



# University of Otago

## Micro-credentials Framework

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The recognition of micro-credentials is an important development in the delivery of tertiary-level study in New Zealand and forms part of an international trend that is rapidly gaining impetus. The purpose of this framework is to outline the place of micro-credentials at the University of Otago in a way that balances their entrepreneurial nature and responsive agility with established principles of quality advancement and excellence.

It is expected that micro-credentials will be developed only in a relatively small number of contexts within the University where there is clear demand from industry, employers, professional associations, iwi and/or other communities. Even so, as with any other teaching at the University all micro-credentials will be delivered in a manner consistent with the *University of Otago Strategic Direction to 2020*, particularly its emphasis on teaching excellence. Those delivering micro-credentials must have regard to the University's Graduate Profile, not least the attribute of Lifelong Learning: 'Commitment to the on-going acquisition of new knowledge and new skills, and an ability to apply these to an ever-changing environment'.

Micro-credentials present the University with an opportunity to offer its expertise in research-informed learning in new ways to new students, without ignoring current students and staff. This is particularly (but not exclusively) at the postgraduate level for those seeking further skills who are mid-career in a continuing vocation or navigating regular changes in career. As such, micro-credentials are eminently suited for distance learning.

Micro-credentials also carry risk. They are not intended to duplicate already existing papers but if micro-credentials proliferate they have the potential to deplete enrolments in the University's core business of papers and qualifications. It is for each division within the University to oversee the development of micro-credentials in a way that is cognisant of this sort of risk. Each division may set a direction for micro-credentials within the broad outlines of this framework. Such divisional leadership, oversight and management of risk is important.

The remainder of this framework sets out the principles and processes that will govern the development of micro-credentials at the University of Otago.

## **1. Definition**

1.1 A micro-credential has been defined by NZQA:

*Micro-credentials are new stand-alone education products intended to enable learners to access specific knowledge and skills in a cost-effective and time-efficient way. They are smaller than qualifications and focus on skill development opportunities not currently catered for in the tertiary education system, and for which there is strong evidence of need by industry, employers, iwi and community.*

1.2 A micro-credential will be a formally approved course of study of between 5 and 40 points.

## **2. Principles**

2.1 The micro-credential certifies achievement of a coherent and self-contained set of skills and knowledge that are not covered by an existing qualification.

2.2 There must be strong evidence of need by industry, employers, professional associations, iwi and/or other communities.

2.3 A micro-credential is a standalone course of study which a student must be enrolled in and successfully complete in order to be granted the award.

2.4 A micro-credential may be recognised for credit towards an existing qualification.

2.5 A micro-credential may not be gained through credit via formal prior learning i.e. via transfer of credit for an existing paper or component of an existing qualification.

2.6 The entry criteria must be in alignment with the level of the micro-credential and learning outcomes.

2.7 A micro-credential awarded by this University or other recognised provider may be eligible for credit transfer towards an existing qualification or used as part of a suite of evidence for meeting admission criteria.

2.8 A micro-credential that has not been offered for a period of three years will be automatically deleted; micro-credentials cannot be suspended.

## **3. Quality Assurance**

3.1 A micro-credential must be approved by the relevant divisional board before being submitted to the Board of Undergraduate Studies or Board of Graduate Studies for final approval.

3.2 A micro-credential must be evaluated each time it is offered using a range of evidence that includes some form of student evaluation.

3.3 A micro-credential will be approved for a period of three years before being subject to a Micro-credentials Review that will include: a brief description of the main

highlights, successes, problems and challenges involved in teaching the micro-credential; an assessment of the quality of the micro-credential informed in part by student feedback; analysis of the number of enrolments; and a recommendation on continuance. A Micro-credentials Review report should be no more than three pages and should be supported by the relevant divisional board before the recommendation on continuance is considered by the Board of Undergraduate Studies or Board of Graduate Studies.

#### **4. Certification**

4.1 The certification of a micro-credential will follow the University's guidelines and include:

- The name and logo of the University
- The title of the micro-credential
- The credit points and level of the micro-credential.

#### **5. Associated Documents and information**

- [NZQA Rules](#) on Micro-credentials and Training Scheme Rules
- [CUAP Handbook Appendix H](#): Quality assurance of university courses and programmes not leading to a qualification
- Appendix 1: Universities New Zealand Guiding Principles

## Appendix 1: Universities New Zealand Guiding Principles



### Universities' guiding principles: Micro-credentials

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The following principles are designed to ensure the consistency and quality of university micro-credential offerings:

1. The university sector should only recognise and/or offer micro-credentials where five criteria are met:
  - a. **Level** – they have been objectively and consistently assessed as being at an appropriate level relative to the qualifications framework.
  - b. **Credit** – they have a credit value that has been derived consistent with the credit value of other comparable courses offered by universities.
  - c. **Assessment** – there are adequate mechanisms for verifying that students themselves have successfully completed necessary work and assessment.
  - d. **Quality assurance** – there is credible quality assurance behind the design, delivery, and assessment of whatever is being offered.
  - e. **Industry, employer and community support** - there is support from the relevant industries, employers or communities.
2. Micro-credentials may be used to award formal credit towards a university qualification. Published university policies on credit transfer limits will apply to credits from micro-credentials and credits from other sources.
3. Where universities offer micro-credentials:
  - a. The university should have a micro-credential framework detailing clear policies and procedures for developing micro-credentials, assessing their level and credit value, quality assuring them, and for delivering them and assessing skills and capabilities of students.
  - b. Universities should adhere to the 'Quality assurance of university courses and programmes not leading to a qualification' appendix of the CUAP Handbook in their development and approval of micro-credentials, along with other courses not leading to a qualification.