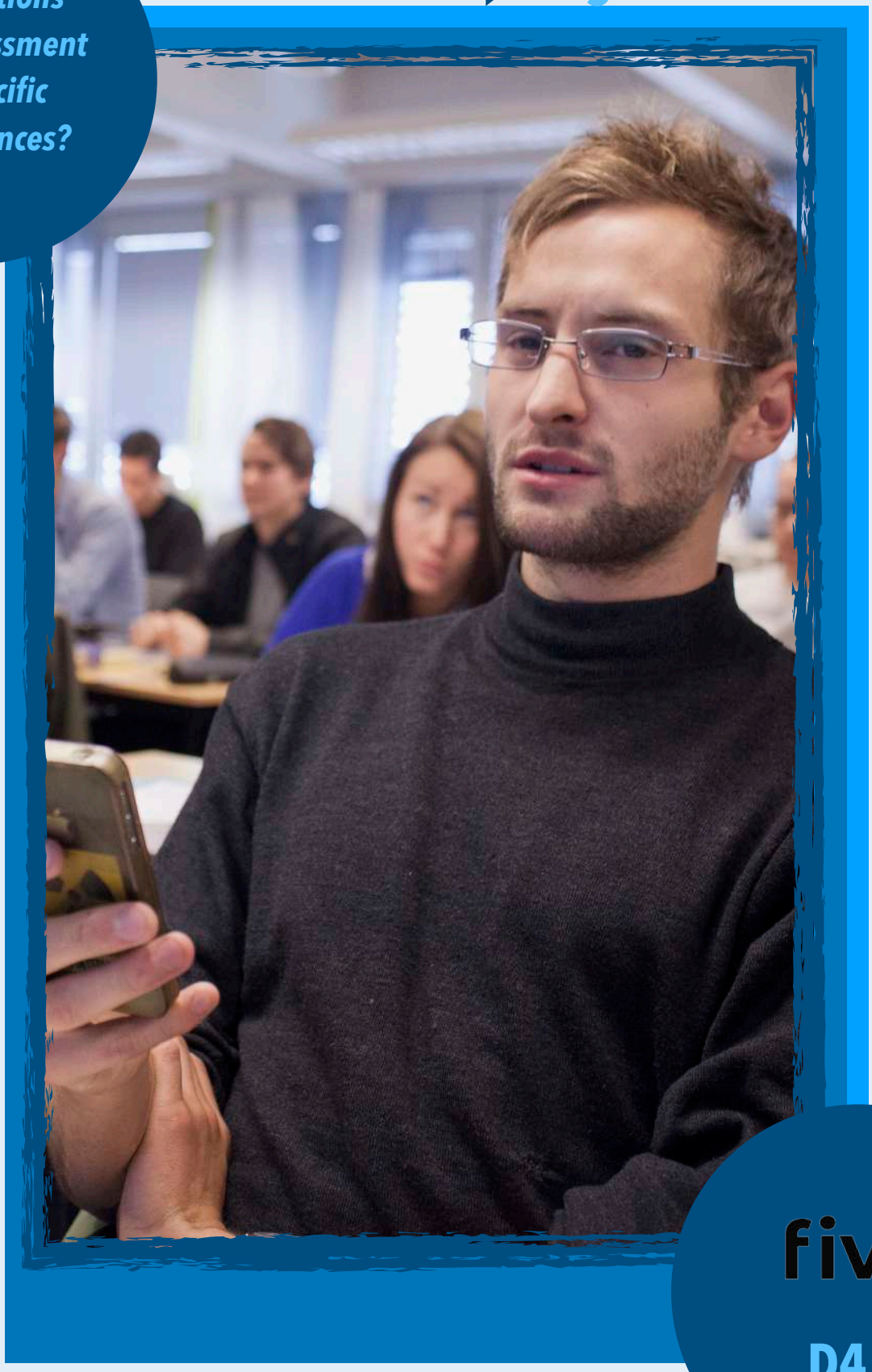
Implementation of Micro-Qualifications
Higher Education

Certifications with assessment off specific competences?



A Possibility for Innovation in Higher Education?

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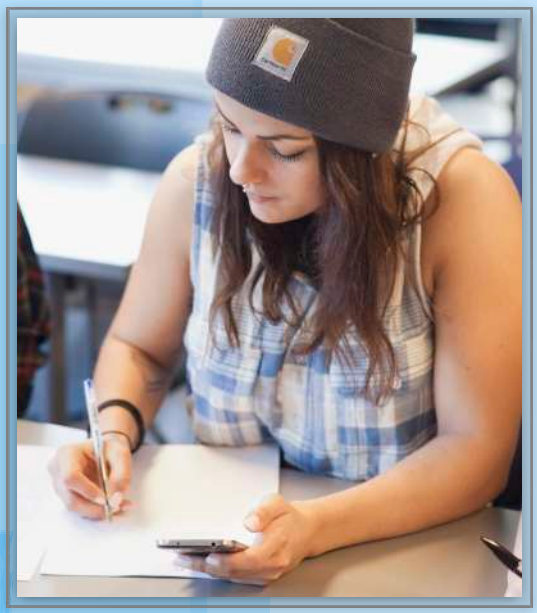
Micro-Qualifications should Increase the Relevance towards the Labour Market Needs

Micro-qualifications are an emerging and increasingly popular approach for awarding credentials in higher education.They will provide Record of Achievement diplomas based up on certifications that include assessments of specific skills and competencies. Such credentials can function independently, evolve into a larger formal International Micro-Qualification Specialization degree, or complement an existing one. Serving as formal evidence of completed learning pathways across various subjects, micro-qualifications stand out for their flexibility and innovation.

What could micro-qualifications become?

Built on digital infrastructure, e.g. like the emerging European digital wallet system solution, they are expected to be shorter in duration and more adaptable compared to traditional bachelor's or master's degrees. This makes them a versatile and forward looking option for learners, offering greater flexibility to create personalized educational pathways and learning journeys. As a result, micro-qualifications hold significant potential for reshaping how learning progression and professional development are approached by start applying and delivering micro-courses.

Micro-qualifications aim to bridge the gap between knowledge and skills, and the competences demanded by the labor market. To remain relevant, it is supposed that their validation probably must be updated regularly to reflect evolving industry needs. However, micro-qualifications also face several challenges, particularly in the areas covered by organizational and administrative barriers that can hinder their adoption and implementation.



Given the rapid pace of change in today's labor market, there is an increasing need to up-skill or re-skill both employees and students. This creates strong cases for testing, evaluating, validating and refining micro-qualifications. As these needs grow, the interest in and value of micro-qualifications are expected to rise, further establishing their role in modern education, including strengthening of work-based practices in Vocational Education and Training, and workforce development.

At the same time, however, there is still a great deal of uncertainty and challenges surrounding the introduction of micro-qualifications - even in higher education!



The role of micro-qualifications

To successfully implement mini-qualifications in higher education, two key factors are crucial:

- Operationalization turning the (abstract) concepts into measurable results, supported by technology,
- The development of a robust micro-qualifications ecosystem that is applying a structured and harmonized modular learning system, giving learners the flexibility to build a professional development portfolio that is unique to their needs.

Together, these factors can provide valuable insights into the advantages and challenges associated with integrating micro-qualifications into educational frameworks.

How can micro-qualifications be made visible to industry and their employers, higher education institutions and their staff, and the students?

Operationalization supported by technology focuses on addressing the technological challenges of implementing and retrieving micro-qualifications in a digital format. Developing a reliable and user-friendly digital platform at European level containing secure digital certifications is essential. Such a platform must be intuitive and tailored to students' needs, while at the same time support independent learning paths. Until now limited experiences on this topic exists, highlighting the need for further investigation of how to implement the practical application of micro-qualifications into education and training. Of particular interest is how it will help engaging and motivating students to complete micro-courses. Creating a digital platform for micro-qualifications will require a professional system for up-skilling and re-skilling staff in the higher education institutions.

International Micro-qualification Specializations (IMiS) should complement - and not replace - existing bachelor's and master's degree programs, and other types of National Qualifications or International Diplomas, making it crucial for the training provider institutions to stay aligned with evolving labor market demands. Additionally, micro-qualifications must adhere to higher education legislation, curricula, and assessment standards to secure their integration into the formal education systems.

The **micro-qualifications ecosystem** must focus on the organizational aspects of education, including student recruitment and collaboration with authorities and the labor market. It is supposed that the labor market will play a critical role in shaping and updating micro-qualifications in higher education, ensuring they align with industry requirements.

By involving the labor market, these programs can be tailored to provide the specific skills, competences and qualifications needed by employers and industry, making them become a valuable part of the hiring process of new staff. For instance, companies may seek candidates with specialized courses or certifications that micro-qualifications will provide.

This necessitates close collaboration between educational institutions and the labor market to develop relevant and practical specifications of relevant micro-qualification programs. However, since micro-qualifications are not yet widely recognized among employers, industry or higher education institutions, increasing their visibility is essential.

It is a significant potential for micro-qualifications to make higher education delivered training more personalized and flexible. These programs empower students to shape their own learning paths, fostering engagement by offering a sense of autonomy, and to provide measurable progress. In this way, micro-qualifications will not only meet labor market needs, but also enhance the student experience through greater independence and mastery.

This points out that micro-qualifications hold a lot of potential, where a greater degree of flexibility can stimulate and allow for more customized learning pathways.

Micro-qualifications can help fill gaps in the labour market where there is a need for specific qualifications or courses.

IMPLICATIONS



Micro-qualifications must explore several key issues, including employability, student learning, technological integration, implementation challenges, curriculum development, while addressing labor market gaps. Despite their disruptive potential, micro-qualifications still remain relatively little recognized. This highlights the importance of raising awareness and further refining the concept. Some skepticism persists, as micro-qualifications to often are compared with and perceived as less prestigious than traditional long degrees system like BSc and MSc studies.

Due to this, micro-qualifications should not be viewed as a replacement for formal degrees but as a complementary offering. While uncertainties remain regarding their introduction, scope and effectiveness, there is a clear need to pilot and test various concepts. Micro-qualifications can be designed to address specific labor market needs by providing targeted skills and qualifications, helping to bridge existing gaps in employability.

In addition, the strong interest in education driven by the desire to remain competitive in the labor market underscores the relevance of micro-qualifications. By offering flexibility and alignment with workforce demands, they can enhance the appeal and adaptability of higher education in meeting modern industrial production needs.



Because the micro-qualifications rely on a digital infrastructure, while at the same time they are shorter in length and more flexible than bachelor's and master's degrees, micro-qualifications are and should be considered as a potentially innovative approach to higher education learning progressions.

Currently, higher education institutions are not yet fully equipped to administratively support the introduction of micro-qualifications. Successfully implementing these programs requires adequate resources and a clear organizational strategy. A robust digital infrastructure is essential, since the traditional accessibility of teachers will be reduced due to an aging workforce in many European countries.

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To maximize the potential of this innovative approach to learning, it is crucial for institutions to prioritize technological and administrative advancements. By doing so, they can establish the necessary framework to support micro-qualifications effectively and integrate them seamlessly into the higher educational landscape.

The micro-qualifications could become a formal proof of a new and complete learning pathway containing different micro-course subjects and various micro-qualifications.

Unlike diplomas or licenses, which involve extensive, in-depth study at accredited institutions and programs, micro-qualifications are designed to target specific skills and achieve focused learning outcomes within a shorter time frame.



At the **University of Ljubljana**, micro-credentials are intended to complement traditional forms of learning rather than trying to replace



established lifelong learning programs. Integrated into the education system alongside formal study programs, they are not designed to lead to diplomas equivalent to undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications.

By delivering targeted, competency-based learning experiences while adhering to quality assurance standards, micro-qualifications provide a modern solution to the evolving needs of society

At the University of Ljubljana, micro-credentials foster innovative learning environments that enhance the value of traditional teaching methods. They offer a swift and adaptable response to societal needs, addressing challenges such as environmental risks, fostering inclusivity and tolerance, and preparing individuals for emerging "professions of the future."

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The aim is for micro-credential based qualifications to foster a culture of academic excellence while still supporting the modernization of full-time study programs at all levels. By incorporating problem-based learning approaches, these credentials enable the swift acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills, aligning with the University's dedication to providing quality education and addressing contemporary challenges.

The micro-qualifications are being incorporated into their education systems as a complement to study programs, providing added value to traditional degrees. However, they do not confer a degree at any level of study, even when combining multiple skills and competencies. Instead, they currently just serve as a supplementary enhancement to formal qualifications.

The micro-qualifications will be internationally transferable, as a standardized quality assurance framework, to be developed in the future in the legally regulated education sector at national and European level.



Important aspects

Until micro-qualifications are formally recognized as publicly valid documents, participants who successfully complete a small-scale learning or micro-course training leading to a micro-credentials will receive a certificate. This certificate includes all the listed mandatory elements of a micro-credential leading to micro-qualifications, as defined by the European Commission. Issued in electronic format, it serves as proof of the competencies, skills, or knowledge acquired.

Micro-qualifications is supposed to establish and apply a standardized quality assurance framework for regulated training at both national and European levels.

The micro-qualifications are designed for individuals of all ages who wish to acquire new skills, knowledge, or competencies. The specific skills and knowledge required to enroll in these small-scale learning and training courses will be outlined in the corresponding new programs at the university in Ljubljana.

The planned duration of small-scale learning and training in micro-courses will vary, ranging from a few days to a few months.
specific schedule for each micro-qualification course will be detailed in its announcement of new training programs.

The University of Ljubljana has established its own quality assurance system based on a feedback loops. This system includes clear processes for setting objectives and priorities, planning actions and activities, executing those activities, and monitoring and evaluating their implementation. Impact evaluation is also integrated into the process, providing essential input for the next planning cycle.

Expand your horizons, shape your future.

At the University of Ljubljana, micro-qualifications open the phat to new and innovative learning environments. It will represent a particular added value compared to established forms of teaching. They are forms of response to the needs of society and thus an effective answer to the specific challenges of development management like e.g. the European Green Deal and European Digital Agenda.

Tackling general development issues, intergenerational cooperation and managing the future requires citizens with new skills and competences. The University of Ljubljana micro-qualifications serve as a validation of high-quality learning, excellence in knowledge transfer, and the acquisition of competencies at a trusted institution. It plays a key role in addressing the challenges of our time and shaping the professions of the future.

The issue and content of the micro-evidences are gathered in a certificate of completed short-term education and training for the micro-certificate issued by University of Ljubljana in accordance with CGP at the university.

The micro-certificate will contains the following information:

- UL logo,
- Name and surname of the participant,
- Date of birth,
- The name of the shorter education and training for the micro-certificate,
- The number of ECTS achieved,
- Achieved SOK and EOK level,
- Achieved learning outcomes,
- Form of cooperation and assessment,
- Date of confirmation of shorter education and training for the micro-certificate and indication of the authority that approved it,
- The type of quality assurance on which the micro-proof is based,
- Date of issue,
- The issuing country,
- Signature of the UL rector.

The micro-certificate is issued in electronic form.



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