



**European MOOC
Consortium
Labour Market**

*Policy Recommendations
adopted in the closing EMC-LM
Policy Forum*

15 December 2021

Policy recommendations from the EMC-LM project

Objectives

Policy recommendations are developed:

- To promote the collaboration between MOOC platforms, universities and labour market organisations;
- To promote the offering of MOOCs and microcredentials for the labour market, meeting the needs for flexible and scalable education and training;
- To promote sustainable interfaces between MOOC platforms, universities and the labour market for matching needs and provisions;
- To support the recognition of microcredentials and microcredential qualifications;
- To create a continuous dialogue on MOOCs and microcredentials with all stakeholders, governments and the EU.

Based on seminars of MOOC platforms, universities, enterprises and public employment services, policy recommendations are developed at the level of each of the stakeholder organizations:

At the level of MOOC platforms

1. **Develop a medium- and long-term strategic plan for MOOCs and microcredentials in cooperation with universities and external stakeholders such as enterprises and social partners**, for meeting the needs of society, regions and the economy.
2. **Support universities in the development of scalable and flexible continuing education** by creating an **interface between universities and the labor market** in order to understand the needs for professional development and to (co-)create initiatives and **dedicated MOOC and microcredential spaces** for sectors and enterprises in the private and public sector.
3. **Build a consistent framework for awards and qualifications for microcredentials in collaboration with the universities**, supporting continuing education and professional development. (see annex).
4. Make MOOC and microcredential courses and programmes **stackable by modularization** where possible
5. **Facilitate fluid credential evaluation of MOOCs and microcredentials** by academia and employers by issuing awards and qualifications accompanied with a transcript describing at least: 1. The logo of the institutions involved; the ID of the learner; 2. learning outcomes and content; 3. The EQF/NQF level; 4. The workload (ECTS); 5. the assessment method; 6. the academic credits (ECTS, certificate) and possibly the professional credits awarded; 7. quality indicators.
Use the Bologna tools facilitating recognition and credential evaluation.

6. **Position MOOC platforms in the European Commission's concept for the University of the Future 2030** and lifelong learning, continuing education and professional development, capitalizing on major policy lines of discussions start at the European Commission

At the level of universities

1. **Collaborate with a MOOC platform to enable flexible and large-scale delivery of MOOCs and microcredentials** in partnership with public and private sectors and professional organizations to optimize content and organizational capabilities.
2. **Develop a medium- and long-term strategic plan for MOOCs and microcredentials in cooperation with your MOOC platform and external partners**, for meeting the needs of society, the regions and the economy.
3. **Develop pedagogical guidelines for the design and development of MOOCs and microcredentials** in collaboration with your MOOC platform and taking into account the specific features of learners at different stages in their career and the needs of society and the economy.
4. **Build a consistent institutional qualification structure for continuing education and professional development** (see annex)
5. **Stimulate multilateral agreements among institutions in networks and EUI alliances on common qualification structures for continuing education and professional development**, which will assure the mutual recognition of MOOCs and microcredentials.
6. **Make MOOCs and microcredentials stackable** to larger programmes by modularization, where possible.
7. **Facilitate fluid credential evaluation of MOOCs and microcredentials** by academia and employers by issuing awards and qualifications accompanied with a transcript describing at least: 1. The logo of the institutions involved; the ID of the learner; 2. learning outcomes and content; 3. The EQF/NQF level; 4. The workload (ECTS); 5. the assessment method; 6. academic credits (ECTS, certificate) and possibly professional credits awarded; 7. quality indicators.
Use the Bologna tools facilitating recognition and credential evaluation.
8. **Use MOOCs and microcredentials as mobility windows** in collaborative programmes and digital mobility schemes.
9. **Develop business models for continuing education and professional development** based on a combination of public funding, possible contributions of sectors and professional organizations and student fees.

10. **Develop an institutional concept for the University of the Future 2030** and for the position of continuing education and professional development, building on current policies and discussions at the European Commission.

At the level of sectors and enterprises

1. **Integrate MOOCs and online microcredentials in the human resources policies of sectors and enterprises** in order to make education and training flexible, scalable and accessible by all, integrating education and training in successive stages of the workforce's career development.
2. **Make leadership and staff of human resources departments familiar with diverse forms of digital education and training** in order to make HR-strategies more efficient and effective.
3. **Collaborate with MOOC platforms and universities to co-create MOOCs and microcredentials** for innovation in sectors and enterprises based on up-to-date knowledge and research.
4. **Collaborate with MOOC platforms and universities to develop sector-specific microcredentials and learning spaces** for both SMEs and large companies.
5. **Extend sectoral funds for education and training to the full spectrum of the workforce**, from low-skilled to highly skilled, as it evolves rapidly through the development of knowledge and innovation.

At the level of public employment services

1. **Inform MOOC platforms and universities on the national and regional needs** for competence development and skills gaps in the economy.
2. **Collaborate with MOOC platforms and universities in the development of education and training provisions** in order to match supply and demand the labour market.
3. **Promote activities of training organisations and services that support competencies and career development** for the complete range of lowly and highly schooled people as the economy is evolving to complex innovations.
4. **Create collaborations between e-learning centers of the public employment services and MOOC platforms**, especially at levels 5,6,7 of EQF and for the development of 21st century skills, in priority sectors of the economy,.
5. **Create a dialogue with MOOC platforms and universities on a differentiation of MOOCs and digital learning offerings**, ranging from micro-learning units to microcredential programmes which can be integrated in corporate training offerings.
6. **Co-create with MOOC platforms and universities micro-learning units, MOOCs and microcredential courses and programmes.**

7. **Organize training of trainers for staff of public employment services** In order to optimize the design, development and delivery of digital learning.

At the government level

1. **Collaborate with MOOC platforms, higher education institutions and stakeholder groups to develop policies for building a national ecosystem for lifelong learning** by which citizens are facilitated to participate massively to continuing education and professional development during the course of their lives.
2. **Create a dialogue with MOOC platforms and higher education institutions** on a consistent implementation of the European Commission's Recommendation on microcredentials in higher education in the national higher education system
3. **Improve the funding of MOOCs and microcredentials SLPs** in order to meet the needs of the economy and society related to priority areas such as digitalization, health care, education and training, climate change and others.

At the European level

1. **Integrate and recognize continuing education and professional development through microcredentials in the Bologna process**, next to degree education, as part of formal education linked to the European Qualification Framework and delivering ECTS. Microcredential qualifications ensure harmonization in continuing education awards, which is important for the recognition by academia and employers.
2. **Promote MOOCs and microcredentials** in order to make continuing education and professional development flexible, scalable and accessible by all to meet the needs of the European labour market.
3. **For making this happen, use the Bologna tools for defining Microcredential qualifications**, notably ECTS credits, the microcredential transcript and levels 5 to 8 of the European Qualification Framework. This will promote the stackability of these qualifications for continuing education in degree programmes.
4. **Create a permanent dialogue in order to involve all stakeholders for continuing education and professional development**, notably educational and social partners and governments, for the development of continuing education at scale in all EU members states and for increasing the relevance of continuing education for employability and entrepreneurship.
5. **Collaborate with university networks and stakeholders to recognize microcredentials as formal parts of the European Education Area**, in order to harmonize and upscale continuing education and professional development in national provisions of higher education
6. **Develop policies for the large-scale development** of continuing education and professional development as a primary area of provision in European universities next to degree education.

ANNEX

Guidelines for awarding microcredential qualifications

Justify the award to be recognized

Justify why the microcredential programme should lead to academic recognition by the partner universities and which qualification should be awarded. Take into account the content, the EQF level, the volume of the programme and the possible stackability to other programmes.

Also seek professional recognition from external stakeholders, such as professional organizations and employers, so that learners can valorise their microcredential qualification for professional development credits or accreditation by professional bodies (e.g. related to professions in psychology, IT, medicine/healthcare, accountancy, education, business sector).

Align the award with the institutional qualification structures

Higher education institutions are likely to have very different institutional qualification structures for continuing and professional development, as can be seen from the study guides. These structures are adopted autonomously by institutions and possibly align with national and evolving European frameworks.

Not all universities have developed a consistent qualification structure, and neither have governments. In fact, many institutional qualification structures are under development and in most cases not yet stable. Institutional structures might converge to the following characteristics and cases:

- a course with a size of less than 1 ECTS is delivered as a micro-learning unit, possibly provided with *an attendance badge*. The course can serve as a unit of learning in a credited course or as a micro-learning unit in a corporate training programme;
- a microcredential course comes with a reliable and valid assessment. *ECTS points* are awarded;
- a CMF microcredential programme¹ is delivered as a coherent track of courses with a total volume of 4-6 ECTS, which is awarded with a *CMF microcredential qualification*. This qualification can be stacked into a broader programme;
- A microdegree is delivered as a microcredential programme of 20-40 ECTS, which is awarded with a *microdegree qualification*;
- A degree is provided in the form of a *bachelor's or master's degree* (180, resp.60/90/120 ECTS). This degree qualification may be awarded following a modular series of microcredential qualifications, supplemented by a thesis.

¹ The Common Microcredential Framework (CMF) is adopted by the main European MOOC platforms associated in the European MOOC Consortium (Futurelearn, France Université Numérique, Miriadax, EduOpen, OpenupEd, iMooX) and the universities linked to them.

From learning unit to degree programme	Volume of learning (ECTS)	Qualification Level	Award
Learning unit/micro-learning unit	Less than 1 ECTS	Undergraduate EQF level 5, 6 Postgraduate EQF level 7,8	a badge/proof of attendance (can be part of a course or stackable to a course)
A single course A microcredential course A single MOOC with credits	Number of ECTS credits awarded to the course	Undergraduate EQF level 5, 6 Postgraduate EQF level 7,8	ECTS course credits (stackable to a programme)
CMF- microcredential programme CMF MOOC pathway	4-6 ECTS	Undergraduate EQF level 5, 6 Postgraduate EQF level 7,8	CMF microcredential gradeo (stackable in a microcredential programme or a degree programme)
Microcredential programme Microdegree programme MOOC-based programme	20-40 ECTS	Undergraduate EQF level 5, 6 Postgraduate EQF level 7,8	undergraduate/postgraduate certificate microdegree specialisation certificate expert certificate certified professional programme focus diploma MicroMaster nanodegree diploma ... (stackable to a degree programme)
Degree programme (bachelor/master/doctorate)	180 ECTS 60-90-120 ECTS 240 (180) ECTS	Undergraduate EQF level 5, 6 Postgraduate EQF level 7,8	short cycle graduate bachelor/master degree doctorate degree

Fig. Outline of possible microcredential awards, based on existing continuing education programmes

Define the type and name of the qualification to be awarded

The higher education institution must define the type and name for the qualification awarded by the microcredential programme.

In the context of the European Education Area and the European Digital Education Plan, the European Commission issued a Recommendation to the Council of Ministers on microcredentials in 2021, which is expected to be implemented by Member States in 2025, for recognizing microcredential qualification.

Current microcredential practices anticipate on this recognition.

In the Common Microcredential Framework, launched by the European MOOC Consortium and the universities concerned, a microcredential qualification meets the following standard requirements, in response to the study time horizon of students who combine work and study:

- an EQF qualification level 5 to 8;
- a study load of 4 to 6 ECTS or 100 to 150 hours of study;
- a reliable and valid assessment;
- stackability to other programmes.

In France, Spain and Italy, these CMF microcredentials are called “gradeos”. CMF microcredentials. CMF microcredentials are now endorsed by other universities as well.

Current qualifications assigned to wider microcredential programmes in Europe (20-40 ECTS) have diverse names, for example: "undergraduate/postgraduate certificate", "undergraduate/postgraduate module", "expert track Certificate" "specialization in ...", "expert in ...", "professional certificate", "focus diploma".

Some short learning programmes include MOOCs or are fully MOOC-based microcredential programmes with qualifications such as "MicroMasters" and "Nanodegrees".

European MOOC platforms and their universities now systematically develop such certified microcredential courses and programmes, which further can be combined to a bachelor or master degree.

In daily practice we see that there is probably a need for an additional standard for microcredential programmes with a size of 14-16 ECTS.

Design a qualification supplement

A qualification for a microcredential programme is accompanied by a qualification supplement, containing information as detailed by the ECTS Users’ Guide and Europass. This is important for the valorisation of the certificate in academia and by employers. Descriptors are (See: http://ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/EHEAParis2018_Communique_AppendixIV_952782.pdf):

- information on the holder of the qualification;
- information identifying the qualification;
- information on the level and duration of the qualification;
- Information about the programme followed and the results achieved;
- Information about the function of the qualification (e.g. stackability)
- information on the national higher education system.

Award a professional qualification

In some cases, microcredential programmes are co-created or accredited by a professional organisation, business sector or public service (healthcare, education,...). These organizations will recognize these programs for their own continuing professional development framework. Microcredential programmes can therefore be financed by the sector or recognized for a personal learning account. In some cases, they will issue a specific professional certificate in addition to the academic award of the university.

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Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

