

Exploring the Potential of Micro-credentials and Digital Badging: Evaluation of Collaborative Cluster

What change is being made? (Brief description(s) of overall activity/intervention)

This is a collaborative cluster which aims to look at micro-credentials and digital badges. This is not new to the Scottish HE sector, but the potential of micro-credentials has not been realised. This cluster aims to explore attitudes towards and knowledge of micro-credentials and digital badges from four stakeholder groups: university staff, employers, current students, and potential customers.

Why have we made/are we making it? (Rationale for the change)

This enquiry is being driven by the current situation we find ourselves in. The pandemic has highlighted the need for a strategic response to upskilling and re-skilling the workforce, supported by funding from Scottish Government. It requires the collaboration of universities and employers to produce bespoke credentials which are current and robust, and attractive to potential users.

What difference will hopefully occur as a result? (Tangible change made successfully or envisaged)

We have made a set of recommendations for the HE sector to work with other stakeholders. There is a need for further work to develop a strategic and co-ordinated long-term approach to micro-credentials, which results in a flexible offering which complements and supplements current higher education offerings.

How will we know? (How is the change measured)

- Common language to describe micro-credentials
- Increased understanding of micro-credentials and digital badges by all stakeholders
- Increased support for collaboration between higher education and employers
- Increased numbers of individuals completing micro-credentials
- Increased articulation to formal HE study
- Formation of a micro-credentials national hub
- Development of a guiding framework

Who is involved in making any judgements? (Who decides on effectiveness)

The stakeholders are ultimately involved in judging the quality of the outcomes, measured by increased engagement with micro-credentials, for example:

- Employer and University development collaboration
- Student/customer uptake
- Student/customer involvement in development

Any lessons learned to apply already? (Applied ongoing learning)

This work has grown in scope since the original proposal. For this to go forward in a timely manner it is worth considering splitting the work into different streams – the cluster currently has eleven HEIs on board, and it makes sense to split them into smaller groups to carry on the work. Suggested workstreams are:

- Developing support materials for effective university/employer collaborations
- Developing a quality framework for micro-credentials
- Digital badges/digital portfolios
- Micro-credentials HE Hub
- Raising awareness of micro-credentials

From the point of view of the cluster, one thing I would change is to involve the student intern and the consultant at an earlier stage, and have them be a permanent member of the group for the life of the project.

Any things you have stopped/need to stop doing? (Any unsuccessful elements)

The only thing we had to change was the Student event because of the timing, which clashed with exam periods in most universities. However, our contingency plan generated some initial data from current students which we can use as a starting place to raise awareness of micro-credentials with that group.

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