



Agensi Kelayakan Malaysia
Malaysian Qualifications Agency

GUIDELINES TO GOOD PRACTICES: MICRO-CREDENTIALS



Guidelines to Good Practices: Micro-credentials
First Edition 2020

Malaysian Qualifications Agency
Mercuri MQA
No. 3539, Jalan Teknokrat 7
Cyber 5
63000 Cyberjaya
Selangor

Tel	+603-8688 1900
Fax	+603-8688 1911
Email	skp@mqa.gov.my
Website	www.mqa.gov.my

©Malaysian Qualifications Agency 2020

All the Agency's publications are available on our portal: www.mqa.gov.my

CONTENTS

Foreword	i
Abbreviation	iii
1.0 Purpose and Objective	1
2.0 Scope	1
3.0 Introduction	2
4.0 Definition of Micro-Credentials	3
5.0 Justification for Micro-Credentials	4
5.1 Lifelong Learning	
5.2 Alternative	
5.3 Access	
5.4 Stackable	
5.5 Recognition of Non-Formal Learning	
6.0 Principles of a Good Micro-Credentials	6
6.1 Outcome-based	
6.2 Personalised	
6.3 On-demand / Industry-driven	
6.4 Secure and shareable	
6.5 Transparent	
7.0 General Policies for Micro-Credentials	7
7.1 Mode of Delivery of Micro-Credential	
7.2 Nationality	
7.3 Naming the Micro-Credentials	
7.4 Micro-Credentials in Professional Fields	
7.5 Level and Type of Programmes for Micro-Credential	
7.6 Suitability of Courses and Programmes for Micro-Credential	
7.7 Implementation of Micro-Credential from Accredited Programmes	
7.8 Extending Micro-Credential from Accredited Programmes to Collaborative Partners (Franchisees)	
7.9 Entry Requirements via Micro-Credential	
7.10 Minimum Graduation Age via Micro-Credential	

8.0 Development, Design and Delivery and Recognition of Micro-Credentials	12
8.1 Micro-Credential which are Component of Accredited Programmes of an HEP	
8.2 Micro-Credential which are components of Accredited Programmes of Multiple HEPs	
8.3 Stand-alone Micro-Credentials	
8.4 Credit Transfer	
9.0 Quality Assurance of Micro-Credentials	15
9.1 Market Needs Assessment	
9.2 Outcomes or Competency-based	
9.3 Assessment of Learning	
9.4 Delivery – System and Resources	
9.5 Monitoring and Review	
9.6 Learner Experience	
9.7 Quality Assessment for HEP and Other Providers	
9.8 Learner Data and Records Management	
References	19
Appendices	21
Appendix 1 List of Panel Members	
Appendix 2 Sample of Malaysian Micro-Credential Statement (MMS)	
Glossary	

FOREWORD

Continuing the national aspiration for flexible higher education, Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) has developed a comprehensive Guidelines to Good Practices (GGP): Micro-credentials enable the unbundling of accredited programmes of higher education providers (HEPs), making them accessible to nontraditional learners in line with the national lifelong and life-wide learning agenda. In May 2019, MQA issued a Guideline on Micro-credentials to launch this initiative.

Traditionally, HEPs design and deliver academic, technical and professional programmes leading to a recognised award or qualification. These qualifications are designed to provide knowledge, skills and values to students over a one to four years of study to enable them to enter the job market, pursue further studies and become functional members of the society. Given the accelerating and disruptive changes in the national and global economy, the graduates and others in the workplace must acquire new knowledge, and learn new technologies and skills throughout their careers to remain productive. The shorter, personalised, demand-driven and stackable micro-credentials are intended to expand opportunities for reskilling and upskilling of the workforce in tandem with changes in the workplace and also offer new pathways to formal qualifications.

The GGP declares MQA's support for, and underscores the importance of micro-credentials within the flexible higher education framework. This GGP empowers and guides the HEPs to systematically develop and/or unbundle their programmes to nontraditional learners while maintaining high quality. To this end, the GGP defines the micro-credentials and enunciates key principles in the development and delivery of micro-credentials which the HEPs and other providers are urged to adhere to.

A set of policy guidances are provided in this GGP to ensure that it is in harmony with the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) and other higher education policies, practices and requirements. These policy guidances will ensure the micro-credentials are valued, recognised and enjoy high confidence amongst all the stakeholders. MQA is grateful for the feedback provided by the stakeholders through the online survey and live online consultation which has greatly benefitted the refinement of the GGP.

As a national QA body, MQA has also introduced a voluntary quality assessment opportunity for stand-alone micro-credentials by HEPs and other providers to obtain third party evaluation of the design, delivery and enhancement of the micro-credentials. The quality assessment of micro-credentials by the national quality assurance body can be an important differentiator for HEPs and providers in an increasing crowd credentials market.

I believe that this GGP will continue our collective national aspiration to develop a flexible quality assured higher education that enjoys the confidence of all stakeholders.

Thank you.

Prof. Dato' Dr. Husaini Omar

Chief Executive Officer

Malaysian Qualifications Agency

July 2020

ABBREVIATION

APEL(A)	Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning for Access
APEL(C)	Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning for Credit Award
EQA	External Quality Assurance
GGP	Guidelines to Good Practices
HEP	Higher Education Provider
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
MMS	Malaysian Micro-Credential Statement
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MOOC	Massive Open Online Courses
MQA	Malaysian Qualifications Agency
MQF	Malaysian Qualifications Framework
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
QMS	Quality Management System
QA	Quality Assurance
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals

1.0 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE

The purpose of the guideline is to provide Higher Education Providers (HEP) and relevant stakeholders with information on policies, principles and good practices in designing, developing, delivering, quality-assuring and recognising the assessed learning acquired through micro-credentials. Specifically, this guideline is intended to **facilitate, empower and guide** all types of micro-credentials whether they are intended to be complementary to, in replacement of, or a component of existing programmes offered by HEPs.

2.0 SCOPE

This guideline applies to any **micro-credentials designed, developed, and delivered by HEPs and other micro-credential providers**. It is of paramount importance that this document is read together with other quality assurance documents and policies issued by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) and other related agencies. These documents include, but are not limited to:

- i. Policies on the offering of short courses outlined by MQA / Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE);
- ii. MQA Policies on Credit Transfer;
- iii. Guidelines to Good Practices: Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (GGP: APEL);
- iv. Guidelines on Credit Transfer for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC); and
- v. Other relevant quality assurance documents developed by MQA / MOHE from time to time.

Whilst every care has been taken to ensure the comprehensiveness of this document, MQA should be consulted on any other issues that may not be covered by this guideline.

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The conventional tertiary credentials like a diploma, bachelor, master and doctorate characterised as macro-credentials, have been the primary means to acquire qualifications for work, profession and further studies. These qualifications, which are described nationally in the qualifications framework, represent a formal recognition of the achievement of a particular body of knowledge, skills-set and related professional values through an extended period of prescribed study by a learner from an authorised HEP.

In contrast, micro-credential is a certification of assessed learning of a single or a set of courses¹ which are intended to provide learners with knowledge, skills, values and competencies in a narrow area of study and/or practice. The globalised and rapidly changing nature of the knowledge economy demands continual lifelong and life-wide learning of all adults to remain employable, adaptable, and productive. Industry and demand-driven, bite-size, personalised and online courses and certifications, have since 2008, challenged and changed the way HEPs deliver higher education. In a nutshell, it has disrupted the conventional idea of education with qualifications as the key objective.

Although micro-credentials or its many alternative references like digital badges, nano degrees, micro-masters, micro-qualifications are of a recent origin, the concept and practice of providing adult learners shorter, work or career-related and more peer and self-learning oriented modules has a much longer history². These offerings are popularly packaged as executive and professional development courses and are offered by private and public HEPs. These credentials or certifications are accepted by employers and required by professional bodies and recognised by HEPs. Consequently, MQA has launched two guidelines in 2016 namely APEL for Credit Award (APEL(C)) and Guidelines on Credit Transfer for Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) to facilitate recognition of all forms of learning.

¹ Courses may also be described as modules, units or subjects.

² Digital Credentialing: Implications of Recognition Across Borders. UNESCO, 2018. pg 8; Buban, J. (2017) Alternative Credentials. Prior Learning 2.0. Online Learning Consortium. pg.15
www.lunimafoundation.org/files/resources/alternative_crednetials.pdf. accessed on 27th Dec 2018.

The MQF has included a graduate certificate and graduate diploma for Level 6 and postgraduate certificate and postgraduate diploma for Level 7. These recognised sub-qualifications have a smaller scope (and credits) than the full qualification and are especially intended to be opportunities for HEPs to develop and provide new knowledge, skills, competencies and technologies suitable to the changes taking place in the industry and work. These sub-qualifications with lesser credits and shorter durations compared to a full-fledged bachelor or masters degree offered by HEPs are formally subject to accreditation requirements by MQA. These sub-qualifications provide multiple entry and exit pathway for students at the MQF Levels 6 and 7 as components of a complete and accredited graduate or postgraduate qualification.

This guideline provides the HEPs with more flexibility in designing and delivering micro-credentials from programmes at all levels of MQF with a different course and credit packages for learners who may or may not seek to study for the award.

4.0 DEFINITION OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS

Micro-credential is a “...term that encompasses various forms of certifications, including ‘nano-degrees’, ‘micro-masters’, ‘credentials’, ‘certificates’, ‘badges’, ‘licences’ and ‘endorsements’” (UNESCO, 2018:10). As the name implies, micro-credentials focus on a much smaller volume of learning than the conventional awards, which allow learners to complete the required study over a shorter duration. In their most developed form, micro-credentials represent more than mere recognition of a smaller volume of learning. They form part of a digital credentialing ecosystem, made possible by digital communications technologies establishing networks of interest through which people can share information about what a learner knows and can do (Milligan and Kennedy, in James et al., 2017, UNESCO, 2018).

Oliver (2019:19) offers a highly synthesised definition of micro-credential as “...digital certification of assessed knowledge, skills and competencies which is additional, alternate or complementary to or a component of formal qualifications”. This definition covers the different purposes of micro-credentials including the potential of micro-credential to be an alternative to traditional credentials as some micro-credential proponents have argued.

For this guideline, micro-credential is defined as digital certification³ of assessed knowledge, skills and competencies in a specific area or field which can be a component of an accredited programme or stand-alone courses supporting the professional, technical, academic and personal development of the learners. This definition underscores several key elements of micro-credential under this guideline viz;

- a. Digital certification
- b. Knowledge skills or competency
- c. A specific area or field
- d. Component of accredited programmes or stand-alone courses
- e. Serves professional, technical, academic and personal development interests of learners.

5.0 JUSTIFICATION FOR MICRO-CREDENTIALS

5.1 Lifelong learning

The 21st century is characterised by rapid and discontinuous change. To survive in such a disruptive environment, adults, workers, and graduates must be agile enough to reskill and upskill to stay on, if not, ahead of the curve. The HEPs must be encouraged to design and deliver suitable short courses on new knowledge, skills, technologies and attributes to equip the workforce for the new technological and economic challenges.

5.2 Alternative

The 3 to 4 years university education degree, whilst still important, requires a longer time to complete which is a challenge for working adults to enrol and complete the programme. Some quarters have predicted the demise of the university degree on the basis that it is too expensive, takes too long, not competency-based, not industry-focused and just-in-case curricula (Gallagher, 2019; Lambert, 2019; Staton, 2014). Micro-credentials offer a more dynamic, competitive, demand-driven, shorter, modular, and less expensive alternative to the traditional degree. HEPs can, through these shorter and focused micro-

³ Non digital form of certifications will continue to be recognised until MQA decides otherwise.

credentials, tap into different market segments of students and workers who are less inclined to enter a 4-year university degree. Such micro-credentials can also offer lower-cost options to acquire the required knowledge, skills and competencies allowing the learners to enter the labour market sooner and pursuing further credentials if their career or professional interests warrant it.

5.3 Access

Where micro-credentials are offered by a wide range of providers and through flexible design and delivery, people have greater access and choice in availing themselves of higher education opportunities. Online and digital delivery can bring the benefits of these courses to people near and far. With the rapid improvement in internet access and broadband speed, more people can enjoy better quality and industry-focused learning to improve their careers.

5.4 Stackable

Through micro-credentials, people can acquire knowledge and skill sets based on their needs, at their own pace and from one or more HEPs of their choice. The accumulation of micro-credentials and credits can be tendered to HEPs for completion leading to an award or credit transfer based on a credible and transparent outcome-based process subject to existing policies. This route can open yet another pathway for working adults to seek knowledge and skills which can ultimately lead to a qualification.

5.5 Recognition of Non-Formal Learning

MQF allows for the recognition of all forms of learning in seeking qualifications described in the MQF. Micro-credentials, which testify to successful attainment of specified outcomes, can be considered through the APEL(C)⁴ process for credits in programmes offered by HEPs.

⁴ Please see Guidelines on APEL(C) for further information on the process and procedures of recognition of these types of learning:

https://www2.mqa.gov.my/qad/garispanduan/2017/GGP%20APEL%20Credit%20Award%2019092016_upload%20website%2013.10.17.pdf

6.0 PRINCIPLES OF A GOOD MICRO-CREDENTIALS

In supporting the HEPs in developing and delivering micro-credentials, all HEPs must consider and apply the following principles to ensure maximal value for all related parties i.e., learners, employers, HEPs, regulators and quality assurance bodies.

The following are the basic principles in designing or developing a credible micro-credential.

6.1 Outcome-based

HEPs should clearly articulate the overall micro-credentials and constituent course outcomes i.e., knowledge, skills, attitudes or competencies, in a measurable or demonstrable manner. The attainment of the outcomes should be demonstrated through suitable assessment methods and reported in a user-friendly manner.

6.2 Personalised

To the extent possible, the HEPs must design micro-credentials which allow the learners to select courses that cater to their needs, interests, and work within the context of the overall objectives and approval of the micro-credential. The mode of delivery, the pace of learning and assessment methods should be appropriately personalised for optimal learning by different learners.

6.3 On-demand / Industry-driven

Micro-credentials should be designed and delivered in response to demands of the learners from employers or industries for shorter and focused skill sets, knowledge and technologies which are required for upskilling and reskilling of the workforce to be ready for the 4th Industrial Revolution or personal development. Active engagement with industries and employers is crucial to ensure currency, relevancy and value of the micro-credentials.

6.4 Secure and Shareable

The micro-credentials should ideally be based on technologies that preserve the identity of the learners and protect the certifications from misuse or alterations to ensure user trust. The micro-credentials should be shareable across multiple platforms including social media, email, blogs, and resumes.

6.5 Transparent

The providers of micro-credentials should furnish complete information on the courses in a readable and easily accessible form covering course objectives, outcomes (knowledge, skills and attitudes), mode of delivery, hours of learning, content, assessments, credits, recognitions and endorsements to the learners and other authorised users for purposes of evaluation and recognition.

7.0 GENERAL POLICIES FOR MICRO-CREDENTIALS

7.1 Mode of Delivery of Micro-credential

Micro-credential can be designed and delivered through open and distance learning (ODL) or conventional modes including blended modes of delivery. However, micro-credentials delivered mainly or fully through online mechanisms allow access to learners from everywhere with the possibility of a more personalised offer. The conventional mode of delivery serves the needs of working adults in a locality or community.

7.2 Nationality

Micro-credential is open to both Malaysian and non-Malaysians. Non-Malaysians enrolled in the micro-credentials must be advised on the recognition of the micro-credentials and the qualifications to be eventually awarded (if so intended by the learners) are subject to the rules and policies of their respective countries. To avoid misconceptions about the award, HEPs should provide a clear explanation and description of the micro-credentials as indicated in Malaysian Micro-Credential Statement (MMS) (Appendix 2). The MMS will

provide basic information on the learning time, credits, MQF level of the associated programme(s), learning outcomes, assessment and quality assurance for recognition by stakeholders.

7.3 Naming the Micro-credentials

The micro-credentials offered by HEPs and other providers should be appropriately named based on the purpose, delivery, content, assessment and scope. The title or nomenclature of micro-credential should not in any way conflict with any qualification title stipulated in the MQF or programme which the micro-credential is a part of, or any other titles which have been trademarked. It is suggested that HEPs call their micro-credentials as Micro-Credential or Micro-Award or Micro-Certification in (Title of the course or a title reflecting the courses).

7.4 Micro-credentials in Professional Fields

HEPs seeking to offer micro-credentials in professional fields such as engineering, medical sciences, allied health, accountancy, law, architecture, nursing, dentistry, pharmacy etc. must ensure that the learners are clear about the professional status of the micro-credentials and the future recognition of the micro-credential within any professional programme if learners wish to pursue professional qualifications in future. The providers should consult the relevant professional body even if the micro-credential does not seek nor claim professional recognition.

7.5 Level and Type of Programmes for Micro-credential

Micro-credentials can be developed from accredited programmes at any MQF level except Foundation programmes⁵ and programmes which are assessed wholly by thesis or dissertation. In general, programmes which require intensive use of equipment such as

⁵ Foundation or equivalent programmes are pathways to bachelors for school leavers with SPM or equivalent entry requirements. Unbundling of the foundations via micro-credential which can be offered and taken by anyone including SPM students may accelerate the progression to the bachelors with implication for recognition of the qualifications. The condition imposed is consistent with the current policy does not permit foundation programmes or courses to be offered to learners before the results are formally announced.

Engineering, laboratory (Applied Sciences), extensive demonstration and clinical training (Physiotherapy) may not be suitable for online micro-credentials.

7.6 Suitability of Courses and Programmes for Micro-credential

HEP must assess and establish the suitability of the courses in the accredited programme to be offered via micro-credential. Courses like industrial training, internship, research projects, fieldwork with substantial hands-on teaching and learning are not suitable for online-based micro-credentials and may have to be delivered by conventional and/or blended means.

7.7 Implementation of Micro-credentials from Accredited Programmes

A programme must have provisional accreditation and fulfilled all conditions imposed, or obtained full accreditation from MQA before it can be unpacked into micro-credentials by a HEP (see subsection 8.1) or multiple HEPs (see subsection 8.2). This is to ensure that the courses offered via micro-credentials have been assessed as meeting all minimum requirements by MQA. Learners who have completed the requirements of an accredited programme via micro-credentials can only be conferred a qualification from fully accredited programmes.

The HEP must ensure that the course(s) delivered via micro-credential, whether under subsection 8.1 or 8.2, is the same as or equivalent to the courses in the programme offered by the HEP through conventional or ODL modes. The HEP, however, can make some adjustments to the teaching, learning and assessments of course(s) offered via micro-credentials provided that constructive alignment is always maintained and demonstrated. When in doubt, please consult MQA for further guidance.

7.8 Extending Micro-credentials from Accredited Programmes to Collaborative Partners (Franchisees)

Micro-credentials which are a component of an accredited programme must demonstrate that all controls are in place to ensure similar or equivalent student learning outcomes and

experience. The HEP must first design and deliver the micro-credential before extending the micro-credential to collaborative partners (franchisees) offering the same programme. HEP may also franchise micro-credentials to new partners up to 70% of a programme with prior notification to MQA.

When a HEP extends the micro-credentials to its collaborative partner (franchisee) or to non-franchisee partners (not exceeding 70% of the courses) such arrangements must be formalised through a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) and the principal or awarding HEP must demonstrate effective oversight of the micro-credentials so that comparable quality is upheld for all learners.

7.9 Entry Requirements via Micro-credential

A learner can enrol in a micro-credential which is a component of an accredited programme without the minimum entry requirements or appropriate APEL(A) certification. This does not absolve the micro-credential providers from setting appropriate prerequisites, i.e. work experience, age, literacy, digital literacy, formal education etc., for a learner to enrol and have a reasonable chance of completing the micro-credential.

However, the learner must meet the minimum requirements for the programme or possess appropriate APEL(A) certification before being eligible for the qualification. The HEP must inform the learners of the minimum entry requirements and other equivalent certifications including APEL(A) if the learners wish to complete the full credits for the qualification. The HEPs must explicitly include this information in the micro-credential brochures, handbooks, websites and alert the learners to this requirement as they progress through the micro-credential.

Learners who have completed 30% of the courses in a programme via micro-credentials under subsection 8.1 or 70% of the courses under subsection 8.2 but who do not meet the minimum entry requirements for the qualification, must be advised to undergo APEL for micro-credential assessment by MQA if they wish to obtain the qualification. APEL for micro-credential assessment requires the learner to submit a complete portfolio following

the procedures stipulated for APEL(A) for verification by MQA to determine the eligibility of the learner for the award.

7.10 Minimum Graduation Age via Micro-credential

The duration taken to earn a qualification via micro-credential must be in accord with the national education system (with its focus on the formal school system) and with appropriate recognition of lifelong learning by working adults. In general, as a matter of policy, the adult learners should not graduate with a qualification before the normal age⁶ as stated in Table 1. However, in exceptional cases, the HEP may permit a lower age learner to graduate.

Table 1: Age at Graduation via Micro-credential

No	Level	Entry Requirement	Normal Age at Graduation
1	Certificate	Based on current entry requirements or equivalent	19 (18+1)
		APEL(A)/APEL (Micro-credential)	20 (19+1)
2	Diploma	Based on current entry requirements or equivalent	20 (18+2)
		APEL(A)/APEL (Micro-credential)	22 (20+2)
3	Bachelor	Based on current entry requirements or equivalent	22 (19+3)
		APEL(A)/APEL (Micro-credential)	24 (21+3)
4	Master	Based on current entry requirements or equivalent	24 (23+1)
		APEL(A)/APEL (Micro-credential)	31 (30+1)

⁶ Age calculated from the year of birth

8.0 DEVELOPMENT, DESIGN AND DELIVERY AND RECOGNITION OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS

In designing and developing micro-credential, HEPs should be guided by the demands of the industry, employers, regulators and learners in terms of the depth, breadth, mode of delivery, androgical approach, duration and the knowledge, skills and competency mix.

The micro-credentials can be additional, alternate or complementary to, or a component of formal qualifications. Accordingly, the three (3) categories of micro-credentials are identified and elaborated in the following sub-sections.

8.1 Micro-credentials which are Component of Accredited Programmes of a HEP

Micro-credentials can be developed from existing accredited programmes of the HEPs to provide access to nontraditional learners. Single and a set of courses from the programmes may be offered to the learners. The learners may or may not have any interest in the qualification. However, if they do develop such intention as they progress through the micro-credentials, they must fulfil the minimum entry requirements for the programme (refer to subsection 7.9) and adhere to the minimum age to graduate as set out in subsection 7.10 and Table 1. Where a learner has completed all the courses via micro-credential including credit transfers (if eligible for it), the learner shall be deemed to have fulfilled the requirements of the programme for graduation.

8.2 Micro-credentials which are Components of Accredited Programmes of Multiple HEPs

Micro-credentials may be offered as a set of courses from accredited programmes by multiple HEPs as a consortium to learners. Learners may also seek micro-credentials across many independent HEPs including authorised foreign HEPs, within a field of study or across cognate fields. These learners may seek to acquire an award from one of the HEPs which has an accredited programme in the field of interest. The HEP can consider these micro-credentials for horizontal credit transfer based on the general credit transfer

policy of MQA⁷ and the in-house regulations of the HEP on credit transfer, the currency of knowledge and other HEP requirements. The awarding HEP can consider up to 70% of the courses via micro-credentials for credit transfer and assess the learner for the balance of the credits through prescribed courses in the programme whose award is sought by the learner. The same minimum graduation age in Table 1 is applicable in this case except for exceptional learners in which case the HEP may permit a lower age. A comparative summary of the features of this type is provided in Table 2 (refer to subsection 8.3).

8.3 Stand-alone Micro-credentials

Stand-alone micro-credentials can also be inspired by courses in accredited programmes or designed anew based on the special needs of the employers or industries or individuals for specific knowledge, skills and competencies. These micro-credentials are aimed at meeting the needs of the workforce for new knowledge, skills and competencies. The HEP may provide the option for the students to be certified as competent at specified levels. These type of micro-credentials may be offered to any interested learners from amongst the population and/or to students in accredited programmes as supplementary or complementary skills certifications for better employability.

Whatever the purposes and origin of the stand-alone micro-credentials, the learners can submit them to any HEP for recognition through Credit Transfer for MOOC or APEL(C) or APEL(Q)⁸ procedures.

A comparative summary of the features of the three types of micro-credentials is provided in Table 2.

⁷ The policy requires that the course/s in question must be of the same level, have similar course learning outcomes, at least 80% content similarity and learners have at least a C grade achievement score.

⁸ In development by MQA.

Table 2: Micro-credentials, Recognition and Awards

Nature of Micro-Credential	Component of Accredited Programme	Component of Accredited Programmes	Stand-alone - additional, alternate & complementary
Micro-Credential Provider	Single HEP	Multiple HEPs	HEPs and Other Providers
Origins of Micro-Credential	<p>All courses taken via micro-credentials are components of provisionally or fully accredited programme of a HEP.</p> <p><i>Example: The learner takes courses from an accredited Diploma in Business from Lifelong College.</i></p>	<p>A combination of courses taken via micro-credentials from accredited programmes across HEPs or providers whether local or foreign.</p> <p><i>Example: The learner takes courses from different public and private, local or foreign* HEPs.</i></p> <p><i>*These courses must be accredited in the home country of the HEP.</i></p>	<p>A combination of courses taken from a variety of providers.</p> <p><i>Example: The learner takes courses from local and foreign HEPs, MOOC providers and local training institutes.</i></p>
Credit Transfer/ Completion of requirements	<p>Since all the micro-credentials are components of the accredited programme of the HEP, all course credits including credit transfers go toward the completion of the programme.</p>	<p>Credit transfers (subject to credit transfer policies of MQA and the HEP) to a maximum of 70% of the credits in the programme. The awarding HEP can determine the 30% requirements to be fulfilled and the mode of delivery of the prescribed courses.</p>	<p>Credit transfer up to 30% of credits in an accredited programme under CT for MOOCs, APEL(C) and micro-credentials.</p> <p>More recognition of nonformal learning can be provided through APEL for award arrangement, i.e APEL(Q).</p>
Institutional requirements	<p>Fully meet the requirements of the programme as the micro-credentials are component of accredited programme of the awarding HEP.</p>	<p>At least 30%* of the graduating credits must be taken with the awarding HEP over a cumulative one-year duration through any approved modes of delivery.</p> <p><i>*Based on the rules of the HEP.</i></p>	<p>Subject to institutional requirements for Non-Micro-credentials arrangement or Subject to the requirements in the Guidelines on APEL(Q)</p>

8.4 Credit Transfer

The HEP must have credit transfer policies on the content and currency of knowledge or skills and competencies appropriate for the level and field of study in considering micro-credentials for an award or qualification. This policy is particularly important given the possibility of self-pacing adult learners who may take a longer time to complete the requirements for an award.

Recognition of credits for courses from other HEPs or other types providers or accumulated knowledge through work experiences can only be granted in compliance with the general Credit Transfer for MOOC or APEL(C) guidelines.

Credit transfer may be considered for a course in the programme based on one or a combination of course(s) which are at the same level, equivalent credits and match the course learning outcomes of the destination course(s). It is critical that HEPs exercise due diligence in evaluating micro-credentials from other providers for purposes of credit transfer. In particular, HEPs must ensure that the assessments are trustworthy and the achievements reported reflect the abilities of the applicant. Where there are doubts about the assessment, the HEP should conduct its own assessment before considering the application for credit transfer. For micro-credentials obtained via MOOCs, the Guidelines on Credit Transfer for MOOC must be followed before the credit transfer decision is made by the HEP.

9.0 QUALITY ASSURANCE OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS

An effective Quality Management System (QMS) covering all aspects of the design, development, delivery, assessment, monitoring, review and improvement of the micro-credentials must be established, maintained and improved by the HEP or provider. The HEPs may utilise existing programme development, design, approval, implementation mechanisms for micro-credentials. In general, the HEP or provider should observe the following processes appropriate to the complexity of the micro-credentials to ensure high quality.

9.1 Market Needs Assessment

To ensure micro-credentials are demand-driven, the providers should consult relevant learners, industry players or their associations or regulators and other labour market mediators like *Institut Latihan & Analisis Pasaran Buruh*, Talent Corp, Malaysian Digital Economy Corporation, Human Resource Development Fund etc., to identify knowledge, skills, technologies and competencies which are in short supply. The needs analysis must focus not just on the what (content) but also on the who (target learners) and how (delivery

modes, andragogy), where (location, geography), feasibility (price) and when (time). These studies should also examine the intentions and interest of the learners and employers for awards or just the micro-credentials.

The market needs assessment should inform the development, design and delivery of the micro-credentials by providers. Additionally, the developers of micro-credential should seek the endorsement of the industry or employers, funding bodies and other relevant intermediaries to signal the alignment and value of the micro-credential to the target learners.

For further information on design and development, providers can refer to the Guidelines to Good Practices (GGP) on Curriculum Design and Delivery, Assessment, Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation (COPPA): ODL and Advisory Notes on Market Need Assessment (www.mqa.gov.my).

9.2 Outcome or Competency-based

Micro-credentials which are component of an accredited programme are outcome-based. Non-higher education providers who want to facilitate the recognition of their micro-credentials must design it with a clear articulation of the objectives and the outcomes of these courses. It is highly advantageous to the providers to align the outcomes of the micro-credential to the MQF level descriptors and outcomes to assist any future recognition by HEPs⁹. These course outcomes should have an action verb, performance criteria and conditions which allow the content, the teaching and learning strategies and assessment to be designed and delivered to facilitate learner achievement of the outcomes. An estimation of learning effort (in hours) required to achieve the outcomes should be provided in addition to any other prerequisite knowledge or skills required for successful completion of the micro-credential.

⁹ See <https://www.mqa.gov.my/pv4/document/mqf/2019/Oct/updated%20MQF%20Ed%20%2024102019.pdf> for details on MQF

9.3 Assessment of Learning

All micro-credential providers must ensure that credible assessment system is in place and appropriate assessment methods are used to assess learning for formative, diagnostic and summative purposes. Micro-credentials which are components of accredited programmes must observe assessment standards as stipulated in the relevant programme standards or COPPA and COPPA: ODL¹⁰.

Information on the type of assessments (examinations, tests, projects etc.), grading (marks, grade points or alphabetical grades etc.) and its quality assurance should be stated in the Malaysian Micro-credential Statement (MMS) (see Appendix 2).

9.4 Delivery – System and Resources

The policies, processes and procedures for the management of the micro-credential from promotion, enrolment, withdrawal or deferment, instructor assignment, scheduling, teaching, learning, the use of the online platform, peer collaboration, formative and summative assessment, and the credentialing should be established, implemented and improved. These processes are normally described in the regulations and/or student handbook. These documentations should be provided to or be accessible to the learners.

9.5 Monitoring and Review

An important aspect of the delivery is the monitoring of the teaching and learning, and assessment processes by those responsible for IQA. The monitoring of operations by gathering required information and reviewing them to examine operational and learning effectiveness is critical for continual improvement. Feedback from academic staff and learners are vital to improving the experience of learners and the value of the micro-credential. The GGP on Monitoring, Reviewing and Continually Improving Institutional Quality (MR-CIIQ) provides further information on monitoring and review. (www.mqa.gov.my).

¹⁰ See <https://www.mqa.gov.my/QAD/>

9.6 Learner Experience

A key part of the QA of the programme/courses is to seek information on the experience of learners at appropriate intervals to validate the delivery system. Both quantitative and qualitative information should be solicited from the learners and used to improve the delivery system. Any instrument designed for this purpose should assess the learner experience rather than just their satisfaction.

9.7 Quality Assessment for HEP and other Providers

Where the micro-credentials are designed as stand-alone credentials, the HEPs or other providers can apply to MQA for an assessment of the effectiveness of their design, development and delivery of the micro-credential. Such an external quality assessment by a recognised QA body will provide an independent third party validation of the quality of the micro-credential to learners, employers, users and other HEPs.

9.8 Learner Data and Records Management

The records on learner application, progression, performance, attrition and completion of modules or micro-credentials must be securely maintained by the provider for verification by users. The digital certification should be safe, secure, shareable and contain key information on the provider, learner, learning and achievement as indicated in the MMS (see Appendix 2). The use of digital badges is highly recommended for ease of verification and carry vital learner information for users.

REFERENCES

1. Buban, Jill (undated), Alternative Credentials – Prior Learning 2.0. Online Learning Consortium. Retrieved on 20th September 2019 from <https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/read/deac-study-alternative-credentials/>
2. Common Microcredential Framework (undated), European MOOCs Consortium, Retrieved on 28th Feb 2020 from https://emc.eadtu.eu/images/EMC_Common_Microcredential_Framework.pdf
3. Common Microcredential Framework (undated), European MOOCs Consortium, Retrieved on 28th Feb 2020 from https://emc.eadtu.eu/images/EMC_Common_Microcredential_Framework.pdf
4. Connecting Credentials – A Beta Credentials Framework – Building a system for communicating about and connecting diverse credentials. Lumina Foundation, 2016. Retrieved on 20th September 2019 from <https://connectingcredentials.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ConnectingCredentials-4-29-30.pdf>
5. Designing & Implementing Micro-Credentials: A Guide for Practitioners, 2019. Commonwealth of Learning. Retrieved on 28th Feb 2020 from <http://www.che.ac.ls/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/14-Designing-and-Implementing-Micro-Credentials-A-Guide-for-Practitioners.pdf>
6. Developing a System of Micro-credentials: Supporting Deeper Learning in the Classroom, HP. Retrieved on 28th Feb 2020 from https://www.hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/mc_deeperlearning.pdf
7. Developing a System of Micro-credentials: Supporting Deeper Learning in the Classroom, HP. Retrieved on 28th Feb 2020 from https://www.hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/mc_deeperlearning.pdf
8. Gallagher, Sean (2019), How the Value of Educational Credential Is and Isn't Changing. *Harvard Business Review*, September 20.
9. Lambert, Harry 21, Aug 2019, The University Con: How the British degree lost its value. *New Statesman*. Retrieved on 4 April 2020 from <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/education/2019/08/great-university-con-how-british-degree-lost-its-value>
10. Oliver, Beverley (2019), Making micro-credentials work for learners, employers and providers retrieved on 20th September 2019 from <http://dteach.deakin.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/103/2019/08/Making-micro-credentials-work-Oliver-Deakin-2019-full-report.pdf>
11. Staton, Michael (2014), The Degree Doomed. *Harvard Business Review*, January 8, 2014.

12. UNESCO (2018), Digital Credentialing – Implication for the Recognition of Learning Across Borders. Retrieved on 20th Sept 2019 from https://www.academia.edu/37642270/Digital_Credentialing_Implications_for_the_recognition_of_learning_across_borders

APPENDICES

LIST OF PANEL MEMBERS

NO.	PANEL MEMBERS	ORGANISATION
1.	Dr. Hazman Shah Abdullah (Chairman)	Quality Assurance Expert
2.	Prof. Dr. Abd Karim Alias	Universiti Sains Malaysia
3.	Assoc Prof. Dr. Andy Liew Teik Kooi	HELP University
4.	Dr. Mohamad Afzhan Khan Mohamad Khalil	Open University Malaysia
5.	Dr. Chong Siong Choy	Finance Accreditation Agency
6.	Mdm. Noranyza Mohamad Yusoff	Jabatan Pendidikan Politeknik dan Kolej Komuniti, Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia

SAMPLE OF MALAYSIAN MICRO-CREDENTIAL STATEMENT (MMS)

MALAYSIAN MICRO-CREDENTIAL STATEMENT¹¹	
Serial No:	A unique Identifier
Name:	Mohamad bin Abdullah
NRIC	840111-11-6678
Name of Course	Micro Award in Tourism Marketing/ Micro-credential in Tourism Marketing/ Micro-certification in Tourism Marketing
Programme (Course Origin)¹	Bachelor in Tourism and Hospitality (MQA/FA XXXX)
Credit transfer/award¹	Bachelor in Tourism and Hospitality Bachelor of Hospitality
Name and status of awarding institution	Peoples' University (a private university registered under ACT 555, Malaysia with powers to award Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral qualifications under the MQF)
Language of instruction/ examination	English
Delivery	Online learning & Face to face Seminars
Mode of study	Distance Learning
Level of the course¹	1st Year Bachelor
Credit hours /equivalent¹	3 credits
Student learning time	120 hours
Duration	15 weeks
Enrolment Requirements	Basic numeracy and intermediate literacy to established through interviews and test
Course Learning Outcomes	1. Explain the fundamental concepts in tourism marketing

¹¹ The sample is not intended to standardise the form or format of statement. HEPs should endeavour to include this and other information pertinent in the digital certification.

Assessment Grade System & Grading System Quality Assurance Date of official stamp/seal of award Signature Contact information for verification	2. Identify segmentation and positioning approaches and strategies in tourism markets 3. Demonstrate the importance of service quality in tourism marketing 50% assignment 50% final examination B+ (A+ to E with marks ranging from 100 to 0) Malaysian Qualifications Agency (for courses from accredited programmes only & Micro-credentials which subject to MQA Quality Assessment) 08 September 2019 Vice President (Academic) verify@edu.my
Note: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stand-alone micro-credentials may not have information for all these fields in the MMS. 2. HEP and other providers may provide the information in the MMS in two or more documents. 	

GLOSSARY

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning		A systematic process that involves the identification, documentation and assessment of prior experiential learning, i.e. knowledge, skills and attitudes, to determine the extent to which an individual has achieved the desired learning outcomes, for access to a programme of study and/or for the award of credit.
APEL(A)		A scheme to assess the capabilities of a candidate based on formal, non-formal and informal learning and experiences to ascertain suitability for entry into academic programmes at various levels.
APEL for credentials	Micro-	A scheme to assess the capabilities of a candidate based on formal, non-formal and informal learning and experiences to ascertain suitability for entry into academic programmes at various levels based solely on the portfolio element of APEL(A).
APEL(C)		Award of credits for the prior experiential learning towards a course in an accredited programme of higher education provider. APEL(C) provides the mechanism to recognise the individual's prior experiential learning that is relevant and specific to a course within a programme of study. The credit award is granted based on the knowledge and skills acquired through informal and non-formal learning. These forms of learning which emphasise experiential learning will need to be formally reviewed and assessed. The process will determine if learning has occurred and is in line with the learning outcomes of the course(s) concerned. It is the learning and not the experience of the learners which is being evaluated.
External Assurance	Quality	External quality assurance refers to the assessment of a HEP by an authorised body to provide stakeholders with the confidence that all standards and requirements are met and will continue to be met.
Higher Providers	Education	Higher education providers are colleges, colleges universities, universities, academies, institutes established under higher education laws empowering these entities to award specified qualifications under the MQF.

HEP (S.2, ACT 679)	Means a body corporate, organisation or other body of persons which conducts higher education or training programmes including skills training programmes leading to the award of a higher education qualification or which awards a higher education qualification and includes the public or private higher education providers, examination or certification bodies or their branch representatives.
Internal Quality Assurance	Internal quality assurance is all the policies, processes and procedures in place to provide confidence that all standards and requirements for the awards are met and will continue to be met by the provider.
Massive Open Online Courses	A guidelines developed by MQA to facilitate HEPs to recognise the learning through Credit Transfer for MOOC. (Guidelines on Credit Transfer for MOOC, 2016, MQA).
Open and Distance Learning	<p>a) The term open and distance learning (ODL) reflects both the fact that all or most of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in time and space from the learner, and that the mission aims to include greater dimensions of openness and flexibility, whether in terms of access, curriculum or Updated: 7 October 2019 vii No. Terms Description other elements of structure (UNESCO, 2002).</p> <p>b) Most definitions of ODL pay attention to the following characteristics: separation of teacher and learner in time and place; institutional accreditation; use of mixed-media courseware, involves two-way communication, the possibility of face-to-face meetings and use of industrialised processes (Commonwealth of Learning, 1999).</p> <p>c) ODL refers to education and training in which using the learning resources, rather than attending classroom sessions, is the central feature of the learning experience (Commonwealth of Learning, 2003).</p>
Portfolio	A formal document that contains a compilation of evidence documenting the individual's prior experiential learning and his/her articulation of learning acquired over a period of time prepared to demonstrate the achievement of the intended course learning outcomes (GGP, APEL(C), 2016).

Provider	Refers to any entity that offers courses and/or programmes which may or may not lead to an award under MQF. A provider refers to entities beyond a HEP – training institutes, consultancies etc.
Programme	Means any arrangement of a course of study that is structured or designed to achieve a learning outcome leading to an award of higher education qualification (S.2.1, MQA Act 2007).
Quality Assessment	An assessment carried out by a recognised third party to attest that the provider complies with the quality management system in place to deliver a service to the customers. It identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the provider to endeavour to become a better provider.
Quality Assurance	The people, processes and procedures in place to ensure that the courses meet the needs, delivered effectively, reviewed regularly and improved continually.

END