



This document is available
in Welsh and English

Micro-credential Framework for Wales and Northern Ireland

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Medr

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1. Introduction and context

The purpose of this Framework is to clearly define micro-credentials for tertiary education in Wales and Northern Ireland and provide key precepts and practices for high-quality micro-credential provision, regardless of its level, subject or delivering/awarding body.

This Framework is non-regulatory. Tertiary education providers across Wales and Northern Ireland are encouraged to view this Framework as a valuable tool to support the development and delivery of high-quality micro-credentials and a high-quality learner experience.

This Framework is designed for tertiary education providers in Wales and Northern Ireland. Tertiary education is formally recognised post-16 education; this includes provision from Level 1 to 8 which may be delivered by further education colleges, universities, university colleges and training providers. With opportunities for a wide variation in level, subject and size, micro-credentials have enormous potential to enable flexible access to tertiary education^a and have an important role in upskilling and reskilling the workforce. Given the wide scope of micro-credentials and a lack of consistent terminology and language across Europe and the UK, there is some confusion and lack of understanding of micro-credentials among providers, employers and learners.

This Framework sets out to clearly define micro-credentials for tertiary education in Wales and Northern Ireland and provide key practices for high-quality micro-credential provision, regardless of its level, subject or delivering/awarding body.

The good practice presented within this Framework has arisen from cross-nation collaboration, through the [QAA-facilitated Micro-credentials Special Interest Group](#). The term 'should' is used throughout this Framework. In some instances, this can be substituted with 'must' when the provider is required to do something as set out in statutory and regulatory guidance, but this may vary depending on the nation and relevant regulator.

Otherwise 'should' indicates recommended good practice rather than a requirement and providers retain discretion over how it is applied in their own context. The Framework is not regulatory guidance, however, external reviewers/assessors may use the Framework as a reference point for exploration of a provider's approach to the quality and standards of its micro-credential provision.

All regulated tertiary providers in Wales and Northern Ireland were invited to take part in its creation and a list of contributors are provided in Section 9. Additionally, the content of this Framework has been informed by micro-credential policy and practice across the UK and internationally.

- The Framework is not regulatory guidance
- 'Should' indicates recommended good practice rather than a requirement and providers retain discretion over how practice is applied in their own context.

^a The Framework is intended to complement existing progression routes, including the Access to HE Diploma, which remains an important pathway into higher education for many adult learners.

1.1 The regulatory context in Wales

Within Wales there has been ongoing support for micro-credential exploration and development since 2021. During the academic year 2022-23 QAA Cymru undertook an enhancement project exploring [micro-credentials practice in the tertiary sector across Wales](#).

In response to developing interest in micro-credentials, QAA Cymru facilitated a sector-wide Tertiary Education Network for Micro-credentials – the Micro-credentials Special Interest Group (MIC.SIG). MIC.SIG was formed in 2023-24 funded by Medr, the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research in Wales. Discussion within the network indicates that there remains considerable inconsistency in the language used, the way in which micro-credentials are developed and the information that is shared with learners and other stakeholders, including level, credit-rating and mode of study, for example.

As the regulator of tertiary education in Wales, [Medr](#) is committed to supporting lifelong learning and wants 'the tertiary education sector to be able to support learners to meet their education and training ambitions, whatever their level and qualification, in a setting that suits them, whenever they decide to embark on their journey.' Medr's Strategic Plan provides important context for the development and delivery of micro-credentials; Strategic Aim 2 is 'To create a flexible and joined up tertiary system where everyone can acquire the skills and knowledge they need for a changing economy and society.' Micro-credentials have the potential to support the acquisition of the skills and knowledge across the tertiary system that are needed for a changing economy and society.

Further education and work-based learning in Wales is inspected by Estyn with a strong focus on the 'quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning.'¹ In Wales, the National HE Quality Assessment Framework requires higher education (HE) providers to meet sector agreed principles of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024 (the UK Quality Code), together with Characteristics Statements and Subject Benchmark Statements, where appropriate.

The [Welsh Language and Education \(Wales\) Act 2025](#) contributes towards the goal of achieving a million Welsh speakers by 2050 by putting measures in place that aim to ensure that all pupils are independent Welsh language users, at least by the time they cease to be of compulsory school age. Together with a duty on Medr, as set out in the [Tertiary Education and Research \(Wales\) Act 2022](#), to encourage the provision of tertiary education through the medium of Welsh, there is likely to be an increase in demand for flexible Welsh-medium and bilingual tertiary provision, which may include micro-credentials.

In addition to meeting any specific duties or requirements set out by Medr, providers in Wales should also ensure that they meet current and future duties as set out in the [Welsh language standards](#). This Framework applies equally to micro-credentials delivered in English, Welsh or bilingually. Welsh-language considerations and the opportunity for Welsh-medium provision should be considered across all aspects of micro-credentials design, development, delivery and review in Wales.

1.2 The regulatory context in Northern Ireland

Following its ten-year strategy for growth: [Vision for a 10X Economy: A Decade of Innovation](#) published in 2021, the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland has identified Good Jobs, Raising Productivity, Regional Balance and Net Zero as its four priority objectives in the [Minister's Economic Vision](#). It is recognised that training, reskilling and upskilling is required in order to enable participation in the changes that are being driven by innovation both within existing and future growth sectors. Micro-credentials have potential to form part of the training, reskilling and upskilling required across Northern Ireland in identified skill areas.

Further education and work-based learning in Northern Ireland is inspected by The Education and Training Inspectorate to 'build capacity within the organisations inspected to provide high-quality education and outcomes for learners.'² While an assessment framework for HE 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.

In addition to meeting any specific duties or requirements set out by the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland, providers in Northern Ireland should also meet any current or future duties imposed by the Northern Ireland Executive.

The Framework has been developed to ensure alignment with the Characteristics Statement for Micro-credentials and be consistent with the recommendations of the European Commission which were adopted by the [Council of the EU](#) in 2022. In this respect, the Framework is compatible with collaborative cross-border micro-credential development and delivery across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

1.3 Wider UK regulatory contexts

In addition to regulatory aspects provided above, all tertiary providers should adhere to all relevant laws and guidance, including guidance provided by the [Competition and Markets Authority](#) related to statutory consumer law, the Equality Act 2010 and all relevant updated or new requirements. The Framework does not intend to replace or duplicate any statutory or regulatory guidance.

2. Definition and general precepts

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.

The definition specifies that micro-credentials must be credit rated.^b This is consistent with the [definition proposed by UNESCO's](#) global expert panel, of which QAA was a member, and the European Commission recommendations adopted by the [Council of the EU](#) which informed the subsequent QAA [Characteristics Statement for Micro-credentials](#).

Micro-credential general precepts

- Micro-credentials are credit rated and should be at least one credit and no more than 40 credits
- Micro-credentials are outcome-based with learner attainment of micro-credential outcomes demonstrated through suitable assessment
- A micro-credential is a standalone award and not a qualification in its own right on the HE [Qualifications Frameworks](#)
- A micro-credential is focused in its area of learning
- Micro-credentials allow learners to select awards that cater to their personal interests and current or future employment needs within the context of lifelong learning.

^b Other small non-credit bearing awards are simply called short course provision. Providers may wish to apply the good practice principles set out in this Framework to both credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing provision to support the high-quality delivery of tertiary education.

Since micro-credentials must be credit rated, the smallest micro-credential may be one credit. One credit is equivalent to 10 hours of notional learning – this can be made up of directed and student-led learning.

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](#). The Characteristics Statement is intended only for HE micro-credentials and, while aligning with the principles in the Statement, this Framework extends beyond this guidance to cover all tertiary micro-credentials. Due to the small and focussed nature of these awards and cognisant that a number of providers offer 60-credit postgraduate certificates, it was agreed that micro-credentials should be no more than 40 credits. Awarding bodies/organisations may set institutional limits within these boundaries in line with their own strategies. For example, a university may decide not to award micro-credentials that comprise fewer than 10 credits.

A provider may offer a micro-credential that is larger than 40 credits where it is deemed in the learner interest, such as where splitting an existing module into smaller awards will have a negative impact on assessment load or course integrity, for example. However, in such cases, a provider may wish to consider whether a larger award is more appropriately designated, such as the awarding body's or organisation's Award or Certificate, to support consistency in terminology across the sector.

Micro-credentials can be at any level (Level 1 to Level 8). There are a range of case studies on the [QAA Cymru webpage for micro-credentials](#) including examples of micro-credentials from Level 1 through to Level 7.

Stacking is the opportunity for learners to combine achieved learning outcomes, demonstrated through a combination of micro-credentials, to achieve a larger award or macro-credential. More information about stacking and providers' consideration of stacking opportunities is provided in [Sections 3.5, 3.7, 3.9 and 3.10](#).

For clarity and to support understanding, a glossary of terms used within this Framework is provided in Section 6. The glossary includes some definitions previously [published by QAA](#) and is informed by global micro-credential practice.

Wherever appropriate, definitions are consistent with those agreed with the sector.



3. Key practices

To enable a shared confidence in the quality and standards of micro-credentials in Wales and Northern Ireland, all providers should ensure that robust quality assurance processes are established, implemented and maintained for the design, development, marketing, delivery, assessment, certification, monitoring and review of micro-credentials.

This section of the Framework introduces 12 key practices that providers should observe when developing regulations, policies and processes for micro-credential design and delivery. These practices, which are informed by the 12 Sector-Agreed Principles of the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024](#), will support the development and delivery of credible, high-quality provision for all stakeholders including learners, employers and providers. The language and examples used throughout this Framework are intended to be fully inclusive of the wider tertiary sectors in Wales and Northern Ireland.

In general, providers should observe the following key practices appropriate and proportionate to the complexity and level of their micro-credentials.

Key practices for micro-credentials

A strategic approach

1. Strategic approach to quality & standards
2. Learner engagement
3. Resourcing for a high-quality learning experience

Evaluating Quality and Standards

4. Using data to inform and evaluate quality of micro-credentials
5. Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing micro-credential provision
6. External review and accreditation

Implementing the approach to quality enhancement and standards

7. Designing, developing and approving micro-credentials
8. Partnerships with other organisations
9. Recruiting, selecting and admitting learners
10. Supporting micro-credential learners to achieve
11. Teaching, learning and assessment
12. Concerns, complaints and appeals processes

3.1 Strategic approach to quality and standards

Providers demonstrate they have a strategic approach to securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality for micro-credential provision that is embedded across the organisation.

Academic standards are ultimately the responsibility of awarding bodies/organisations and all micro-credential providers should ensure that micro-credential provision is consistent with relevant academic regulations and is subject to the appropriate policies and procedures. Micro-credentials are awards in their own right and should be included within awarding bodies'/organisations' regulations including any institutional limits or exceptions in relation to credit limits, recognition of prior learning (RPL) and/or assessment, especially where these differ from other relevant regulations in place for substantive awards or larger macro-credentials.

A provider's approach to quality assurance and enhancement of micro-credentials should be appropriate and proportionate.

Providers should detail clear and explicit reference to micro-credential provision in their institutional quality and standards policies and strategies. Providers may wish to amend some of the processes to enable a proportionate approach to quality management. In particular, providers should consider whether processes for learner registration, assessment and award confirmation are agile enough to enable swift decision-making.



A review of policies and procedures that apply or will apply to micro-credential provision and learners may be needed to ensure all micro-credential learners have access to high-quality learning experiences and relevant and proportionate support mechanisms are identified and agreed prior to learner enrolment. Most providers will have a multitude of policies and procedures and any review should be appropriate and proportionate. Below are key policies/procedures that providers should review as a minimum. Any decisions to alter or limit micro-credential learner access, entitlement or representation, for example, should be proportionate and fair and consistent with regulatory guidance.

Award regulations

Awarding bodies ensure that micro-credentials are included in their academic regulations as awards in their own right that comply with the credit limits set out in this Framework.

Approval and review

Providers consider whether existing processes for course approval and review are appropriate for micro-credentials and are flexible enough to enable agility and responsiveness for the development of short course provision (see [Section 3.5](#)).

Learner status

Providers, in consultation with their student unions/associations, agree the status of micro-credential learners who may have limited engagement with a provider, see [Sections 3.2](#) and [3.9](#).

Admissions

Providers consider how micro-credentials will be advertised and the appropriateness of entry requirements, see [Section 3.9](#).

Access to provider services

Providers identify academic and pastoral services that micro-credential learners will and will not have access to and consider the impact of any restrictions on the micro-credential learner experience, see [Sections 3.3](#) and [3.10](#).

Assessment

Providers consider strategies and processes for assessment and their suitability for micro-credential provision, see [Section 3.11](#).

Quality oversight

Providers have clear strategies for the oversight of the quality of micro-credential provision and the learner experience, see [Section 3.5](#).

Complaints and appeals

Providers ensure the processes for complaints and appeals are fair and appropriate for micro-credential learners, see [Section 3.12](#).

3.2 Learner engagement

Providers take deliberate steps to engage micro-credential learners as active partners in assuring and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience.

Effective learner engagement is essential for a high-quality learning experience. The nature of engagements will be informed, in part, by provider mission and ethos, learner type and length of time a learner is registered with a provider.

3.2.1 Micro-credential learners

There is no single type of micro-credential learner but they are likely to be different to those registered for longer full or part-time courses. These are just some examples of individuals who may study micro-credentials which will be reflected in a wide range of learner types:

- an employee undertaking a micro-credential to upskill in a particular area directly relevant to their work
- individuals undertaking one or more micro-credentials to develop skills or knowledge to enable them to enter or re-enter the workforce
- those undertaking a taster course before applying to join or commencing a macro-credential such as a diploma or undergraduate degree
- existing students undertaking micro-credentials alongside their main programme of study in complementary or unrelated subjects
- curious learners wanting to study a subject that is of interest to them.

Additional to the reason for study, micro-credential learners will have a wide range of personal characteristics that should be considered. Some learners will have no previous, or no recent, experience of education at the level of their chosen micro-credential. In line with statutory responsibilities, providers should take account of learners' protected characteristics but should also ensure that where any additional support or adjustments are needed these can be provided in a timely manner while the learner is registered on the micro-credential. Additionally, providers in Wales should take account of Welsh language requirements noting some Welsh speakers may lack full confidence or fluency.



3.2.2 Learners as partners

'Learner engagement is most effective when led by the needs of learners.'[°] Given a diverse range of learners and settings, 'there isn't a single "right" approach to learner engagement' and micro-credential providers should review existing learner engagement strategies and policies to determine the aspects that are relevant and applicable to their micro-credential learners. This review should take account of current and planned micro-credential provision and consider the range of micro-credentials that will be available for study to inform reasonable and proportionate approaches. Micro-credentials delivered over short periods of time, such as one or two-day events or a week block of learning, are likely to support different learner engagement opportunities than micro-credentials delivered over a term, semester or year. Additionally, learner engagement is likely to differ for purely online learners than for those who study with a provider in person or through blended learning modalities (see [Section 3.11.1](#)).

To support learner engagement with their studies and with peers and educators, providers should consider ways to facilitate learner communication, especially when undertaking online micro-credentials. It may be appropriate for learners to have access to a virtual learning environment (VLE) or secure site to engage with educators and peers. Where appropriate, opportunities for learners to engage synchronously with micro-credential peers and staff, online or in-person, are likely to support enhanced learner engagement.

To provide transparency, micro-credential providers are encouraged to actively promote learner feedback mechanisms. Learners should be asked to provide feedback on their experience as micro-credential learners, such as through surveys, focus groups or representation on relevant quality committees or equivalent. Where appropriate, support and training should be available for micro-credential learner representatives, designed to streamline involvement without overloading the learner. Providers should also share with micro-credential learners a summary of the learner feedback that is received and any actions undertaken as a result.



[°] Taken from the [Medr Learner Engagement Code](#), 2026

The following learner engagement opportunities should be facilitated by all micro-credential providers.

Recommended for all micro-credential learners/providers	Desirable for micro-credential learners/providers where practicable
Providers consider ways to facilitate learner communication with micro-credential peers and educators, such as through a VLE	Learners have opportunities to engage synchronously with micro-credential peers and educators online or in-person
Providers actively solicit learner views (e.g. a survey) and encourage engagement	Providers employ a bespoke micro-credential learner survey which is periodically reviewed to ensure it continues to provide a high-quality source of information
There is a structured method for learners to provide feedback to the provider at the end of the micro-credential, as a minimum	Micro-credential learners are actively involved in the design and/or review of micro-credential feedback mechanisms
Providers take account of learner views and use them to inform future iterations of the micro-credential	Providers take account of learner views and use them to inform provider-level micro-credential strategies, policies and procedures
For Welsh-medium and bilingual micro-credentials, learner feedback specifically captures experience of studying in Welsh, including confidence, experience of language use on the course and support needs.	

3.3 Resourcing for a high-quality learning experience

Providers plan, secure and maintain suitable resources relating to micro-credential learning, technology, facilities and staffing to enable the delivery and enhancement of an accessible, innovative and high-quality learning experience for micro-credential learners.

As outlined in [Section 3.2](#) above, micro-credential learners are likely to differ from those registered for longer full or part-time courses. Some learners will have no previous, or no recent, experience of education at the level of their chosen micro-credential. Additionally, learners may choose to study a micro-credential because of its short and focused nature which may better suit a range of personal characteristics and/or needs. Providers should ensure that where any additional academic or non-academic support or adjustments are needed, these can be provided in a timely manner while the learner is registered on the micro-credential.

Micro-credentials should be delivered by suitably qualified and/or experienced staff who have understanding of the material being delivered and the nature of micro-credential learners (see also [Section 3.2](#)); this includes taught delivery and facilitation of learning through online or blended sessions. Similarly, learning resources should be appropriate for the intended audience and creators should also have appropriate understanding of the nature of micro-credential learners.

Providers should review internal professional/support services and relevant policies and procedures to determine any adjustments that may be required to ensure micro-credential learners have a high-quality experience from admission through to completion. This may include review of quality and enhancement policies and procedures and the role and processes of admissions, finance, registry and student records teams, access to libraries, careers services and academic and pastoral support services.



Recommended for all micro-credential learners/providers	Desirable for micro-credential learners/providers where practicable
Micro-credentials are delivered by appropriately qualified staff who have understanding of the material being delivered and the nature of micro-credential learners	Providers develop appropriate training for micro-credential teaching staff to support understanding of micro-credential learners and deliver a high-quality learning experience
Learners have access to necessary subject-based resources where required to undertake micro-credentials, such as specialist software or equipment	In Wales, providers plan Welsh-medium staff capacity for micro-credentials, particularly in subject areas and at higher levels where specialist Welsh-medium staff are scarce
Essential texts including, where appropriate, Welsh medium and bilingual resources, are made available to micro-credential learners through in-person or online library access or through open-source resources which are clearly signposted and freely accessible	
Relevant study skills support is available that is appropriate and proportionate to the micro-credential	

3.4 Using data to inform and evaluate quality of micro-credentials

Providers collect, analyse and utilise qualitative and quantitative data at provider, departmental, stackable programme and individual micro-credential levels. These analyses inform decision-making with the aim of enhancing practices and processes relating to teaching, learning and the wider learner experience.

Essential practices such as the ethical use of data, adherence to national data protection legislation and relevant regulatory requirements are not repeated here. If in any doubt, staff should refer to provider-level data policies and/or seek advice from regulatory bodies.



As indicated elsewhere, providers should adopt proportionate and reasonable approaches to the collection and use of data as summarised here.

Recommended for all micro-credential learners/providers	Desirable for micro-credential learners/providers where practicable
A strategic approach to the collection, storage and management of data is employed across the provider and clearly communicated in provider-level micro-credential strategies or policies	Providers collect additional learner data to enhance the provision and accessibility of learner support and to aid monitoring and review. This is likely to include data on health and disabilities, ethnicity, protected characteristics and purpose of study and in Wales, language of study
Providers collect essential learner data at or prior to registration/enrolment, as required for statutory and regulatory oversight. This will include as a minimum name, date of birth, address for correspondence, nationality and personal characteristics required by the relevant regulator	Providers maintain a secure and central record of any additional micro-credential learner data that does not have to be reported to the relevant regulator
Providers maintain a secure and central record of micro-credential learner data that is required to be reported to the relevant regulator	Summary micro-credential learner performance data is internally reported to, and reviewed by, appropriate structures for oversight of quality and standards
Providers maintain a secure and central record of micro-credential learner performance (retention and achievement) data	Providers in Wales consider quality indicators and learner outcomes in the context of development of Welsh-medium provision
Micro-credential learner performance data is used to support the evaluation of the quality of micro-credential provision	
In Wales, providers record language of study for micro-credentials	

3.5 Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing micro-credential provision

Providers regularly monitor and review their micro-credential provision to secure academic standards and enhance quality. Proportionate and deliberate steps should be taken to engage and involve learners, staff and external expertise in monitoring and evaluation activity. The outcomes and impact of these activities should be considered at provider level to facilitate enhancement across the provider.

All micro-credentials should be subject to regular monitoring and review. This will enable providers to be confident that the awards continue to meet their stated aims and that the content and learning outcomes continue to be relevant to the target audience. Providers should have clear strategies for the oversight of the quality of micro-credential provision and learner experience, establishing separate structures for micro-credentials where appropriate. Clearly articulated processes for micro-credential monitoring and review should be regularly reviewed based on relevant benchmarks, such as the UK Quality Code, as well as providing due regard to any relevant external quality assurance processes.

Review of micro-credentials should take account of learner feedback – see [Section 3.2](#). Micro-credential review should also take account of learner performance including retention and achievement, using data collected as outlined in [Section 3.4](#). Where appropriate, review should also take account of differing learner characteristics to inform changes or enhancement activity.

Providers are recommended to include externality in their micro-credential review processes. Externality may include the use of external examiners/verifiers to comment on the quality and standards of micro-credential awards and learner performance. Providers may also seek views from internal staff and learners who are external to the department or school of the micro-credential(s) under review, particularly where, for example, a very small award is under review or where there are very few learners. A proportionate use of externality may be in the periodic review of a group or suite of micro-credentials.

Providers who offer micro-credentials for upskilling and/or workforce development should seek and consider feedback from employers, employer representatives and/or other appropriate stakeholders on the currency and continued relevance of the awards (see also [Sections 3.8](#) and [4](#)). Planning, monitoring and reviewing micro-credentials should include appropriate consideration of relevant labour market information.

Where micro-credentials stack to achieve a macro-credential, providers should ensure the final macro-credential is also reviewed. In particular, providers should consider the effectiveness of stacking on the academic coherency of the final award; for example, whether the order of achieving constituent micro-credentials has an impact on the overall learner experience.

Providers should use the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation to implement proportional improvements and/or enhancements, as appropriate, to ensure awards remain high-quality.

The outcomes of review should be reported to relevant institutional structures, such as committees or working groups, to ensure any institutional lessons can be learned and good practice shared. Ideally these structures will have learner representation – see [Section 3.2](#). Similarly, the outcomes of internal review and monitoring should be included in provider-level self-evaluations, where appropriate (see also [Section 3.6](#)).

Recommended for all micro-credential learners/providers	Desirable for micro-credential learners/providers where practicable
Providers have clear strategies for the oversight of the quality of micro-credential provision	Providers who offer micro-credentials for upskilling and/or workforce development seek and consider feedback from employers, employer representatives and/or other appropriate stakeholders
Micro-credentials are subject to at least annual monitoring and review, taking into account learner performance and feedback	Where micro-credentials stack to achieve a macro-credential, providers also review the final macro-credential
Providers include externality in their micro-credential review processes	For Welsh-language and bilingual provision, providers seek to use external examiners/advisors with appropriate language skills
Outcomes of review are reported to relevant institutional structures	

3.6 External review and accreditation

Providers engage with external reviews to give assurance about the effectiveness of their approach to managing quality and standards. External reviews may be undertaken by representative organisations, agencies or professional, statutory or regulatory bodies.

Most providers will have their micro-credential provision considered as part of external reviews under relevant regulatory arrangements. This Framework is not regulatory guidance however, external reviewers/assessors may use the Framework as a reference point for exploration of a provider's micro-credential provision.

Providers should consider how their micro-credential provision aligns with the precepts and key practices set out within this Framework, reflecting on their approach where useful.

Providers should include the outcomes of internal review and monitoring (see [Section 3.5](#)) in provider-level self-evaluations prepared and/or submitted as part of external quality assessments to support external review.

Where providers work with professional, statutory and/or regulatory bodies (PSRBs), it is recommended that relevant micro-credentials are included in accreditation processes and reviews to support the relevance and currency of the provision.

Recommended for all micro-credential learners/providers	Desirable for micro-credential learners/providers where practicable
Where appropriate, micro-credential provision is included in provider-level self-evaluations prepared and/or submitted as part of external quality assessments	Micro-credential provision is included as part of PSRB accreditation and reviews

3.7 Designing, developing and approving micro-credentials

Providers design, develop and approve micro-credentials to ensure the quality of provision and the academic standards of awards are consistent with the relevant levels of the appropriate qualifications framework(s).

This Section deliberately contains some duplication from other Sections of the Framework to provide a ready reference for anyone seeking guidance on the design of micro-credentials.^d

3.7.1 Micro-credential design

In designing and approving micro-credentials, providers should consider the target audience and ensure the micro-credential provision is appropriately designed to meet the needs of the target learner and support individuals' ability to build a portfolio of learning and achievement in line with personal goals and objectives (see [Section 3.2.1](#)).

3.7.2 Micro-credential level and size

As stated in Section 2, micro-credentials can be developed at any level. For more information on levels, designers should refer to the relevant qualifications framework(s) which may be the [Regulated Qualifications Framework \(RQF\)](#), the [Credit and Qualifications Framework Wales \(CQFW\)](#) and/or the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of Degree-Awarding Bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ). [Qualifications can Cross Boundaries](#) helpfully provides information that enables comparability between qualifications and levels across the UK and Ireland.

As a credit-bearing award, micro-credentials must be at least one credit in size. To support the focused nature of learning, micro-credentials should be no more than 40 credits (see [Section 2](#)). Where more than 40 credits of learning are planned, providers should design smaller units of learning that can be collated or stacked (see [Section 3.7.5](#) below) to create the desired larger package of learning. In these instances, providers should clearly articulate relevant aspects such as related learning or pre-requisites.

An important point to remember when considering size is that the term 'micro-credential' does not necessarily refer to a very small module. Rather, it represents something that is being studied on a 'micro' level which can stand alone and still have credibility and validity even if it is a module or unit originally drawn from a larger programme or pathway.

^d All micro-credential designers and approvers are recommended to read and familiarise themselves with the entirety of this Framework to support the development of high-quality provision.

Being small awards, each micro-credential should cover a focused area of learning; the design of a single micro-credential to cover a range of skills or competencies should be avoided. For example, a package of learning to upskill employees to undertake a range of office-based tasks such as basic payroll, principles of human resources management and bookkeeping, would be better designed as three or more micro-credentials rather than combining the requisite skills and knowledge into one award.

There are examples of micro-credentials that cover a range of levels and sizes on the [QAA website](#). Cardiff University offers a suite of 10-credit, Level 3 micro-credentials as part of their [Community Learning Programme](#). Seven Apprenticeship Contract Holders in Wales received work-based learning funding from Medr in 2025-26 for the delivery of micro-credentials to apprentices including 7-credit [City and Guilds Level 2 Awards](#) in welding and a range of specialist 3- and 4-credit BPEC Level 3 awards in renewable energy. After employer consultation in Scotland, the College Micro-credentials Consortium identified that approximately two days of learning was ideal for many employees and their employers and agreed 2 credits as their standard micro-credential size. Some HEIs have used existing curriculum structures to create 20-credit micro-credentials - equivalent to one module of their undergraduate or postgraduate provision.

3.7.3 Entry requirements

Most micro-credentials are likely to require some prior knowledge and/or skills that a learner will need to have in order to succeed. This may be subject knowledge, IT skills (including for courses delivered online) and/or the ability to study at a given level; this may be more important for micro-credentials at Level 4 and above, and especially important for those targeted at graduates. Providers should decide on appropriate entry requirements to encourage inclusion whilst also supporting learner achievement (see also [Section 3.9](#)). Any overarching requirements, such as for prior achievement in English and Maths may need to be considered, dependent on the micro-credential provision that will be developed. Providers should also consider the opportunity for RPL as an appropriate route for micro-credential admission (see [Section 3.10](#)).



3.7.4 Standalone awards

Micro-credentials should be standalone awards as stated in [Section 2](#); a learner should be able to study a micro-credential and, after successful completion of the associated assessment(s), be awarded the micro-credential and be able to exit study at that point. Nevertheless, micro-credentials should be considered a key element of lifelong learning and, where possible, micro-credential designers should consider where micro-credentials can lead to further study. Having access to a range of complementary micro-credentials that may be stacked into larger awards is a distinctive feature of micro-credentials (see [Section 3.7.5](#)).

Some providers have and will identify parts of larger macro-credentials and approve these as micro-credentials, such as modules or units from diplomas and degree programmes. If existing modules or units of study are approved as micro-credentials, providers should ensure their suitability to stand alone in their own right, considering the key practices provided in this Framework.

Providers should take care when approving units or modules of macro-credentials as micro-credentials. Designers and approvers should consider each of the key aspects listed in this Section and make decisions on their suitability as standalone awards where the learner may have little experience of the subject at the relevant level and may study in isolation and/or online without the support and access to resources and services afforded to students on the parent macro-credential.



3.7.5 Stacking

Stacking is the opportunity for learners to combine achieved learning outcomes, demonstrated through a combination of micro-credentials, to achieve a larger award or macro-credential. In some cases, a stackable pathway will be clear. For example, in this [case study](#) Swansea University outlines the opportunity for a learner to accumulate micro-credentials from a range of universities in Wales to achieve a CertHE in Computer Science.

As more micro-credentials become available, awarding bodies/organisations may look to design 'capstone' awards where a range of micro-credentials can be stacked to achieve a macro-credential. This may include micro-credentials from a range of providers and/or awarding bodies/organisations and may include a combination of technical, vocational or academic content. Known routes for stacking of micro-credentials should be clearly communicated to learners prior to commencing micro-credentials (see [Section 3.9](#)).

Providers are recommended to consider whether a stackable award is an appropriate outcome for the successful achievement of a set of micro-credentials and ensure all the relevant considerations are deliberated prior to approval of the 'stacked' award. This may include the 'lifetime' of micro-credentials, noting that some micro-credentials, especially those based on contemporary skills acquisition or practice (as opposed to classical or well-established knowledge or theory) may become outdated or superseded by more recent knowledge, findings, standards or legislation.

Providers should ensure that stackable awards are covered within their regulations and comply with rules related to credit transfer and RPL (see also [Section 3.10.2](#)). Particular attention should be given to ensuring that there is no duplication or double-counting of credit.



3.7.6 Learning outcomes and assessment

Micro-credentials are outcome-based awards and designers should clearly articulate the intended learning outcomes that need to be achieved to achieve the micro-credential. In describing outcomes, designers should refer to descriptors or other relevant guidance in reference points such as the relevant qualifications framework (RQF, CQFW and/or FHEQ).

Designers should consider whether learning outcomes are knowledge, skills, attitudes and/or competencies in line with the level of the award and the target audience. Bloom's Taxonomy provides a useful reference for choosing succinct language to describe learning outcomes accurately. Designers should also consider the number of outcomes for each micro-credential, bearing in mind that each outcome needs to be assessed. Providers may wish to set limits on the number of learning outcomes for a given number of credits and also the number of assessment tasks – this can support proportionality of resource and effort for learners and staff.

Providers are encouraged to review their existing assessment policies to ensure they remain fit-for-purpose for small awards (see [Section 3.11](#)). In particular, providers should consider the role of internal and external verification or moderation. In reviewing processes, providers should be mindful to ensure that all awards are appropriately quality assured and that the actions and requirements of staff are proportionate.

3.7.7 Approval

All micro-credentials should be subject to a formal, clearly documented process of approval, consistent with the nature of the award. This process may differ from the institution's process for approval of larger awards to enable the process to be proportionate, particularly with respect to relevant timescales. Nevertheless, the approval process should be suitably robust and take into account the precepts and key practices contained within this Framework.

Providers should consider their requirements for externality at the approval stage; to enable a proportionate and timely response to micro-credential design, this is likely to be partially based on the size of micro-credential(s) and any relationship to other awards in existence or also under approval. Providers should also consider the opportunity for employer and/or PSRB involvement in the approval process.

At the approval stage, providers should consider a wide range of aspects that are likely to impact on the learner experience. A set of reflective questions is provided to support providers in their approval processes – this is not intended to be an exhaustive list of approval considerations but an aid to complement existing approval approaches. Providers should adopt a proportionate approach to micro-credential approval while adhering to a commitment to provide a high-quality learner experience and maintaining academic standards.

Questions to aid MC approval

- Does the micro-credential meet the precepts in terms of size and credit rating?
- Has a target audience and/or purpose of the micro-credential been identified? This may be for workforce upskilling, taster micro-credential to enable progression to a macro-credential, adjunct to existing study, learning for leisure/personal interest or enjoyment.
- Where micro-credentials are designed for workforce upskilling, have appropriate employers/industry representatives been consulted? Have relevant national and regional skills priorities been considered?
- To ensure learners have the ability to succeed, what prior learning or any pre-requisite qualifications or experience are required?
- Has the mode of learning (in-person, online or blended) been specified and does this meet the needs of the intended audience?
- What resources will learners need access to and will these be available to all learners?
- What academic support will be available to learners?
- What provider-level services will the learner be entitled to access and will they be accessible to all learners? Consider learners who will not attend the provider in person or do so only for limited lengths of time. Consider learners with health issues or disabilities.
- Are there complementary micro-credentials that learners may wish study alongside or before or after achieving the micro-credential being approved? Do all of these micro-credentials have equivalent entry requirements and offer equivalent support services to enable transition or progression across micro-credentials?
- To what extent have learners been involved in the design or modification of micro-credentials?
- To what extent has there been externality in the design or modification of micro-credentials?
- Does promotional and course documentation clearly set out the information listed in [Section 3.92](#)?
- Do the activities and considerations within the design and approval process align with the provider's policies and practices on equity, equality, diversity and inclusion?

Recommended for all micro-credential learners/providers	Desirable for micro-credential learners/providers where practicable
In designing and approving micro-credentials, providers consider the target audience	Where appropriate, micro-credential designers should consider where micro-credentials can lead to further study
Providers consider appropriate entry requirements and opportunities for RPL to encourage inclusion whilst also supporting learner achievement	Providers may wish to set limits on the number of learning outcomes and assessment tasks for a given number of credits to support proportionality of resource and effort for learners and staff
If approving units or modules of larger awards as micro-credentials, providers ensure their suitability as standalone awards and consider learner access to necessary resources and support	
Providers ensure that any stackable awards are covered within their regulations and comply with rules relating to credit transfer and RPL	
Micro-credentials are subject to a formal, clearly documented process of approval	
Appropriate externality is considered as part of the micro-credential approval process including employer and/or PSRB involvement	
Providers in Wales consider the development of Welsh medium and bilingual micro-credentials	

3.8 Partnerships with other organisations

Providers and their partners agree proportionate arrangements for effective governance to secure the academic standards and enhance the quality of micro-credentials that are delivered in partnership.

The development of micro-credentials should be informed by relevant market needs assessments and, in many cases, this development work is best achieved collaboratively with tertiary providers working in partnership. Where appropriate, it is good practice to share resources and avoid unnecessary generation of multiple similar micro-credentials across many providers. This may be through existing collaborative partnerships or opportunities exploited through national and/or regional networks.

It may be appropriate for several providers to collaborate to offer a range of micro-credentials within a given field and identify a suitable capstone award as the outcome of micro-credential stacking. Such collaboration can be beneficial for learners by widening the pool of available micro-credentials and potentially giving choices for the location or modality of study. To facilitate successful collaboration, each provider should ensure their micro-credentials fully meet the precepts and key practices set out in this Framework.

Where an awarding body/organisation approves another provider to deliver their micro-credentials, the arrangements for the delivery and oversight of the provision should be clearly set out in agreed documentation. It is recommended that [Section 3](#) of this Framework is used as a checklist to support the consideration of relevant aspects of the partnership.

To support upskilling and career development, many micro-credentials will be targeted towards employers and/or individual employees or prospective employees. Providers should actively engage with industry, employers and/or PSRBs in the design of new micro-credentials to ensure new awards meet current needs and align with professional standards. Effective collaboration can support learner take-up of micro-credentials and credibility of the awards within the sector.

Providers are also recommended to work with PSRBs to raise awareness of professional sector micro-credentials, including as continuing professional development (CPD) and continuing education, and promote opportunities for RPL. Where appropriate, providers should seek PSRB recognition or accreditation of micro-credentials.

Some providers may use an external delivery platform to host online micro-credentials. These providers should ensure that the external platform enables them to adhere to the precepts and key practices detailed within this Framework (see also [Sections 3.9](#) and [3.11](#)).

Recommended for all micro-credential learners/providers	Desirable for micro-credential learners/providers where practicable
Micro-credential development is informed by relevant market needs assessments and, in many cases, this development work is best achieved collaboratively with tertiary providers working in partnership	Where appropriate, tertiary providers work in partnership to develop micro-credentials to share practice and avoid duplication
Section 3 of this Framework is used as a checklist to support the quality management of micro-credential partnerships	Providers work with PSRBs to raise awareness of micro-credentials and promote opportunities for RPL
Where appropriate, providers seek PSRB recognition or accreditation of micro-credentials	

3.9 Recruiting, selecting and admitting learners

Providers operate recruitment, selection and admissions processes for micro-credentials that are transparent, fair and inclusive for learners. In line with relevant statutory and regulatory guidance, providers should maintain and publish accurate, relevant and accessible information about their provision, enabling learners to make informed choices about their studies and future aspirations.

3.9.1 Learner recruitment

Staff involved in micro-credential recruitment, selection and admissions should be appropriately trained. In particular, staff should understand and be familiar with any differences between micro-credential recruitment processes and those for the providers' substantive programmes.

To support learners in identifying appropriate micro-credentials, providers should make all relevant entry requirements clear and accessible (see also [Section 3.7.3](#)). If a micro-credential is also a component of a macro-credential, such as a diploma or degree, providers should ensure that any entry requirements for the macro-credential are clearly communicated - this is to ensure micro-credential learners who do not meet the macro-credential entry requirements are fully aware of the potential limited progression from the micro-credential.

Providers should consider the opportunity for RPL as an appropriate route for micro-credential admission (see [Section 3.7.3](#) and [3.10.2](#)).

3.9.2 Transparency of awards

When promoting and advertising micro-credentials, providers should make available clear, accurate and accessible information to prospective and current learners. For open awards,^e this information should be available and easily accessible on the provider's website. For closed awards, the same information should be provided to learners and award funders/ supporters prior to the delivery of any learning or assessment. The information identified here is not intended to duplicate or replace statutory or good practice guidance published by the CMA.

Providers should publish the following for their micro-credentials:

- title of the micro-credential
- credit value
- level
- learning outcomes
- target learner - for example, whether the award is intended for professional development, skills development, entry to larger or higher award
- any prerequisite qualifications or achievements
- duration
- mode of delivery - online, in-person or blended and the venue of any in-person delivery, as appropriate
- language of delivery, as appropriate
- hours of directed learning including contact time with a lecturer/teacher/assessor and notional hours of learner-led learning
- method(s) of assessment - for example, test, submission of assignment or portfolio, observed competency
- cost
- any recognitions such as by a PSRB
- nature of certification, such as certificate, transcript, digital badge. As a minimum a certificate or transcript should be provided.

^e An open award is one for which any learner who meets the entry requirements may be admitted. A closed award is one that is only available to a given group of learners, such as the employees of a sponsoring organisation.

3.9.3 Learner registration and status

Providers should be clear on the status of micro-credential learners and their access to services such as library and IT resources, student support, students' union/association membership. The status of learners is likely to be based on several factors as indicated in [Section 3.2.1](#).

If micro-credentials are delivered in partnership, including with an external delivery platform, there should be agreed arrangements in place to confirm and communicate learner status and access to services (see [Section 3.8](#)).

Upon registration for a micro-credential, the learner, provider, staff and students' union/association, where appropriate, should all be clear on the learner status and the services that are and are not available to them.

Recommended for all micro-credential learners/providers	Desirable for micro-credential learners/providers where practicable
Learners have access to and experience a high-quality admissions process, including online admissions	Providers develop streamlined admissions processes for micro-credentials and provide appropriate training and support for relevant staff
Staff involved in micro-credential recruitment, selection and admissions are appropriately trained	If a micro-credential is also a component of a macro-credential, providers ensure that the entry requirements for the macro-credential are clearly communicated to inform opportunities and/or barriers for progression
Providers make all micro-credential entry requirements clear and accessible	Micro-credential learners, the provider, staff and students' union/association, where appropriate, are all clear on the status of the learner and the services that are and are not available to them
Clear, accurate and accessible information is provided to prospective and current micro-credential learners	
Providers clearly articulate the status of micro-credential learners and their access to services such as library and IT resources, student support, students' union/association membership	

3.10 Supporting micro-credential learners to achieve

Micro-credential providers facilitate a framework of proportional support for micro-credential learners that enables them to have a high-quality learning experience and achieve their chosen micro-credential(s).

3.10.1 Support for micro-credential learners

Given the wide variety of potential micro-credential learners (see [Section 3.2](#)) and varying lengths of time that they may engage with the provider, support should be clearly planned and communicated.

Unlike many larger macro-credentials, key transition points for micro-credential learners are likely to be close together in time restricting the opportunities for acknowledging learner development and potential next steps in their lifelong learning journeys. Providers should support this process by ensuring learners receive appropriate information, advice and guidance (IAG) prior to commencing any micro-credentials. This information should include information about complementary micro-credentials, stacking opportunities, known capstone awards, potential progression to macro-credentials and any known restrictions to progression – this is covered in more detail in [Section 3.7](#).

Micro-credential providers should take a fair and reasonable approach to their arrangements for IAG. Providers may involve careers advisors and/or employer engagement/business development staff in the provision of appropriate IAG. For smaller micro-credentials (such as up to 20 credits) and/or those delivered in just a few weeks or a shorter amount of time, a proportionate approach would be to collate and share information through digital means including the provision of key facts and FAQs, for example, on the provider's website.

To support lifelong learning journeys, providers should consider the provision of targeted micro-credentials or resources that develop learners' academic and professional skills and knowledge. Such lifelong learning micro-credentials are best explored and developed in partnership to reduce duplication of effort and unnecessary competition. Providers may wish to consider a nation-wide partnership approach to the development and hosting of such micro-credentials, such as developed for the [University Ready hub](#) for example.^f

^f The University Ready hub includes a wide range of resources to support students in decision making and preparation for higher education. More information can be found in this [short case study](#).

3.10.2 RPL and credit transfer

In addition to RPL for admission (see [Section 3.9.1](#) above), providers should consider the opportunity for learners to use RPL for achievement of part of a micro-credential (for one or more learning outcomes for example), such as through evidenced achievement of a non-credit bearing course or work experience.⁹ Typically, RPL may be more appropriate for larger micro-credentials (20 credits or larger) than smaller awards and providers should record the outcomes of deliberations of RPL to guide colleagues and learners.

Credit transfer is a system that allows credit gained on a particular programme to contribute towards the requirements of a different one. It also allows credit awarded by one awarding body/organisation to be recognised and included towards the requirements for a programme delivered and/or awarded by another awarding body/organisation. In the context of micro-credentials, credit transfer can facilitate portability of micro-credentials and enable stacking of micro-credentials achieved with different providers.

While all micro-credentials should be standalone awards, there may be learners who wish to stack micro-credentials into larger awards and use micro-credentials to gain access to macro-credentials such as a Professional Certificate or Diploma, a Certificate of Higher Education, or an undergraduate or postgraduate degree.

Where possible, providers should endeavour to recognise credit that learners have achieved through micro-credentials and support learners to build on that credit where it is wanted. Most awarding bodies/organisations have rules around the maximum credit that can count towards an award that is achieved with another awarding body. Providers are encouraged to review their academic regulations in light of the development of micro-credentials in order to enable portability and learner mobility. It is acknowledged that some providers, particularly colleges, may be restricted in their ability to apply credit transfer due to the regulations of relevant awarding bodies/organisations.



⁹ It is noted that many established qualifications include limits on the amount of credit that can be awarded through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL): this is 50 per cent of the qualification (or 30 credits) for the Access to HE Diploma, for example.

Recommended for all micro-credential learners/providers	Desirable for micro-credential learners/providers where practicable
Support for micro-credential learners is clearly planned and communicated	Where appropriate, information on learner support and pre-registration IAG is made available and accessible, such as on the provider's website
Providers take a fair and reasonable approach to their arrangements for IAG and should ensure micro-credential learners receive appropriate IAG prior to commencing any micro-credential	To support lifelong learning journeys, providers consider the provision of targeted micro-credentials or resources that develop learners' academic and professional skills and knowledge
Where possible, providers endeavour to recognise credit that learners have achieved through micro-credentials and support learners to build on that credit where it is wanted	Where appropriate, providers consider the opportunity for learners to use RPL for achievement of part of a micro-credential

3.11 Teaching, learning and assessment

Providers facilitate a collaborative and inclusive approach that enables micro-credential learners to have a high-quality learning experience through their studies. Micro-credential learners should be supported to develop and demonstrate academic and professional skills and competencies. Micro-credential assessment should employ a variety of methods, embodying the values of academic integrity, producing outcomes that are comparable across the UK.

3.11.1 Mode of delivery

Flexibility of delivery is key to the accessibility of micro-credentials to a wide range of learners and stakeholders. Providers should consider the most appropriate mode of delivery, based on the intended audience. Some micro-credentials will require the demonstration and/or assessment of practical skills which are likely to be best accommodated by in-person delivery; this may be at the provider's location or campus or potentially onsite at the learner's place of employment.

Many micro-credentials will be well suited to online delivery and providers should consider the suitability of any online learning platform and the scheduling of synchronous and/or asynchronous sessions and time taken to complete a micro-credential. There will also be the place for blended delivery, combining online and in-person tuition.

Blended models may be predominantly in-person with the use of online resources and forums to support learners. Alternatively, blended models may be predominantly online with the addition of in-person sessions to provide learner support or the delivery and practice of practical skills, for example.

Providers may choose to use an internal platform to host online micro-credentials or partner with an external company. Providers who choose to use external platforms should ensure that they have undertaken appropriate due diligence before entering into partnership (see [Section 3.8](#)) and that the key practices detailed in this Framework align to all their micro-credentials, regardless of the chosen platform.

The chosen mode of delivery should be informed by the target audience, the aims of the micro-credential, the nature of the learning outcomes, the best way to enable learners to achieve the outcomes and the method(s) of assessment. Where online delivery is chosen, providers should take into consideration the potential advantages and disadvantages of online learning, including digital poverty for example, to avoid micro-credential learners being disadvantaged.

Where a VLE is used to deliver micro-credentials, or share relevant learning resources, it is important that providers ensure effective micro-credential learner access to the VLE. This may require adaption of existing VLE and IT systems to ensure access is enabled swiftly. Additionally, providers should ensure that micro-credential learners who engage with the provider for only a brief period of time have access to the resources in a timely manner to support their study (see also [Section 3.3](#)).

A [survey](#) undertaken by QAA Cymru in 2025 found that employers preferred blended (a combination of online and in-person) opportunities for workforce development. Online delivery was the next preferred mode of delivery, which was only slightly preferred over in-person delivery at either their organisation or a college or university.



3.11.2 Assessment

Learners should be provided with clear information about the type(s) of assessment prior to commencing a micro-credential. The assessment should reflect the level of the micro-credential and ensure it assesses the learning outcomes. Assessments should be fair, reliable and inclusive in their design and take account of a diverse range of learner types and those with disabilities (see also [Sections 3.2.1](#) and [3.7.6](#)).

Providers should review their policies for assessment, academic integrity, use of artificial intelligence and academic appeals to ensure the provider-level policies and procedures are appropriate for micro-credential awards and learners (see also [Section 3.7](#)). Where necessary adaptations need to be made, these should be clearly documented and articulated to staff and learners. In particular, providers should review timescales for setting assessments and timescales for the return of assessed work with feedback. While a micro-credential may only have one assessment task, learners should receive feedback on their assessed work to ensure they have opportunity to learn from that feedback and apply necessary learning in the next step of their learning journey.

Where micro-credential achievement requires confirmation by a group or committee, such as an award board, providers should make arrangements for these to take place in a timely fashion to minimise delay in confirming awards and issuing certificates to learners. It may be appropriate for a specific micro-credential board (or equivalent) to meet regularly to consider micro-credentials from across the provider in a timely fashion. Where micro-credential awards are considered at an institutional level, processes should be established to ensure that good practice is shared and any issues are fed back to relevant departments for consideration and action, as appropriate.

Similarly, the use of externality should be appropriate and proportionate. Where external examiners or equivalent are not required by a provider to routinely provide comment or assurance on individual micro-credentials, it is recommended that periodic sampling is enabled by the provider and/or awarding body/organisation to ensure high-quality and maintenance of academic standards (see also [Section 3.5](#)).



3.11.3 Certification

On successful completion, the achievement of the micro-credential should be evidenced through formal certification.

The following information should be provided to a learner on successful completion of a micro-credential.

This is usually on a transcript:

- learner name
- title of the micro-credential
- name of the awarding body/organisation and delivery provider, where relevant
- date of issue
- level and credit value
- learning outcomes
- mark/grade achieved
- mode of delivery
- any recognitions such as by a PSRB.

In addition to the minimum information provided on certification, the following will support micro-credential portability and learners' ability to evidence their achievements:

- hours of learning
- brief description of content.

Where certifications are digital, the identity of the learners should be protected and certifications should be secure from misuse or alterations to ensure user trust. Digital micro-credentials should be able to be shared securely across multiple platforms including email, professional networks and social media.

Recommended for all micro-credential learners/providers	Desirable for micro-credential learners/providers where practicable
Providers consider the most appropriate mode of delivery, based on the intended audience and learning outcomes	Providers who choose to use an external online platform ensure that the key practices detailed in this Framework align to all their online micro-credentials
Where a VLE is used for any aspect of micro-credential delivery, providers ensure effective learner access to the VLE	Where digital, certifications are protected and secure and be able to be shared securely across appropriate platforms
Providers review their policies related to assessment to ensure their appropriateness and suitability for micro-credential awards and learners	
Achievement of micro-credentials is evidenced through formal certification	

3.12 Concerns, complaints and appeals processes

Providers operate processes for complaints and appeals that are robust, fair, transparent and accessible and clearly articulated to staff and micro-credential learners.

Providers should take account of statutory responsibilities and guidance provided by the relevant regulator as well as the Competition and Markets Authority and the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator \(OIA\)](#) or the [Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman \(NIPSO\)](#), as appropriate.

Providers should review existing concerns, complaints and appeals policies for appropriateness for micro-credential provision. In particular, providers should review the timescales within these policies to ensure suitability for short course provision. Where such timescales are inappropriate or impracticable, adjustments should be made to the policies or bespoke arrangements agreed for identified provision. Any resultant changes should adhere to the principles of fairness, dignity and respect and be clearly articulated to staff and learners.

Providers' policies and processes for concerns, complaints and appeals for micro-credential learners should be regularly reviewed and the outcomes used to support the enhancement of micro-credential provision and the learner experience (see also [Section 3.5](#)).

Providers should ensure that information on complaints and appeals processes is accessible to micro-credential learners; this includes information relating to the admissions process as well as the delivery, assessment and award of micro-credentials.

Recommended for all micro-credential learners/providers	Desirable for micro-credential learners/providers where practicable
Providers review existing concerns, complaints and appeals processes for appropriateness for micro-credential provision	
Providers' policies and processes for concerns, complaints and appeals for micro-credential learners are regularly reviewed to support the enhancement of micro-credential provision and the learner experience	
Information on complaints and appeals processes is accessible to micro-credential learners	

4. Employer engagement and micro-credentials for workforce development

'[The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy](#)' states that in 'wider stakeholder engagement, businesses have told us [the UK Government] that the skills system is not meeting their needs, with not enough of the flexibility they require to build a modern workforce, equipped with the right skills – including AI, digital, management, and data skills, hampering tech adoption and the productivity gains this can bring.'

Research by the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) indicates that 62% of employers are experiencing skills shortages.³ In [Growth through People Taking on The NEET Challenge: Creating Job Opportunities for Gen Z](#), BCC recommends that employers need more flexibility to invest in modular upskilling, as well as non- and pre-apprenticeship training.

Micro-credentials have the potential to address identified skills gaps and provide essential upskilling and CPD for many UK businesses. Nevertheless, employer awareness of micro-credentials is relatively low. In a [survey conducted by QAA Cymru in 2025](#), only 44% of employer respondents were aware of micro-credentials.

The cost of staff development and CPD also plays a major factor in workforce development. In its 2025 survey, QAA Cymru found that while the majority of employers (68%) agreed that their business/organisation would be willing to fund employees taking micro-credentials that meet their business needs, one-fifth of employer respondents indicated they would only pay for employee development if it was subsidised. Tertiary education providers and businesses need to be open about both the benefits and costs of micro-credential development and delivery.

Given that businesses need to ensure employees are competent, engaged and productive, micro-credentials can provide a flexible targeted approach to upskilling the workforce with exactly the right skills. They can be used to boost employee engagement and support employees' development. However, there can be a disconnect between businesses and academic establishments in terms of ensuring courses and qualifications meet the needs of business and adhere to the high-quality and standards demanded for UK further and higher education. Micro-credentials present an opportunity which, through close collaboration between companies, both large and small, and local colleges and universities, can provide tailored qualifications for the UK workforce that deliver exactly what is needed for the UK economy.

Colleges and universities are encouraged to discuss CPD needs with local employers to stimulate curriculum development that meets business needs. QAA Cymru has produced a [micro-credential factsheet for employers](#) to support these discussions. As identified in [Section 3.5](#), [3.7](#), [3.8](#) and [3.10](#), there should be ongoing communication with employers in terms of micro-credential design, delivery and review.

5. Realising the potential of micro-credentials

Micro-credentials offer the opportunity to provide a new approach to learning. A bite-sized approach may be attractive and accessible to individuals who might otherwise not engage in, or have disengaged from, formal education. The small but focused nature of micro-credentials can enable learners to develop new areas of knowledge and skills. There is potential for learners to combine these micro-credentials, through stacking, into macro-credentials to achieve substantive qualifications such as diplomas or degrees, underpinned with appropriately in-built quality and standards.

Micro-credentials present a significant opportunity to widen access to Welsh-medium tertiary education. Their size and flexibility may support learners to engage with Welsh-medium study in focused and achievable ways, including in subject areas where provision has previously been limited.

The role of micro-credentials in workforce upskilling and development is yet to be fully harnessed. Active and purposeful discussion and collaboration with employers can result in innovative learning programmes and recognition of achievements to meet the needs of employers, employees and the economies of Wales and Northern Ireland.

This Framework is intended as a starting point for the design and development of micro-credentials to ensure provision is well designed and fit-for-purpose. Tertiary education providers are encouraged to view this Framework as an essential tool for ongoing quality management to ensure micro-credentials across Wales and Northern Ireland provide a high-quality learner experience and facilitate learner mobility.

¹ Estyn (2024) How we inspect (the inspection process): Further education

² The Education and Training Inspectorate (2024) Empowering Improvement: New Framework for Inspection, Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland

³ BCC Workforce Survey, 2024 <https://www.britishchambers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Workplace-Equity-CommissionSeptember-2024.pdf>

6. Glossary

Term	Definition
Accreditation	A process for approving a programme by an authorised external organisation. This could be by a university, a professional body or a regulatory body.
Award	A qualification, or academic credit, conferred in formal recognition that a student has achieved the intended learning outcomes and passed the assessments required to meet the academic standards set for a programme or unit of study.
Awarding body/awarding organisation	Any organisation or institution which is authorised to award a particular qualification. For example, universities are authorised awarding bodies for degrees.
Blended learning	Learning delivered by several different methods, usually including face-to-face and e-learning (also known as 'technology enhanced' or 'enabled learning').
Capstone award	This term describes a bespoke award developed by an authorised awarding body/organisation to recognise a set of achieved micro-credentials as a larger micro-credential or macro-credential. For more information in relation to HE, see the Micro-credentials Characteristics Statement .
Certification	Certification is providing a document or other evidence of achievement such as the passing of an examination and/or the completion of a programme of study. In the context of micro-credentials this may be a paper-based or digital certificate or record of achievement.
Characteristics Statements	Characteristics Statements, published by QAA, describe the distinctive features of qualifications. They describe the qualifications in terms of their purpose, general characteristics and generic outcomes, but do not include subject-level detail. Characteristics Statements are only available for higher education qualifications at Levels 4 to 8 as described within The frameworks for higher education qualifications of UK degree-awarding bodies.
Continuing education	Provision to develop/enhance specific employability or professional skills where learners are not employed (unlike CPD).
Continuing professional development (CPD)	Provision to develop/enhance specific employability or professional skills where learners are employed (see also Continuing education).

Term	Definition
Credit	A means of quantifying and recognising learning whenever and wherever it is achieved, awarded in recognition of achievement of learning outcomes at a specified level and used for the purposes of certification. One credit typically represents 10 notional hours of learning.
Credit transfer	Credit transfer is the transfer of credit from one qualification/learning programme to another in order to minimise duplication of learning. In many cases this may also involve the transfer of credit between providers..
Digital badge	A digital badge is a visual representation of achievement or skill that can be displayed, accessed and verified online. Digital badges are considered portable credentials with data describing an individual's achievement or skill embedded into the badge image. Holders can embed their badge on a personal website or professional profile in popular social media platforms, for example.
Learner	A learner is a person who is trying to gain knowledge or skill in something by studying, practicing or being taught. A student is a type of learner – see below. Within this Framework, learner is used rather than student to recognise the potential different entitlements of micro-credentials learners from students who are registered on substantive or macro-qualifications.
Learning outcome	A learning outcome is what a learner or student is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning and assessment.
Level	Levels indicate the difficulty or complexity of a qualification or learning programme. Level descriptors describe in broad terms what learners should be able to do or demonstrate at each level by defining the generic outcomes for the characteristics at each level.
Macro-credentials	Macro-credentials typically refer to broader-based formal qualifications that include Level 2 and Level 3 Diplomas, HNCs, degrees and postgraduate certificates, for example.
Micro-credential	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. While designed as standalone qualifications, micro-credentials may be combined (or stacked) into larger credentials or provide entry into a larger award.

Term	Definition
Portability	Portability is the ability of a learner to carry or use a micro-credential achieved or awarded by one institution or awarding body and be able to build on the learning from that micro-credential with another institution/awarding body. The further learning may be at the same level or it may be a higher level (see Stacking).
Provider	The term 'provider' is used throughout this Framework to represent any provider of micro-credentials – this includes micro-credential awarding bodies and organisations and colleges, universities or other institutions who deliver micro-credentials.
PSRB	PSRBs (professional, statutory and/or regulatory bodies) are organisations that set the standards for, and regulate entry into, particular profession(s) and are authorised to accredit, approve or recognise specific programmes leading to the relevant professional qualification(s) – for which they may have a statutory or regulatory responsibility.
Qualification	A formally recognised academic award, such as a certificate, diploma or degree, granted on successful completion of a programme of study.
Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	Recognition of prior learning or RPL is the process for recognising learning that has come from experience and/or previous formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts. This includes knowledge and skills gained outside school, college and university and outside formal learning situations such as through life and work experiences. Some organisations use other terms for RPL including APL (accreditation of prior learning), APEL (accreditation of prior experiential learning), and APCL (accreditation of prior certificated learning).
Short course	A short course is a programme of course or study that is delivered over a short period of time; this may be less than one year or as little as one day, for example. Short courses may or may not be credit-rated.
Short cycle	A generic qualification descriptor that forms one of the wider Dublin descriptors. These descriptors are set out in the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) agreed in 2018. Short cycle qualifications are higher education awards which do not meet the full requirements for an undergraduate degree. These qualifications have also been referred to, within the UK, as sub-degree qualifications.

Term	Definition
Stacking	Stackable micro-credentials can be viewed as building blocks, where each micro-credential that a learner earns, has potential to build up to a larger credential. Stacking of micro-credentials is a way of enabling learners to achieve the learning outcomes of a macro-credential through the achievement of a number of micro-credentials.
Structure	The term 'structure' is used in this Framework to describe a provider's arrangement for oversight or governance of an aspect of its provision. This may be a board, committee or other forum, depending on the provider.
Student	A student is a type of learner who enrolls or registers for a programme of study with an education provider. Typically, students follow a series of subject-specific goals that may be selected, assessed and monitored by educators. Students usually have access to a range of support services offered by the education provider.
Transcript	A formal document also referred to as a statement of learning, a record of achievement or something similar, that certifies the results (marks or grades) achieved on successful completion of a programme or course.
Tertiary sector	The tertiary sector is an inclusive term for all education providers that deliver formally recognised post-16 education. Within this Framework, tertiary providers include colleges, universities and other education or training providers that deliver recognised awards. This comprises awards recognised by the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in Northern Ireland, Qualifications Wales , Ofqual , the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and awards of providers with degree-awarding powers.
Upskilling	Learning new skills, particularly related to current or planned employment. Upskilling is often facilitated by employers through providing training and development opportunities to enhance workforce abilities and minimise skill gaps.

7. Acronyms/abbreviations

Acronym	Full Name
BCC	British Chambers of Commerce
CMA	Competition and Markets Authority
CPD	Continuing professional development
CQFW	Credit and Qualifications Framework Wales
FAQs	Frequently asked questions
FE	Further education
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of Degree-Awarding Bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
HE	Higher education
IAG	Information, advice and guidance
NIPSO	Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman
OIA	Office of the Independent Adjudicator
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
RQF	Regulated Qualifications Framework
VLE	Virtual learning environment

8. Links to useful resources

[Bloom's Taxonomy](#)

[Credit and Qualifications Framework Wales \(CQFW\)](#)

[Micro-credentials: Benefits for businesses and employees](#) – an employer-facing micro-credential fact sheet for colleges and universities to share with their employer partners

[Micro-credentials – the essential information and FAQs](#)

[QAA Characteristics Statement for Micro-credentials](#)

[Qualifications can Cross Boundaries - Guide to Comparing Qualifications in the UK and Ireland](#)

[Recognition of Prior Learning: Framework for Scotland](#)

[Regulated Qualifications Framework \(RQF\)](#)

[The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#)

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