

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



ONTEXT

- 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



France

North Sea



VLOR (FLEMISH EDUCATION COUNCIL) **ADVICE ON MICRO-CREDENTIALS**

- Official advisory body for education policy in Flanders, \bullet
- 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 microcredentials 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 microcredentials 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

activity

- identity verification)
- Grade achieved
- Integration/stackability options (standalone, independent micro-credential / integrated, stackable towards another credential)
- Further information



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

Prerequisites needed to enrol in the learning

Supervision and identity verification during assessment (unsupervised with no identity verification, supervised with no identity verification, supervised online or onsite with

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 qualtity 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) ullet
 - 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 ullet
- September 2024: new Flemish Government ullet
 - 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: ullet
 - **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 \bullet
- Max: Not defined in the framework (European / Flemish definition: < 59) ۲
 - 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 microcredentials.





SSIBILITIES

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



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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 lacksquare
 - AY 24-25: 234 participants •



FIRST LESSONS

- **Findings from Participant Survey:** lacksquare
 - 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.



NOVA ACADEMY

:Nova:Academy:

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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



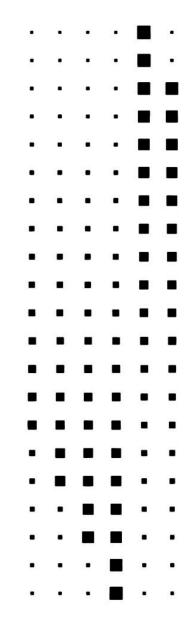
What is a micro-credential?

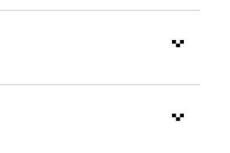


What is the difference with bachelor's or master's programmes?

Find programmes

NL/EN MENU





RESULTS: 200+ MICRO-

:Nova:Academy:

Q Find programmes

X NL/EN MENU

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