

# Understanding micro-credentials and small qualifications in Scotland

## Case study: ‘Student Resilience: Moving from Surviving to Thriving’ short course

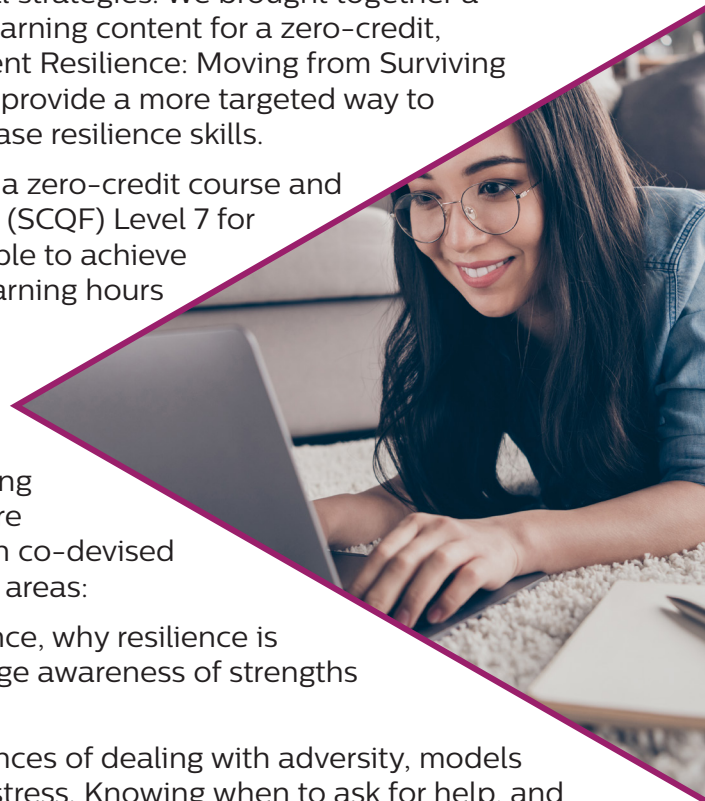
University of Aberdeen

Inspired by the current Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme, the University of Aberdeen has been piloting interventions and approaches to help students manage periods of adversity and to develop their resilience through practical strategies. We brought together a multi-disciplinary team to devise and develop resilient learning content for a zero-credit, standalone, undergraduate 5-week short course – ‘Student Resilience: Moving from Surviving to Thriving’. This shorter form of learning was selected to provide a more targeted way to enhance student knowledge and competencies, in this case resilience skills.

‘Student Resilience: Moving from Surviving to Thriving’ is a zero-credit course and mapped at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 7 for first-year undergraduate students. Students should be able to achieve the intended learning outcomes through two notional learning hours per week.

The course is delivered entirely online and comprises self-paced, personalised learning activities. It has also been co-created in partnership with students to ensure an inclusive, collaborative teaching context, where learning is meaningful and relevant. During the course students are presented with asynchronous materials, which have been co-devised by both staff and their student peers, and cover five core areas:

- Introduction to resilience – covering models of resilience, why resilience is important, and resilience self-assessment to encourage awareness of strengths and areas where further support might be needed.
- Adversity impacts everyone – shared student experiences of dealing with adversity, models of mental health, recognising symptoms of mental distress. Knowing when to ask for help, and where to find support.
- Building resilience – including metacognition strategies, self-care, and physical wellbeing.
- Social connections – interactive activities with peers, shared tasks, resilience walks, all designed to help build personal networks and provide a sense of community.
- Reflection and study-life balance – looking back on the resilience journey, assessing which activities were most useful, comparative self-assessment of resilience. Thinking about achieving study-life-work balance ([WonkHE 2022](#)).



Our curriculum also includes innovative co-developed learning materials, which have been designed to motivate and connect with students from different disciplines across the university. Engaging podcasts, blogs, infographics, discussion boards, Spotify™ playlists, and TED-style talk recordings all feature in our Blackboard online learning platform.

During the course, students complete activities designed to enhance their resilience each week, then reflect on these experiences via a learner-centred resilience journal. At the end of the course, student progress is assessed in their resilience journal. Students who successfully complete have their achievement recognised and recorded on their university degree transcript when they graduate, our institutional precursor to HEAR (Higher Education Achievement Record).

This novel short course seeks to equip our students with strategies, insights and approaches to build their resilience networks, knowledge and skills at the start of their degree studies. Perhaps more importantly, building resilience helps undergraduate students who elect to study this course, also succeed in their life beyond University ([TargetJobs](#), 2023).

## Impact

Preliminary feedback gathered at the end of the short course indicates how it has positively impacted on student understanding of resilience and how to navigate potential challenges during their studies. Illustrated via the following comments:

‘It gave me an insight on what university was like and how to deal with the struggles I might face.’

‘It gave me a sense of commitment and a new understanding behind resilience and all other aspects that are linked to it.’

During the first short course, students generally found activities based on self-care, metacognition, and physical wellbeing both engaging and rewarding. In contrast, students mainly found activities designed to enhance social networks as more challenging. This may be because post-pandemic students feel more comfortable networking online than in traditional environments. Going forward, the course materials and learning activities will be updated to address student feedback. Planned course enhancements include more in-person elements, such as scheduled, peer-led resilience walks.

The original short course proposal included a series of student-led ‘resilience walks’, as a distinct activity designed to enable students to build their personal network and form connections with both peers and the city of Aberdeen. Pilot campus-based resilience walks were launched during the University’s BeWell Week in October 2022. Currently, work is being carried out to evaluate these walks and activities, and to embed this in-person element within the short course in 2023.

## More information

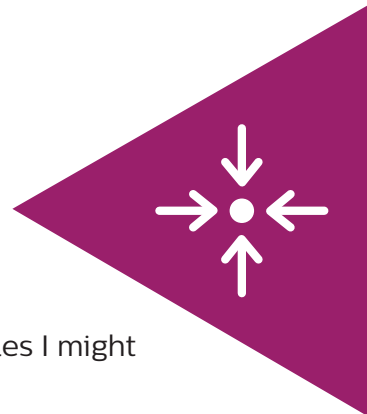
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## Find out more

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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