Maynooth University Framework for Micro-credentials

Part 1: Introduction and context

The development of a European approach to micro-credentials is a key flagship initiative in the European Education Area by 2025. The European Commission's proposal for *Council Recommendation on a European Approach to Micro-Credentials for Lifelong Learning and Employability* (December 2021) outlines the definition for and fundamental elements of micro-credentials in the European area.

From the national perspective, Maynooth University is one of seven partner universities on a national project led by the Irish Universities Association (IUA) collaborating to develop a national framework for micro-credentials.

Part 2: Maynooth University Framework for Micro-credentials

Purpose

The purpose of the Maynooth University Framework for Micro-credentials is to outline the academic structures and qualifications underpinning the development of micro-credential courses at Maynooth. This framework is in line with the characteristics of micro-credentials as agreed by the seven Irish Universities.

Principles

The Maynooth University Framework for Micro-credentials is guided by the following principles:

1. The Framework adopts the definition for micro-credentials specified in the Commission proposal for Council Recommendation on a European Approach to Micro-Credentials for Lifelong Learning and Employability SWD (2021) 367 final:

    The record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined standards. Courses leading to micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs. Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, can be shared and are portable. They may be standalone or combined into larger credentials. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity.

2. All Maynooth University micro-credentials are credit-bearing, within the range of 5 ECTS to 15 ECTS.

3. Maynooth University micro-credentials are not formal awards. Learners who undertake a micro-credential receive a Maynooth University transcript upon completion, recording the ECTS credits earned. Learners do not receive a University parchment and learners do not attend Maynooth University graduation ceremonies. If departments wish to issue a Certificate of Completion, an approved template will be made available which is the format that should be used. Micro-credentials may contribute to the completion of larger awards.

4. A micro-credential at Maynooth University will normally be completed at levels 8 and 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), while recognizing that micro-credentials at level 7 may be considered.

5. Micro-credentials will use the title convention of "Micro credential: short title." The long title may be used for marketing purposes, but all marketing materials should make it clear that on completion the learner will be awarded a xx-ECTS credit micro-credential in XXX.

6. Microcredentials may be used as exemptions towards major or minor awards (in line with guidelines provided by the University).

7. Micro-credentials at Maynooth University may be stacked into larger, formal awards. Where such stacking may be possible and suitable, the combination of micro-credentials and/or modules required to earn the formal award will be predetermined by the University. The formal award may be a special purpose or a minor award on the NFQ.

8. Maynooth University micro-credentials are normally part-time courses, designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competencies that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs.

9. Each Maynooth University micro-credential has clearly defined academic entry requirements that set out the admissions criteria tailored to the specific micro-credential.

10. Where an applicant does not meet the stipulated admissions criteria for a micro-credential, the applicant (or, in some cases, the employer of a group of learners) has the opportunity to submit an application through the University's *Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning* (RPEL) process.

11. Each Maynooth University micro-credential provides learners with a set of learning outcomes specific to the micro-credential undertaken. The assessment practices are tailored to allow learners demonstrate they have acquired the associated learning outcomes.

12. The Maynooth University Teaching and Learning Guidelines sets out the principles and policy guiding teaching and learning at the University. The general principles outlined in the Guidelines apply to all teaching at the University, including teaching micro-credentials.

13. Results for individual micro-credentials are reviewed and approved by departmental examination boards prior to University Examination Boards.

14. The quality assurance of Maynooth University micro-credentials is provided through the quality processes and procedures of the Maynooth University Framework for Quality Assurance and Enhancement.

15. Micro-credentials will be approved by the University's Academic Programmes Committee in accordance with published procedures.

Annex A: Version History

Version 23 May 2022	Approved at Academic Council May 2022. Published on University website.
Version 22 May 2023	Update: departmental examination boards and University Examination Boards. Approved at Academic Council 22 May 2023. Published on University website.