

# Good Practice Guide for Micro-credentials and Small Qualifications in Scotland

August 2023



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# 1 Introduction and context

The purpose of this Good Practice Guide is to set out principles and practices that have been agreed by a range of stakeholders through the Scottish Tertiary Education Network for Micro-credentials. Scottish tertiary education providers and other credit-rating bodies are encouraged to use this Good Practice Guide for all micro-credentials to support improved learner take-up of micro-credentials across Scotland and improve learner mobility facilitated by a level of assurance that all awards adhere to baseline principles and good practices.

Micro-credentials and small qualifications can enable flexible access to tertiary education and have an increasing role in upskilling and reskilling the workforce. The role of these small qualifications in Scotland is illustrated by the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) recommendation for the 'development of shorter, sharper courses to support learning throughout life' in its [Review of Tertiary Education and Research](#). Similarly, in the 2023 Scottish [Skills Delivery Landscape Review](#), Withers recognises the need for 'more flexibility to suit learners of all stages in life', noting that shorter courses should be embraced to allow 'individuals to build and gather qualifications and skills throughout their life'.

There is further information about micro-credentials in the [Scottish Tertiary Education Micro-credentials Glossary](#) and QAA's [Characteristics Statement for Micro-credentials](#).<sup>1</sup>

The scope of micro-credential interest in Scotland is illustrated by the current range of micro-credentials and small qualifications on offer across Scottish colleges, higher education institutions (HEIs) and other credit-rating bodies (CRBs). A [tertiary sector-wide survey](#) undertaken in January/February 2023, completed by 34 Scottish colleges, HEIs and CRBs, indicates a range of provision at Level 2-11 of the [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework](#) (SCQF) although the majority of awards are at SCQF Level 5, 6 and 7. Based on the survey results and subsequent correspondence, there is estimated to be at least 22,715 learners on 350 (credit-rated) micro-credentials in Scotland in 2022-23.<sup>2</sup> Further information about the micro-credential landscape in Scotland in 2022-23 is provided in the Annex.

In response to the wide interest in micro-credentials, QAA Scotland (QAAS) facilitated the sector-wide project - [Understanding Micro-credentials and Small Qualifications in Scotland](#) during 2021-22 and 2022-23 as part of the [Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme](#). Findings from the project show 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. The project also identified interest from Scottish providers and learners to facilitate connecting or stacking micro-credentials into larger awards (macro-credentials) but that learner mobility is challenged partly due to the wide range of approaches currently in place for micro-credential development, delivery and quality assurance.

The purpose of this Good Practice Guide is to facilitate learner take-up of micro-credentials across Scotland and improve micro-credential learner mobility. The principles and practices set out in this Guide have been agreed by a range of stakeholders through the [Scottish](#)

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<sup>1</sup> The Characteristics Statement for Micro-credentials focuses on higher education (HE) micro-credentials and is aimed at HE providers.

<sup>2</sup> The [sector survey](#) was not completed by all tertiary providers and CRBs in Scotland so the number of micro-credentials and registered learners is likely to be higher than the current estimate.

[Tertiary Education Network for Micro-credentials](#). Scottish colleges, HEIs and CRBs are encouraged to use this Good Practice Guide for all micro-credentials to support learner take-up of micro-credentials across Scotland and improve learner mobility, facilitated by a level of assurance that all awards adhere to baseline principles and good practices.

In its [Review of Tertiary Education and Research](#), the SFC recommends a pilot National Micro-credential Framework and Delivery Plan for Scotland to 'certify this bite-sized learning and explore how modules can be combined to form larger qualifications over time'. It is envisaged that, with the wide range of stakeholders who have contributed, this Good Practice Guide will provide the foundation of this Framework.

## 2 Definition and nomenclature

A micro-credential is the record of assessed knowledge, skills and/or achievements within a focused area of outcome-based learning. It is normally the outcome of a small, discrete, credit-bearing course.

The above definition of a micro-credential, as set out in the Scottish Tertiary Education Micro-Credentials Glossary, was agreed by the Scottish Tertiary Education Network for Micro-credentials. This definition recognises the wide tertiary sector across Scotland, encompassing further and higher education, and is consistent with the Characteristics Statement that states that higher education micro-credentials should be credit bearing. The Scottish Tertiary Education Network for Micro-credentials recognises the interest and place of small, discrete records of learning that are not credit bearing. For ease, the term micro-credentials will be used throughout to include credit-rated micro-credentials and non-credit bearing small qualifications with specific differentiation provided, where appropriate. It is envisaged that the inclusion of micro-credentials and small non-credit bearing qualifications in one Guide will help to drive consistent practice in the design, delivery, quality assurance and promotion of these small awards to aid learner and other stakeholder understanding of the scope, benefits and limitations of these flexible packages of learning.

## 3 Principles and key good practices

This Guide sets out general principles for micro-credentials and key practices that providers are encouraged to observe when developing micro-credentials and their regulations and processes for micro-credential design and delivery.

### General principles

All micro-credentials should adhere to the definition above and the following principles to ensure credibility, high quality and maximum value for all stakeholders including learners, employers and providers. (Guidance on the implementation of these principles is provided in Sections 4 and 5.)

## General principles

- Micro-credentials should be outcome-based
- Learner attainment of micro-credential outcomes should be demonstrated through suitable assessment
- A micro-credential should be a standalone award and not a qualification in its own right on [The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland](#) (FQHEIS)<sup>3</sup>
- A micro-credential should be focused in its area of learning
- Micro-credentials should be designed to allow learners to select awards that cater to their personal interests and current or future employment needs within the context of lifelong learning

## Key good practices

Additional to the general principles provided above, micro-credential providers should meet the following key good practices.

### Micro-credential learners

Micro-credentials may be of interest to a wide range of learners. Learners may be those wishing to undertake a taster course before applying to join or commencing a macro-credential such as a diploma or undergraduate degree. A learner may be an employee undertaking a micro-credential to upskill in a particular area directly relevant to their work. Some learners may be unemployed and undertaking one or more micro-credentials to develop skills or knowledge to enable them to enter or re-enter the workforce. For some, the affordability of studying bite-sized chunks of learning will enable them to further their education without the burden of high tuition fees or student loans, while some existing students will undertake micro-credentials alongside their main programme of study in complementary or unrelated subjects. Some learners will simply want to study a subject that is of particular interest to them.

It is not possible to categorise such a wide range of potential learners. These learners may not see themselves as traditional students and providers need to ensure they support micro-credential learners in an appropriate manner which is likely to be different to 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 and providers should also consider appropriate mechanisms to support all learners regardless of their background.

### 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 method of delivering micro-credential courses, based on the intended audience. Some micro-credential courses will require the demonstration and assessment of practical skills which is 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-credential courses will be well suited to online delivery and providers should consider the suitability of any online

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<sup>3</sup> The FQHEIS is a constituent part of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

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. Providers should take into consideration potential disadvantages of online learning, including digital poverty, ensuring that micro-credential learners are not disadvantaged by online delivery.

### **Transparency of awards**

Micro-credentials should be named in such a way that distinguishes them as standalone, short awards. Micro-credential providers should furnish complete and accurate information on the awards in an easily accessible format covering outcomes, method(s) of assessment and whether they are credit-rated. Where credit-rated, each micro-credential's SCQF level and credit points should be clearly identifiable, as should any arrangements for stacking or recognition of prior learning (RPL).

Where micro-credentials are the product of a course of study, providers should additionally state mode of delivery, hours of learning and content.

Any recognitions, such as by a professional, regulatory or statutory body (PSRB), should also be clearly stated.

### **Micro-credentials for employment and in professional fields**

To support upskilling and career development, many micro-credentials will be targeted towards employers and/or individual employees or prospective employees. Active engagement with industries and employers in the design of new micro-credentials is strongly recommended to ensure new awards meet current needs within the relevant sector to support learner take-up and credibility within the sector.

Providers are encouraged to work with PSRBs to develop awards that meet identified needs in employment/professional sectors and support individuals' membership of PSRBs or relevant accreditation. Collaboration with PSRBs is recommended to raise awareness of professional sector micro-credentials, including as continuing professional development (CPD), and promote opportunities for RPL. Where appropriate, it is highly desirable for providers to seek PSRB recognition or accreditation of micro-credentials.

### **Micro-credential level and size**

Micro-credentials can be developed at any SCQF level; in 2023 micro-credentials in Scotland are available from Level 2 to 11.

In terms of size, the Characteristics Statement provides useful guidance for higher education providers. There is no upper or lower limit of credit for micro-credentials other than the expectation that a micro-credential would not normally constitute a qualification in its own right; for HEIs in Scotland this is an award on the FQHEIS.

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.

### **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 7 and above, and especially important for those targeted at graduates.

To support learners in identifying appropriate micro-credentials, providers need to make all relevant entry requirements clear and accessible.

If a micro-credential is also a component of a macro-credential, such as a degree programme, 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.

## **Security**

As a formal record of assessed learning, micro-credentials should accurately reflect the outcomes that have been achieved. Where certifications are digital, the identity of the learners must 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.

## **4 Development, design and delivery of micro-credentials**

The guidance in this section is divided into the stages of development, design and delivery. There is likely to be overlap between these stages within institutions/organisations. Providers are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the whole of this Good Practice Guide when designing micro-credentials and/or institutional/organisational policy or practice.

### **Micro-credential development**

Institutions and organisations may develop micro-credentials for a range of reasons. Providers developing micro-credentials for upskilling and skills development to support the workforce should be aware of the priorities for Scotland's economy as outlined in the [National Strategy for Economic Transformation](#). The development, design and delivery of micro-credentials should be informed by relevant market needs assessments. In many cases this development work is best achieved collaboratively with tertiary providers working in partnership with other providers, as well working with employers, sector bodies and/or PSRBs. Where appropriate, providers should seek the endorsement of approved micro-credentials by industry, employers or other relevant bodies.

The SFC [University Upskilling Fund](#) was launched in July 2019 to provide 'shorter, more flexible provision to enable institutions to respond to the needs of learners and business'. While this fund continues to be available, HEIs can use their allocation of funding to develop micro-credentials for upskilling. HEIs can also develop micro-credentials for non-priority employment sectors and/or targeted to learners for pleasure and leisure rather than workforce development.

Scotland's colleges have a track record for collaborative partnership and are well placed to work in collaboration with other colleges, employers and/or HEIs. Pilot work led by the [College Micro-credentials Consortium](#) is an example of successful partnership working that resulted in the development of a working model for micro-credential development within the college sector.

Providers are strongly encouraged to engage and collaborate with employers in the design of micro-credentials to ensure relevance and employer engagement. Providers are also

encouraged to engage with employer representative bodies and/or PSRBs to identify areas for development and create demand-led provision.

Where possible, it is good practice to share resources and avoid the generation of multiple similar micro-credentials across many institutions/organisations.

## **Micro-credential design**

Micro-credentials should support individuals' ability to build a portfolio of learning and achievement in line with personal goals and objectives. Accordingly, micro-credentials should be designed to enable learners to build on and extend their learning across a range of providers. All micro-credentials should adhere to underlying principles as set out in Section 3. Additional guidance for micro-credentials designers and approvers is provided here.

### **Small, focused areas of learning**

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.

After employer consultation, 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. Many HEIs have used their SFC Upskilling Fund allocations to create 20-credit micro-credentials - equivalent to one module of their undergraduate or postgraduate provision.

Micro-credential designers should carefully consider the size of their awards. In particular, if micro-credentials larger than 30 SCQF credits points are under consideration, designers should consider whether the award could or should be offered as multiple smaller micro-credentials, enabling each to remain focused in its area of learning.

### **Standalone awards**

Micro-credentials should be standalone awards. They may be designed as individual awards with no identified companion learning. More commonly, micro-credentials will sit alongside similar small awards that complement each other. Having a range of complementary micro-credentials to achieve and combine into larger awards is a key benefit of micro-credentials. 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 principles and good practice provided in this Guide.

### **Outcomes and assessment**

All micro-credentials should be outcome-based. Micro-credential designers should clearly articulate the overall intended learning outcomes (ILOs) that need to be achieved, in terms of relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes or competencies, to achieve the micro-credential award. In describing outcomes, designers should refer to relevant reference points such as the SCQF and the FQHEIS. Designers should consider whether 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 ILOs accurately. Designers should also consider the number of ILOs for each micro-credential, bearing in mind that each outcome needs to be assessed.

ILOs must also be clearly articulated for non-credit-bearing small qualifications. A level of the SCQF cannot be assigned to non-credit rated awards so language and description of the award needs to support understanding of the notional level of learning required. For some awards, it may be appropriate to indicate the notional amount of learning effort (in hours) required to achieve the ILOs.

Providers may wish to review their existing assessment policies to ensure they remain fit-for-purpose for small awards. 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.

## Delivery of micro-credential programmes

Delivery of micro-credential programmes can be fully online, wholly in-person or using a blended approach that combines online and in-person teaching and learning. Blended models can be predominantly in-person with the use of online resources and forums to support learners or predominantly online with the addition of in-person sessions to provide learner support or for the delivery and practice of practical skills, for example. The chosen approach should be informed by the target audience, the aims of the micro-credential, the nature of the ILOs, the best way to enable learners to achieve the outcomes and the method(s) of assessment.

There is a wide range of examples of good practice available for providers who choose online and/or blended delivery approaches. Examples and useful guidance and resources may be found on the [QAAS](#), [Enhancement Themes](#) and [College Development Network \(CDN\)](#) websites.

Providers may choose to use an internal platform to host their micro-credential programmes or partner with an external company such as FutureLearn or OpenLearning. An advantage of an external platform is the opportunity to greatly extend the pool of potential learners and gain international exposure. Established companies can also support providers in the design and use of online learning content and assessment tools. Providers who choose to use such external platforms should ensure that good practice detailed in this Guide aligns to all their micro-credentials, regardless of the chosen platform, to maintain consistency of information and accessibility for learners and the Scottish tertiary sector.

## RPL and credit transfer

As for all academic awards, providers should be aware of opportunities for recognition of prior learning (RPL) and use of credit transfer.

Within the context of micro-credentials, **RPL** may be appropriate in several circumstances; below are four examples of these.

- Recognising prior certificated learning that demonstrates a learner is suitably equipped to undertake a micro-credential - this may demonstrate skill/knowledge in a particular subject and/or at a given level.
- Recognising non-certificated (experiential) learning that has been achieved through work or other life experience that demonstrates a learner is suitably equipped to undertake a micro-credential.

- Recognising non-certificated (experiential) learning that has been achieved through work or other life experience that demonstrates a learner has met one or more of the intended learning outcomes of a micro-credential or across a suite of related micro-credentials.
- Enabling a learner to undertake some but not all micro-credentials from across a suite of related micro-credentials, where it is recognised that the outcomes of identified micro-credentials can be demonstrated through work or other life experience. In this example, if the provider combines the suite of micro-credentials into a larger named award, the learner would be eligible for the full award on successful completion of the micro-credentials that have not been achieved via RPL.

Institutions and organisations should refer to the [Recognition of Prior Learning: Framework for Scotland](#) and the [SCQF Guide to RPL](#) for comprehensive guidance on RPL and its applications.

**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 or credit-rating body to be recognised and included towards the requirements for a programme delivered and/or awarded by another awarding or credit-rating body. In the context of micro-credentials, credit transfer can facilitate portability of micro-credentials and enable stacking of micro-credentials achieved at 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.

Wherever 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 HEIs and CRBs have rules around the maximum credit that can count towards an award that is achieved with another provider. Providers are strongly 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.

## 5 Quality assurance

To enable a shared confidence in the quality and standards of Scottish micro-credentials, all providers should ensure that robust quality assurance processes are established, implemented and maintained for the development, marketing, delivery, assessment, certification, monitoring and review of micro-credentials. In general, providers should observe the following processes appropriate to the complexity and level of their micro-credentials. In terms of external review of quality assurance by QAAS, providers are not required to adhere to the processes within this section but are strongly encouraged to do so to ensure a high-quality learner experience and facilitate learner mobility.

### Policies, processes and academic regulations

A provider's approach to quality assurance and enhancement of micro-credentials should be appropriate and proportionate. Providers should adhere to their established regulations and/or processes but 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.

Where micro-credential achievement requires confirmation by a group or committee, such as an award board, institutions/organisations need to 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 institution/organisation in a timely fashion. Where micro-credential awards are considered at an institutional/organisational 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 an institution/organisation 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 to ensure high quality and maintenance of academic standards.

## **Learner registration**

Providers should be clear on the status of learners and their access to services such as library and IT resources, student support, students' association membership and students' association services. The status of learners is likely to be based on several factors including:

- whether the micro-credential learner is following a course of study at the institution
- the size of the micro-credential
- whether the micro-credential is an open award with access for any suitable learner or a closed award, such as bespoke for an employer
- whether learning is delivered online, in-person or using a blended approach.

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

## **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/organisation'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 principles and good practice contained within this Guide.

For credit-rated micro-credentials, the formal credit-rating should form part of the approval process; for colleges and CRBs, this may be a two-step process with the content, ILOs and assessment being approved first, followed by formal SCQF credit-rating.

Providers may wish to consider the potential for approval of modules or other units of larger awards as standalone micro-credentials. For this purpose, it may be appropriate to include micro-credential approval criteria into standard module approval processes to facilitate this option.

## Monitoring and review

All micro-credentials should be subject to regular monitoring and review. This will enable institutions/organisations to be confident that the awards continue to meet their stated aims and that the content and ILOs continue to be relevant to the target audience, including in the context of learner feedback, current or future employment needs, and lifelong learning. Clearly articulated processes for micro-credential monitoring and review should be regularly reviewed based on relevant benchmarks such as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the [SCQF principles](#), as well as providing due regard to any relevant external quality assurance processes.

## Learner experience and feedback

Micro-credential providers should ensure that all learners who undertake micro-credentials receive a high-quality experience. Provision of information, support and resources should be available as required to enable learners to achieve the micro-credential for which they are registered. There should be clear and transparent articulation of learner access to services and support to ensure learners are aware of their entitlements and the limitations of this access, where appropriate.

Learners should be asked to provide feedback on their experience as micro-credential learners. Providers should communicate to micro-credential learners their consideration of feedback that is received, including any actions undertaken as a result. To provide transparency, micro-credential providers are encouraged to actively promote learner feedback mechanisms.

## Stakeholder feedback

Providers who offer micro-credentials for upskilling and/or workforce development should regularly seek and consider feedback from employers, employer representatives and other appropriate stakeholders on the currency and continued relevance of the awards.

## Promotion and advertising of micro-credentials

Institutions/organisations should provide clear information to prospective and current learners about the micro-credentials and small qualifications that are available. For open awards, this information should be available and easily accessible on the provider's website. For closed awards, the same information needs to be provided to learners and award funders/supporters prior to the delivery of any learning or assessment.

The following is the minimum that all providers should publish for their micro-credentials and small qualifications:

- title of the micro-credential / small qualification
- SCQF credit points if credit-rated and if not, a clear statement indicating it is not credit-rated
- SCQF level if credit-rated or an indication of the difficulty of the programme and learning hours if not credit-rated
- intended learning outcomes (ILOs)
- target student - for example, whether the award is intended for professional development, skills development, entry to larger or higher award
- any prerequisite qualifications or achievements
- duration, if the micro-credential is offered as a course of study
- mode of delivery - online, in-person or blended. If in person, the venue of the delivery

- hours of directed learning and notional hours of student-led learning
- method 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.

## Certification

On successful completion, the achievement of the micro-credential must be evidenced through formal certification, typically through a transcript. The following is the minimum that should be provided on the certificate or transcript:

- learner name
- title of the micro-credential / small qualification
- name of the awarding body / credit-rating body
- date of issue
- SCQF credit points and level, and SCQF logo if credit rated
- aims and learning outcomes
- mark/grade achieved
- any recognitions such as by a PSRB
- where micro-credentials are the product of a course of study, providers should additionally state:
  - mode of delivery
  - hours of learning
  - brief description of content.

If credit-rated, certification must also meet SCQF principle 10 as outlined in the [SCQF Handbook](#).

## 6 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, and combine these, if wanted, into macro-credentials. There is potential for learners to achieve degrees from stacking of micro-credentials at appropriate levels with appropriately in-built quality and standards.

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 Scottish economy.

This Good Practice Guide 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 Guide as an essential tool for ongoing quality management to ensure micro-credentials across Scotland provide a high-quality learner experience and facilitate learner mobility.

## 7 Links to useful resources

[Bloom's Taxonomy](#)

[College Development Network](#)

[College Micro-credentials Consortium](#)

[Enhancement Themes](#)

[National Strategy for Economic Transformation](#)

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

[QAA Scotland](#)

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

[Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework](#)

[Scottish Tertiary Education Micro-Credentials Glossary](#)

[SCQF Guide to RPL](#)

[SCQF Handbook](#)

[SCQF principles](#)

[SFC University Upskilling Fund](#)

[Tertiary sector micro-credentials survey 2022-23](#)

[The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland](#)

## 8 Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all the 2022-23 members of the Scottish Tertiary Education Network for Micro-credentials who supported the development of this Good Practice Guide, and particularly those who actively participated with content writing and review - indicated here with an asterisk (\*).

Claire Bannister	Universities Scotland
George Brown*	Scottish Qualifications Authority
Megan Brown*	Sparqs
Jon Buglass*	Edinburgh College
Aoife Clarke	Heriot-Watt University
Scott Connor*	University of the Highlands and Islands
Dr Ann Cotterill*	QAA Scotland
Sheila Dunn*	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership
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Debra Macfarlane	Scottish Funding Council
Mark McCahill	Colleges Scotland
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Dr Luke Millard*	Abertay University
Nicola Milton*	University of St Andrews
Kirsty Paterson*	Dundee and Angus College
Dr Joy Perkins*	University of Aberdeen
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Sara Rae*	West College Scotland and Colleges Scotland
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Paula Wilcock*	Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland
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Professor Debra Willison*	University of Strathclyde
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## Annex

Table 1 provides a snapshot of the micro-credential landscape in Scotland in 2022-23. This information was predominantly gained from a [tertiary sector-wide survey](#) undertaken in January/February 2023, which was completed by 34 Scottish colleges, HEIs and CRBs. The survey explored a range of features of providers' micro-credentials and small qualifications, including their level on the SCQF, if they were credit-bearing, their size and predominant method of delivery.

**Table 1: Micro-credential landscape in Scotland, 2022-23**

Feature	Colleges	HEIs	CRBs
<b>Micro-credential size</b>	Wide range, up to 60 credits or 600 hours of notional learning A consortium approach is based on 2 credits	Wide range up to 60 credits or 600 hours of notional learning Up to 20 credits for the majority of HEIs	Up to 20 credits
<b>SCQF level</b>	SCQF Level 2-10	SCQF Level 5-11	SCQF Level 6-10
<b>Delivery method</b>	Online and blended	Online and blended	Online and blended
<b>Assessment*</b>	Credit awarded after successful assessment; normal internal assessment and verification processes apply	Credit awarded after successful assessment; normal internal assessment and verification processes apply	Credit awarded after successful assessment; normal internal assessment and verification process apply
<b>RPL and credit transfer*</b>	Subject to internal policies and processes, following the <a href="#">SCQF RPL principles</a> , in line with the <a href="#">Scottish RPL Framework</a>	Subject to internal policies and processes, following the <a href="#">SCQF RPL principles</a> , in line with the <a href="#">Scottish RPL Framework</a>	Subject to internal policies and processes, following the <a href="#">SCQF RPL principles</a> , in line with the <a href="#">Scottish RPL Framework</a>

\* These features were not explored in the survey



Published by QAA, and produced by the sector and QAA Scotland, this resource has been commissioned by the Scottish Funding Council to support its duty to secure provision for assessing and enhancing the quality of fundable further and higher education provision.



Published - August 2023

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

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