Micro-credentials: key concepts, definitions and principles

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# SHAPING THE CONCEPT OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS

Micro-credentials are mostly associated with existing credentials that certify:

Small learning experience

- upskilling/reskilling short courses (both in formal and non-formal settings)

- parts of formal education programmes (units of learning, modules)

Demonstrated competence

- professional certificates/ certificates of competence awarded by professional or other authorized bodies

- validation of non-formal and informal learning/ RPL
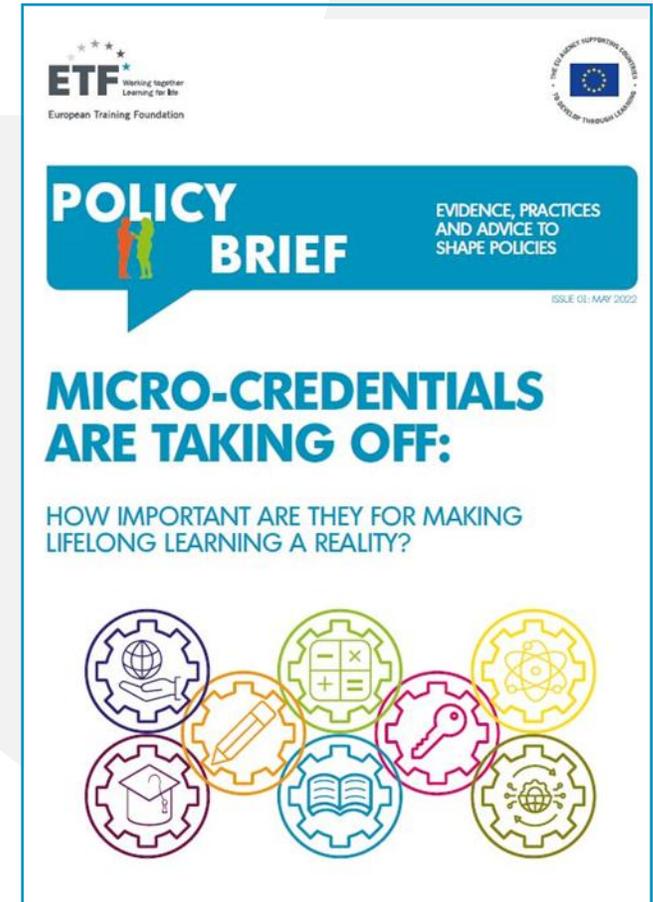
WHAT CREDENTIALS ARE NOT MICRO-CREDENTIALS?

A credential is not a micro-credential if it:

- does not include assessment of skills/ competences (assessed LO)

- is a full formal education qualification (macro-credential)

- has no standalone value (a meaningful unit of a qualification or complementary to it)

- is not subject to quality assurance process (or not awarded by a recognised body)

- does not represent a small volume of learning outcomes (a short period of learning)

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DEFINING MICRO-CREDENTIALS

UNESCO global definition (2022)

A micro-credential:

- is a record of **focused learning achievement** verifying what the learner knows, understands or can do;

- includes **assessment based on clearly defined standards** and is awarded by a **trusted provider**;

- has **stand-alone value** and may also **contribute to or complement other micro-credentials or macro-credentials**, including through **recognition of prior learning**; and

- meets the standards required by relevant **quality assurance**

European approach to micro-credentials (2022)

<u>Micro-credential</u> means **the record of the learning outcomes** that a learner has acquired following a *small volume of learning*:

- **Assessment:** These **learning outcomes** will have been assessed against transparent and **clearly defined criteria**

- **Skill or competency focused:** Learning experiences leading to micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competences

- **Relevant:** that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs

- **Stackable:** They may be stand-alone or combined into larger credentials

- **Quality:** They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity

HOW TO DESIGN A GOOD MICRO-CREDENTIAL?

Considerations for developing Micro-Credentials

Relevance

Learner Centricity

Learning Pathways

Collaborate actively with external stakeholders.

Address identified needs of specific target groups of learners,

Create or develop a micro-credentialing strategy for your institution.

Give learners the opportunity to follow micro-credentials in different ways, different times and different places.

Use or create mechanisms for learners to take agency to improve micro-credentials.

Design micro-credentials to support flexible learning pathways, including the possibility to validate, recognise and 'stack' micro-credentials from across different systems.

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HOW TO DESIGN A GOOD MICRO-CREDENTIAL?

Considerations for building trust in Micro-Credentials

Quality Assurance

Incorporate micro-credentials into your institutional quality assurance system.

Externally review the quality of your institution.

Publish methods and results of internal and external quality assurance.

Transparency

Publish the learning outcomes, notional workload and, where relevant, credit points of micro-credentials.

Publish information on micro-credentials using the standard model.

Reference learning outcomes to formal taxonomies such as skill or competence frameworks.

Integrate micro-credentials into national and regional qualifications frameworks.

Assessment

Issue micro-credentials at the end of a process of assessment, regardless whether learning takes place in formal, non-formal or informal learning contexts.

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HOW TO DESIGN A GOOD MICRO-CREDENTIAL?

Considerations to support access to education and labour market

Recognition

Enable multiple, feasible routes for micro-credential recognition.

Facilitate recognition via the Recognition of Prior Learning as the 'fallback' route when no other recognition route is available.

Apply the principles of International Conventions on the Recognition of Qualifications.

Portability and Authenticity

Issue micro-credentials as verifiable digital credentials.

Issue micro-credentials according to a structured data format for credentials to ensure inter-operability.

Digitally sign micro-credentials to ensure that their authenticity can be checked by a verifier.

Ensure learners own and control their own micro-credentials.

Information and Guidance

Ensure accessibility and effective outreach of information on micro-credential offers.

Guide learners and promote lifelong-learning through micro-credentials.

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ACQF MICRO-CREDENTIALS HANDBOOK (2024)

GUIDE TO DESIGN, ISSUE AND RECOGNISE MICRO-CREDENTIALS (2023)

ETF POLICY BRIEF (2022)
MICRO-CREDENTIALS ARE TAKING OFF

GUIDE TO DESIGN,
ISSUE AND RECOGNISE
MICRO-CREDENTIALS

Thank you!