Version Final - 22.02.2026
Project number: 101132832

ERASMUS-EDU-2023-PI-FORWARD-LOT2

Innovative VET Scalable Micro-Credential Solutions that Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate and Evaluate

D7.2

Developing transparent standards for educational quality

1. Building trust in Micro-Courses paired with Micro-Credentials through transparent quality standards
2. Quality assurance inn education and training explained
3. Why establishing a quality assurance process for Micro-courses paired with MCs?
4. Who is benefitting from the quality assurance of an educational process?
5. How are quality assurance processes designed and implemented?
6. Institutional nimbleness and quality assurance in MCs compared to other credentials
7. Evaluating and assessing the full life cycle of the MCs
8. The evaluation and quality assurance phase
9. Focusing on the stakeholder information needs and what they would like to know
10. Foundational guideline principles for quality assurance of education
11. Recommendations for establishing a quality assurance framework for MCs
12. The principles guiding the development of quality assurance frameworks
13. The quality assurance procedures for program approval and review framework

https://www.stimuli2.no/project/five

Contributors: ELS

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Micro-Courses & Micro-Credentials

Developing transparent standards

Micro-Courses - Small lessons with big impact



five

D7.2

Guideline for developing transparent standards for educational quality.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Building trust in Micro-Courses paired with Micro-Credentials through transparent quality standards

For Micro-Credentials (MCs) to hold real and lasting value, they must be trusted by prospective learners, employers, the wider community, other educational institutions and accrediting bodies or governments. This trust is established not through branding alone, but through the consistent application of transparent, well-defined standards of quality. Clear articulation of learning outcomes, assessment methods and workload expectations allow stakeholders to understand precisely what a credential represents. It describes what a learner is capable of upon completion. When standards are publicly available and aligned with recognised frameworks, qualifications or industry benchmarks, they become easier to interpret, compare and validate across contexts.

Transparency must both include and extend assessment integrity and verification. This involves rigorous, authentic assessments that demonstrably measure stated competences and combined with secure credentialing. It should show clear evidence of learner achievement and traceable issuer information in order to reinforce confidence among employers and institutions. Involving external stakeholders, such as industry partners, professional bodies or independent reviewers in the design and review of MCs will further strengthens credibility and relevance. Finally, last but not least will ongoing quality assurance processes, including regular evaluation, learner feedback and continuous improvement, signal accountability and commitment to high standards. Together, these practices create a shared understanding of quality that transforms MCs from isolated learning artefacts into trusted, portable signals of knowledge, skills and competences.

Quality assurance inn education and training explained

Quality assurance is a comprehensive and systematic approach that encompasses the policies, processes, standards and procedures an educational provider institution implements to ensure the quality and effectiveness of its training programs. It involves the continuous planning, monitoring, evaluation and improvement of educational and operational activities. Those should verify that they meet or exceed established internal and external standards. Through quality assurance, institutions promote consistency, accountability and continuous improvement. This helps ensuring that educational programs remain relevant, effective and aligned with stakeholder expectations, regulatory requirements and best practices. It is a comprehensive set of evaluation activities that applies across multiple levels, including program approval, ongoing program review and broader organisational review. Through systematic assessment and evidence-based judgment, it ensures that standards are met and continuously improved. The overarching aim of this activity is to sustain and enhance excellence in educational program offerings. This is done by promoting quality, relevance, effectiveness and alignment with institutional goals and stakeholder expectations.

Quality assurance serves as a cornerstone for protecting and enhancing the institution's reputation among learners, peer institutions, employers and other key stakeholders. It is committing to a clearly defined and transparent set of quality criteria. Through this an educational institution demonstrate accountability, consistency and integrity across all of its educational and professional offerings. These standards ensure that educational programs, services and credentials meet established expectations. They continually strive to exceed them through regular review and improvement. In doing so, quality assurance builds trust and confidence in the institution's outcomes. It signals the reliability and relevance of its qualifications and reinforces its standing as a credible and respected provider of education and training. The quality assurance process is deliberately formal and structured, ensuring consistency, rigor and accountability at every stage. The outcomes are made public, allowing stakeholders to examine decisions, understand their rationale and assess their implications. By operating transparently and adhering to clear standards, the process strengthens credibility and fosters confidence. This will ultimately help to build and sustain trust in an educational institution's offerings and its commitment to fairness and quality.







Why establish a quality assurance process for Micro-Courses paired with MCs?

There are many compelling reasons to develop and implement a robust quality assurance framework for micro-courses paired with MCs. Such a framework helps ensure consistency, credibility and relevance across short micro-learning experiences. Those will often be delivered at scale and across diverse platforms. By clearly defining standards for learning outcomes, assessment methods, instructional design and credentialing criteria, quality assurance will build trust among learners, employers and educational stakeholders. It will support alignment with workforce needs, ensuring that MCs genuinely reflect validated, job-relevant skills rather than fragmented or superficial learning. Additionally, a quality assurance framework promotes continuous improvement by providing mechanisms for evaluation, feedback and revision. This is enabling institutions to adapt quickly to emerging skills and technologies while maintaining educational and professional integrity. Ultimately, quality assurance safeguards the value of micro-courses paired with MCs. This is enhancing learner confidence, employer recognition and the long-term sustainability of these flexible learning pathways.

At its core, quality assurance safeguards the integrity and effectiveness of MC programs by ensuring that learners receive high-quality, relevant training that genuinely prepares them for the workplace. It establishes clear standards for curriculum design, instructional delivery, assessment and continuous improvement. This is helping to align the learning outcome descriptions with real industry needs. Through consistent evaluation and oversight, quality assurance helps build trust among learners, employers and institutions alike. This is ensuring that MCs are not only efficient and accessible, but also credible, rigorous and capable of equipping learners with practical job-ready skills.

Indeed, quality assurance plays a vital role in ensuring consistency across all MC offerings within an institution. It helps establishing clear standards for curriculum design, learning outcomes, assessment methods and delivery formats. This includes quality assurance frameworks help aligning diverse MCs with a shared educational provider institutional vision and level of rigour. This consistency ensures that learners, employers and external partners can trust that each MC regardless of department or discipline. The MCs should meet comparable expectations for the educational integrity, workload and demonstrated competence. In turn, a coherent and reliable MC portfolio strengthens the institution's reputation. It helps supporting credit recognition or stacking pathways, while enhancing the overall value of MCs in the labour market.

Micro-courses, when paired with clearly defined MCs, should be designed, formally approved and regularly reviewed through a consistent institutional process. This process should align with existing post-secondary educational standards and quality assurance frameworks. This includes the institutional policies and apply equally to both credit and non-credit offerings. Establishing such alignment ensures educational rigour, transparency and consistency across programs, while at the same time supporting coherence with broader credentialing pathways. Ongoing review mechanisms should assess relevance, learning outcomes and labour market alignment to ensure that micro-courses and MCs maintain their value over time. Collectively, these measures help ensure that learners gain meaningful, recognisable credentials that effectively support their educational advancement and employment objectives.

All credit-based credentials should be subject to systematic and ongoing review as an integral component of the institution's internal quality assurance framework. These reviews should be conducted on a regular, clearly defined cycle. They must be designed to evaluate program relevance, educational rigour, learning outcomes and alignment with institutional standards and external expectations. The review process should incorporate evidence-based analysis. This is including student performance data, completion and progression rates, stakeholder feedback and labour market or disciplinary developments where applicable. Findings from these reviews should inform continuous improvement efforts, support accountability and ensure that credit-based credentials consistently maintain high standards of program quality and educational effectiveness.

Who is benefitting from the quality assurance of an educational process?

Quality assurance serves a wide range of stakeholders, each of whom values its presence for different but complementary reasons. For educational institutions themselves, quality assurance provides a structured framework to evaluate performance. It helps maintaining operational educational standards that is supported with continuous improvement. An educational organization will use this to identify strengths and weaknesses, ensure consistency in processes and build a culture of accountability and evidence-based decision-making.

For students, clients, or end users, quality assurance offers confidence that the services or education they receive meet established standards and are aligned with their expectations. It signals reliability, fairness and a commitment to delivering meaningful outcomes. Employers and external stakeholder partners will meanwhile rely on quality assurance to trust the credibility of qualifications, products or services. They are knowing they are produced through rigorous and transparent processes.

Regulatory bodies and funders also value quality assurance as a mechanism for oversight and stewardship. It enables them to verify compliance with policies, justify the allocation of resources and ensure that public or private investments lead to demonstrable value. Taken together, these perspectives highlight that quality assurance is not a single-purpose activity. Rather it is a shared system that balances accountability, improvement and trust across all stakeholders involved.

Quality education benefits everyone.
Ensuring excellence for every learner.



five explain

For learners, an institution's commitment to quality assurance provides essential peace of mind. It signals that programs, teaching methods and assessment practices are regularly reviewed and held to recognised standards. It is reducing uncertainty about the value of the education they receive. Quality assurance reassures learners that their time, effort and financial investment are protected. That qualifications will be credible and widely recognised and that support systems are in place to help them succeed. Ultimately, it helps building trust and confidence. It is allowing learners to focus fully on their studies and long-term goals rather than worrying about the reliability or legitimacy of the institution. An institution that implements a robust quality assurance process for its MC programs clearly signals a strong commitment to educational coherence, educational rigour and long-term value. Such a process ensures that individual MCs are thoughtfully designed, aligned with clear learning outcomes and meaningfully connected to broader skill frameworks or industry needs. It will demonstrate that the institution prioritises consistency in standards, assessment integrity and learner experience. This is done systematically rather than treating MCs as isolated or ad hoc offerings. By embedding quality assurance into the development and review of these programs, the institution reinforces the credibility of its MCs. This is done by building trust with learners and employers and affirms that these offerings carry genuine educational and professional worth.

For other institutions that may receive the learner as they continue their educational journey, quality assurance serves as a critical source of transparent and reliable information about the educational standards upheld by the institution. It communicates the rigour, consistence and credibility of the institution's programs. This includes the curricula and assessment practices, enabling receiving institutions to make informed decisions regarding credit transfer, admissions and educational standing. By clearly articulating the benchmarks and expectations applied across all offerings, quality assurance helps ensure continuity in learning. It supports mutual recognition of qualifications and fosters trust and collaboration within the broader education system. It offers clear and credible reassurance that any program delivered by the institution is thoughtfully designed, rigorously evaluated and aligned with high educational and professional standards. This is giving prospective participants confidence in the quality, relevance and long-term value of their educational investment.

Quality assurance gives learners confidence that their education meets recognized standards through regular review of programs, teaching and assessment. It is reducing uncertainty about the value of their learning experiences.



Sitat

For employers, community and professional organisations including government agencies or accrediting bodies, quality assurance serves as a clear mechanism for transparency. It is demonstrating what an institution prioritises, values and upholds within its educational and training programs. It helps external stakeholders understand the standards guiding curriculum design, learning outcome descriptions, assessment practices and the continuous improvement efforts. At the same time it is reinforcing accountability and trust by making institutional commitments explicit and visible.

This serves as a deliberate mechanism for building confidence in the institution's credentials by clearly demonstrating its legitimacy, expertise and reliability. By making standards, qualifications and affiliations transparent, it reassures stakeholders that an educational institution meets recognised benchmarks of quality and accountability. This clarity helps reduce uncertainty, reinforces credibility and helps fostering long-term trust among students, partners, regulators and the broader public.

An educational institution that establishes a robust quality assurance process sends a clear and deliberate signal that it is committed to maintaining high standards in its educational offerings. By systematically monitoring, evaluating and improving the design and delivery of its MCs, the institution demonstrates that quality is not incidental but integral to its mission. This commitment helps ensure consistency, relevance and credibility across programmes. This in turn builds trust among learners, employers and other stakeholders. In this way, quality assurance functions not only as a mechanism to protect learners, but also as a strategic tool for the institution itself. It is safeguarding its reputation and reinforcing its standing as a provider of excellent, credible and valuable MCs.

Demonstrating Standards.
Delivering Confidence.

Transparent Education.
Trusted Talent



While all stakeholders recognise the importance of quality assurance in MCs, their interpretations of what constitutes quality will often differ:

- Learners will prioritise clear learning outcomes, employer recognition and practical relevance to career advancement.
- On the other hand, employers will focus on the credibility of the issuing institution, the rigour of assessment and the alignment of competences with workforce needs.
- Educational providers, in contrast, may emphasise sound instructional design, educational standards and consistency with existing qualification frameworks.
- Policymakers and accreditation bodies will view quality through the lens of transparency, comparability and accountability across systems.

As a result, MC quality assurance must balance these diverse perspectives, ensuring that credentials are trustworthy, meaningful and fit for purpose for all stakeholders involved. Key performance indicators for micro-courses paired with MC quality across different stakeholder groups include:

- **Learners** consistently identify a clear set of quality markers when evaluating educational programs. Foremost among these is affordability, as programs must represent a realistic financial investment with a strong return of investment. Learners also value short-term, achievable program lengths that allow them to balance education with work and personal responsibilities while delivering timely outcomes. Central to their expectations is the ability to achieve tangible professional growth whether that means progressing in their current career, upskilling or retooling existing competences. This should help changing career trajectories or securing a new or different job. Closely tied to this is the expectation of improved earning potential with higher wages serving as a concrete indicator of program value.

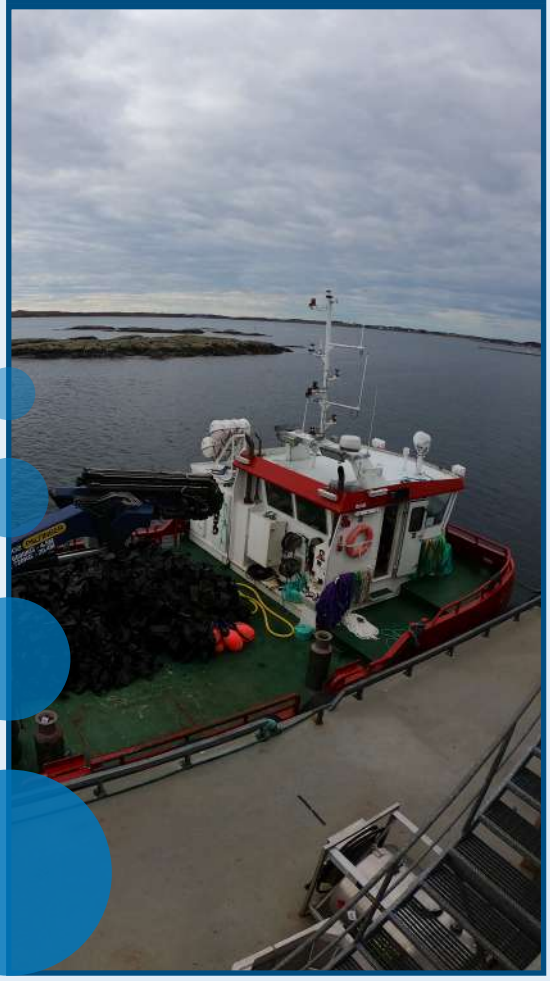
  Equally important is the practical application of learning into work-based frameworks. Learners want a clear understanding of how newly acquired skills translate to real-world contexts, supported by assessments that reflect authentic workplace tasks and environments. They place high value on programs whose target skills are recognised and valued by employers. This is ensuring that credentials carry credibility and relevance in the labour market. Beyond immediate employment outcomes, learners seek greater confidence in their chosen career path and future prospects. This includes renewed confidence to continue engaging in post-secondary education over time. Underpinning all of these factors is the expectation of authentic alignment between learning objectives, instructional activities and measurable outcomes. This helps assuring learners that what is taught, practiced and assessed directly supports their professional and personal goals.

- **Employers** evaluate the quality and effectiveness of workforce initiatives by examining how well they align with real-world business needs and long-term talent strategies. High-quality programs are those that directly address specific workplace demands by preparing individuals for industry-recognised job roles and clearly defined job descriptions that are currently in demand. These initiatives should contribute to the recruitment of a skilled and competence job-ready workforce. It is ensuring that candidates possess the technical competencies, transferable skills and competences and professional behaviours required to perform successfully from day one.

  In addition, employers place strong emphasis on the integration of a clear diversity, equity and inclusion strategy within recruitment practices. This includes broadening access to opportunities and reducing barriers for underrepresented groups. It includes building inclusive talent pipelines that reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. Quality is measured by an organisation's ability to retain talent through continuous learning opportunities. This is including reskilling and upskilling current employees to adapt to evolving technologies, processes and market needs.

  Finally, employers assess whether workforce efforts support clear and sustainable career pathways. This involves providing structured progression opportunities that enable individuals to advance within an organization or industry over time. It is aligning the individual career growth with organisational goals. Together, these criteria ensure that workforce strategies not only meet immediate hiring needs, but also support long-term business resilience and employee success.





- **Instructors and educational providers** evaluate the quality of an educational program through a comprehensive set of indicators that reflect both educational effectiveness and workforce relevance. A strong program actively engages learners through meaningful instruction, supportive learning environments and opportunities for participation that motivate students to persist. Faculty also look for clear evidence of learning, demonstrated through measurable gains in knowledge, skills and competences over time. This learning is reinforced by authentic assessments evaluations that mirror real-world tasks and challenges. They are allowing learners to apply what they have learned in practical, relevant contexts.

Equally important are indicators related to student progress and outcomes. High learner retention and a strong program completion rate signal that students are supported and find value in the program. Quality programs provide clear on-ramps to additional educational opportunities, such as advanced credentials or degree pathways. They include off-ramps to employment, enabling learners to transition smoothly into the workforce when they are ready. Programs that offer stackable educational and career pathways will allow learners to build credentials incrementally. They will further support lifelong and life-wide learning and career mobility.

Educational providers further assess whether the curriculum is aligned with employment needs, ensuring that what is taught matches current and emerging industry demands. This alignment contributes directly to career readiness, equipping learners with not only technical skills but also transferable skills such as communication, problem-solving and professionalism. Finally, strong programs demonstrate active industry engagement. They are including meaningful involvement from an advisory committee that provides guidance, validates curriculum relevance and helps keep the program responsive to workforce trends. Together, these indicators provide a holistic picture of a program's quality, impact and long-term value to learners and employers alike.

Support That Retains. Pathways That Advance. From Enrollment to Achievement.

- **Administrators** responsible for overseeing MCs at their institutions typically evaluate programs through a comprehensive set of educational, operational and workforce-aligned criteria. Central to their assessment is whether an MC clearly meets a specific workforce development need and aligns with current or emerging labour market demands. Equally important is learner success, both during the program and after completion, measured by indicators such as enrolment demand, retention once learners register and overall completion rates. Administrators will examine the program's financial sustainability, including revenues generated and return on investment. They will evaluate alongside the effectiveness of marketing efforts, particularly the program's digital visibility and discoverability to prospective learners.

  Beyond metrics of participation and revenue, administrators consider the broader value and impact of the credential. This includes the portability of the MC for learners across employers or industries, its perceived and demonstrated value to learners and validation or recognition by employers. Equity and access are also key considerations, with attention given to whether the program creates meaningful opportunities for diverse learners and supports community engagement. Finally, administrators assess institutional responsibilities and educational quality by ensuring compliance with accessibility best practices, policies and legislation. This includes evaluating the overall quality of the learning experience, including instructional effectiveness, curriculum design and learning materials.

- An accreditor or government agency responsible for overseeing MCs will evaluate program success using a comprehensive set of indicators that collectively demonstrate quality, relevance and value. Key among these is evidence of robust quality assurance processes. This is including clearly defined standards, regular program review cycles, mechanisms for stakeholder feedback and documented continuous improvement practices. Equally important is curricular alignment, ensuring that learning outcomes, competences, assessments and instructional activities are coherently mapped and aligned with industry needs and credential objectives.

  Agencies will closely examine the employability of graduates, such as job placement rates, career advancement, employer satisfaction, or demonstrated workplace competencies. Those will be indicators of the credential's labour market relevance. Transparency in tuition, fees and total learner costs is another critical factor. This is requiring that institutions clearly communicate financial obligations, expected time to completion and any additional expenses, whereby learners will use this to make informed decisions. Finally, return on investment for learners including measurable wage gains, career mobility, reduced time to employment, or other economic and professional benefits relative to program cost, serves as central measures of whether the MC delivers tangible value. Together, these indicators provide accreditors and government agencies with a holistic framework for assessing the effectiveness, credibility and sustainability of MC programs.

Institutions should take a holistic, inclusive approach when developing quality assurance standards for MC programs by deliberately considering the perspectives and needs of all relevant stakeholders. This includes

- learners who seek credentials that are credible, transparent and aligned with their career goals,
- employers who value demonstrable, workforce-relevant skills and clear signals of competency,
- educational providers and instructional designers who ensure educational rigour, pedagogical soundness and alignment with institutional learning outcomes,
- external partners such as accreditation bodies, professional associations and industry groups, who contribute benchmarks, recognition and broader legitimacy.

By integrating these diverse viewpoints into the design and evaluation of quality assurance frameworks, institutions will create MC programs that are trustworthy, relevant, adaptable and responsive to both educational and labour market demands.



How are quality assurance processes designed and implemented?

Each institution establishes its own policies and procedures to assure the quality and integrity of its MC offerings. While these frameworks share a common goal of maintaining educational and operational standards, their design and implementation will vary considerably across institutions. Differences are shaped by the specific institutional context, including mission, strategic priorities and target learners. They will be affected by internal governance structures and decision-making processes. Existing educational quality assurance mechanisms, credentialing systems and technological infrastructures will play a significant role in determining how MCs are developed, reviewed, delivered and evaluated. As a result, quality assurance approaches are not uniform but are intentionally adapted to align MCs with each institution's broader educational objectives and capabilities.

Institutional nimbleness and quality assurance in MCs compared to other credentials:

It may be the case that an educational provider institution's existing quality assurance processes are sufficiently robust and flexible to be extended to the review and approval of MCs. Rather than creating an entirely new governance framework, educational institutions will often adapt established policies, committees and evaluation mechanisms to ensure that MCs meet appropriate educational professional and regulatory standards. This will include using current processes for curriculum design, learning outcomes alignment, assessment validation and periodic review. It includes making targeted adjustments to account for the shorter duration, specific skill focus and industry alignment that typically characterise MCs. Leveraging existing quality assurance structures will help maintain consistency, reduce administrative burden and ensure that MCs are recognised as credible. This will be understood as high-quality offerings within the institution's broader educational portfolio.

MCs are typically designed and brought to market quickly, enabling institutions and training providers to respond effectively to rapidly evolving workplace demands. This accelerated development cycle allows programs to address emerging skills gaps, new technologies and changing industry standards in a timely manner. In many cases MCs will be launched to capitalise on time-limited funding opportunities, policy initiatives or employer partnerships. This should further encourage agile design, streamlined approval processes and focused learning outcomes aligned with immediate workforce needs.

In recognition of the growing need for institutional nimbleness, institutions will have established rigorous yet expedited review and approval pathways for new MCs. These streamlined processes are designed to maintain educational quality and integrity while significantly reducing the time required to move from concept to implementation. By shortening approval timelines and clarifying governance responsibilities, institutions will respond more effectively to rapidly evolving workforce demands, emerging technologies and learner needs. Such pathways often balance flexibility with oversight, enabling innovation without sacrificing standards. They are positioning institutions to remain competitive and relevant in a fast-changing educational landscape.



Institutional nimbleness provides agile approval with trusted quality.

five explain

Many institutions maintain distinct quality assurance frameworks for reviewing credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing programs. These parallel processes are often shaped by differing regulatory requirements, funding models, learner populations and intended outcomes.

- Credit-bearing programs typically follow formal educational governance structures, accreditation standards and cyclical program review timelines.
- Non-credit-bearing offerings may be evaluated through more flexible or market-responsive mechanisms focused on workforce relevance, learner satisfaction and short-term outcomes.

As a result, oversight responsibilities, documentation requirements and performance indicators will vary significantly between the two streams. Although this separation allows institutions to tailor review practices to the unique characteristics of each program type, it will in addition create inconsistencies in standards, duplication of effort. This will lead to missed opportunities for integrated planning and continuous improvement across the full portfolio of educational offerings.

A teacher should critically reflect on whether the two types of MCs will or should be assessed using the same processes. This decision is rarely universal and will depend on several contextual factors, including the purpose of each MC, the nature of the learning outcomes and the level of evidence required to demonstrate achievement. In many cases, one type of MC will emphasise practical, skills-based performance. Another will focus more on theoretical understanding or professional reflection, making a single assessment approach inappropriate. Additionally, an institution's existing assessment frameworks, digital platforms, quality assurance requirements and accreditation policies will strongly influence what is feasible. Teachers should therefore consider how well current systems will support differentiation in assessment methods, feedback mechanisms and validation processes. This includes evaluating whether adaptations or parallel approaches are necessary to ensure that each MC is assessed in a way that is both rigorous and fit for purpose.

An outcome focused approach:

MCs represent a fundamentally different category of learning provision compared to traditional macro-qualifications within an educational institution's existing suite of credentials. They are typically shorter in duration, more targeted in scope and often designed to respond rapidly to evolving industry, professional or community needs. As a result, the assumptions, standards and approval mechanisms that underpin conventional degrees, diplomas, or certificates will not be fully appropriate for MCs.

To ensure educational integrity, relevance and credibility, MCs therefore require distinct and fit-for-purpose quality assurance processes. These processes should account for differences in learning outcomes, assessment methods, volume of learning, modes of delivery and the involvement of external stakeholders such as industry partners. Quality assurance frameworks for MCs must be sufficiently flexible to support timely development and innovation, while still maintaining clear standards for curriculum design, assessment validity, learner support and credentialing. Establishing dedicated quality assurance arrangements helps ensure that MCs are both robust and trusted. This is happening without constraining them within systems designed for fundamentally different types of qualifications.

Indeed, a recurring theme across several MC quality frameworks is the emphasis on clearly defined and demonstrable learning outcomes. Rather than prioritising inputs such as contact hours, content coverage or delivery mode, these frameworks consistently highlight what learners are expected to know, understand and be able to do upon completion. The learning outcomes serve as the primary anchor for quality assurance, guiding the design of learning activities, assessment strategies and credential validation processes. By foregrounding outcomes, MCs will better signal their value to learners, employers and other stakeholders. This will ensure alignment with workforce and societal needs and support transparency, comparability and trust across diverse educational contexts.

This stands in clear contrast to the way quality has traditionally been assessed in wider education credentials, where the emphasis is placed primarily on inputs rather than outcomes. Conventional measures of quality tend to focus on factors such as admission selectivity, instructional hours, curriculum content, educational provider qualifications and institutional resources. While these input-based indicators offer a sense of educational rigour and prestige, they provide only indirect evidence of what learners actually know or will do upon completion. By prioritising inputs, traditional credentialing often assumes that high-quality conditions will naturally lead to meaningful learning. This is in contrast to directly evaluating demonstrated competences or real-world performance.

Program design encompassing clearly articulated learning outcomes, coherent assessment strategies and purposeful learning activities is a foundational indicator of degree quality. High-quality programs define what graduates should know and be able to do, aligning assessments to validly and reliably measure those outcomes. They should implement learning activities that progressively build the required knowledge, skills and competences. When these elements are intentionally aligned, students experience a transparent and cohesive learning journey. This includes expectations that are clear, feedback that is meaningful and instruction that are directly connected to demonstrable achievement. Strong program design will support consistency across courses, promotes educational rigour and enables continuous improvement. This will be done through evidence-based evaluation, thereby ensuring that the degree delivers both educational value and credibility.

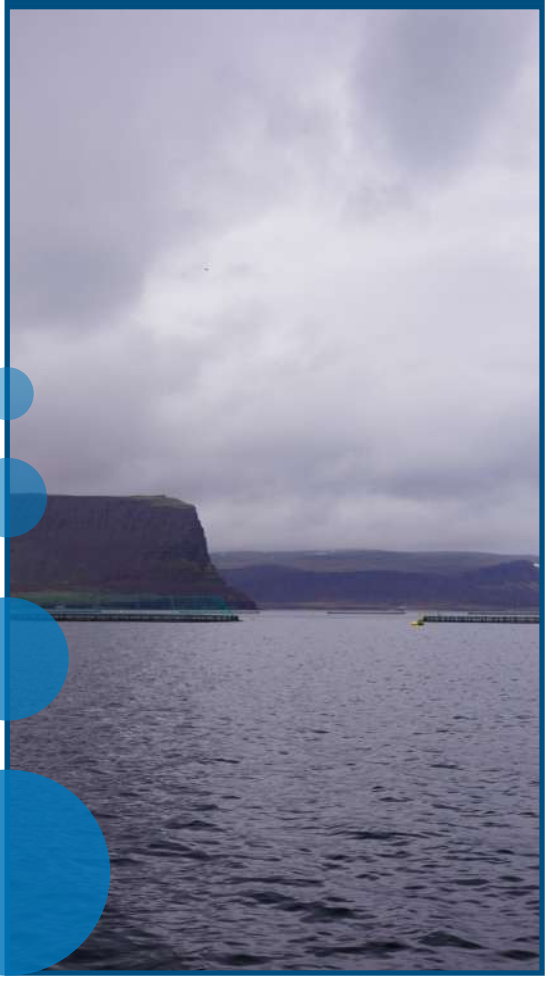




This input will function as a meaningful indicator of quality for MCs. Beyond its immediate purpose, it provides a signal that helps distinguish well-designed, credible offerings from those of lower rigour or relevance. When applied consistently, it will support transparency, comparability and trust. This is achieved by giving learners, employers and institutions greater confidence that an MC meets defined standards and delivers genuine value.

Given the strong work-alignment focus of MCs, their quality is often best evaluated through the outcomes rather than inputs. Traditional measures such as curriculum design, instructional hours or faculty credentials, while still relevant, provide only partial insight into whether an MC achieves its primary purpose. That is enabling learners to acquire skills that translate directly into workplace value. Outcome-oriented indicators such as learner completion rates, demonstrated competency attainment, employment or advancement outcomes, employer recognition and applicability of skills on the job offer more meaningful evidence of program effectiveness. By prioritising results, evaluators will better assess whether an MC delivers tangible benefits to learners and employers, remains responsive to labour market needs. They should fulfill the promise as a flexible, skills-focused alternative to more traditional educational pathways.





For example, an evaluation could consider whether graduates were able to secure relevant employment after earning the MC. This includes how effectively the credential supported their entry or advancement in the workforce. It should examine employer perspectives, including whether employers were satisfied with graduates demonstrated competences, skills and knowledge. This should include the overall job readiness. In addition, the evaluation should assess the broader recognition of the MC. This address whether it was accepted by other educational or training institutions as a valid foundation for further study, advanced credentials or credits toward additional qualifications.

Evaluating and assessing the full life cycle of the MCs:
The quality of an MC is determined by the consistent application of good practices and the fulfillment of clearly defined quality standards throughout its entire lifecycle. This includes every stage of the process from initial needs analysis and learning design to development, delivery, assessment and ongoing review. High-quality MCs are built on well-articulated learning outcomes aligned with relevant industry, professional or educational standards. This includes how to employ sound instructional design principles to ensure accessibility, inclusivity and learner engagement. Robust assessment methods are used to validly and reliably demonstrate the achievement of competences. Included are transparent criteria that support trust and recognition among learners, employers and institutions. Additionally, effective implementation involves qualified instructors, appropriate learning technologies and learner support mechanisms. Continuous monitoring, evaluation and improvement processes further ensure that the MC remains current, credible and responsive to evolving learner and workforce needs.

For example, an MC may be thoughtfully structured and grounded in sound learning design principles, incorporating clear outcomes, engaging activities and appropriate assessments. However, if it is developed without a thorough needs assessment or environmental scan, its overall quality will still be limited. Failing to systematically examine learner needs, labour market demands, or industry expectations will result in a credential that, while pedagogically strong, still does not address a genuine skills gap or respond to real-world contexts. In such cases, the MC will offer little practical value to learners seeking employability or career advancement. It may be overlooked by employers who do not see its relevance. High-quality MCs therefore require not only effective instructional design but also clear alignment with demonstrated learner and employer needs.

> Accelerating learning, while preserving quality.

The quality of an MC will be assessed through a set of indicators that align with each stage of its lifecycle, from design and development to delivery, recognition and long-term impact. Because an MC evolves over time, no single data source is sufficient to judge its quality. Instead, different forms of evidence provide insight at different points. Accordingly, quality assessment should consider how well the MC is conceived. This could for example address the clarity of learning outcomes, alignment with industry or educational standards and appropriateness of assessment methods. How effectively those are implemented including learner engagement, completion rates, instructional quality and assessment validity. They must look into how they perform after issuance, such as learner satisfaction, employer recognition, portability and demonstrated learner outcomes. By systematically examining these indicators across the full lifecycle, stakeholders will form a more comprehensive and reliable understanding of an MCs overall quality, relevance and value.

The analysing phase:

During the analysis phase of program development encompassing ideation, team formation and feasibility assessment, a high-quality program will be grounded in a comprehensive and systematic review of key strategic, operational and market-based factors. This phase begins by examining the degree to which the proposed program aligns with the institutions or educational providers mission, vision and strategic goals. This is help ensuring that the initiative meaningfully advances organisational priorities. Equally important is an assessment of institutional capacity, including the availability and expertise of personnel, financial sustainability, infrastructure readiness and the potential impact of competing demands on existing programs and resources.

A thorough feasibility analysis could then conduct incorporating a needs assessment and environmental scan to confirm there is a clearly defined demand and viable market for the program. This is complemented by a SWOT analysis evaluating strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This should be used to provide a balanced understanding of both internal capabilities and external conditions that may influence program success. In addition, an analysis of the relevant skills gap should be undertaken to ensure the program targets demonstrable and validated learner or workforce needs. This should be done rather than relying on assumptions that could reduce its relevance or effectiveness. Finally, the analysis phase includes an assessment of the technology requirements necessary to deliver the program effectively. This must include instructional platforms, specialised software and support systems. This should help ensuring that technological considerations are fully integrated into program planning from the outset.

The designing and developing phase:

During the design and development phases, a robust quality program should systematically monitor the extent and effectiveness of stakeholder involvement, engagement and buy-in. This includes ensuring that key stakeholders such as institutional leadership, educational provider, students, employers and industry partners are meaningfully involved throughout the process. They should have opportunities to provide input, feedback and validation at critical stages. Equally important is the careful monitoring of contributions from both the institution and employers to the overall program design. This is including the development of assessments, learning outcomes and performance standards. Active collaboration between these parties helps ensure that the program is educational sound and aligned with institutional goals. It must be responsive to current and emerging workforce needs, thereby strengthening the relevance, credibility and overall quality of the program.



The launching and implementation phase:

After the program has been launched and fully implemented, quality will be assessed through a set of integrated performance and impact indicators that reflect both operational effectiveness and learner value. One key measure is time-to-market defined as the period from initial ideation to the program's availability to learners, which serves as an indicator of the institution's responsiveness, agility and internal efficiency. Closely related is the identification and effective use of a minimally viable product approach, demonstrating the program's ability to prioritise and deliver core learning outcomes quickly while allowing for iterative improvement based on feedback and demand.

Program quality should be evaluated through marketing performance and learner demand, including the number of marketing leads generated, the effectiveness of follow-through on those leads and the resulting conversion into enrollments. These metrics provide insight into the clarity of the program's value proposition, the effectiveness of outreach strategies and the program's resonance with its intended audience.

Equally important is the alignment of the program with industry needs and employment opportunities, ensuring that curriculum content, competencies and learning outcomes are directly relevant to current and emerging workforce demands. Finally, quality is reflected in the transparency, validation, recognition and reward of learner skills and knowledge. This should include clear articulation of competences gained, credible assessment and validation mechanisms and recognition by employers or industry partners. It must address the tangible benefits for learners such as career advancement, employability or professional recognition. Together, these measures provide a comprehensive view of program quality from design and delivery through market relevance and learner impact.

The evaluation and quality assurance phase:

At the evaluation stage, program quality will be assessed through a comprehensive set of qualitative and quantitative indicators that capture learner experience, outcomes and broader market impact. These include systematic surveys of learners' expectations, experiences, perspectives and perceived outcomes. This should provide insight into satisfaction, relevance and areas for improvement. Learner completion rates serve as a key measure of engagement and program design effectiveness. Post-completion outcomes such as average increases in pay, job placement rates within the relevant field and the number of learners who receive promotions offer concrete evidence of the MCs value in the labour market. Financial sustainability is reflected in the revenues generated by the program, helping to determine scalability and long-term viability. Additional indicators include how and where learners share their MCs, such as for instance the visibility and uptake of digital badges on professional platforms like LinkedIn. Those will signal perceived credibility and recognition. Employer behaviour provides an important measure of quality, particularly the extent to which organisations modify or integrate their recruitment, hiring, retention and promotion processes to recognise the MC. Finally, evidence of iterative improvement across successive offerings based on continuous data, feedback and outcomes, will demonstrates a commitment to continuous enhancement and responsiveness to learner and employer needs.

The central consideration is not whether and educational provider institution has designed an MC quality assurance process that explicitly mirrors a prescribed set of standards, but whether the existing quality assurance framework meaningfully evaluates the full lifecycle of an MC. Rather than focusing solely on compliance at the point of final approval, institutions should examine how quality is assured at multiple stages of development. This is including the initial concept and needs analysis, followed by curriculum design and assessment planning, to delivery, evaluation and inclusion of continuous improvement processes. A robust approach recognises that quality is built incrementally and intentionally over time. The early-stage decisions will often have a significant impact on learner outcomes, credibility and relevance. By ensuring that quality assurance mechanisms are embedded throughout the development process, institutions will better support innovation in MCs while maintaining educational rigour and consistency.

Focusing on the stakeholder information needs and what they would like to know

As an educational institution develops a comprehensive quality assurance framework, it is essential for teachers to actively consider the perspectives and information needs of key stakeholders connected to the program. Each of the stakeholders, like prospective learners, employers, partner institutions that recognise or accept the MC and relevant government or regulatory agencies, require clear, reliable information to understand the value and meaning of the credential. Teachers should therefore reflect on what type of evidence these audiences would need in order to confidently interpret what a learner has accomplished. This includes clarity around the learning outcomes achieved, including the level and rigour of assessment. In addition, the methods used to evaluate competence and the standards against which performance is judged must be described. By anticipating and addressing these informational needs, educators help ensure that the MC is transparent, credible and easily understood beyond the classroom. This will thereby help strengthening its recognition, transferability and overall impact.

Stakeholders are most likely to be convinced of the program's validity, merit and value through clear, credible evidence that demonstrates both its sound foundation and its tangible impact. This includes well-articulated goals aligned with identified needs. Those should be done in combination with a logical program design grounded in research or best practices. It is recommended to apply transparent methodologies that describes how the outcomes and results are achieved. Data driven results such as measurable improvements, evaluations, pilot outcomes or comparative benchmarks will help establishing credibility. They will in addition reduce the uncertainty. Testimonials, case studies or endorsements from respected partners and participants, will further reinforce trust by illustrating real-world success. Additionally, clarity around cost-effectiveness, scalability and long-term sustainability signals value by showing that resources are used responsibly and that benefits extend beyond the short term. Together, rigorous evidence, compelling narratives and strategic alignment will persuasively demonstrate why the program is not only valid and meritorious, but why it is a worthwhile investment.

How to make the quality assurance process as transparent as possible?

The quality assurance process can be made highly transparent by clearly documenting, communicating and continuously sharing how quality is defined, measured and improved across the organization. Transparency begins with well-defined standards and procedures that are accessible to all stakeholders. This is including team members, leadership and where appropriate the end users. These standards should explain what is being tested, why it matters and how success or failure is determined.

Equally important is openness in execution. Quality assurance activities, such as testing methods, review cycles, audit schedules and validation criteria, should be visible and understandable rather than treated as a black box. This will be achieved through shared dashboards, regular status reports and clear metrics. Those should track defects, risks, corrective actions and progress over time. When issues are identified, they should be logged, prioritised and tracked openly, with clear ownership and timelines for resolution.

Transparency depends on honest communication. Findings from quality assurance reviews, including both positive and negative, should be shared promptly and constructively without minimising problems or assigning blame. Explaining not only *what* failed but *why* it failed and *how* it will be addressed builds trust and encourages learning. Involving cross-functional teams in reviews and retrospectives further reinforces openness and shared accountability.



Finally, a transparent quality assurance process is one that invites feedback and adapts over time. Stakeholders should have clear channels to ask questions, challenge assumptions and suggest improvements. By combining clear documentation, visible metrics, open communication and continuous feedback, the quality assurance process becomes does not just become a control mechanism. It indeed becomes a trusted, collaborative system that supports consistent improvement and confidence in outcomes.

How is it possible to ensure clear and consistent communication with all the stakeholders?

The quality assurance process plays a critical role in ensuring clear, consistent and timely communication with all stakeholders throughout the operational lifecycle. By establishing structured communication channels and defined reporting mechanisms, quality assurance helps align expectations and responsibilities. This includes outcomes among internal stakeholders, management, clients and external industry partners. Regular quality assurance activities such as audits, reviews, testing cycles and status reporting, will generate reliable information that should be shared with the stakeholders. It will provide transparency on progress, risks, compliance and performance against standards.

In addition, quality assurance frameworks often require documented processes, feedback loops and escalation paths. Those should ensure that stakeholder concerns are formally captured, evaluated and addressed. Scheduled meetings, dashboards and quality reports translate technical findings into stakeholder-relevant insights, thus supporting informed decision-making. By integrating stakeholder communication requirements into quality plans and continuously monitoring their effectiveness, the quality assurance process not only verifies that standards are met but also fosters trust and collaboration. This provides a shared accountability across all the parties involved.





How to encourage MCs to go beyond compliance and excel beyond the minimum standards?

Quality assurance will play a proactive and developmental role by shifting its focus from minimum compliance toward continuous improvement and innovation. Rather than treating standards as fixed endpoints, quality assurance frameworks should frame them as baselines upon which providers are encouraged to build distinctive strengths. This will be achieved by embedding aspirational criteria within the quality assurance processes. This is for instance including exemplary learner centred design and strong alignment with emerging industry needs. The latter must include measurable societal impact that reward educational providers who go beyond basic requirements.

Quality assurance bodies should encourage excellence by incorporating formative evaluation alongside summative judgment. Constructive feedback, peer review and reflective self-assessment processes will enable MC providers to identify areas where they can innovate or lead, rather than merely pass an audit. Recognition mechanisms such as quality labels, commendations, or tiered accreditation levels, will further incentivise providers to exceed standards in specific dimensions. This is for example addressing digital pedagogy, inclusivity or employer engagement.

In addition, quality assurance should support exceeding standards by remaining adaptive and forward-looking. Regularly updating criteria must reflect technological advances and labour market shifts. The learner expectations should help ensuring that MCs are not only credible but also cutting edge. By fostering collaboration among providers, employers and learners, quality assurance systems must disseminate good practices and create a culture where exceeding standards is seen as both achievable and desirable. In this way, quality assurance becomes not just a gatekeeper, but a catalyst for excellence and innovation in micro-credentials.

For example, the educational provider will wish to include illustrative examples that demonstrate different levels of quality assurance achievement for each assessment criterion, similar to the descriptors used in a rubric. By expanding on this approach, such examples could clearly articulate what constitutes minimum, satisfactory, good and exemplary performance. They will thereby help providing transparent benchmarks against which evidence can be judged. This would support consistency in assessment decisions, while assisting assessors and reviewers in making reliable judgements. Next, this will help learners and stakeholders better understand expectations and standards of performance.

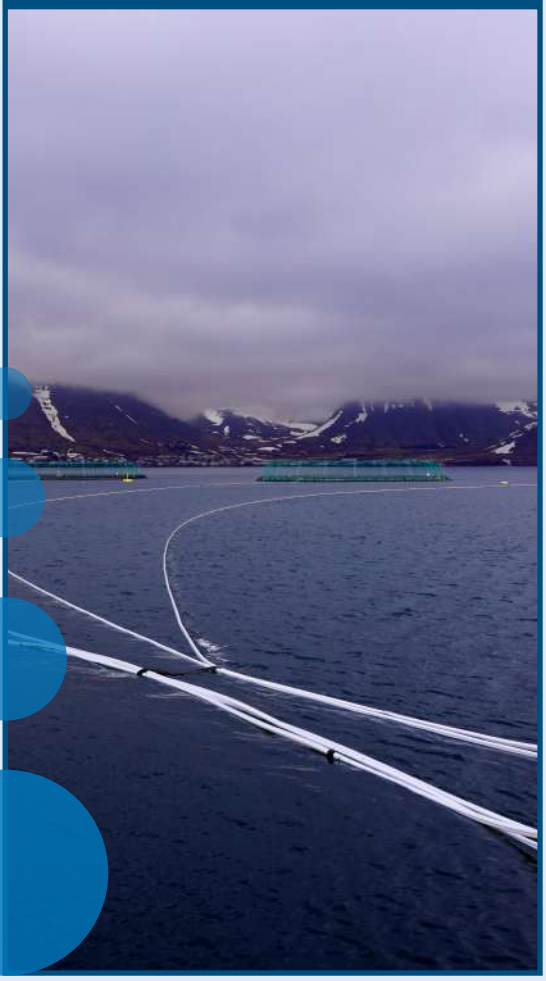
MCs differ from traditional forms of certification primarily because of their close and intentional alignment with the world of work. They are designed to respond to specific, often rapidly changing, skill needs in the labour market. In addition, they should demonstrate practical, job-ready capabilities rather than broad or purely educational achievement. This strong vocational orientation means that their value is closely tied to how well they reflect real workplace requirements and expectations. For this reason, training providers should critically examine their quality assurance processes and consider whether there is a meaningful role for employer endorsement. Involving employers whether through consultation, validation of learning outcomes, or formal endorsement, will help ensure that MCs remain relevant, credible and trusted by learners and industry alike. They should strengthen the connection between learning provision and employment outcomes.

Foundational guideline principles for quality assurance of education

A quality assurance policy establishes a clear set of guiding principles that shape how the credential is evaluated and maintained. These principles define the standards of quality, consistency, fairness and transparency that underpin the assessment process. They provide a framework for determining whether the credential meets its intended purpose. This includes how it aligns with relevant industry or educational benchmarks and thus remains credible and trustworthy over time. By articulating these guiding principles, the policy ensures that quality assessment is systematic, evidence-based and continuously improved. This helps supporting confidence among stakeholders in the value and integrity of the credential.

Below is a single, cohesive section that rewrites, elaborates and expands these ideas and statements into eight policy ready principles for quality MCs frameworks. These apply a clear and formal articulation suitable for policy, strategy and educational documentation in a style for the post-secondary sector. They advise that the quality assurance process encompass the following features, recognising that robust and transparent quality assurance is essential to maintaining the credibility, consistency and value of educational offerings. A comprehensive quality assurance process should be systematic, evidence-based and embedded across the full lifecycle of program design, delivery, assessment and review. It must include clearly defined governance structures that establish responsibility and accountability for quality at both the institutional provider and program levels. It should ensure that standards are applied consistently and decisions are well documented.





The process should incorporate rigorous approval and review mechanisms, including clearly articulated criteria for curriculum design, learning outcomes, assessment strategies and instructional resources. These mechanisms should be supported by input from appropriately qualified educational staff. Where relevant, external stakeholders such as industry representatives or professional bodies should be engaged and involved. Regular monitoring and periodic evaluation are essential, using qualitative and quantitative evidence. This includes systems for regularly collecting learner feedback, completion data and outcomes, to assess effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.

Quality assurance should emphasise transparency, with clear documentation of standards, processes and expectations made accessible to learners and stakeholders. Continuous improvement must be a central feature, supported by formal feedback loops and action plans that respond to evaluation findings. Finally, the process should be adaptable, allowing the educational institutions to respond to changing educational, technological and workforce contexts while maintaining educational integrity and public trust.

1. **Educationally rigorous and learner-centred programs that deliver meaningful value**

   High-quality post-secondary educational programs must be intentionally designed around the needs, goals and contexts of learners while maintaining strong standards of educational rigour. Educationally rigorous, learner-centred programs place learners at the core of curriculum design, delivery and assessment. This is ensuring that learning experiences are both intellectually demanding and directly valuable to learners' personal, educational and professional development.

   Such programs articulate clear learning outcomes that reflect disciplinary depth, applied competence and transferable skills. Instructional design is grounded in evidence-based pedagogical practices that promote active learning, critical thinking and sustained engagement. Learning activities and assessments are appropriately challenging, aligned with stated outcomes and structured to require meaningful demonstration of knowledge and skills rather than passive participation.

Fast-track innovation, while upholding excellence.

The learner-centred programs recognise the diversity of learner backgrounds, prior experiences and learning goals. Flexible pathways, inclusive delivery models and transparent expectations enable learners to progress effectively while balancing study with work and other responsibilities. Where appropriate, programs incorporate recognition of prior learning and experiential learning to validate existing competencies and avoid unnecessary duplication.

Value for learners is reinforced through relevance and applicability. Programs are designed to support educational progression, career advancement and lifelong learning by aligning learning outcomes with real-world contexts, professional standards and evolving societal and workforce needs. Clear communication of program purpose, level, workload and outcomes allows learners to make informed decisions and confidently articulate the value of their learning to employers and other educational institutions.

By integrating educational rigour with a strong learner-centred focus, these programs uphold educational integrity while delivering accessible, relevant and meaningful learning experiences. This balance ensures that learners not only achieve recognised credentials but also gain enduring knowledge, skills and confidence that support long-term success.

2. **Educational Freedom and Accountability**

Educational freedom and accountability are both essential to the credibility and sustainability of MCs in the post-secondary sector. Quality MC frameworks must allow provider institutions and educators the flexibility to innovate in curriculum design, pedagogy and delivery. This should be a response to rapidly evolving learner and workforce needs, while also holding programs to clearly defined standards of educational and professional integrity.

MCs should be evaluated using appropriate educational and training methodologies that reflect their scope, level and intended outcomes. This includes the use of sound instructional design principles and valid and reliable assessment practices. The learning activities should support the achievement of stated competences. Evaluation processes must go beyond participation or completion metrics, focusing instead on evidence of meaningful learning and demonstrated skill acquisition.

Peer review plays a central role in ensuring quality and accountability. Subject-matter experts, instructional designers and qualified educators should be engaged to review MC content, learning outcomes, assessments and delivery approaches. Peer review helps confirm educational rigour and alignment with disciplinary or industry standards. It provides consistency with institutional policies, while fostering a culture of shared responsibility and continuous improvement.



At the same time, accountability mechanisms should be proportionate and fit for purpose. Oversight and quality assurance processes must be rigorous without being overly burdensome, ensuring that innovation is not stifled by excessive regulation. Transparent documentation of review processes, evaluation criteria and approval decisions helps establishing and supporting trust among learners, employers and external partners.

By combining educational freedom with structured accountability that is grounded in appropriate training methodologies and peer review processes, MC frameworks will support and encourage innovation. This will be achieved while maintaining quality, credibility and public confidence in post-secondary MCs.

3. **Commitment to a culture of continuous quality improvement**

A strong quality culture within the provider institution is grounded in an ongoing commitment to continuous improvement, recognising that quality assessment is not a one-time or compliance driven activity. It should be a sustained and iterative process. Rather than treating quality assurance as a periodic checkpoint, the institution embeds quality considerations into the full lifecycle of program and MC design, delivery, assessment and review.

This culture is characterised by regular reflection on evidence drawn from learner outcomes, assessment results, learner and employer feedback and it includes external benchmarking. Data-informed evaluation is used to identify strengths, address gaps and adapt offerings. Those should be a response to evolving educational standards, industry needs and learner expectations. Clear roles and shared responsibility for quality across educational leadership, faculty, instructional designers and administrative units reinforce collective ownership of improvement.

Continuous quality improvement requires transparent processes, documented review cycles and mechanisms for acting on findings in a timely and meaningful way. Lessons learned are systematically integrated into curriculum updates, assessment practices, faculty development and institutional policy refinement. By fostering an environment where evaluation, feedback and innovation are routine and valued, the educational provider ensures that quality remains dynamic, responsive and aligned with both institutional mission and external stakeholder trust.

4. **Informed Practice Grounded in Stakeholder Interests**

Effective practice within post-secondary MC frameworks must be intentionally informed by the perspectives, needs and priorities of both internal and external stakeholders. This includes learners, institution, educational leadership and support staff, as well as employers, industry partners, professional bodies, community organisations and regulatory agencies. Actively engaging these stakeholders ensures that MCs are relevant, credible and responsive to real-world contexts.

Informed practice requires structured mechanisms for consultation, collaboration and feedback throughout the lifecycle of the MCs. This must address everything from the initial design and approval to delivery, assessment and review. Internal stakeholders contribute educational expertise, pedagogical insight and institutional alignment. The external stakeholders provide essential input on workforce relevance, evolving skill demands and professional expectations. Together, these perspectives support balanced decision-making that integrates educational integrity with practical applicability.

By grounding practice in stakeholder interests, institutions will better anticipate emerging needs, reduce misalignment between education and employment and strengthen learner outcomes. Transparent communication, shared accountability and evidence-based decision-making further reinforce trust and legitimacy. Ultimately, informed practice ensures that MC initiatives are not developed in isolation. They should be co-created within a broader educational, economic and societal ecosystem, enhancing their long-term value and impact.

5. **Proportional implementation**

The creation, approval, delivery and administration of MCs should be proportionate to the volume, complexity and level of learning they represent. Because MCs are intentionally smaller and more targeted than traditional post-secondary credentials, their governance, quality assurance and administrative requirements should be appropriately scaled. This will avoid unnecessary burden while preserving the educational integrity and credibility.

Proportional implementation recognises that overly complex or resource-intensive processes can undermine the agility and responsiveness that makes MCs valuable. Approval workflows, curriculum documentation, assessment design and reporting requirements should therefore be streamlined and fit for purpose. They should still ensure clarity of learning outcomes, sound assessment practices and qualified instructional oversight. This balance enables provider institutions to innovate rapidly in response to learner and workforce needs without compromising standards.

At the same time, proportionality does not imply reduced expectations for quality. Rather, it calls for right-sized rigour, where the depth of review, oversight and evaluation aligns with the scope of learning and the potential impact of the credential. Higher-stakes MCs such as those that are credit-bearing, stackable or tied to professional recognition, may warrant more robust governance than non-credit or exploratory offerings.

Proportional implementation supports sustainability and equity by reducing administrative barriers for both institutions and learners. Efficient processes lower development costs, shorten time to launch and facilitate frequent updating of content. This helps ensuring MCs remain current and accessible. For learners, proportional administration will translate into clearer requirements, faster recognition of achievement and reduced complexity in credential documentation.

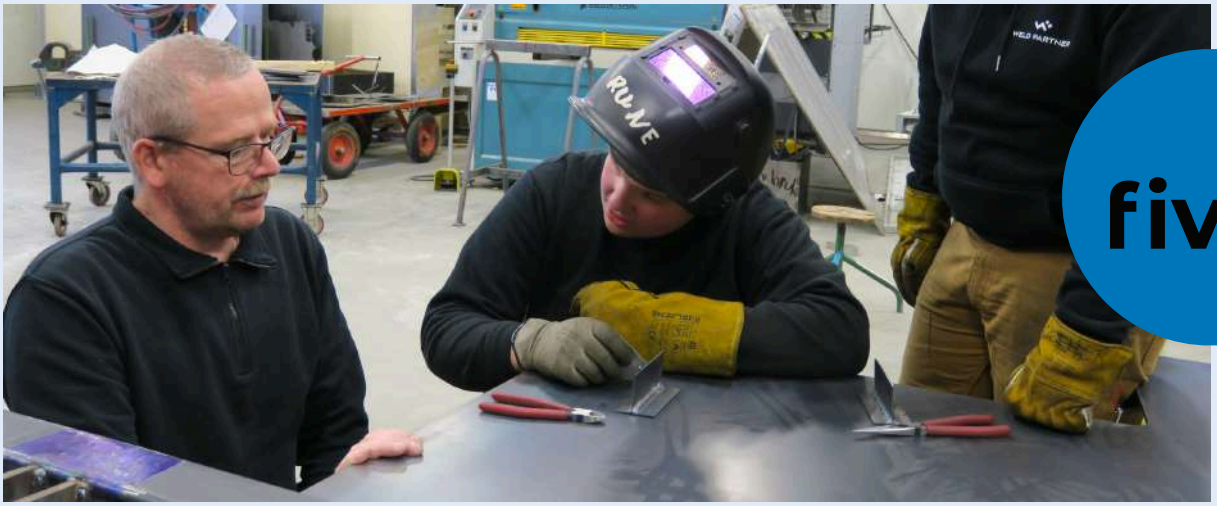
By aligning processes with scale and purpose, proportional implementation ensures that MCs remain flexible, credible and learner-centred. This is preserving their distinct value within the post-secondary ecosystem while maintaining confidence among educators, employers and regulators.

6. **Comprehensive and publicly accountable quality assurance**

Quality assurance for MCs in the post-secondary sector must be comprehensive and publicly accountable, with all processes for assessing and maintaining quality made transparent and accessible. Institutions should clearly document and publish their policies, standards, review criteria and decision-making processes. Those must be related to the design, approval, delivery, assessment and renewal of MCs. Public availability of this information enables learners, employers, regulators and other stakeholders to understand how quality is defined, evaluated and upheld.

A comprehensive approach requires that quality assurance extend across the full lifecycle of an MC. This must start from initial needs analysis and learning design through instruction, assessment, credential issuance and periodic review. Responsibilities for oversight and accountability should be clearly defined, including the roles of educational governance bodies, external partners and quality assurance units. Where external validation or accreditation is involved, the nature and outcomes of those processes should also be made visible.

Public accountability further demands that institutions provide clear mechanisms for feedback, appeal with system solutions for continuous improvement. Data on learner outcomes, completion rates and revisions to credentials should be used to inform quality enhancement. Where appropriate, they should be shared in aggregate form. By making quality assurance processes open, consistent and understandable, post-secondary institutions build trust, protect the integrity of MCs. This will ensure that these offerings deliver credible and meaningful value to learners and society.



7. Measurements, reporting and educational governance

Effective educational governance in the post-secondary sector depends on systematic measurement and transparent reporting of program and learner outcomes. Educational provider institutions must establish robust data collection and analysis practices that generate reliable evidence about the effectiveness, quality and impact of their programs. This evidence base will better support informed decision-making, continuous system solutions for improvement and accountability to learners, regulators, employers, including the broader public.

Institutions should collect data across the full learner lifecycle. This should include access and participation, progression, completion, assessment outcomes, learner satisfaction and post-learning impacts. This includes employment, further studies or professional advancement. Both quantitative and qualitative measures are essential to capture not only performance indicators but also learner experience and program relevance. Data collection processes must be methodologically sound, ethically managed and compliant with privacy and data protection requirements.

> Where metrics meet meaning.





Transparent reporting is a core component of quality governance. Institutions must regularly analyse and communicate findings internally and externally in ways that are accurate, timely and accessible for the stakeholders. Clear reporting enables oversight bodies and institutional leaders to monitor performance against stated objectives and identify strengths and gaps. This should be used to demonstrate the value and credibility of educational offerings. Where appropriate, reporting should align with sectoral standards and frameworks to support comparability and public trust.

Crucially, measurement and reporting must be embedded within institutional governance structures rather than treated as standalone compliance activities. Leadership, educational committees and quality assurance bodies should actively use outcome data. Those should guide the strategic planning, curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, resource allocation and staff development. Feedback loops should be clearly defined so that evidence gathered from learners and program outcomes leads directly to actionable improvements.

Through integrated measurement, transparent reporting and evidence-informed governance, the educational providers should use this to foster a culture of continuous improvement. This approach ensures that programs remain responsive to learner needs, aligned with societal and workforce demands. They must be grounded in demonstrable educational value, while reinforcing institutional accountability and long-term sustainability.

8. **Alignment with institutional policy and international good practice**

MC policies and processes should be fully aligned with existing institutional policies, governance structures and educational quality assurance frameworks. Consistency across the institution ensures coherence, transparency and fairness in the design, approval, delivery, assessment and review of MCs. This will reinforce their credibility alongside other post-secondary offerings. Wherever possible, MC practices should integrate seamlessly with established processes for curriculum development, faculty oversight, learner support, assessment integrity and credential issuance. They should not be operating as parallel or ad hoc systems.

In addition to internal alignment, MC frameworks should reflect international good practice and recognised quality assurance standards within the relevant field of education. This includes adherence to principles of educational rigour, learner-centred design, outcomes-based assessment and continuous improvement. This is typically articulated by reputable international bodies and accreditation agencies. Benchmarking against international frameworks supports comparability, portability and global recognition of MCs, particularly in an increasingly mobile and digitally mediated education landscape.

By aligning institutional policies with internationally informed quality assurance practices, post-secondary providers will strengthen trust among learners, employers, regulators and partner organisations. This alignment helps ensure that MCs are credible, sustainable and responsive to evolving educational and workforce needs. At the same this approach will be maintaining the integrity and reputation of the institution as a whole.

Recommendations for establishing a quality assurance framework for MCs

A robust quality assurance framework is essential to ensure that MCs are credible, consistent and trusted by learners, employers and other educational institutions. As short and targeted learning offerings continue to expand within post-secondary education, quality assurance systems must be intentionally designed to uphold the educational standards. At the same time, they must be remaining flexible enough to support innovation and responsiveness. The following recommendations outline key considerations for setting up an effective and sustainable quality assurance framework for MCs.

The provider institutions should start by establishing a clear governance structure for MCs that defines roles, responsibilities and decision-making authority. This structure should specify who is responsible for approving new MCs, setting quality standards, monitoring delivery and reviewing outcomes. Integrating MCs into existing educational governance processes, while allowing for streamlined approvals where appropriate, will help ensure consistency and institutional accountability.

Secondly, the framework should articulate clear standards and criteria for MC design. These standards should address learning outcomes, level and workload, instructional design, assessment methods and instructor qualifications. Defining expectations at the outset promotes consistency across offerings and provides guidance to faculty and partners involved in development. Standards should be aligned, where possible, with national or international qualification frameworks to support external recognition.



Moreover, quality assurance processes should emphasise the application of competence-based assessment with evidences from the learning processes. The framework should require that MCs are awarded based on demonstrated achievement of stated outcomes, supported by valid and reliable assessment practices. Clear rubrics, moderation processes and documentation of learner performance are essential to maintain credibility and comparability.

Fourth, institutions should embed stakeholder engagement into the quality assurance framework. Input from employers, industry representatives, professional bodies, learners and community partners will help ensuring that MCs remain relevant and responsive to real-world needs. Structured consultation mechanisms, such as advisory committees or periodic reviews, will strengthen alignment with workforce and the societal priorities.

Fifth, transparency should be a core principle of the framework. Information about each MC, including learning outcomes, assessment methods, workload, credential level and issuing authority. This should be clearly documented and publicly accessible. Transparent documentation supports learner decision-making and enables employers and other institutions to interpret and trust the credential.

Sixth, the MC framework should address credit recognition, stackability and portability. Clear policies are needed to determine how MCs will contribute to larger micro-qualifications. This includes how they are recorded and under what conditions they may be recognised internally or externally. This will support learner mobility and ensures that MCs are meaningfully integrated into broader educational pathways.

Seventh, quality assurance processes should incorporate equity, accessibility and learner support considerations. This framework should encourage inclusive design, flexible delivery and appropriate support services. In addition, they should be monitoring participation and outcomes across different learner groups. Embedding equity considerations into quality review processes helps ensuring that MCs expand opportunity rather than reinforce existing barriers.

Finally, the framework should include mechanisms for ongoing monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement. Regular review cycles, informed by learner feedback, completion data, assessment outcomes and stakeholder input, will allow institutions to refine offerings and respond to changing needs. Continuous improvement processes reinforce trust in MCs and support their long-term sustainability.

Taken together, these recommendations provide a comprehensive foundation for setting up a quality assurance framework for MCs. This one must balance rigour with flexibility, support innovation and ensure that MCs deliver genuine and enduring value.



The principles guiding the development of quality assurance frameworks

The guiding principles for the design and implementation of a quality assurance framework for micro-courses paired with MCs, includes the following set with six proposed recommendations:

- **Industry aligned relevance**
  Involve or consult with the industry or the community.
- **Professionally endorsed accreditation**
  Approved, recognised or awarded by a professional accrediting body.
- **Regulated for standardisation**
  Meet quality standards set by government.
- **Substantiated through demonstration, evidence and assessment**
  The credential is awarded upon demonstration of the required knowledge, skills and competences.
- **Adaptable and Flexible**
  Learners can progress at their own pace and follow a learning structure that works for them.
- **Modular and buildable into stacks**
  Can be accumulated or combined toward a larger credential, such as a diploma or a degree.

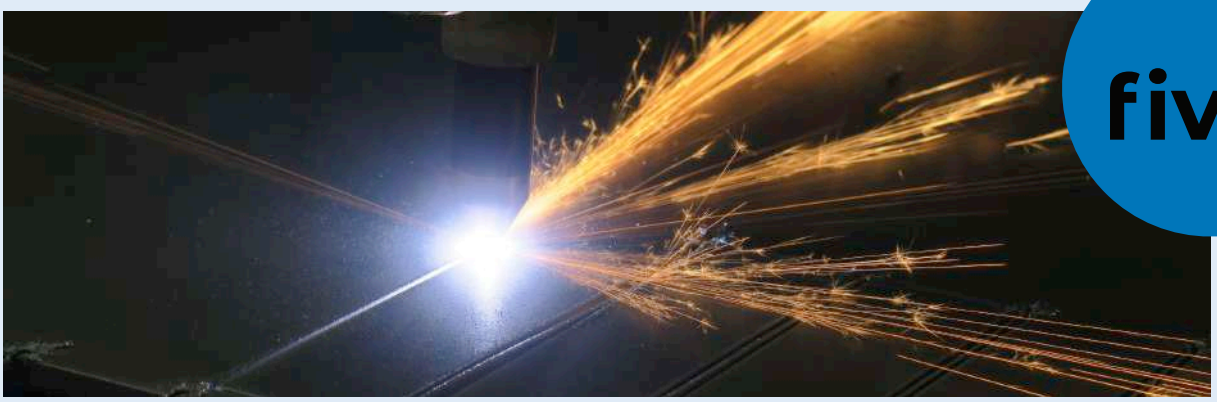
Although not always explicitly articulated within individual quality principles or evaluation criteria, transparency is a foundational requirement that must underpin the entire quality assurance process for MCs in the post-secondary sector. Transparency ensures that expectations, decisions and outcomes are clearly communicated and understood by all stakeholders, including learners, educators, employers and external industry partners.

A transparent quality assurance process makes visible how MCs are designed, approved, assessed and reviewed. This includes clear documentation of learning outcomes, assessment standards, instructional methods, governance structures and quality review procedures. When these elements are openly communicated, stakeholders can better evaluate the credibility, rigour and relevance of a given MC.

Transparency supports fairness and accountability by clarifying roles and responsibilities at each stage of the quality assurance process. Learners benefit from knowing how their performance will be evaluated and how the credentials are awarded, while educators and administrators operate within clearly defined expectations and decision-making frameworks. For employers and external bodies, transparency strengthens trust by enabling informed recognition and interpretation of MCs.

At the end transparency is essential for continuous improvement. Open reporting of evaluation findings, learner outcomes and stakeholder feedback allows institutions to identify strengths, address gaps and adapt to changing educational and workforce needs. By embedding transparency throughout the quality assurance lifecycle, from design and delivery to assessment and review, post-secondary institutions reinforce the legitimacy, portability and long-term value of MCs.

> Transparency builds trust in quality education.



The quality assurance procedures for program approval and review framework

The quality assurance procedures establish a coherent and systematic framework through which all institutional programs are evaluated to ensure they meet defined expectations of educational quality, relevance and integrity. Central to this procedure is a clearly articulated set of criteria and accompanying standards that are applied consistently across all programs, regardless of discipline, delivery mode or credential type. These criteria provide a common benchmark against which program proposals are assessed prior to approval, ensuring that only programs that meet institutional, regulatory and sector-wide expectations are authorised to be offered.

Before a program is approved, it must demonstrate alignment with the institution's educational mission, including the learning and teaching standards and the strategic priorities. Evaluation against the established criteria typically includes scrutiny of program objectives and the learning outcomes. They must take account for and include curriculum design, assessment practices, staffing qualifications, learning resources and student support structures. This pre-approval review process promotes transparency, comparability and accountability, while safeguarding the institution's educational reputation.

The same standards used during program approval must guide the periodic post-approval reviews. Ongoing evaluation ensures that programs remain current, effective and responsive to evolving educational, professional and societal needs. Periodic reviews assess evidence of student achievement, progression and completion rates. This should include learner feedback, graduate outcomes and external stakeholder input. By applying consistent criteria over time, the institution can identify areas of strength, address emerging risks and implement targeted improvements.

Together the pre-approval evaluation and periodic review form an integrated quality assurance cycle that supports continuous improvement. This approach ensures that programs not only meet required standards at the point of entry, but continue to deliver high-quality learning experiences throughout their lifecycle. This is reinforcing institutional accountability and long-term educational excellence.

A robust quality assurance procedure must clearly articulate the structures, processes and responsibilities that govern the approval, delivery and ongoing review of programs. This includes transparent identification of who is involved in quality assurance activities and what roles and responsibilities each participant holds. This is of particular importance when key quality-related actions occur across the educational program lifecycle. Educational leaders, quality assurance units, external reviewers and, where appropriate, industry or community representatives should each have defined functions that support accountability and educational integrity.

The quality assurance procedure should specify the context in which the activities take place, including institutional policies, regulatory requirements and external standards that guide decision-making. Clear documentation is essential to ensure consistency and fairness. As an example, the approval of new micro-course programs paired with MCs should follow a formal and documented process that outlines required evidence, evaluation criteria and the decision-making authority. This typically includes the submission of standardised forms to a designated approving body, such as an educational committee or accrediting authority. Those will review the submission against established quality benchmarks before granting approval.





In addition to initial approval, quality assurance procedures must define how and how often programs are reviewed to ensure they continue to meet institutional and external quality standards. Regular cyclical reviews, supplemented by interim monitoring where necessary, should assess program relevance. This includes learning outcomes, assessment practices, learner achievement and stakeholder feedback. The procedures should identify review timelines, required documentation, responsible parties and mechanisms for acting on findings. This must include continuous improvement plans or corrective actions.

By clearly outlining roles, processes, approval mechanisms and review cycles, the quality assurance procedures will promote transparency, consistency and continuous enhancement. This is ensuring that educational programs remain credible, relevant and aligned with quality expectations over time.

Policy development
Open standards.
Stronger Micro-Credentials.

Impact
Transparency turns standards into confidence

Learners
Quality you can see, skills you can use.

Flagship
Transparent quality.
Trusted credentials.

Thus, the quality assurance procedures for an educational programme approval and review framework, establish a structured and transparent system to ensure that all educational offerings meet defined academic, professional, and regulatory standards. These procedures guide the design, evaluation and continuous improvement of programmes by setting clear criteria for curriculum relevance, learning outcomes, assessment methods and alignment with labour market and societal needs.

Through systematic internal and external reviews, stakeholder consultation and evidence-based evaluation, the framework supports accountability and consistency across institutions and delivery modes. It ensures that new programmes are rigorously assessed before implementation and that existing programmes are regularly monitored and updated in response to student feedback, industry developments and technological change.

In doing so, the quality assurance framework promotes excellence, credibility and long-term sustainability into the post-secondary educational phases.

Policy development

Transparency builds trust in quality education and is the heart of quality assurance.

Impact

When quality is clear, everyone succeeds.
Clear expectations provide real results.

Learners

Know the standard and trust the outcomes.
Clear pathways with credible credentials.