

# Micro-credential Framework

for B.C.'s Public Post-Secondary  
Education System

Ministry of Advanced Education  
and Skills Training

SEPTEMBER 2021

## INTRODUCTION



This Micro-credential Framework and set of Guiding Principles was developed by the B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Training (the Ministry) as the first step in a process to develop and implement a coordinated and consistent approach to micro-credentials across British Columbia's public post-secondary education system.

We recognize that the understanding of how micro-credentials can meet the needs of a changing economy and workforce is evolving and as such, this Framework will need to evolve. Our goal is that over time, we will work with our partners to put the mechanisms in place to ensure that micro-credentials become fully integrated into the post-secondary system and recognized as an important and valuable credential option in supporting B.C.'s future economy and workforce.

Micro-credentials will be stackable and transferrable and provide opportunities for learners at any stage in their career journey, including those who have been reluctant to pursue post-secondary education, to gain the critical competencies and skills required to thrive in the future economy and workforce. At this point, micro-credentials provide another option for post-secondary institutions to further support the upskilling and reskilling of British Columbians for in-demand occupations. They are intended to complement current offerings and pathways in B.C.'s public post-secondary system and enhance access to education for all British Columbians.

To support the further evolution of this Framework, the Ministry will continue to be informed by discussions with other Canadian jurisdictions, research, and best practices globally as well as experience gained through the continued development and implementation of micro-credentials in B.C. The Ministry and its partners will continue to work on the components that, over time, will ensure the full integration of micro-credentials into the post-secondary eco-system.



The Framework has been developed primarily for B.C.'s public post-secondary institutions, but we recognize that private post-secondary institutions, organizations, industry or Indigenous controlled post-secondary institutes, are developing micro-credentials as well and these organizations are welcome to utilize the Framework.

The Ministry would like to gratefully acknowledge the work of the advisory committee of public post-secondary institution representatives in the development of the Framework. Also appreciated is the feedback received from numerous stakeholders and partners during the Ministry's spring 2021 engagement process, including from Indigenous, post-secondary, employer and industry organizations. The input received was invaluable in informing this version of the Micro-credential Framework.

For questions or further information about this document, please contact:

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## COLLABORATION WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND INSTITUTES

Public post-secondary institutions are encouraged to partner with other organizations to deliver post-secondary programs in community settings, including Indigenous communities and institutes. In the spirit of Reconciliation and consistent with the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, institutions should work with Indigenous communities and organizations (including First Nations, Métis chartered communities, Indigenous-controlled post-secondary institutes and urban Indigenous organizations) to:

- Jointly develop and implement relevant micro-credential offerings that recognize and respond to community and economic needs and provide meaningful pathways for learners; and,
- Determine whether additional supports are required for learners who face barriers to remote learning, such as lack of technology or diverse levels of digital literacy.



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

### For Micro-credential Development and Implementation in B.C.'s Public Post-Secondary Education System

#### ACCESS:

Micro-credentials should increase access to post-secondary education and be accessible to a range of potential learners. They should provide flexibility, reduce barriers and increase opportunities for employment and life-long learning. Tuition and fees should align with the duration, skill level, learners targeted and expected outcomes of a micro-credential.



#### QUALITY:

Micro-credentials will be developed and assessed through a process that assures learners of their value and facilitates recognition by employers and other post-secondary institutions.

#### RELEVANCE:

Micro-credentials will provide opportunities for in-demand upskilling and reskilling, aligning with labour market demands, needs of employers and learners, needs of Indigenous communities and learners, government priorities, as well as post-secondary institutions' areas of specialty and expertise.

#### COLLABORATION & COORDINATION:

Micro-credentials will be developed by post-secondary institutions through engagement and collaboration with relevant education partners, Indigenous communities and other stakeholders. Post-secondary institutions should, wherever possible, work together to reduce unnecessary duplication and to enhance laddering and transfer opportunities.

#### EMPLOYER AND INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT:

Employers and industry sectors will be engaged in the identification and development of micro-credentials and ongoing refinements.



#### CLARITY & TRANSPARENCY:

To support informed choices, details on the purpose and benefit of each micro-credential, how it will be offered and the competencies it recognizes will be clear to learners prior to enrolment.

## FRAMEWORK

The following Framework has been developed to support shared understanding of key aspects of micro-credentials across a wide range of education partners, including learners, employers and post-secondary institutions. It identifies key factors that should be considered in the development and implementation of micro-credentials in British Columbia's public post-secondary education system.



### Definition

Micro-credentials recognize stand-alone, short duration learning experiences that are competency-based, align with industry, employer, community and/or Indigenous community needs and can be assessed and recognized for employment or learning purposes.

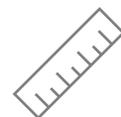


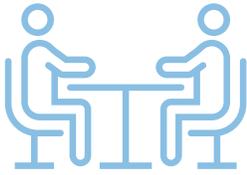
### Duration

Individual micro-credentials should be sufficient in length for learners to acquire the competency being sought and be shorter in duration than other formal post-secondary credentials, specifically a short certificate (under 288 hours).

### Delivery

Micro-credentials can be delivered in a variety of flexible formats, including in-person, online or blended, synchronous or asynchronous, or a combination of multiple formats. Delivery formats should support and be relevant to the competency being taught. In considering delivery formats, institutions should use processes to reduce barriers, increase access and mobility and meet the unique needs of learners.





### Collaboration & Coordination

Post-secondary institutions will work with relevant employers/industry, non-profits, Indigenous communities, institutes and organizations and other community stakeholders in the identification, development and validation of micro-credentials.

Micro-credential development will be informed by evidence of labour market, community and/or Indigenous needs.

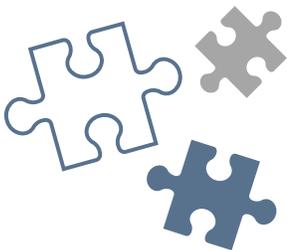
### Quality Assurance\*

Micro-credentials will be developed, approved and periodically reviewed, through an institutional process that aligns with existing post-secondary standards and policies, for credit and non-credit offerings, to ensure value to learners in meeting education or employment goals.



### Assessment

Assessment of a student's learning is required to ensure learners have achieved the intended competency. Assessment should be relevant to how employers recognize a competency has been obtained.



### Registry\*

Further work is being undertaken to consider a common registry to facilitate access, understanding, and further development of the micro-credential ecosystem.

\* This component is an area where further development is being considered.

## Learning Pathways

Micro-credentials may be credit or non-credit bearing, and this should be made explicit to learners prior to enrolment. In order to create meaningful learner pathways, micro-credentials should be developed in a manner that shows how they:

- relate to other credit and non-credit bearing opportunities,
- connect with existing larger units of learning, and,
- remove barriers and create clear and varied pathways for learning.



Post-secondary institutions are encouraged to collaborate internally and with other post-secondary institutions in developing micro-credentials to increase opportunities for transfer, laddering or stackability.



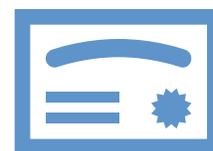
### Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition\*

Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) should be considered when offering micro-credentials.

### Post-secondary System Recognition & Transfer\*

Micro-credentials should facilitate learner mobility across institutions, industries, and credentials, and not introduce barriers to learning, transfer or labour market participation.

Credit bearing micro-credentials should be recorded on a learner's transcript or other official record. Recognition of non-credit bearing micro-credentials should be done in a manner that supports identification of the specific competencies obtained.



Micro-credentials, where possible, will integrate with existing credit transfer processes.

\* This component is an area where further development is being considered.

## GLOSSARY

### Of Terms Used Within this Framework

#### **Asynchronous / Synchronous**

Synchronous learning happens in real-time, when a group of learners and instructor meet and interact, such as in scheduled classes or virtual lectures. Asynchronous learning is when learners interact with materials and instructors outside of a specific time and place, often providing flexibility to learners in accessing content and instruction. Micro-credentials can be synchronous, asynchronous, or can blend both formats.



#### **Blended Learning**

Learning that combines different delivery formats. For example, a course with both online and face-to-face components would be considered blended.

#### **Community**

Community may refer to a specific geographic region or municipality, a group of individuals sharing common need or interest, or, where specified, an Indigenous community or organization (including First Nations, Métis chartered communities, Indigenous-controlled post-secondary institutes and urban Indigenous organizations).

#### **Competency-based**

A competency is a specific unit of knowledge, skill or ability that can be assessed and applied in a setting such as work. Competency-based learning is tied to learning and assessing a specific competency or set of competencies.



#### **Credit bearing / Non-Credit bearing**

If a micro-credential is “credit bearing,” it provides a learner with formal academic credit, recognized on a post-secondary transcript or official record. If a micro-credential is “non-credit bearing” it does not receive formal academic credit that can be recognized on a post-secondary transcript or official record.

## Indigenous

Includes First Nations, Métis and Inuit and is inclusive of all Indigenous peoples in the province, whether or not they have status or have a connection to a particular community; recognizing that many peoples prefer the terms that are specific and traditional to their communities.

## Laddering / Stackability

Laddering refers to the ability of a learner to use the completion of an initial micro-credential to move into another credential. For example, the completion of a micro-credential may be used to meet entry requirements or as credit towards a another (usually larger) credential.

Stackability refers to the ability to combine two or more micro-credentials into a larger credential or component of learning.

## Transfer Credit

Transfer credit enables learners to receive credit at one post-secondary institution for a course (or credit) that was taken at another post-secondary institution.

