

14 September 2021 (13:30-15:30 UTC+2)



Background

Micro-credentials are increasingly promoted as a new and more flexible way of recognising knowledge, skills and competences. Giving learners and employees the possibility to collect and combine smaller units of learning according to their specific needs, they are often promoted as building blocks that can facilitate lifelong and life-wide learning. However, progress with micro-credentials is hampered because, among other challenges, there is no commonly recognised definition that clearly communicates to users, particularly learners and employers, what micro-credentials are. The lack of a common definition, shared and understood by all users, has a number of negative implications, particularly when it comes to the transparency, portability and cross-border recognition of micro-credentials. In recent years, policymakers, scholars and educators have produced their own definitions, advancing scholarship in the area, but sometimes causing more confusion by adding yet another definition.

To address these challenges, UNESCO has conducted a study with the aim to propose a common definition of micro-credentials, reached through consensus by a global panel of more than forty experts representing diverse regions and sectors. The definition is not intended to replace national or regional definitions. It is an attempt to distil what experts “agree that they agree on” so far about micro-credentials. It is intended as an umbrella statement that can be an international reference point, rather than a replacement, for established definitions. A common language on micro-credentials is an essential

first step towards their wider use and recognition by employers and learners, and for facilitating mobility of learners and workers, increasing trust, and enabling lifelong learning for all.

Objectives

The webinar provides an opportunity to share with experts the methodology and findings of the study and will provide a space for reflection and discussion of the proposed definition of micro-credentials.

The proposed definition signals the beginning of a conversation rather than being the last word. Achieving consensus with more than forty experts from all sectors and parts of the globe has been a challenging and richly rewarding exercise in a short time frame. More experts now need to be included in the conversation, representative of jurisdictions and sectors. Experts with commercial interests in micro-credentials also need to be brought into the conversation, as do the most important group - lay users such as learners across the lifespan, and employers. This webinar is the opportunity to launch this conversation and engage participants' perspectives – from education and training, industry, and beyond. It is also an opportunity, not only to discuss the proposed definition, but to ponder implementation, next steps, and other challenges associated with micro-credentials.

Agenda

After a brief introduction, there will be a presentation of the key findings by the project leader, then four short video messages in which those from inaccessible time zones can share their perspectives. These will be followed by a live discussion among members of the expert panel.

Agenda

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| 13:30 – 13:40 | <p><i>Overall moderator: Katerina Ananiadou, UNESCO</i></p> <p>Introduction and opening remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Borhene Chakroun, Director, Division of Policies and Lifelong learning Systems, UNESCO |
| 13:40 – 13:50 | <p>Remarks from Cedefop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Anastasia Poulidou, VET Expert, Cedefop |
| 13:50 – 14:30 | <p>Presentation of key findings followed by discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emeritus Professor Beverley Oliver, project leader and report author, UNESCO consultant • <i>Discussant:</i> John Hart, independent expert |
| 14:30 – 14:50 | <p>International perspectives on micro-credentials</p> <p>Four short recordings sharing the perspectives of experts from various regions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Grant Klinkum, Chief Executive, NZQA, New Zealand • Dr Kristi Wold-McCormick, Assistant Vice Provost and University Registrar, University of Colorado Boulder, United States • Dr John O’Connor, Head of Framework Integrity, Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Ireland • Dr Beatriz Palacios, Director at Educational Innovation, Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico |
| 14:50 – 15:25 | <p>Moderated panel discussion followed by Q&A</p> <p><i>Moderator: Emeritus Professor Beverley Oliver, Project leader and report author, UNESCO consultant</i></p> <p>Live panel of experts involved in the project - open discussion on the key issues associated with the definition, its strengths and weaknesses and challenges in its implementation in formal and non-formal settings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Julie Reddy, Chief Executive Officer, South African Qualification Authority, South Africa • Dr Sean Gallagher, Executive Director, Center for the Future of Higher Education & Talent Strategy, Northeastern University, United States • Dr Dominic Orr, Team lead atingi.org at GIZ, Germany • Dr Susanna Karakhanyan, President, International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), United Arab Emirates • Mr Don Presant, President, Learning Agents, Canada • Dr Fiona Aldridge, Director for Policy and Research, Learning and Work Institute, United Kingdom |
| 15:25 – 15:30 | <p>Wrap up and next steps</p> <p>Hervé Huot-Marchand, Chief, Section for Youth, Literacy and Skills Development, UNESCO</p> |