

Micro-credential development in OECD countries

Key findings from the Micro-credential Implementation Project

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23 November 2023



What are micro-credentials? Why on the rise?

What?

Compared to traditional degree programmes, micro-credentials are:

Smaller in volume (in study duration or load)

More targeted in terms of skills or study topics

More flexible in delivery

Why?

Different offerings have distinct, but often overlapping purposes

Educational advancement



Employment and wage advancement



Enjoyment and personal growth





How are they different from existing non-degree programmes?

Key features of micro-credentials

Labour market oriented

Responds to short, medium, and long-term skill needs of the broader socio-economic environment.

Online

When micro-credentials are newly developed, they are most likely to be offered online to ensure flexibility.

Stackable

Can be taken on their own but micro-credentials certifications should be recognised, and when appropriate, be used to work towards a larger qualification.

Cross-sectoral

Micro-credentials can be offered both across HE, VET and pre-existing adult learning providers. They are also often co-created with actors from the broader socio-economic environment.

How are micro-credentials developed?



HEIs develop micro-credentials in diverse forms

Independently

- > Micro-credentials developed by individual HEIs or HEI departments
- > Can be based on, among others:
 - Unbundling of degree programmes;
 - Bundling of several courses;
 - Pre-existing continuous learning offers.

**HO
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**TAL
TECH**



In collaboration with others

- > Micro-credentials developed by HEIs partnering with other organisations, including:
 - Employers, professional organisations or other labour market actors;
 - Through online learning platforms;
 - As part of national and international collaboration projects.

ecampus
Ontario



**Future
Learn**

coursera

**MICRO
CREDS**



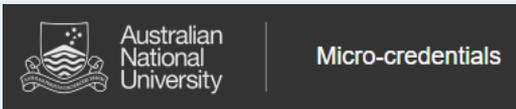
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Developing micro-credentials independently

Unbundling degree programmes

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educations study at HOGENT research partners this is HIGH news and info



University College Ghent, Belgium
<https://www.hogent.be/opleidingen/micro-degrees/>



visit us on the information day of September 10 →

The micro degree sustainability is part of the bachelor's degree in business management, specialization in environmental and sustainability management. A micro degree is a clustering of courses within a specific domain of a bachelor's degree. You will receive a credit certificate for all course units for which you pass.



Developing micro-credentials independently

Bundling several courses

MICRODEGREE

Starting last autumn, TalTech's Open University will offer abbreviated study programmes - microdegrees - comprising two or more degree-level courses. A microdegree can be acquired in one to two semesters. Completion of a microdegree programme is confirmed by a continuing education certificate.

Microdegree programmes are prepared based on the labour market requirements and combine courses with an aim to best meet the needs and consider the prospective challenges facing the students. A tuition fee is charged for microdegree courses and calculated for each semester based on the amount of credit points and the established fee rates.

[FRAMEWORK OF THE DIGITAL STATE](#)

[DIGITAL MANUFACTURING](#)

Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia
<https://taltech.ee/en/open-studies>



Developing micro-credentials independently

Building on continuing education offerings



Continuing Education

Search

HOME ▾ COMMUNITY COURSES ▾ ANU RESEARCH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING ▾ MICRO-CREDENTIALS ▾ LOGIN ▾

CCE programs, services and course offerings

The Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) hosts non-award professional short courses and micro-credentials on behalf of ANU colleges and institutes. We are also the home of the ANU community courses for those wishing to study [Asian](#) or [European languages](#), develop some [artistic skills](#) or learn about [history, culture or philosophy](#).



Professional Learning

CCE provides the hosting platform for a diverse range of professional learning / executive education short courses. Each of these is developed using the vast knowledge and experience of world-leading academics from ANU colleges, institutes and schools. So if you are looking for some training or upskilling as part of a professional development



Micro-credentials

CCE also hosts micro-credentials on behalf of ANU. These are similar to professional learning short courses but carry the additional benefit of accreditation. On successful completion of an ANU micro-credential, participants receive a digital badge containing all of the metadata linked to the completed learning and assessment. This metadata may



Community Courses

CCE has delivered short community courses for more than 50 years and this tradition continues today. Offerings span [Asian](#) and [European languages](#), art and [history/culture/philosophy](#). This diverse program offers something of interest to most and is a great way to continue the journey of lifelong learning.

Australian National University
<https://cce.anu.edu.au/home/about-cce.aspx>



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Australian
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CREDS



Developing micro-credentials in partnerships with government-led learning platforms



About Swayam | All Courses |

[SIGN-IN / REGISTER](#)

Courses >

Artificial Intelligence

By Prof. Bhushan Trivedi | GLS University

Learners enrolled: 14004

GLS University and Swayam, India

<https://swayam.gov.in/>



Summary

Course Status :	Ongoing
Course Type :	Core
Duration :	15 weeks
Start Date :	07 Jan 2021
End Date :	30 Apr 2021
Exam Date :	
Category :	o Computer Science and Engineering
Credit Points :	4



Developing micro-credentials in partnerships with learning platforms and employers



Subjects ▾ Courses ▾ FL Business

Search online courses



Sign in

Register

Online Microcredential in [Creative Arts & Media](#)

Fashion Sustainability: Shaping Fashion's Future

Discover why sustainability in fashion matters and how to create a strategy to build sustainability in the industry.

Find out more

Join now €624

Created by

Institut
FRANÇAIS
de la
MODE

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Co-created by

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Dates

Started on 25 Apr 2022

Join by 6 Mar 2023 at 23:59

[See more start dates](#)

Duration

10 weeks

Cost

€624

Credit

University Credit 4 ECTS

[Learn more](#)

Level

Undergraduate

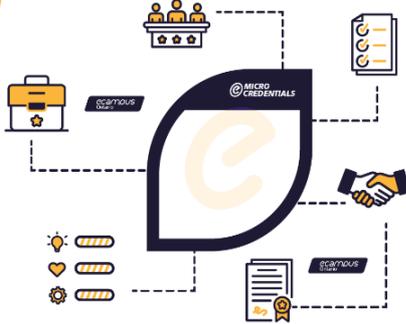
[See requirements](#)

Institut Français de la Mode and Kering, France; FutureLearn, UK
<https://www.futurelearn.com/microcredentials/fashion-sustainability>



Developing micro-credentials in partnerships with employers

ecampus
Ontario



Micro-credential Pilots 2020-21

With the support of the Government of Ontario, eCampusOntario has launched thirty-six micro-credential pilot projects at Ontario colleges and universities. Each pilot project represents a unique partnership with an industry partner and a collaborative response to an identified skills gap. Download this document for a full list of pilots.

Whatever the conditions, eCampusOntario is your partner in driving the evolution of education through micro-credentials at both the local and systemic level. Upgrading learning through micro-credentials offers digital and creative solutions to meet rapid needs while building longer-term economic resilience.

→ Micro-credential in Data Analytics

Create new content to issue micro-credentials in fundamental elements of the data life cycle: business analysis, data exploration, quantitative analysis, communication of results, and data life-cycle management. **Partners:** McMaster University, National Institutes of Health Informatics

→ Micro-credential in Design Thinking

Explore the complex challenges and opportunities at the intersection of design, technology, and social theory, in the development of a new product prototype for this stackable Human Centred Design Micro-credential. **Partners:** OCAD University, Myant Inc.

→ Micro-credential for Media Ingestor

Create new content to issue micro-credentials in ingesting media into production for news broadcast environments. **Partners:** Seneca College, Avid Technology Inc.

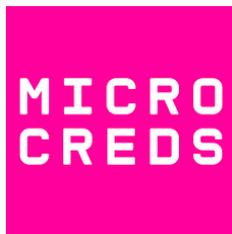
eCampusOntario, Canada

<https://micro.ecampusontario.ca/pilots/>



Developing micro-credentials in partnerships with other HEIs in the country

- MicroCreds is a 5-Year €12.3 million national project, led by Irish Universities Association and delivered in partnership with 7 universities
- The MicroCreds Project's format of micro-credentials:
 - ♦ Small, focused courses
 - ♦ Range from undergraduate to masters Level
 - ♦ Credit size 1-30 ECTS (1 ECTS = 25 learning hours)
 - ♦ University quality assured
 - ♦ Standalone credentials, some may stack towards a larger award
 - ♦ Developed in response to identified skills need
- Development of a common platform: [microcreds.ie](https://www.microcreds.ie)





Developing micro-credentials in partnerships with HEIs in other countries

The European Commission supports HEIs cooperating in developing micro-credentials within the framework of the European Universities Initiative

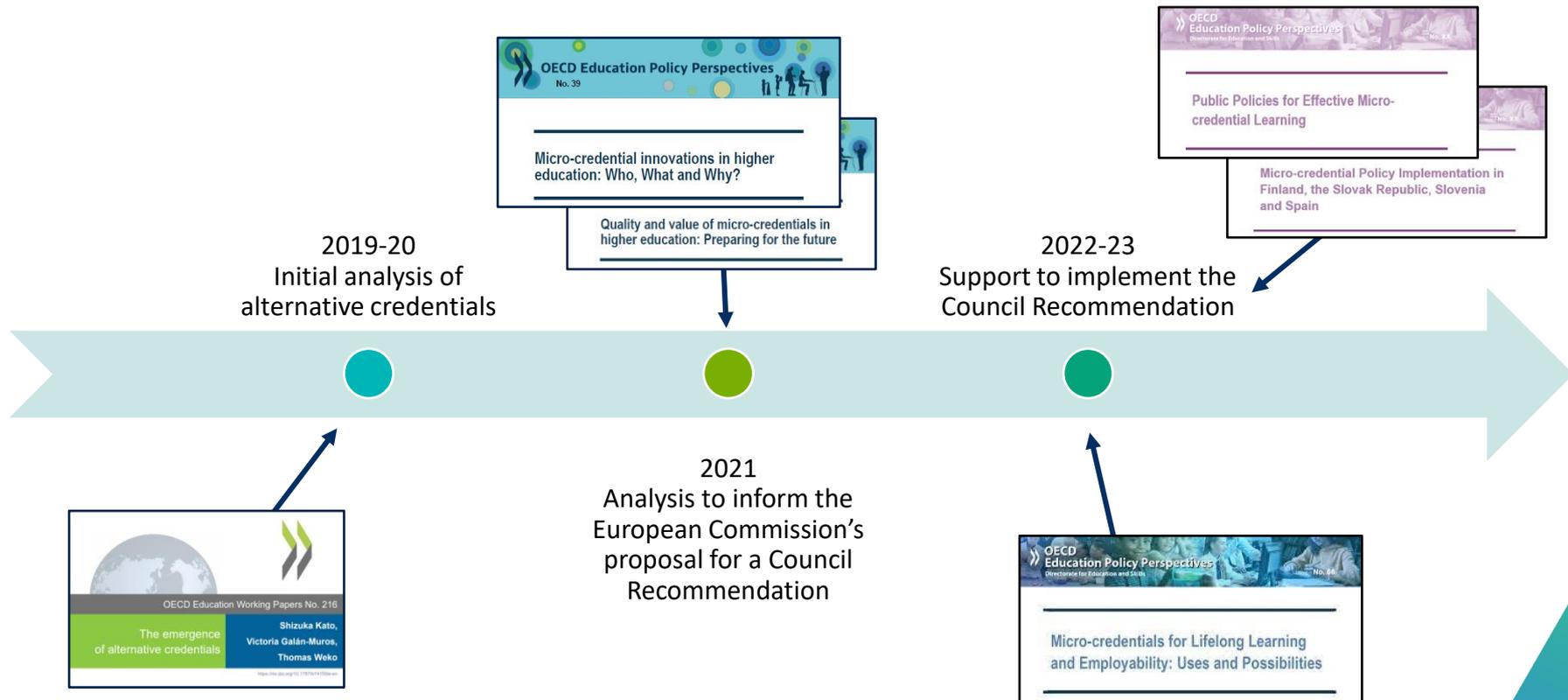
- ♦ 50 Alliances;
- ♦ 35 countries, including all EU Member States;
- ♦ More than 430 HEIs;
- ♦ A budget of €402.2 million under the 2021-2027 Erasmus+ programme.



What has the OECD been doing on micro-credentials?



We have been supporting governments as they respond to micro-credential innovations





Micro-credential Implementation Project 2022-23 - Overview

Preparatory Phase –

Strengthen the micro-credential evidence base (August to December 2022)

Analysis of how micro-credentials can contribute to:

- > Enhancing employability
- > Widening pathways from upper secondary to higher education and improving completion of higher education
- > Promoting social inclusion among disadvantaged learners

Implementation Phase –

Partner with governments to support their policy initiatives (January to December 2023)

Assist governments in creating a supportive ecosystem for learners and providers. The areas of focus are:

- > Funding
- > Quality assurance
- > Information and guidance for learners
- > Industry collaboration





Micro-credential Implementation Project 2022-23 - Outputs

A concise guidance
paper

An international
knowledge exchange
workshop

National stakeholder
workshops



A two-part series of
summary papers

A self-assessment tool
for policy
implementation

A public webinar



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

How are governments responding to micro-credential development?



Public policies can help micro-credential providers and learners

Examples of policy levers used in OECD countries

A. Regulations and guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Create a framework providers can follow when offering and recognising micro-credentials- Enforce or make changes to legislation under which providers operate
B. Public funding for HEIs and learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Use targeted funding- Include in core public funding and/or extend student loan schemes- Adopt individual learning accounts
C. Quality assurance mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Integrate micro-credentials in an existing quality assurance system- Develop a quality assurance system dedicated to micro-credentials
D. Information systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Create a nationwide information portal to assist learners in making informed choices

Sources: OECD (2023), "Micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability: Uses and possibilities", OECD Education Policy Perspectives, No. 66, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9c4b7b68-en>; and OECD (forthcoming), "Public Policies for Effective Micro-credential Learning", OECD Education Policy Perspectives, OECD Publishing, Paris.



A. Regulations and guidelines – example uses

Harder approach – e.g. Spain



- > Ministry of Universities issued Royal Decree in 2021, defining micro-credentials as one of five types of unofficial credentials universities may offer

The screenshot shows the official website of the Spanish Ministry of Universities. The header includes the Spanish coat of arms and the text 'GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA' and 'MINISTERIO DE LA PRESIDENCIA, RELACIONES CON LAS CORTES Y POLÍTICA DEMOCRÁTICA'. The main title is 'Agencia Estatal Boletín Oficial del Estado'. The page content is in Spanish and describes 'Real Decreto 822/2021, de 28 de septiembre, por el que se establece la organización de las enseñanzas universitarias y del procedimiento de aseguramiento de su calidad.' The page also includes publication details, a search bar, and navigation options.

<https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2021-15781>



Types of unofficial (*títulos propios*) credentials universities may offer

Micro-credentials	less than 15 ECTS
Certificates	15 or more ECTS
Expert diplomas	15-29 ECTS
Specialist diplomas	30-59 ECTS
Unofficial master's degrees	60 or more ECTS



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The screenshot shows the official website of the Spanish Boletín Oficial del Estado (BOE). The header includes the Spanish coat of arms, the text 'GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA' and 'MINISTERIO DE LA PRESIDENCIA, RELACIONES CON LAS CORTES Y TRANSPARENCIA DEMOCRÁTICA', and the logo of the 'Agencia Estatal Boletín Oficial del Estado' with the number '23'. The page is in Spanish, with 'Castellano' selected in the language dropdown. The search bar contains 'MI BOE'. The main content area is titled 'Legislación consolidada' and features a blue 'Ayuda' icon. The primary text reads: 'Real Decreto 822/2021, de 28 de septiembre, por el que se establece la organización de las enseñanzas universitarias y del procedimiento de aseguramiento de su calidad.' Below this, publication details are listed: 'Publicado en: «BOE» núm. 233, de 29/09/2021.', 'Entrada en vigor: 19/10/2021', 'Departamento: Ministerio de Universidades', 'Referencia: BOE-A-2021-15781', and 'Permalink ELI: https://www.boe.es/eli/es/rd/2021/09/28/822/con'. At the bottom, there is a 'Seleccionar redacción:' dropdown menu set to 'Última actualización publicada el 19/10/2022' and two icons for 'PDF' and 'ePUB'.

<https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2021-15781>

Softer approach – e.g. Australia



- Department of Education, Skills and Employment published a non-binding national guideline in 2021



<https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-publications/resources/national-microcredentials-framework>



A. Regulations and guidelines – example uses

Country	Approach	Workload	Provider coverage
Australia	Non-binding guidelines developed by national authorities	A minimum volume of learning of one hour and less than an Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) award qualification	All types of education and training providers (including alternative providers)
Canada (British Columbia)		Shorter than other formal post-secondary credentials (under 288 hours)	Public post-secondary institutions
New Zealand		1-40 credits in size (equivalent to 0.5-20 ECTS)	Accredited education providers (including some alternative providers)
Spain	Royal Decree 822/2021	Less than 15 ECTS	Universities
Ireland	Non-binding guidelines developed by other bodies	1-30 ECTS	Seven public universities
The Netherlands		3-30 ECTS	32 higher education institutions



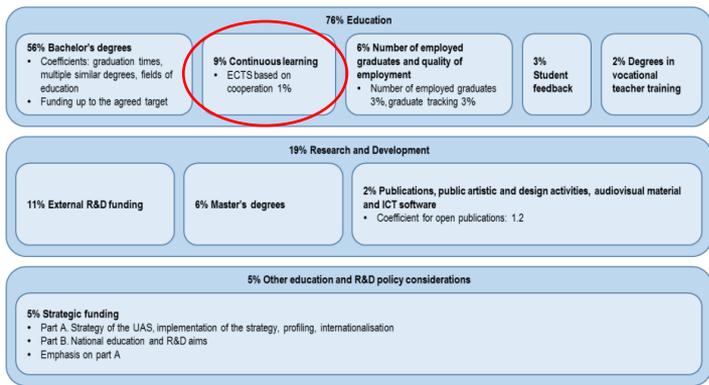
B. Public funding for HEIs and learners – example uses

More integrated approach – e.g. Finland



- From 2021, the core funding allocation model for HEIs considers the number of credits gained through open studies (5% for universities and 9% for universities of applied sciences)

Universities of applied sciences



<https://doi.org/10.1787/61ad64b9-en>

Exploratory approach – e.g. the Netherlands



- The micro-credential pilot in the HE sector ran from 2021 to 2023, and the pilot in the VET sector is starting

Acceleration plan | Educational innovation with ICT

Zones Knowledge base News Podcast EPIC About Contact

Acceleration plan | Microcredentials Pilot

Microcredentials Pilot

Fast to:

Flexible education | Project

Since October, 32 higher education institutions – 10 universities and 22 universities of applied sciences – have been taking part in the Dutch national Microcredentials pilot under the direction of the Making education more flexible zone, the Universities of The Netherlands, and The Association of Universities of Applied Sciences of the Netherlands. Microcredentialing – breaking down education into smaller units certified separately – stimulates flexibility and gives recognisable value to the lifelong development offer by institutions. You can read exactly

About the Microcredentials pilot

10 years 12 years

2022

<https://www.versnellingsplan.nl/en/Kennisbank/pilot-microcredentials-2/>



C. Quality assurance mechanisms – example uses

At the institutional level – e.g. Spain



Industry and Higher Education

Impact Factor: 1.7
5-Year Impact Factor: 1.7

Available access | Research article | First published online October 19, 2022

A European perspective on accrediting short learning programs: First experiences are out

Marti Casadesus, Esther Huertas, and Carme Edo [View all authors and affiliations](#)

Volume 37, Issue 3 | <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950422221132129>

Contents | PDF / ePub | Cite article | Share options | Information, rights and permissions

Abstract

In higher education, micro-credentials – that is, proof of the learning results a student has acquired after a short learning programme (SLP) – are gaining in importance. In general, SLPs are formative programs addressed to professionals in a specific area of knowledge. Despite the various characteristics of this type of training, delivered in a wide range of teaching centres and modalities, and therefore the difficulties in

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0950422221132129>

At the institutional and study programme group levels - e.g. Estonia



QA of MICRO-CREDENTIALS – the Estonian touch

I feel like my skills need updating. There is a lot of work and little time. I need a solution that takes into account my capabilities and specific needs, and would offer the best learning outcomes. How to do that, exactly?

There are many options like various courses (MOOCs) offered by HEIs, VET institutions, private companies, public organisations, YouTube peer-learning...

... Micro-credentials (MCs) are certified small volumes of learning that provide a flexible, targeted way to develop one's knowledge, skills and competences. They can be offered by HEIs, VET institutions, private companies and public organisations.

HOW IS THE QUALITY OF MCs ASSURED?

AGENCY
Assessing the formal and non-formal education institutions in a flexible, fair, and comparable way. Since 2016, Estonian Quality Agency for Education has assessed the quality of continuing education in more than 100 non-formal education institutions.

EQA of MC provided by formal education institutions

- The institution can offer micro-credentials if it has gained the right to conduct studies in that study programme group at the level of higher education.
- The quality is safeguarded via regular EQA of institutions (higher education) or study programme groups (VET).

EQA of MC provided by non-formal institutions

- The institution requesting the right to offer MCs must undergo quality assessment in the study programme group that follows the requirements of EQA principles.
- Regular external review at least once in 5 years.

REGISTER OF MCs
Institutions offering MCs must register the micro-credential curriculum in Estonian Education System, the formal compliance with respective requirements will be checked in advance.

Estonian Quality Agency for Education

<https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/EKKA-2.pdf>



D. Information systems – example uses

Hoch & Weit



- The German Rectors Conference launched an online portal that lists further education programmes offered by public and government-recognised higher education institutions in 2022

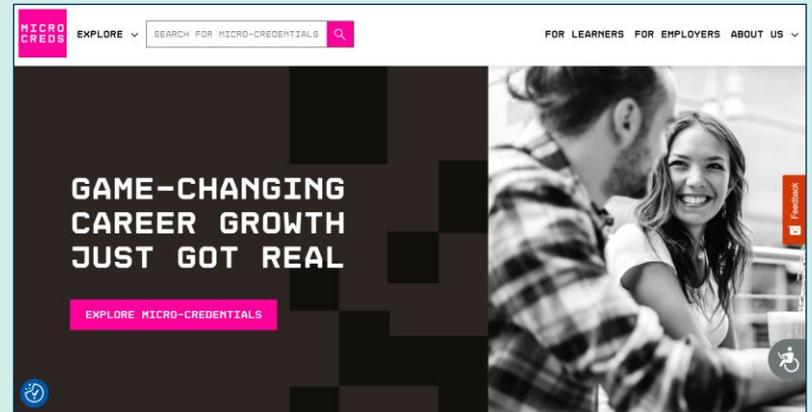


<https://hoch-und-weit.de/>

IUA MicroCreds



- The Irish Universities Association launched an online portal that lists programmes offered by seven public universities that participate in the MicroCreds project in 2023



<https://microcreds.ie/>



Links to relevant OECD publications

- OECD (forthcoming), "Public Policies for Effective Micro-credential Learning", OECD Education Policy Perspectives, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- OECD (forthcoming), "Micro-credential Policy Implementation in Finland, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Spain", OECD Education Policy Perspectives, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- OECD (2023), "Micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability: Uses and possibilities", OECD Education Policy Perspectives, No. 66, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9c4b7b68-en>.
- OECD (2021), "Micro-credential innovations in higher education: Who, What and Why?", OECD Education Policy Perspectives, No. 39, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f14ef041-en>.
- OECD (2021), "Quality and value of micro-credentials in higher education: Preparing for the future", OECD Education Policy Perspectives, No. 40, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9c4ad26d-en>.
- Kato, S., V. Galán-Muros and T. Weko (2020), "The emergence of alternative credentials", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 216, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b741f39e-en>.



Thank you!

- Contact: Shizuka.KATO@oecd.org
- OECD Education Website: www.oecd.org/education
- Higher Education Policy Website: <https://www.oecd.org/education/higher-education-policy>
- Digital platform with all data and analytical results from OECD's work on education:



Education GPS
THE WORLD OF EDUCATION AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

<http://gpseducation.oecd.org/>

