

Designing a Suite of Micro-credentials: A Practical Framework

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Executive Summary

In 2025, eCampusOntario identified the need for a framework or approach for developing a harmonized suite of micro-credentials. Unable to find a publicly available framework, **we decided to use our own micro-credential portfolio and expertise to build such a framework. This approach provides a practical example** that can be used across postsecondary education, as efforts to expand and harmonize micro-credential offerings increase as a response to changes in the labour market and postsecondary institutions. This framework is a way of answering the questions:

- what should be the same across micro-credentials?
- what can be different?
- what needs to be considered operationally to support this?

The framework is intended to be a practical addition to [eCampusOntario's Micro-credential Principles](#), which articulates a theoretical understanding of micro-credentials, and [eCampusOntario's Micro-Credential Toolkit](#) which provides a more detailed overview of how to develop and implement individual micro-credentials. It also connects the principles and creation of individual micro-credentials to an overarching practical structure of creating a harmonized suite.

Below is a list of guiding questions to consider in **creating a suite of micro-credentials**. This resource is openly licensed to help others put together cohesive micro-credential offerings in this rapidly growing space.

Methodology

An environmental scan was conducted to understand what frameworks currently exist to define and support the development of a suite of micro-credentials. Our definition of a 'suite of micro-credentials' is a group of related micro-credentials. We left open what connects the micro-credentials but it could include themes, progressive skills acquisition, or learner experience.

Many existing frameworks address specific aspects of micro-credential development rather than the design of a complete micro-credential framework. For example, there are models for workplace training design, such as ADDIE (Pease, 2025); standards for online learning quality (National Standards for Quality Online Learning, 2026); guides for developing instructional models (Natarajan & Charles, 2024); and competency frameworks (Green & Levy, 2021). eCampusOntario's *Micro-credential Toolkit* (Bigelow et al., 2022) similarly supports the development of individual micro-credentials and was created in consultation with sector leaders. However, while these resources are valuable, they do not provide practical guidance on the intentional design and harmonization of a **suite** of micro-credentials as a cohesive offering. We were unable to locate a framework that addresses this suite-level focus, suggesting a gap in practical guidance in this area.

To address this gap, a facilitated workshop was conducted with eCampusOntario's Professional Learning team. The purpose of the workshop was to capture the team's experience in developing eCampusOntario's own suite of micro-credentials. Insights from the workshop were analyzed and synthesized into this resource, which documents the key elements of eCampusOntario's current micro-credential framework. The draft resource was then reviewed by the Professional Learning team to ensure accuracy and completeness, and their feedback was incorporated.

In the final section, additional topics are mentioned, relevant to our members as providers of formal credentials, that emerged in conversation with eCampusOntario's Professional Learning team during the review of this document.

Steps to Create a Micro-credential Framework

Use the 6 steps below to build out your own framework for your suite of micro-credentials.

Step 1: Define Audience and Subject Area

Your micro-credential suite should be anchored in a who you think will take your micro-credentials and what subject area you plan to cover. An audience could be people in a certain job, industry, or holding a particular level of education. We recommend centering the areas of focus within your organization's strategic plan. This may be a straightforward process, but if it is not, create a process to determine what topics will be included and what are out of scope for your micro-credential suite. Some things to keep in mind when deciding on your audience and topic areas include access to expertise, available resources, market analysis, and alignment with organizational strategy.

Step 2: Determine Conceptual Approach

How will your micro-credentials work together?

- **Progressive/Stackable:** in this approach, the individual micro-credentials build on one another. Each module assumes prior knowledge or skills from earlier ones following a defined path
- **Modular:** each micro-credential within the suite can be completed without knowledge of the other micro-credentials. The micro-credentials can be taken in any order.
- **Hybrid:** the suite has a core set of foundational models that follow a defined path with additional, stand alone, micro-credentials that provide specialized knowledge.

Step 3: Define Framework Elements

Consider what you want standardized across all micro-credentials within your suite. Define the circumstances, if any, that you would deviate from the standard micro-credential format. Listed are some elements that could be standardized:

1. Level of effort required of the learner

When a learner signs up for a micro-credential within a suite of micro-credentials, will the level of effort be the same across all the micro-credentials? To calibrate the level of effort, consider the following :

- How many learning outcomes per module?
- How many activities?
- How many modules?
- How many facilitated sessions
- What is the duration (weeks, hours)?

2. Course outcomes

What will learners receive at the end of a micro-credential; for example, will it be an actionable capstone project, letter grade, self-assessment, and/or pass fail?

3. Pedagogical design

What is the conceptual approach to teaching, for example, Bloom's Taxonomy?

4. Instructional design

What is the instructional design model, for example, action mapping?

5. Assessment methods

What kind of activities will be used to assess knowledge, for example, quizzes, capstone reports, discussions, etc.? If there is a consistent pedagogical or instructional design, this may affect how the assessment methods are standardized.

6. Employer Endorsement

Where possible, have the micro-credential framework endorsed by employers. Consider what 'endorsement' means. Will employers participate in designing and approving content? Will having the micro-credential be a factor in a hiring process? Is the micro-credential framework part of on-the-job training. The employer does not need to have participated in creating the micro-credential framework to endorse it. Also consider the internal resources available to steward employer participation in an endorsement process.

7. User Experience (UX) and Learner Journey

Standardize the look and feel of the micro-credential suite within the Learning Management System.

Consider standardizing the communications across the micro-credentials throughout the learner's experience: registration, during the course and facilitated sessions, badging, and follow up survey.

What course elements, e.g. overview, discussion, exploration, language, are consistent, even if not all elements are used in all modules. Note: UX design should align with whatever decision is made regarding pedagogy and instructional design approach.

Step 4: Plan Facilitator Training

Define what knowledge and skills facilitators need to support a micro-credential. The type of facilitation training needed will depend on how your micro-credential is delivered, for example, the number of live sessions included and the role of the facilitator.

Establish the steps the facilitator needs to take if they do not yet have the skills needed. For example, reviewing resources related to the topic, training on Learning Management Systems, such as Brightspace, functionality, etc.

Step 5: Deploy Evaluation and Iterate

Incorporate learners and, if applicable, employer, feedback on an ongoing basis to provide feedback to update the suite of micro-credentials.

Step 6: Build Relevant Tools

Once a Framework is created for the suite of micro-credentials, tools and templates can be created to reflect these decisions. The templates can include activities, formatted documents, Request for Quotation (RFQ), and Learning Management System branding.

Other Considerations

The framework document above reflects eCampusOntario's experience to date creating a micro-credential framework and is specific to our context offering informal micro-credentials. In looking to the future of micro-credential strategy and design, organizations are asking how micro-credential frameworks can support learners as they move in and out of the education system, and how they can create clearer pathways between learning and employment. Some institutions are exploring credit articulation, including how stacked micro-credentials might translate into formal credit and function across institutions. Another emerging focus is the recognition of prior learning within these frameworks. Together, these approaches point to a growing effort to make micro-credentials more flexible, portable, and meaningful for learners' long-term educational and career trajectories.

Contact Us

As this space evolves, eCampusOntario will continue to revisit and refine this framework. We welcome all who wish to contribute, please reach out to us at (research@ecampusontario.ca).

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