



## A NOTE ON CHOICE BASED CREDIT SYSTEM

**DR. C. SIVA SANKAR** <sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPT. OF EDUCATION, RAJIV GANDHI UNIVERSITY, DOIMUKH -791112, ARUNACHAL PRADESH, INDIA

### ABSTRACT:

Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) is well designed and comprehensive education system to meet needs of individual and society and provides positive learning environment for innovations. It is flexible system through which learner can learn at their own phase. It provides wider choices to select elective courses from wide range of courses and forms foundation for skill acquisition. This paper reflects on conceptual frame work, need of CBCS, types of courses in CBCS, evaluation pattern in CBCS and certain issues in CBCS.

### KEYWORDS:

HIGHER EDUCATION, CBCS, SGPA, CGPA.

### INTRODUCTION:

India is the third largest system of higher education in the world in terms of number of learners, teachers, institutions, programmes and diversity. Indian higher education system has expanded from mere 20 universities to 719 universities consisting 220 state universities, 128 deemed to be universities, 46 central universities and 215 private universities. Out of 220 state universities, there are 13 open universities and one Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) (Saroja, 2015). In India, F2F class room system at higher level is based on monolithic repository of knowledge through chalk and talk method. The methods of transacting curriculum have failed to increase productivity or to encourage creativity. We have been failing to reach the global standards with regard to equity, expansion, excellence and efficiency.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has been initiating certain measures in higher education system in order to accomplish quality and equality as well as to promote excellence in higher education. It has been trying to bring innovative changes in curriculum, teaching methods, learning approaches, examination and evaluation systems. Other regulatory bodies of higher education such as AICTE, NCTE, MCI, BCI, and NCI are also continuously striving to improve efficacy of system through various educational reforms at higher level. New policies and practices have been taken place to promote quality research, innovation, accountability and transparent governance. CBCS is one of the best practices to meet needs of the society and global aspirations.

CBCS is a potential innovation to bring spectacular and radical reforms in higher education. It is a comprehensive intervention to meet global changes. Before implementing this system, UGC has initiated to conduct nine workshops on CBCS in Pondicherry, New Delhi, Varanasi, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Ahmadabad, Jaipur and Srinagar

during March-April, 2015 in order to know the strengths and weaknesses of CBCS. UGC invited interactive meetings with MHRD officials, Vice-Chancellors, principals, senior faculty and functionaries at national level. From the interactive meetings, it is accepted that CBCS can empower students globally through broad based learning and multidisciplinary approach. Thus, UGC has initiated to introduce CBCS at higher level. CBCS is well designed and comprehensive education system to meet needs of individual and society and provides positive learning environment for innovations. It is flexible system through which learner can learn at their own pace. It provides wider choices to select elective courses from wide range of courses and forms foundation for skill.

### THE IMPORTANT FEATURES OF CBCS ARE:

1. It is paradigm shift from teacher centric education to learner centric education where student chooses courses of his/her choice.
2. It is broad based knowledge with global standards where student can opt for unique combinations like physics with education, microbiology with chemistry etc.
3. It facilitates accumulation of credits. Learners can opt for as much credit worth courses as they can cope up with one semester conveniently.
4. It facilitates for credit transfer. It allows learner mobility with flexibility to study at different institutions in country or abroad to complete one programme.
5. It allows intra disciplinary and inter disciplinary and skill based courses (even from discipline other than core according to need, interest and aptitude.
6. It connects with semester system to equate with international educational system.
7. It is continuous and term end evaluation with transition from 1-100 point numerical assessment and three

categories to 1-10 point grading assessment.

8. It contains modularity with options for multiple entry and exit point at different stages.

UGC emphasized the importance of choice based credit system in higher education in the context of globalization and liberalization. CBCS aims at universalisation of education to facilitate mobility of students to other universities in India and abroad by way of credit transfer system, provide flexibility to the students in terms choice of courses and to bring uniformity in assessment and grading across institutes of higher education in the country.

CBCS follows cafeteria approaches wherein the student can choose courses of their choices and study at their own pace. CBCS aims at (Saroja, 2015):

- 1) Making students learn at their own pace
- 2) Enabling students to choose from a wide range of courses
- 3) Undergoing additional courses and acquire more than required number of credits
- 4) Adopting an interdisciplinary approach in learning
- 5) Inter college/ university transfer of credits
- 6) Completing a part of programme in a parent institute and get enrolled in another institution for specialized courses
- 7) Enhancing skill or employability by taking up project work, entrepreneurship and vocational training
- 8) Making best use of the expertise of available faculty
- 9) Bridge the gap between professional and liberal education
- 10) Improving the employability of students
- 11) Promoting students mobility-horizontal as well as vertical
- 12) Collaboration with industry and foreign partners to foster innovative possibilities.

#### **NEED OF CBCS:**

In the light of diversity of higher education system, universities of India have been implementing various strategies and approaches in examination system and evaluation system. HEIs have freedom in framing curriculum with new teaching- learning methods, as well as the examination and evaluation methods. But, it is the need of the hour to formulate sensible system for awarding the grades based on the performance of students. Presently, the performance of the students is being reflected through marking system or grading system or both. The conversion from marks to letter grades and the letter grades used vary widely across the HEIs in the country. This creates difficulty for the academia and the employers to understand and infer the performance of the students graduating from different universities and colleges based on grades. The grading system is considered to be better than the conventional marks

system and hence, it has been followed in the top institutions in India and abroad. So, it is desirable to introduce uniform grading system. This will facilitate student mobility across institutions within and across countries and also enable potential employers to assess the performance of students. To bring in the desired uniformity, in grading system and method for computing the cumulative grade point average (CGPA) based on the performance of students in the examinations, the UGC has formulated guidelines on CBCS. CBCS seeks holistic development of learners by offering opportunities to learn core, elective and skill based courses. It brings gap between educational degree and employability. It is expected to empower learner in pursuit of excellence and development of competencies through CBCS.

The present educational system has lost its relevance and applicability in the light of liberalization, privatization and globalization. There is less chance to promote creativity, culture, spirit and enthusiasm to generate new ideas and innovation with present system. There is less chance to promote critical thinking and creative thinking abilities among younger pupils. There is no flexibility, in depth analytical study, flow of knowledge, choice of pace and broad based learning. CBCS is capable of desirable transformation. It provides learning avenues to meet scholastic needs and aspirations. It offers flexibility in opting for elective subjects on choice. It looks into all round development of the learner (Chahal, 2016). Actually, CBCS was adopted in agricultural universities on land grant pattern in India in 1962. Some other HEIs like University of Madras, Guru Nanak Dev University, Pondicherry University and Tirunelveli University also adopted CBCS before UGC's initiation. Now, it has been introduced by UGC from academic session 2015-16 with a view to bring uniform system all over the country. It is acceptable fact that CBCS also helps in continuous and comprehensive evaluation.

#### **SEMESTER SYSTEM AND CHOICE BASED CREDIT SYSTEM:**

The Indian Higher Education Institutions have been following semester system. Currently many of the institutions have already introduced the choice based credit system. The semester system accelerates the teaching-learning process and enables vertical and horizontal mobility in learning. The credit based semester system provides flexibility in designing curriculum and assigning credits based on the course content and hours of teaching. The choice based credit system provides a 'cafeteria' type approach in which the students can take courses of their choice, learn at their own pace, undergo additional courses and acquire more than the required credits, and adopt an interdisciplinary approach to learning. It is desirable that the HEIs move to CBCS and implement the grading system.

#### **TYPES OF COURSES IN CBCS:**

Courses in CBCS can be classified into three types namely; 1) Core Courses, 2) Elective Courses and 3) Foundation

Courses.

**1) CORE COURSES:** These are basic and essential courses for fulfilling the requirements of a programme. It has two forms. a) *Core Compulsory* and b) *Core Allied*

a) *Core Compulsory:* Any course prescribed to be studied compulsorily for fulfillment of a programme.

b) *Core allied:* A course required to be studied for fulfillment of a programme but chosen from a pool of courses from allied discipline supporting the main discipline.

**2) ELECTIVE COURSES:** They are optional and selected from pool of courses which are supportive and expand scope of the discipline. Students may opt other discipline which enhance proficiency, skill and open thinking. Elective courses can be divided into three types: a) *Generic Elective* b) *Discipline Centric* and c) *Open Elective*

a) *Generic elective:* Focusing on those courses which add generic proficiency

b) *Discipline Centric:* Courses from within discipline can be chosen. This is called elective subjects.

c) *Open Elective:* Chosen from unrelated subjects.

**3) FOUNDATION COURSES:** These courses lead to knowledge enhancement and personality development. These may be mandatory for all disciplines and these promote character education. These can be divided into two types.

a) *Compulsory Foundation:* Focus on knowledge enhancement and mandatory for all disciplines.

b) *Elective Foundation:* It is valued based education and for man making education.

### EXAMINATION AND EVALUATION PATTERN:

The HEIs are currently following various methods for examination and assessment suitable for the courses and programmes as approved by their respective statutory bodies. In assessing the performance of the students in examinations, the usual approach is to award marks based on the examinations conducted at various stages (sessional, mid-term, end-semester etc.,) in a semester. Some of the HEIs convert these marks to letter grades based on absolute or relative grading system and award the grades. There is a marked variation across the colleges and universities in the number of grades, grade points, letter grades used, which creates difficulties in comparing students across the institutions. The UGC recommends the following system to be implemented in awarding the grades, SGPA AND CGPA under the credit based semester system.

### GRADES AND GRADE POINTS:

Grade is the index of performance of the students in a course. In the process of enhancing the level of objectivity in measuring the intellectual status of the students, the marks are converted into grades after scientific normalized procedure. Grade is the transformation of scaled marks secured by a student in a particular course.

Grade point is numerical weightage attached to each grade on 10 point scale depending on the range of marks awarded in a course.

There are two methods in grading namely; a) relative grading and b) absolute grading. The relative grading is based on the distribution (usually normal distribution) of marks obtained by all the students of the course and the grades are awarded based on a cut-off marks or percentile. Under the absolute grading, the marks are converted to grades based on pre-determined class intervals. To implement the following grading system, the colleges and universities can use any one of the above methods. But, there is large variation across all colleges and universities in defining grades and grade points. Hence, the UGC recommends a 10-point grading system with the following letter grades as given below:

**TABLE 1: GRADES AND GRADE POINTS:**

Letter Grade	Grade Point
O (Out Standing)	10
A+(Excellent)	9
A(Very Good)	8
B+(Good)	7
B(Above Average)	6
C	5
P	4
F	0
Ab	0

UGC reports that a student obtaining Grade F shall be considered failed and will be required to reappear in the examination. For non credit courses 'Satisfactory' or 'Unsatisfactory' shall be indicated instead of the letter grade and this will not be counted for the computation of SGPA/CGPA. The Universities can decide on the grade or percentage of marks required to pass in a course and also the CGPA required to qualify for a degree taking into consideration the recommendations of the statutory professional councils such as AICTE, MCI, BCI, NCTE etc.,

The statutory requirement for eligibility to enter as assistant professor in colleges and universities in the disciplines of arts, science, commerce etc., is a minimum average mark of 50% and 55% in relevant postgraduate degree respectively for reserved and general category. Hence, it is recommended that the cut-off marks for grade B shall not be less than 50% and for grade B+, it should not be less than 55% under the absolute grading system. Similarly cut-off marks shall be fixed for grade B and B+ based on the recommendation of the statutory bodies (AICTE, NCTE etc.,) of the relevant disciplines.

### FAIRNESS IN EVALUATION:

Evaluation is an integral part of system of education as it is instrumental in identifying and certifying the academic

standards accomplished by a student and projecting them far and wide as an objective and impartial indicator of a student's performance. Thus, it becomes bounden duty of a University to ensure that it is carried out in fair manner. In this regard, UGC recommends the following system of checks and balances which would enable Universities effectively and fairly carry out the process of assessment and examination.

i) In case of at least 50% of core courses offered in different programmes across the disciplines, the assessment of the theoretical component towards the end of the semester should be undertaken by external examiners from outside the university conducting examination, who may be appointed by the competent authority. In such courses, the question papers will be set as well as assessed by external examiners.

ii) In case of the assessment of practical component of such core courses, the team of examiners should be constituted on 50 – 50 % basis. i.e. half of the examiners in the team should be invited from outside the university conducting examination.

iii) In case of the assessment of project reports / thesis / dissertation etc. the work should be undertaken by internal as well as external examiners.

**COMPUTATION OF SGPA AND CGPA**

The UGC recommends the following procedure to compute the Semester Grade Point

Average (SGPA) and Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA):

i) SGPA: it is the ratio of sum of the product of the number of credits with the grade Points scored by a student in all the courses taken by a student and the sum of the number of credits of all the courses undergone by a student

$$SGPA (Si) = \frac{\sum(Ci \times Gi)}{\sum Ci}$$

Where, Ci is the number of credits of the ith course and

Gi is the grade point scored by the student in the ith course.

ii) CGPA: it is also calculated in the same manner taking into account all the courses

Under gone by a student over all the semesters of a programme.

$$CGPA = \frac{\sum(Ci \times Si)}{\sum Ci}$$

Where, Si is the SGPA of the ith semester and Ci is the total number of credits in that semester.

iii) The SGPA and CGPA shall be rounded off to 2 decimal points and reported in the transcripts.

**Illustration of Computation of SGPA and CGPA**

**1. Illustration for SGPA**

Course	Credit	Grade	Grade point	Credit Point (Credit x Grade)
Course 1	3	A	8	3 X 8 = 24
Course 2	4	B+	7	4 X 7 = 28
Course 3	3	B	6	3 X 6 = 18
Course 4	3	O	10	3 X 10 = 30
Course 5	3	C	5	3 X 5 = 15
Course 6	4	B	6	4 X 6 = 24
	20			139

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Course 3	3	B	6	3 X 6 = 18
Course 4	3	O	10	3 X 10 = 30
Course 5	3	C	5	3 X 5 = 15
Course 6	4	B	6	4 X 6 = 24
	20			139

Thus, **SGPA = 139/20 = 6.95**

**2. Illustration for CGPA**

Semester 1	Credit : 20	Semester 2	Credit : 22	Semester 3	Credit : 25
	SGPA:6.9		SGPA:7.8		SGPA: 5.6
Semester 4	Credit : 26	Semester 5	Credit : 26	Semester 6	Credit : 25
	SGPA:6.0		SGPA:6.3		SGPA: 8.0

Thus, **CGPA = 20 x 6.9 + 22 x 7.8 + 25 x 5.6 + 26 x 6.0 + 26 x 6.3 + 25 x 8.0**

$$= \frac{144}{22.2} = 6.48$$

Transcript (Format): Based on the above recommendations on Letter grades, grade points and SGPA and CCPA, the HEIs may issue the transcript for each semester and a Consolidated transcript indicating the performance in all semesters.

**ISSUES:**

For success of CBCS, UGC must provide adequate competent and well trained human capital and sufficient physical infrastructure. CBCS in ODL system is also a challenging reform. Providing learner support services, arranging opportunities for and access to technology, developing reliable database on academic counseling, monitoring counseling sessions, practical sessions and continuous evaluation etc. are also certain challenges in ODL system with CBCS.

**CONCLUSION:**

For implementing CBCS successfully, first and foremost function is to give orientation for concerned teachers and other functionaries on CBCS. Harmonization of course curriculum, Uniformity in credit requirements for different study programmes, availability of text books relevant to CBCS, establishment of question banks, strengthening practical component for skill development, adoption of proper examination system, development of infrastructure etc are important things to be considered in implementation of CBCS.

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