Micro-credentials – the essential information and FAQs

This FAQs document has been created for members of the Tertiary Micro-credentials Special Interest Group (MIC.SIG) to support discussions at MIC.SIG meetings and with colleagues.

What are micro-credentials?

Micro-credentials are small, credit-bearing qualifications that are outcome-based. To achieve a micro-credential, learners are assessed to demonstrate they have achieved the learning outcomes.

Is there a globally accepted definition?

The simple answer is no! Within MIC.SIG, following a focused study undertaken in 2024-25, we are working with the definition that micro-credentials must be credit rated (other small non-credit bearing awards are simply called short course provision). This is consistent with the definition proposed by UNESCO's global expert panel, of which QAA was a member and informed the subsequent QAA Characteristics Statement for Micro-credentials.

Are micro-credentials limited to a certain level or size?

Micro-credentials can be at any level. There are a range of case studies on our website including examples of micro-credentials from level 1 through to level 7.

The QAA Characteristics Statement for Micro-credentials states that while there are no upper or lower limits on size, a micro-credential should not be a qualification in its own right on the HE Qualifications Frameworks. Therefore, micro-credentials should be no more than 60 credits. Supported with HEFCW funding in 2022-23, a number of Welsh HE providers have developed micro-credentials that are equivalent to a standard module in size (20 or 30 credits) but they may be as small as 2 credits, for example.

What about regulatory requirements?

In Wales, the National HE Quality Assessment Framework requires HE providers to meet sector agreed principles of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education; together with characteristics statements and subject benchmark statements, where appropriate. In Northern Ireland, while an assessment framework is yet to be agreed, it is expected that any future quality assessment will be based on an expectation that providers meet the principles of the Quality Code and associated references including characteristics statements. Similar expectations are not in place for non-HE provision delivered by colleges but providers are expected to deliver all courses with high quality and due regard to the learner experience.

Where can I find out more?

QAA Cymru publishes information on behalf of MIC.SIG on its micro-credentials website. Here you can find useful links, case studies, webinars and results of our employer survey.

Can I share this fact sheet?

This fact sheet may be shared within providers.

A separate factsheet for employers is available on the MIC.SIG website, onto which providers can add their own logo and the contact details of their micro-credential or employer engagement lead.

The Tertiary Micro-credentials Special Interest Group (MIC.SIG) is facilitated by QAA Cymru through its grant arrangement with Medr.