



UNIVERSITEIT
GENT

THE ROLE OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: PRACTICES AND PERSPECTIVES FROM FLANDERS AND GHENT UNIVERSITY

Seminar: Synchronising Micro-Credentials in the EU Ecosystem 27 May 2025

CONTEXT

- Belgium
 - Federal state.
 - 3 regions (Flemish, Walloon, and Brussels-Capital)
 - Territorially bound matters (e.g. employment, economy)
 - 3 communities (Flemish, French, and German-speaking)
 - Person-related matters (e.g. culture, education, research)
- Policy on lifelong learning and microcredentials = regional responsibility
- Situation in Flanders is different from other parts of Belgium



VLOR (FLEMISH EDUCATION COUNCIL)

ADVICE ON MICRO-CREDENTIALS

- Official advisory body for education policy in Flanders,
- Representatives from various educational institutions, government bodies, social partners and other stakeholders
- 26/10/2023: Advice on micro-credentials:
 - Adopt European definition and embed it in Flemish legislation to foster awareness and shared understanding.
 - Integrate micro-credentials into educational, employment, and lifelong learning policies.
 - Encourage collaboration among educational institutions, employers, and other stakeholders
 - Ensure long-term funding to support development and embedding of micro-credentials in education and training.

DEFINITION IN RECOMMENDATION

‘Micro-credential’ means the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes will have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined criteria. Learning experiences leading to micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs. Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, can be shared and are portable. They may be stand-alone or combined into larger credentials. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity.

EU STANDARD ELEMENTS TO INCLUDE

Mandatory elements

- Identification of the learner
- Title of the micro-credential
- Country/Region of the issuer
- Awarding body
- Date of issuing
- Learning outcomes
- Notional workload needed to achieve the learning outcomes (in ECTS credits, wherever possible)
- Level (and cycle, if applicable) of the learning experience leading to the micro-credential (EQF, QF-EHEA), if applicable
- Type of assessment
- Form of participation in the learning activity
- Type of quality assurance used to underpin the micro-credential

Optional elements, where relevant *(non-exhaustive list)*

- Prerequisites needed to enrol in the learning activity
- Supervision and identity verification during assessment (unsupervised with no identity verification, supervised with no identity verification, supervised online or onsite with identity verification)
- Grade achieved
- Integration/stackability options (standalone, independent micro-credential / integrated, stackable towards another credential)
- Further information

MICRO-CREDENTIALS IN HIGHER EDUCATION /1

- Flexibilisation HE since 2005
- Programmes are composed of course units
- At the level of the course units: study load in credits, learning outcomes, teaching and evaluation methods are defined and credit certificates are issued.
- Existing qualifications framework
- External quality assurance: institutional reviews with focus on the quality assurance policy of the institution
- Micro-credentials are not “new” in Flemish higher education

MICRO-CREDENTIALS IN HIGHER EDUCATION /2



- Post-covid financial impulse (*Voorsprongfonds*)
 - Created a high level of dynamism and creation of new micro-credentials in higher education
- Framework of agreements was developed in co-creation by higher education institutions
 - Non-binding (yet)
 - Not anchored in legislation (yet)
- Reserve the term micro-credential within higher education for a specific part of the lifelong learning programmes that meets all the criteria
- Maximum utilisation of and integration with existing procedures and legislation
- September 2024: new Flemish Government
 - Coalition agreement: *"We will develop a system to award micro-credentials in **higher education** to encourage lifelong learning."*

GHENT UNIVERSITY FRAMEWORK FOR MICRO-CREDENTIALS

- Start 2022-2023
- Opportunity: open up initial/regular programmes for LLL
- Two key conditions:
 - **Content** tailored to the needs of learners/the professional field / society
 - **Practical organization** adjusted to target group LLL, combination of learning and working
- Min: 3 ECTS
- Max: Not defined in the framework (European / Flemish definition: < 59)
 - More important: SMALL
 - Lifelong learners should be able to fully pursue a micro-credential in combination with their professional and family life.
 - Longer trajectories are best broken down into multiple and stackable micro-credentials.

POSSIBILITIES

1

1. Micro-credentials consisting of one or more **existing course units** from our Bachelor's and/or Master's programmes.

2

2. Micro-credentials consisting of one or more **existing course units** from our Bachelor's and/or Master's programmes, complemented by additional lifelong learning initiatives.
3. Micro-credentials consisting of **new units** with learning contents from our Bachelor's and/or Master's programmes.
4. Micro-credentials consisting of **new learning contents** or learning contents taken from existing lifelong learning initiatives.

CURRENT STATUS

- **Number of Micro-credentials:**
 - Approximately 70 (constantly evolving)
 - Type 1: Majority (type 4 growing)
 - Explanation: Origin of our framework, government-funded project
- **Participants:**
 - AY 22-23: 69 participants
 - AY 23-24: 149 participants
 - AY 24-25: 234 participants

FIRST LESSONS

- **Findings from Participant Survey:**
 - Enthusiasm for content and the concept of returning to university
 - Positive feedback on interaction/ mixing of student and lifelong learning groups.
 - But: adequate guidance and support must be provided
(work in progress !)
- **Future Vision:** Shift towards quality over quantity,
 - Focusing on programs addressing industry or societal needs.
 - Increasing collaboration in micro-credential creation, including partnerships with companies and other (international) universities.
 - Expansion of online, hybrid and distance learning.





Micro-credentials



With the growing need for lifelong learning, new forms of continuing education are starting to emerge. In addition to postgraduate programmes, lectures and study days, micro-credentials are perhaps the best answer to this increasing need.

 [See all micro-credentials](#)

Frequently asked questions

	What is a micro-credential?	
	What is the difference with bachelor's or master's programmes?	

RESULTS: 200+ MICRO-

(Bio)Engineering, Civil Engineer, Engineering Technology

Starts on 10.02.2025

Micro-credential Knowledge Graphs

Read more



(Bio)Engineering, Bioengineering, Biomedical Sciences, Engineering Technology

Starts on 28.02.2025

Micro-credential Food regulation

Read more



Architecture and Design, Art and Culture

Starts on 01.10.2024

Micro-credential Optical Microscopy for Heritage Materials

Read more



Law, Social Sciences

Starts on 10.02.2025

Micro-credential 'Selected Issues: Drug Policy'

Available online

Read more



Economics, Business and (Public) Management

Starts on 23.09.2024

Micro-credential Transport Policy

Read more



Social Sciences

Starts on 16.09.2024

Micro-credential Democracy: challenges & futures

Available online

Read more



Bioengineering, Sciences

Starts on 03.02.2025

Micro-credential Biodiversity Restoration

Read more



Economics, Business and (Public) Management, Social Sciences, Philosophy and Ethics

Starts on 01.10.2024

Micro-credential Theories of Development

Read more



Economics, Business and (Public) Management

Starts on 03.02.2025

Micro-credential Transport and Location

Read more



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