Micro-Course Education Qualifications Explained

A European Approach for Flexible and Inclusive Learning Opportunities



Design and use of Qualifications and Learning Outcome Descriptions.

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The Framework for Micro-Course Education Qualifications Explained

They are designed for Vocational Education and Training (VET) students, or adult students that are in full job or don't have a job, who want to up-skill or re-skill in a specialized area without committing to full degree study programs leading to a Nation al Qualification (NQ) or an International Diploma.
This is supposed to become an educational approach designed to help students progress more quickly through a curriculum by completing it in shorter, focused units that are organized in modules named Competence Units (CUs).

Competence Units

Each module covers a specific set of knowledge, skills and competences. It allows and encourage students to concentrate on one topic at a time, master it, and then move on to the next. This approach is often used to accelerate learning in a flexible and individualized way, accommodating students' needs and goals.

This flexible structure contains a number of key features such as a study program that is divided into modules that can be taken independently, allowing students to start at different points based on prior knowledge, skill levels or experience gained.

This system allow students to complete modules at their own pace, enabling faster learning progression through the study materials. It helps focusing the learning activities and work-based train ing practices, since each module is dedicated to specific learning outcomes, so students can concentrate deeply on a particular subject before moving forward.



It applies regular assessment, where students are assessed at the end of each module (CU) to ensure they have achieved the necessary knowledge or skills before progressing, thus strongly supporting students motivation and engagement.

The targeted study programs will often be tailored to individual needs, allowing students to focus more intensively on areas where they need improvement or to skip modules if they already possess the relevant competencies.



Micro-Qualification Levels

Successfully completing one or a series of modules (CUs) that are delivered as micro-courses which are assessed and validated by a granted authorized body, will lead to formal micro-qualification levels.

The micro-qualification levels apply descriptions of knowledge, skills and competences. These three categories are described and compared through learning outcome descriptions.

They could be understood as follows:

A micro-credential is the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning.

- **Knowledge** - An understanding of theories, facts, principles, procedures and practices within specific and specialized subject areas or professions.
- **Skills** -The ability to apply knowledge and use know how to solve (repeating) problems or to complete specialized tasks that occurs often, including cognitive, practical, creative, and communication skills.
- **Competence** - The ability to independently use knowledge and skills across various situations, developed and delivered systematically through work-based training practices, resulting in both professional and personal development.

The learning outcome descriptions apply statements describing what a learner knows, understands, and can do upon completing a learning process, expressed in terms of knowledge, skills, and competences. They are structured like this:

- The description of **content** of the micro-course structured and organized like a CU, contains informational materials transforming the curriculum into short and focused content descriptions.
- The **General Learning Outcomes** (GLO) descriptions are transforming the description of the content into brief, clear and specific measurable statements addressing knowledge, skills and general competences.
- The **Specific Learning Outcomes** (SLO) transforms the GLO into the operational level, by specifying knowledge, skills and general competences.

A micro-course qualification is the formal result of an assessment and validation process, granted when an authorized body confirms that an individual has met specified learning outcomes according to established standards.

The Five project proposes to apply micro-course level qualifications as follows:

- **EQF level 4 and 5 - The International Micro Specialization (IMiS) qualification.** An IMiS qualification will be more quickly achieved than traditional NQs, international diplomas or higher educational programs. They are in their nature specializations, developed and delivered as micro-course based VET. They apply a harmonized and international minimum standard for how to structure, organize, deliver and assess the micro-course based education and training activities. The duration of an IMiS qualification is usually relatively short in time, it will be equivalent to a number of ECTS and will result in issuing of an IMiS Diploma.

Micro-Credentials certify the learning outcomes of short-term learning experiences, for example a short course or training.

Students that have achieved one or several IMiS Diplomas, may use their micro qualification specializations to take a national or international exam, whereby they will receive either a traditional recognized National Qualification or an International Diploma.

The benefits of such new micro-course based education programs result in improved efficiency, since students will advance quickly through a harmonized micro-course program, potentially reducing the time and cost of completing a micro-qualification. It supports customization, since it helps developing personalized learning paths, catering to diverse learning speeds and prior knowledge levels. Retention and mastery is achieved by focusing on one module at a time, where students may retain information more effectively and achieve deeper mastery of each topic. Last but not least, it results in increased motivation when students notice and register tangible progress more quickly, which thus enhance motivation and engagement.



Delivery Methods

Delivery of micro-course education based qualifications are especially useful in fields that require rapid skill development or are competency-based. This includes both continuing VET education courses and basic VET level education programs providing specialized training.

This is delivery of competency-based training, which becomes an educational approach that focuses on equipping learners with specific skills and knowledge required to perform tasks or functions in a job or profession. Rather than progressing based on time spent in a course, learners advance by demonstrating mastery of particular competencies, ensuring that they meet clearly defined standards of proficiency. It is a highly effective VET approach for preparing learners for real-world roles by focusing on the essential competencies needed for their success in work.

The **key characteristics of micro-course delivered VET** includes organizing the training around distinct skills, behaviors, or knowledge areas (competencies) that learners need to perform effectively in real-world settings.

They apply clear learning outcomes descriptions that outline what a learner must know and be able to do to demonstrate proficiency.

Capture, record and document micro-learning.



The **study progression** is self paced and stimulating learners progress at their own pace, moving forward only after they have shown they fully understand and can perform each competency level. The work-based assessment processes are based on the practical demonstration of skills and competences, rather than theoretical exams or time-based study requirements. Learners will often be observed completing tasks or evaluated through project-based and work-based assessments.

The individualized learning approach stimulate learners to receive additional support for challenging competence areas or just skip areas they have already mastered. Last but not least, the micro-course delivered VET is developed in collaboration with industry standards and employers to ensure the training aligns with the skills required in the workforce.

In addition, **the benefits of micro-course provided VET** includes providing training that directly aligns with industry needs, so learners are more job-ready and prepared to meet professional expectations. This is time- and cost effective VET, since learners move at their own pace and focus only on what they need to learn.

Furthermore, this is a new educational path that will be more time- and cost efficient, especially for individuals with prior experiences and relevant work-based skills. Moreover, the students will notice their learning progression through clear, achievable skills and competencies, thus improving their engagement and motivation.

The micro-course delivered VET ensures let learners meet each standard of proficiency before moving forward, resulting in a more reliable level of skills and competencies.

Life-Long Learning



Micro-course provided VET supports application of lifelong learning activities that enhance the students knowledge, skills, expertise, competencies, and/or qualifications for personal, social or professional development. This includes

- **non-formal learning** that occurs as part of planned work-based activities, but which is not specifically designated as formal learning in terms of learning objectives, learning time, or VET support. From the learner's perspective, non-formal learning is intentional.

- **informal learning** that is supported through learning and training activities that occurs through everyday activities related to work, family life, or even during leisure time. The informal training is not organized or structured with specific objectives, timeframes, or VET support. Informal learning is often unintentional from the learner's perspective.

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