Table 1: Allotment of Grading in CBCS as per UGC guidelines

| S.No. | Letter Grade | Grade | Grade Point |
|-------|--------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1 | O | Outstanding | 10 |
| 2 | A+ | Excellent | 9 |
| 3 | A | Very Good | 8 |
| 4 | B+ | Good | 7 |
| 5 | B | Above Average | 6 |
| 6 | C | Average | 5 |
| 7 | P | Pass | 4 |
| 8 | F | Fail | 0 |
| 9 | Ab | Absent | 0 |

Analysis of CBCS

Strength of CBCS:

- ✓ Emphasis on ongoing evaluation and student-centricity,
- ✓ More elective courses.
- ✓ The option to select a dissertation or project,
- ✓ The ability to transfer credits between universities
- ✓ Loss of year/semester due to attendance shortage in any one subject is avoided. Student who fails to maintain required attendance in one subject has to reappear only for that subject in order to clear the entire course.

Weaknesses CBCS:

- ✓ Less emphasis on and credit for core areas or primary subjects.
- ✓ Students must take languages at a higher education level.
- ✓ The option to take courses according to their ability and pace is limited. There is no freedom for the first year student to take an advanced course or a third year student to take an introductory course.
- ✓ Students are compelled to be inside the classroom for the entire five hour per day schedule leaving no scope for independent study.

Opportunities for CBCS:

- ✓ Students can choose papers outside of their core area so that they can be specialised in multi-discipline.
- ✓ Students have opportunity to take extra credits more than minimum requirement to complete the course which will give weightage to encashing further opportunities.
- ✓ Higher education gradings are acceptable internationally so that students can compete international opportunities.
- ✓ Credit-transfer opportunity and possibility of taking different courses in different colleges simultaneously to complete the total credit requirement within minimum period.

Challenges for CBCS:

- ✓ For any new system, usually there will be a strong resistance to change from every quarter of the academic world.
- ✓ Accepting grade points in subject instead of marks and letter grade instead of exact total marks is difficult due to the fact that allotment of individual ranking is not possible by merely referring grade points and letter grades.
- ✓ Opportunity to take credits outside the core subject area may dilute the depth in core area of studies.
- ✓ Students may face dilemma in choosing the subjects due to their inexperience in predicting future demand.

Conclusion

The primary goal of choice-based education is to expand academic excellence in all spheres, from the micro level, such as core curriculum, to the macro level, such as learning-teaching process, examination, and evaluation systems. Paradoxically, however, the CBCS appears to limit the role of education from promoting the development of well-rounded individuals to training for marketable skilled workforce. Therefore, the CBCS is positioned to exacerbate the issues currently present in higher education rather than addressing the system's fundamental shortcomings. In conclusion, it can be argued that success requires hard work and perseverance, consistent efforts, willpower, motivation, and inspiration. Since the CBCS is still in its early stages, nothing has been lost. We may cross the finish line by working together with all interested parties and taking into account social, political, economic, and geographic variables in this academic trip.

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