

Micro-credential Guidelines

Responsibility: Provost/Deputy Provost

Authorization: University Council

Approval Date: May 18, 2023

Review date:

Purpose

These guidelines are designed to:

1. Enable the creation and offering of micro-credentials as directly accessible, short-term educational offerings focused on development and demonstration of defined skills/competencies addressing specific labour market and/or community needs,
2. Define the essential features or parameters of micro-credentials, including their relationship to other non-degree offerings and degree offerings, where appropriate; and
3. Delineate an approval process for micro-credentials and establish responsibilities in their development, delivery, use, and recognition.

Definitions

Authentic Assessment: for the purposes of these guidelines is an assessment designed to allow a learner to demonstrate achievement of explicit outcomes through the application of skills/competencies in a context similar to where the skills would typically be used.

Micro-credential: A non-degree educational offering that is directly accessible, short, and focused on defined skills/competencies identified as needed in the labour market and/or community. Successful completion of authentic assessment results in a non-degree level digital credential.

Skills/competencies: the ability to apply knowledges to complete tasks and solve problems. Skills/competencies can range from use of methods or instruments in a particular setting and in relation to defined tasks to the application of knowledges and capabilities in an independent, self-directed way in new situations facing unforeseen challenges.

Notional learning hours: the number of hours it would take a typical learner to demonstrate achievement of specified outcomes, including participation in required or optional learning activities (in-person or online presentation of material, independent learning activities, group learning activities, online learning modules, and experiential learning activities that are work, research, project, community, or creative practice based) inclusive of authentic assessment.

Digital credential: a validated digital image and its associated metadata that documents when, where and how a set of skills/competencies was demonstrated to achieve a credential.

Stacking: refers to the practice of assembling or bundling units of study.

Stackable credential: is a credential that combines units of study to accurately reflect accumulated knowledge(s), skills, and competencies.

Learner: a participant in a micro-credential offering.

Educator: an instructor, facilitator and/or assessor of a micro-credential offering

Authority and Responsibility

These guidelines apply to micro-credentials issued by the University of Saskatchewan which are earned through non-degree level activities (see definitions).

Guideline Elements

1. Establishment criteria

In order to be considered for approval a micro-credential must:

- i. **Focus on specific skills/competencies:** narrow focus on a set of skills/competencies aligned with appropriate national and/or international taxonomies (e.g., [Employment and Social Development Canada National Occupational Classification skills taxonomy](#), [European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations skills & competencies](#))
- ii. **Be Short Duration:** are a maximum of 150 notional learning hours (enabling demonstration of outcomes equivalent to or less than a 3cu course)
- iii. **Demonstrate Relevance:** fulfill a specific labour market and/or community need and be endorsed by an industry/employer and/or community partner
- iv. **Be Accessible:** offered in a format best suited for learners with no or limited admissions requirements
- v. **Identify credit unit and academic level equivalency** (e.g., 1 cu and 100... 400, 800)
- vi. **Be coherently designed:** with clear outcomes and aligned learning activities
- vii. **Be financially viable:** as determined by the Provost and Vice President Academic or designate in consultation with the Dean
- viii. **Certify competence:** competence is demonstrated through authentic assessment with successful demonstration resulting in a USask credential

2. Units that may propose micro-credentials

- i. Micro-credentials must be proposed by one or more colleges/schools. Administrative units that are not colleges/schools may partner with colleges/schools to jointly develop and deliver micro-credentials.

3. Administration of Micro-credentials

- i. Administrative support for micro-credentials will be provided by a central unit(s) designated by the Provost and Vice President Academic within their portfolio (herein referred to as the Micro-credential administrative unit). The details of the support provided will be outlined in a memorandum of agreement between the unit(s) and the college/school proposing the micro-credential in advance of the commencement of development work in line with responsibilities outlined in the microcredentials procedures.

4. Approval of micro-credentials

- ii. The approval process for micro-credentials has been designed to facilitate just-in-time development of offerings needed by learners, employers, and the community.
 - a. The central unit designated by the Provost and Vice President Academic will provide a proposal form to be completed and submitted for each proposed micro-credential. The minimum information the form will require is outlined in appendix A.
 - b. A proposed micro-credential requires endorsement by the Dean/Executive Director, or designate, of the proposing college/school.
 - c. An initial timely review of each proposal will be conducted by a small advisory team, with membership including one member of Academic Programs Committee of University Council, one member of Planning and Priorities Committee of University Council, one faculty member at large, the University Registrar (or designate), the Senior Director, Resource Allocation and Planning (or designate) and the Senior Director, Teaching and Learning Enhancement (or designate). The group will advise the Provost and Vice-President Academic, within 10 working days of receipt of the proposal, on the fit of the proposal with the establishment criteria.
 - d. The authority to approve and to discontinue micro-credentials is delegated by University Council to the Provost and Vice-President Academic or their designate. The Provost and Vice-President Academic or their designate may exercise the delegated authority to approve micro-credentials where the requirements of these guidelines and any other applicable University Council policies and/or guidelines are satisfied.
 - e. Micro-credential fee categories and exemptions will be approved as per the *Tuition and Fees Authorization Policy* and particularly in consideration of the financial viability of micro-credentials as per the criteria for establishment of micro-credentials (guideline element 1.iv).

5. Learner rights and responsibilities

- i. Individuals accepted into micro-credential programming are considered Learners, not students, and will not be registered as students of the University of Saskatchewan. Learners in micro-credential programming will not have the rights and responsibilities of students as set out in *The University of Saskatchewan Act, 1995* and the policies of the University of Saskatchewan. Applicants for micro-credential programming will nevertheless be expected to abide by the same standards of conduct applicable to students and will be held accountable for academic dishonesty and non-academic misconduct.

6. Recognition of completion of a micro-credential

- i. Upon successful completion of a micro-credential, a digital credential will be provided to a learner.

- ii. The template and features of the digital credential will be established and overseen by the Provost and Vice President Academic or designate. Any such credential must comply with the Board of Governors approved *Logo and Secondary Logo Use Policy*.
 - iii. Micro-credentials are not part of Convocation, per *The University of Saskatchewan Act, 1995*, and are not awarded at convocation.
- 7. Application of completed micro-credentials towards further programming
 - i. Completed USask micro-credential offerings may be stacked or applied towards satisfaction of some or all requirements of non-degree certificates.
 - ii. Completed USask micro-credential offerings may be applied as credit towards a degree program as a course equivalent and/or by granting advanced standing to a student by decision of the college/school
 - iii. Application of completed micro-credentials towards credit or non-credit offerings will require review and approval at the level appropriate to that credential offering.
- 8. Review of micro-credential offerings
 - i. Micro-credential offerings will be reviewed annually, at minimum, by the Micro-credential administrative unit regarding fit with the establishment criteria (particularly criteria iii, iv, and vii) and value to learners. A report will be provided to the Dean of the college offering the micro-credential and the Provost and Vice President Academic with a recommendation for growth in the number of offerings, adjustments to the offering, and/or discontinuation.
- 9. Reporting
 - i. Reports will be produced twice annually on micro-credential offerings and enrollment by the Micro-credential administrative unit to the Office of the Provost and Vice President Academic.
 - ii. The Office of the Provost and Vice President Academic will report annually to Academic Programs Committee of Council on offerings and enrolment in micro-credentials.

Related Policies, procedures and guidelines

Microcredential procedures

[Academic and curricular nomenclature](#)

[Certificate and diploma guidelines](#)

[Tuition and Fees Authorization Policy](#)

[Curricular Changes: Program and course approvals](#)

[Articulation and transfer credit policy](#)

Appendix A – Micro-credential proposal form required information

- **Proposer contact information**
- **Working title**
- **Brief description**
- **Means of offering**
- **Proposed Fee category**
- **Notional learning hours**
- **Credit unit equivalency**
- **Academic level equivalency**
- **Accreditation or professional license requirements met, if appropriate**
- **Primary target learners**
- **Targeted skills/competencies (linked to national and/or international taxonomies)**
- **Demonstrated demand for this micro-credential (industry, community)**
- **Demonstrated fit of instructional approach/mode for learners**
- **Benefits for learners**
- **Partner identified for endorsement**
- **Landscape review (other comparable offerings in sector)**
- **Summary of financial viability referencing demonstrated demand, comparable offerings, fee category, instructional costs and proposed timing and number of offerings**
- **Micro-credential outline:**
 - **Outcomes**
 - **Instructional plan and schedule, including mode(s)**
 - **Authentic assessment**
 - **Assessment Rubric**