

# **Micro-credentials: Educational Opportunity or Accessibility Barrier**

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This is the alternate format of the slides presented at Accessing Higher Ground. The content is the same and slide numbers have been provided.

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# Micro-credentials:: Educational Opportunity or Accessibility Barrier (Slide 1)

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## Gamification of Learning? (Slide 2)

CEUs will become badges.

In North America, there appear to be two companies providing badges:


Micro-credentials.

Credly.

Some micro-credentials stand alone while others appear to lead to a degree or certificate.


At this early stage, it is unclear how this will evolve.

## What's in a Badge? (Slide 3)



**There's data inside**

- Criteria that you met
- Where you received the badge
- Alignment to professional standards
- Expiration date

 Adapted from Open Badges (P.S. there's data inside...) by Visual Thinkery is licenced under CC-BY-ND

Copied from graphic:

There's data inside.

Criteria that you met.

Where you received the badge.

Alignment to professional standards.

Expiration date.

What are micro-credentials? | Micro-credentials (ontariotechu.ca)

## **University of Denver Micro-credential Badges (Slide 4)**

Small class, workshop or program.

Geared toward today's workforce.

Can be shared on a variety of platforms.

[Micro-credentials and Badges | University of Denver \(du.edu\)](#)<sup>1</sup>

## **Positive Aspects! (Slide 5)**

IAAP, for example, uses Credly.

Professional development badge.

My ADS certification or badge is valid until 2023.

This ensures that my skill are up to date.

If the badge expires and I don't retake the certification, this is evident.

Micro-credentials do provide a means of upskilling.

They provide a way to explore a new career without investing funding in a full program.

Some badges can then be used toward a certificate.

## **Micro-credential Case Study (Slide 6)**

What can go wrong?

## **Accessible Media Production Program (Slide 7)**

Graduate certificate that provided career path.

Intensive learning that provided well-rounded learning in:

Disability Legislation for Media Professionals.

Accessible Content Creation (Word and PowerPoint).

Inclusive Writing & Communication.

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<sup>1</sup> University of Denver, Micro-credentials: <https://www.du.edu/registrar/academic-programs/micro-credentials-badges>

Assistive Technology & Media Content.

Business Applications & Entrepreneurship.

Social Media, Accessibility and Analytics.

Captioning and Video Description.

Web Accessibility.

## **Graduate Certificate Cancelled (Slide 8)**

On June 2, days after Global Accessibility Awareness Day, the graduate certificate was cancelled.

The college had been working on micro-credentials since January.

Received funding for the development but not the updating.

Only two of the courses from the graduate certificate were enhanced into micro-credentials:

Accessible Word, PowerPoint, PDF, and PDF forms.

Accessible Web Pages.

The goal was to theoretically support the graduate certificate and provide graduates with additional skills. On

## **Cost Saving? (Slide 9)**

Ontario government gave \$15 million to develop micro-credentials.

The micro-credentials are housed in Continuing Education.

If faculty wanted to monitor the micro-credentials, it represented a significant reduction in income.

\$110.00 per student for a 40-hour micro-credential course.

No longer paid by the hour.

If 4 students registered, it would be \$440.00 for 40 hours.

## **Cost Saving? (Continued) (Slide 10)**

The facilitator only had to provide 1 hour of “office hours” per week for the 6 weeks of the micro-credential offering.

This type of approach is not conducive to project-based assessment.

It is likely that the project-based micro-credentials will go to quiz-based.

Not appropriate to evaluate whether someone can create accessible digital content...or is it? ”

## **Education and Training (Slide 11)**

“Micro-credentials are rapid training programs offered by postsecondary education institutions across the province that can help you get the skills that employers need. Micro-credentials help people retrain and upgrade their skills to find new employment.”

[Micro-credentials from Ontario’s postsecondary schools | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/page/micro-credentials-ontarios-postsecondary-schools)<sup>2</sup>

## **Education and Training (Continued) (Slide12)**

Micro-credentials:

Take less time to complete than degrees or diplomas

May be completed online and may include on-the-job training

Are often created with input from business sectors, so the skills being taught match employer needs

Micro-credentials from Ontario’s postsecondary schools | ontario.ca

## **Ontario’s Approach to Micro-credentials (Slide13)**

The Ontario government’s micro-credential page indicates that a micro-credential can be a “course”, a webinar or a podcast.

They are short learning experiences that result in a badge.

They can be used for professional development.

They can be consolidated into a certificate.

There is funding available, but it is unclear if this is funding to develop or take a micro-credential.

Not clear if micro-credentials can be gathered from provincial, national or international sources to personalize a learning experience or certificate truly.

## **Ontario Micro-credentials (Continued) (Slide 14)**

No framework for sharing badges among academic institutions.

Can someone collect badges in a subject area from colleges and universities around the province and create a customized certificate or degree?

No mandatory accessibility component!

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<sup>2</sup> Micro-credentials from Ontario’s Postsecondary Schools: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/micro-credentials-ontarios-postsecondary-schools>

Despite the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the upcoming revisions to the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulations regarding education.

## **Types of Micro-credentials (Slide15)**

Self-paced

- 3 months.
- Access to current material.
- Digital badge.
- “Custom Success Manager Support”

Hybrid

- 6 months.
- All features in self-paced.
- Bookable facilitator hours.
- Industry networking.

Facilitator Lead

- 6 weeks, 8-10 hours per week.
- All features in hybrid.
- In-class networking and collaboration.
- Employment partner events.

[Custom Micro-credentials for a Common Problem | Ontario Tech Talent](#)<sup>3</sup>

## **Basics of Micro-credentials (Slide 16)**

Portable::

Can get badges from any academic institution provincially, nationally or globally and create a custom diploma or certificate.

Transparent::

The process to create a micro-credential is available to everyone.

“Stackable”:

What micro-credentials do I need for a diploma or degree?

What order?

Consistency of learning?

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<sup>3</sup> Custom Micro-credentials for a Common Problem, Ontario Tech Talent:  
<https://ontariotechtalent.ca/custom-microcredential-for-a-common-problem/>



## **The EU Approach to Micro-credentials (Slide 17)**

The Accessibility Act and a framework with accessibility and transparency as well as monitoring and assessment processes to ensure quality education.

### **Framework to be Harmonized (Slide 18)**

Portable between countries.

Transparent development process that is standardized.

Accessible for those with disabilities.

Strong on assessment process.

Many are at the university level rather than college level but the framework applies to all.

### **Harmonization (Slide 19)**

Integrated with the Digital Accessibility Act. (this is missing from the Canadian/North American implementation).

Talks about learning rather than training.

There is a difference between being trained to do something and understanding why you are doing this and how it affects other elements.

“An effective culture of lifelong learning is key to ensuring that everyone has the knowledge, skills and competences they need to thrive in their personal and professional lives.”

“However, without common standards ensuring their quality, transparency, cross-border comparability, recognition and portability, micro-credentials cannot reach their full potential.”

[A European approach to micro-credentials | European Education Area \(europa.eu\)](#)<sup>4</sup>

### **EU 301 549 (2021) (Slide 20)**

Is the foundation for accessible digital content.

Incorporates WCAG 2.1.

Goes beyond WCAG.

Other countries have adopted it in principle then added customized elements specific to their needs.

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<sup>4</sup> A European approach to micro-credentials, European Education Area:  
<https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/micro-credentials>

Several Canadian government ministries and the government as a whole is looking to do the same.

Countries acknowledge global opportunities for harmonized workforce and educational opportunities.

## **EU Accessibility Act (Slide 21)**

EAA was developed from the UN Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Implementation laws needed to be met by 2019.

June 28, 2025, for full implementation.

Covers people with disabilities and seniors.

Applies to products and services.

For businesses in the EU or those whose audience is in the EU.

Seamless cross border trading.

Expand markets.

## **EU Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027) (Slide 22)**

Plan for high quality, accessible and inclusive education for the EU.

Response to COVID.

Provide education and training opportunities as people get back to work.

High quality EU education ecosystem.

Involves transformation plans for all levels of education.

Enhance digital skills and and competencies.

Common guidelines for teachers and educators.

European Digital Education Hub.

To support both priority areas.

## **Summary with Humour! (Slide 23)**

Sometimes the best laid plans of mice and men...

## **Theory vs. Reality (Slide 24)**

The table on this slide is reproduced in an accessible format from the following article:

Micro-credentials in Ontario by Alex Usher

April 28, 2021

Higher Education Strategy Associates

<b>What Education Ministers Believe About Micro-Credentials</b>	<b>Reality</b>
Cheap, accessible	Sure, if you're prepared to fund them. Otherwise, you get what you pay for.
Credit-bearing	OK, if you specify it that way.
Non-credit-bearing	OK, if you specify it that way.
Delivered online	Sure. Why not? But not necessarily.
Attached to a digital credential	What in the hell are you talking about?
Competency-based	No. Come on.
Industry-focused	Maybe. If you specify it that way.
Transparent	In theory, but it requires a lot of work to create a system where the learning done in a credential is understandable in terms both of credential length and credential level.
Stackable	This is up to each institution, but at a minimum it implies that they understand what level each micro-credential is at so they can be grouped together
Portable	Implies that other institutions can understand the length and level of a credential and are prepared to award credit at the appropriate level for them.

[Micro-credentials in Ontario](#)<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Micro-credentials in Ontario: <https://higherstrategy.com/micro-credentials-in-ontario/>

## **Micro-credentials have Potential (Slide 25)**

IF, and only IF North America adopts the harmonization approach to implementing micro-credentials.

Need to have harmonization between micro-credential badging companies.

If the concept of micro-credentials is to be viable, there needs to be one single point of gathering your own badges.

## **Possible Scenario (Slide 26)**

Consider a scenario:

I want a PhD from Portfolio.

I haven't been in academia for 20 years.

Micro-credentials in literature review, writing a thesis, developing a thesis...

I could gather all of the components of a PhD in Education through badges and then work with an academic institution to finalize the PhD.

Would mean that North America MUST change its offerings in PDDs.

## **Resources! (Slide 27)**

Want to know more about accessible document design or inclusive education? Here are some resources.

### **General Resources (Slide 28)**

Universidad Cardenal Herrera CEU and Micro-credential Information:

<https://www.uchceu.com/en/about-us/microcredentials#:~:text=Microcredentials%20To%20improve%20the%20employability%20of%20our%20graduates%2C,possess%20on%20social%20networks%20in%20an%20effective%20way.>

McMaster University Micro-credential Home Page:

<https://continuing.mcmaster.ca/programs/microcredentials/>

eCampus Micro-credentials Framework:

<https://micro.ecampusontario.ca/#:~:text=The%20eCampusOntario%20micro%2Dcredential%20framework,of%20new%20micro%2Dcredential%20initiatives.&text=eCampusOntario%20supports%20and%20encourages%20the,Ontario%20and%20beyond%20our%20borders.>

## **Credly (Slide 29)**

<https://credly.com/organizations/credly/badges>

## **Ontario Canada Resources (Slide 30)**

Micro-credentials from Ontario's postsecondary schools

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/micro-credentials-ontarios-postsecondary-schools>

[eCampus Ontario Micro-credential Principles and Framework](#)<sup>6</sup>

Custom Micro-credentials for a Common Problem

<https://ontariotechtalent.ca/custom-microcredential-for-a-common-problem/>

Micro-credentials in Ontario, Higher Education Strategy Associates:

<https://higherstrategy.com/micro-credentials-in-ontario/>

## **AODA Alliance on Program Cancellation (Slide 31)**

AODA Alliance (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act):

<https://www.aodaalliance.org/whats-new/aoda-alliance-finally-gets-virtual-meeting-with-mohawk-college-president-to-see-restoration-of-the-accessible-media-production-program-that-mohawk-axed/>

<https://www.aodaalliance.org/whats-new/mohawk-colleges-reasons-for-cancelling-its-much-needed-accessible-media-production-program-dont-stand-up-under-scrutiny/>

<https://www.aodaalliance.org/whats-new/media-covers-backlash-against-mohawk-colleges-wrong-headed-axing-of-its-much-needed-accessible-media-production-program/>

## **Media Coverage of Program Cancellation (Slide 32)**

CNIB:

Mohawk College Suspends Accessible Media Production Program.

<https://www.cnib.ca/en/news/mohawk-college-accessible-media-production-program-suspension?region=on#:~:text=Mohawk%20College%20suspended%20its%20Accessible%20Media%20Production%20%28AMP%29,Ron%20J.%20McKerlie%2C%20in%20response%20to%20the%20announcement> .

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<sup>6</sup> eCampus Ontario Micro-credential Principles and Framework: extension://memepcobodlebmohdlnfnjiaalggfcpic/https://www.ecampusontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Micro-credentials-en1.pdf

CBC

Mohawk College faces Backlash for Shuttering Accessible Media Production Program.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/mohawk-college-accessible-media-production-program-1.6481612>

You can search for other media articles on the cancellation of this one of a kind program in Canada.

## **Colleges & Institutes Canada (Slide 33)**

National framework for micro-credentials

<https://www.collegesinstitutes.ca/policyfocus/micro-credentials/>

The “framework” simply defines a micro-credential and is not as robust as the EU approach.

Disappointing!

## **EU Implementation of Micro-credentials (Slide 34)**

EU Accessibility Act, Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion:

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1202>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2022/05/11/the-european-accessibility-act-everything-you-need-to-know/?sh=2045606b5b86>

A European approach to micro-credentials

<https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/micro-credentials>

EU Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027):

<https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan>

Output of the micro-credentials higher education consultation group :

<https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7a939850-6c18-11eb-aeb5-01aa75ed71a1>

## **Other EU Policy and legal Documents (Slide 35)**

A Europe Fit for the Digital Age:

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age_en)

European Skills Agenda.

<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en>

European Pillars of Social Rights.

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights_en)

European Education Area Explained.

<https://education.ec.europa.eu/about-eea/the-eea-explained>

## **Contact! (Slide36)**

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There are free tutorials on the Karlen Communications website:

<http://www.karlencommunications.com>

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