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What are micro-credentials and what is the added value they bring?

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What are micro-credentials?

- the term refers to both the learning activity leading to a credential and the credential itself
- the existing definitions describe the following characteristics of micro-credentials:
  - size
  - purpose
  - categorisation
  - types of short courses they may encompass
  - linked to "digital"
- no consensus on a definition

Working definition:

A micro-credential is a small volume of learning certified by a credential. In the EHEA context, it can be offered by higher education institutions or recognised by them, when offered by other providers, using recognition of prior learning (RPL) procedures. A micro-credential is designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills or competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs. Micro-credentials have explicitly defined learning outcomes at a specific QF-EHEA/NQF level, an indication of their associated workload in ECTS credits, assessment methods and criteria, and are subject to quality assurance in line with the ESG.

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Working definition:

Questions:

Would you add or delete anything from the definition?

What would you delete from the definition?

What detail(s) would you add to the definition?

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Why micro-credentials?

Policymakers' perspective

- increasing need for upskilling and reskilling
- need for flexible and inclusive learning paths

Higher education institutions' perspective

- a way to provide more targeted and specialised training
- increase their visibility and reputation
- increase their responsiveness to students' and labour markets' demands
- experiment with new pedagogies and technologies

Learners' perspective

- an entry mechanism to a degree programme
- a way to acquire interdisciplinary knowledge and skills
- a way to more flexibility in planning their studies

Employers' perspective

- micro-credentials may help them to better understand specific skills of a prospective employee
- may serve as on-job training

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Issues and constraints

⚠️   lack a consensus on a definition

⚠️   lack of clarity which leads to confusion for learners and employers

⚠️   lack of funding mechanisms in many continental European countries

⚠️   lack of validation mechanisms

⚠️   issues related to their storage and portability

Conclusion:

- micro-credentials are not a new phenomenon

- they do not substitute but complement conventional higher education qualifications

- consensus on a definition is needed

Thank you!