

Understanding micro-credentials and small qualifications in Scotland

Case study: On-demand learning for workforce upskilling – 15-credit micro-credential at SCQF Level 11

University of Aberdeen

The University of Aberdeen offers a number of short standalone online courses supporting the energy transition to net zero. Our energy transition courses are part of a wider offering of short course provision available through our On-demand Learning site. In general, the courses, though offered standalone, have been disaggregated from postgraduate taught degree programmes. The courses can be taken on their own or stacked to build up to a degree qualification.

An example course in this energy transition suite is Decommissioning of Offshore Installations: Regulatory Aspects, a 15-credit micro-credential at Level 11 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The course is delivered wholly online and teaching is delivered through MyAberdeen, our online virtual learning environment (VLE), with at least one intake per academic year and a duration of 12 weeks.

The content comprises online lectures, videos, reading materials, case studies, projects and synchronous live discussions to encourage peer-to-peer interaction with other participants and tutors. The online resources of the Sir Duncan Rice Library and the Law Library are also available to online students. Assessment takes place entirely online via multiple choice questions and essays.

The micro-credential course was designed for individuals involved in the decommissioning process to gain the expertise to tackle the legal issues involved in decommissioning oil and gas installations. Credits can be earned towards an MSc or LL.M (Master of Laws) degree. Critically, the micro-credential is designed in such a way that a legal background is not required to achieve the course, which is aimed at engineers, professionals working in the decommissioning field and those involved in environmental impact assessments, as well as lawyers.

Unusually, credits earned on this micro-credential can be used towards a qualification in two different Schools of the University – MSc Decommissioning, a multidisciplinary programme with an engineering flavour, or the LL.M in Oil and Gas Law.

The LL.M in Oil and Gas Law is also part of our short course route to programme study. This route allows students without typical academic entry requirements to take two micro-credentials to prove their capability of attainment at Master's level. After successfully completing 30 credits, these students are transferred to a Master's programme. This route has become increasingly popular with 94 micro-credential and short course students transferring to a programme in the academic year 2021-22.



Impact

As evidenced by this [case study](#), the Decommissioning of Offshore Installations: Regulatory Aspects short course is one small, but effective, intervention that addresses the need to reskill a workforce highly educated in traditional hydrocarbons in the skills and expertise required to deliver a net zero future.

Without energy transition short courses, there is the undesirable possibility of a highly skilled but unemployed/unemployable workforce, particularly in the north-east of Scotland, in the near future. The micro-credential aims to mitigate against the risk of redundancy/unemployment by not reskilling; this risk is more acute for mid-career professionals.

Since its launch in 2020, there have been 150 students on the Decommissioning of Offshore Installations: Regulatory Aspects micro-credential. The course is consistently popular and one of the most applied for when allocating [upskilling funding \(through the SFC \(Scottish Funding Council\) Upskilling Fund\)](#).

The University has 132 micro-credentials and short courses in its On-demand Learning site, all of which can be studied standalone and the majority of which can be stacked to build to a qualification.

More information

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Find out more

This case study is one of a series published as part of the 'Understanding micro-credentials and small qualifications in Scotland' project from the Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme.

Following from the establishment of the Scottish Tertiary Education Micro-credentials Network and the production of the Scottish Tertiary Education Micro-credentials Glossary in 2021-22, the project continues to explore micro-credential practice in Scotland in 2022-23 and the development of a good practice guide.

You can find further case studies and resources on the [project website](#).

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