

Micro-credentials: Advancing Sustainable Business Practices Through Targeted Workforce Upskilling

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Overview

Employer perspectives of micro-credential short course learning were studied through a Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Scotland-commissioned collaborative project. Micro-credentials are small packets of learning and skills acquisition that may be recognised by a digital certificate or badge. They may be standalone, or the starting point for degree-level study (QAA, 2020). Despite the recognised educational benefits of micro-credentials, limited research has been conducted regarding employer views (Perkins & Pryor, 2021). This poster illustrates findings from an employer survey and considers how micro-credentials have the potential to enable sustainability. Upskilling the workforce with the skills to embed sustainable practices would allow businesses to address the UN sustainability goals and drive long-term impact.

Key Survey Findings

A mixed-methods, online SNAP survey was used to explore employer awareness and potential workplace use of micro-credentials. 92 employer responses came from 22 employment sectors, with a range of organisational sizes. Before completing the survey, only 13% of employer respondents reported having engaged with the concept of micro-credentials.

Figure 1: Five-stage Model for Co-developing Sustainability Micro-credentials



Table 1: Highlights of Employer Survey Responses

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Micro-credentials provide credible CPD opportunities for employees.	17%	63%	19%	1%	0%
Micro-credentials offer the ability to address skills gaps in employees.	24%	63%	12%	1%	0%
Micro-credentials should reward learning with academic credit.	16%	56%	27%	0%	1%
A wide range of micro-credentials topics are offered by universities to enable upskilling and reskilling of employees.	7%	35%	49%	8%	1%

Next Steps....

Based on survey findings, the authors offer a practical 5-stage model (Figure 1) to help co-develop sustainability focused micro-credentials through business-university partnerships.

Findings indicate employer interest in co-creation of micro-credentials, especially in areas that align with workforce trends and technology advancements.

"From what I have come across, the micro-credentials offered are becoming more and more what employees (and businesses) need to operate in the modern world. The more flexible and on-point these are, the better."

(Engineering & Manufacturing, Small Business)

"This is definitely the way CPD and learning is going, I can see this would be a good way to encourage leadership and management development as an ongoing learning experience."

(Information Technology, Large Business)

References

- Perkins, J., & Pryor, M. (2021). Digital badges: Pinning down employer challenges. Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability, 12(1), 24-38. <https://doi.org/10.21153/jtlge2021vol12no1art1027>
- QAA (Scotland) Understanding micro-credentials and small qualifications <https://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/resilient-learning-communities/flexible-and-accessible-learning/understanding-micro-credentials-and-small-qualifications-in-scotland>