



Government of
South Australia

Micro-credentials in South Australia

Consultation Outcomes Report

November 2020

www.tasc.sa.gov.au/micro-credentials

Introduction

A range of stakeholders were asked to help develop the policy direction, explore concepts, and refine the approach for the implementation of micro-credentials in South Australia in the short and longer term with a focus on:

- ▶ Defining micro-credentials through developing a shared understanding what they are between industry, government and training providers;
- ▶ Determining clear roles of government, industry and individuals in micro-credentials; and
- ▶ Developing a framework for development, delivery, assessment, quality, recognition and funding of micro-credentials.

The consultation approach was held in three phases from February 2020 to June 2020 in a range of settings being face to face and virtual workshops, and written submissions. Stakeholders included the three education sectors, a cross section of industry / employers, and government, all of whom were engaged throughout the consultation period.



Workshops included:

17 February 2020: kick-off face to face workshop to deliver foundational work to support the uptake of micro-credentials in South Australia (21 attendees).

10 March 2020: face to face workshop to explore concepts in the use of micro-credentials across a range of settings (23 attendees).

21 May to 3 June 2020: virtual workshops guided by a Discussion Paper to refine the definition and approach of micro-credentials (37 attendees).

Consultation was intentionally designed to provide an open forum where opportunities, benefits, risks and barriers could be raised.

Outcomes from the consultation are provided in this report and have informed the development and endorsement process for the micro-credentials pilot for South Australia. Additionally, the workshop outcomes will influence national and state VET reforms where micro-credentials are being considered in a range of settings to meet workforce mobility and emerging skill needs.

Consultation Outcomes



What we heard

Important features of micro-credentials include:

- **accreditation**
- **alignment with the Australian Qualifications Framework**
- **co-designed with, and/or endorsed by, industry or a profession**
- **industry relevance**
- **certification**
- **recognition**

Accredited

- Accreditation ensures that:
 - specific standards and quality assurance measures are met
 - there is integrity in the development of a micro-credential
 - the learning can be validated to give meaning to industry, enterprise, community and the individual.

Aligned to the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

- Where possible micro-credentials should be aligned to the AQF so that:
 - the learning meets the skills and knowledge required
 - appropriate competency outcomes are identified
 - national quality assurance mechanisms are implemented
 - competencies can be mapped to a full qualification
 - learning is recognised and valued by employers and industry.

Co-designed with, and/or endorsed by, industry or a profession

- The development and assessment of micro-credentials should be co-designed, and/or endorsed by, industry to ensure the learning outcomes meet necessary standards.
- For highly casualised industries where individuals move between employers based on demand for skilled labour (i.e. creative industries, music festival circuits, etc.), co-designing with industry is important to allow for mobility in that sector.
- Micro-credentials may have a role in compulsory professional development and for professional practices which allows for growth.

Industry relevance

- The development of a micro-credential requires the support of rapid decision making to ensure it responds to industry's immediate and future / anticipated demands, connects to research and drives innovation.
- A regular review / evaluation mechanism will need to be applied to ensure a micro-credential remains current or is decommissioned if it becomes out of date.

Certification

- Certification will be required to confirm that an individual has completed, and been awarded, a micro-credential.
- This certification will verify the knowledge, skills, experience, and attributes within a chosen industry or profession.
- Certification should be recorded digitally so that individuals can keep track of their learning.
- The national Unique Student Identifier would be an appropriate place to record micro-credentials, noting that South Australia cannot pursue this alone.

Recognition

- Micro-credentials should be recognised, and learners should be able to demonstrate achievement with employers and other training providers.
- Achievement of the learning outcomes through accredited training should provide a pathway to a formal accredited course so that the learning undertaken can contribute to a qualification, regardless of whether the learner decides to take up this opportunity in the short term.
- Micro-credentials should be portable, stackable and transferable to support learners to pivot between and across VET, universities and workplaces.

Points of divergence



Focus of the Approach

The South Australian approach aims to establish a broad definition and guiding principles to suit a range of educational and industry settings in South Australia. It supports the growing interest in promoting and enabling seamless pathways between education sectors and promote linkages between vocational and higher education.

There was strong support that the approach to micro-credentials should focus on development, recognition and certification of micro-credentials rather than prescribing delivery approaches which may limit innovation in implementation. This is reflected in the guidelines



Funding

The scope of this engagement was system development rather than an open discussion on Government funding. This was important to ensure broad thinking of the opportunities and barriers to implementing micro-credentials was not constrained to considering only where Government may invest.

Throughout the engagement stakeholders were interested to discuss potential for Government investment of micro-credentials. Issues such as level of industry and individual benefit achieved, connection to nationally accredited training and endorsement approaches were raised and have been captured for future consideration by the Department.

The South Australian approach is intended to be broad to inform implementation of micro-credentials with or without Government funding. It can be used by industry and training providers to develop micro-credentials in a fee-for service market as well as to guide Government investment approaches.



Endorsement

There was debate around whether micro-credentials needed industry endorsement and if so, who would represent industry to undertake this role. This was of particular interest given differing endorsement approaches between schooling VET and higher education sectors. Issues of how to balance responsiveness, quality and competition were explored with various options for how to resolve these issues discussed. This is an area where the differing roles in the sectors will result in different approaches for each.

For VET, the Department for Innovation and Skills as the State Training Authority will consider what would constitute industry endorsement for VET micro-credentials. This will be undertaken in consultation with the Training and Skills Commission and Industry Skills Councils.



Dual sector approaches

Dual sector micro-credentials have the potential to enable learners to pivot between and across VET, universities, and the workplace. The role for micro-credentials across education sectors to create seamless and meaningful learning journeys and pathways for individuals was considered, particularly regarding connections between VET and higher education.

Stakeholders identified that developing dual sector approaches post-school would add a level of sophistication to the education and training of South Australians. There was recognition that the SA schooling system is well integrated with VET through the single senior secondary certificate and diverse VET pathways for senior secondary students. It was recommended that this be maintained.

Higher education providers have indicated they are open to engage with Government to consider the development of shorter form credential articulations and co-delivery, with the intent to incentivise skill development in identified industries. This will provide clarity for individuals to engage in either University or VET to strengthen or broaden their skill sets and credentials, and for them to be recognised and transportable.

Universities are already working on shorter form credentials that support and align to national VET reforms through the provision of flexible, valued and recognised credentials for individuals, and similarly across employers and industry. Dual sector micro-credentials require further engagement to build a level of sophistication to their development and implementation. This will be facilitated by the Department for Innovation and Skills.

Thank you to participants

The Department for Innovation and Skills would like to thank participants for their engagement in the discussions around why micro-credentials are important and how they could be developed in South Australia to support industry through innovative training approaches.

For more information visit www.tasc.sa.gov.au/micro-credentials
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