



# **Competency-Based Assessment Models in Accounting Programs: Enhancing Professional Skills, Accountability, and Employability**

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## **Abstract**

The rapidly evolving business environment has significantly altered expectations from accounting graduates, placing greater emphasis on professional competencies rather than solely technical knowledge. In response, competency-based assessment (CBA) models have gained prominence in accounting education as an alternative to traditional content-driven evaluation systems. This paper examines the role of competency-based assessment models in accounting programs and explores how such models enhance students' professional skills, ethical reasoning, and employability. Drawing on an extensive review of academic literature, professional accounting standards, and global education frameworks, the study analyzes key competency domains, assessment strategies, and implementation challenges. The paper proposes an integrated competency-based assessment framework tailored for accounting education that aligns learning outcomes, pedagogy, and evaluation methods. The study concludes that competency-based assessment models improve learning relevance, support lifelong professional development, and better align accounting education with industry and societal expectations.

**Key Words:** Competency-Based Assessment, Accounting Education, Learning Outcomes, Professional Skills, Curriculum Design

## **Introduction**

Accounting education has traditionally relied on knowledge-based assessment methods such as written examinations and problem-solving tests. While these approaches effectively evaluate technical proficiency, they often fail to capture broader professional competencies required in contemporary accounting practice. Employers increasingly demand graduates who demonstrate analytical thinking, ethical judgment, communication skills, technological literacy, and adaptability in complex business environments.

In response to these changing expectations, competency-based education and assessment models have gained global attention. Professional accounting bodies such as IFAC, ACCA, CPA, and ICAI emphasize competency-based frameworks that integrate knowledge, skills, and professional values. This paper argues that competency-based assessment models are essential for aligning accounting education with professional practice and enhancing graduate employability. The study explores theoretical foundations, assessment approaches, challenges,

and future directions of competency-based assessment in accounting programs.

## **2. Conceptual Foundations of Competency-Based Assessment**

Competency-based assessment is grounded in the principle that learning outcomes should reflect demonstrable abilities rather than time-based or content-based achievement. Competencies are typically defined as a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and professional values that enable effective performance in real-world contexts.

In accounting education, competency frameworks often draw on outcome-based education, constructivist learning theory, and experiential learning theory. These perspectives emphasize active learning, authentic assessment, and continuous feedback. Competency-based assessment shifts the focus from what students know to what they can do with that knowledge, reinforcing accountability and professional readiness.

## **3. Competency Frameworks in Accounting Education**

Global accounting education standards increasingly adopt competency-based frameworks. The International Education Standards (IES) issued by IFAC identify technical competence, professional skills, and professional values as core domains. Similarly, the ACCA and CPA competency models emphasize ethics, communication, digital skills, and strategic thinking alongside technical accounting knowledge.

For accounting programs, these frameworks provide a structured basis for curriculum design and assessment alignment. Competency-based assessment ensures that graduates meet minimum professional standards while allowing flexibility in learning pathways.

## **4. Rationale for Competency-Based Assessment in Accounting Programs**

Competency-based assessment addresses several limitations of traditional evaluation systems. First, it enhances the relevance of assessment by linking learning outcomes to workplace expectations. Second, it supports holistic development by evaluating cognitive, behavioral, and ethical dimensions of learning. Third, it promotes transparency and consistency in grading through clearly defined performance criteria.

Moreover, competency-based assessment encourages student-centered learning by providing formative feedback and opportunities for self-reflection. These features are particularly valuable in accounting education, where professional judgment and ethical reasoning are critical.

## **5. Pedagogical Approaches Supporting Competency-Based Assessment**

### **5.1 Authentic and Performance-Based Assessment**

Authentic assessments such as case analyses, simulations, and role-plays enable students to demonstrate competencies in realistic contexts. These methods assess analytical ability, communication, and ethical decision-making simultaneously.

### **5.2 Portfolio-Based Assessment**

Learning portfolios allow students to document competency development over time through projects, reflections, and practical assignments. Portfolios provide a comprehensive view of student progress and support continuous assessment.

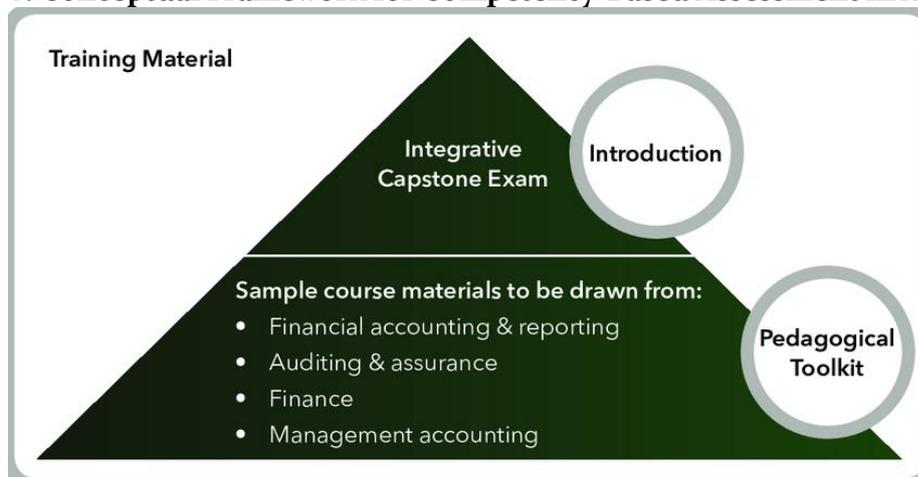
### 5.3 Rubric-Driven Evaluation

Clearly defined rubrics aligned with competency frameworks enhance assessment reliability and transparency. Rubrics help students understand performance expectations and facilitate consistent grading across instructors.

### 5.4 Technology-Enabled Assessment

Digital assessment platforms, learning analytics, and simulation software support scalable and data-driven competency evaluation. These tools are particularly useful for assessing complex skills such as data analysis and professional communication.

## 6. Conceptual Framework for Competency-Based Assessment in Accounting



## Outcome-Based Education

### Example of Assessment Methods for Program Outcome 2: Capability to Communicate Effectively

Performance Criteria	Subjects	Assessment Methods	Documents to be Kept
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Present and document ideas and experimental results properly documented in a specified format, and supported with evidence. The document must contain explanation with sufficient detail, with minimum grammatical and spelling errors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All Subjects- Lab Experiments, FYP, ITP, Mini Projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coursework and exam</li> <li>presentation of Final Year Project and Industrial Training reports</li> <li>Lab Reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exam scripts and assignment</li> <li>Final Year Project and Industrial Training reports and mark sheets, lab reports,</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use multimedia content in oral and visual communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPT4046 Final Year Project, EPT4066 Industrial Training</li> <li>Mini Project</li> <li>Other Seminars, and</li> <li>Meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation of Final Year Project, Industrial Training, Mini projects and other seminars</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final Year Project and Industrial Training, Mini Projects mark sheets, PowerPoint presentation slides. Attendance records in other seminars</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respond to audience's questions correctly and confidently</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPT4046 Final Year Project, EPT4066 Industrial Training,</li> <li>EPT3016 Mini Project,</li> <li>other seminars and</li> <li>meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation of Final Year Project, Industrial Training, Mini projects and other seminars</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final Year Project and Industrial Training, Mini Projects mark sheets, PowerPoint presentation slides. Student attendance records in other seminars</li> </ul>

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31

### Figure 1. Integrated Competency-Based Assessment Framework for Accounting Programs

The framework illustrates the alignment between competency domains, teaching strategies, assessment methods, and feedback mechanisms, emphasizing continuous learning and professional development.

#### 7. Curriculum Alignment and Implementation Strategies

Successful implementation of competency-based assessment requires curriculum alignment across courses and academic levels. Learning outcomes must explicitly reference competencies, and assessment methods should be mapped systematically to these outcomes. Faculty collaboration is essential to ensure consistency and coherence.

Assessment should be both formative and summative, allowing students multiple opportunities to demonstrate competency mastery. Industry engagement through internships, live projects, and guest evaluations further enhances assessment authenticity.

#### 8. Challenges in Implementing Competency-Based Assessment

Despite its advantages, competency-based assessment faces several challenges. Faculty resistance, increased workload, and lack of assessment expertise can hinder implementation. Developing valid and reliable assessment instruments for complex competencies such as ethics and judgment remains difficult.

Additionally, large class sizes and limited institutional resources may constrain personalized assessment and feedback. Addressing these challenges requires institutional support, faculty training, and investment in assessment infrastructure.

### **9. Role of Educators, Institutions, and Professional Bodies**

Accounting educators play a central role in designing and implementing competency-based assessments. Continuous professional development and collaboration with industry practitioners enhance assessment relevance. Institutions must support curriculum innovation, provide technological resources, and recognize assessment reform efforts.

Professional bodies can facilitate adoption by issuing clear competency guidelines, offering assessment tools, and aligning accreditation standards with competency-based education principles.

### **10. Future Directions and Policy Implications**

Future research should explore empirical evaluation of competency-based assessment effectiveness in accounting programs. Emerging areas such as digital accounting, sustainability reporting, and ESG assurance require new competency domains and assessment models.

Policymakers and accreditation agencies should encourage outcome-oriented assessment practices and provide flexibility for innovative evaluation methods. International collaboration can further harmonize competency standards across jurisdictions.

### **11. Conclusion**

Competency-based assessment models represent a transformative approach to evaluating learning in accounting programs. By focusing on demonstrable professional abilities, these models enhance learning relevance, ethical awareness, and employability. Integrating competency-based assessment into accounting education requires curriculum alignment, faculty engagement, and institutional commitment. Ultimately, such models contribute to the development of competent, adaptable, and socially responsible accounting professionals.

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