Micro-credentials Policy

Section 1 - Introduction

(1) The University of Newcastle (University) offers a range of courses for continuing professional development (cpd), pathways, academic skills, and executive education. These courses provide opportunities for learners seeking relevant knowledge and skills in smaller, more flexible, more accessible forms, and in a shorter period.

(2) Micro-credentials provide alternatives for reskilling, upskilling, and lifelong learning to support industry needs and also in some cases, to offer pathways for entry into award programs.

(3) This policy and the Micro-credentials Schedule draw upon information from the National Microcredentials Framework (Department of Education, Skills, and Employment).

Section 2 - Scope

(4) This policy applies to micro-credentials created and offered by the University.

(5) This Policy makes references to School and College structures and positions. Equivalent structures and positions may exist in Pathways and Academic Learning Support Centre and are referenced where relevant.

Section 3 - Purpose

(6) This policy outlines the University's approach to providing shorter forms of learning, and:

a. establishes the principles for creating, approving, and quality assurance of the University's micro-credentials;
b. provides the University's standards and quality requirements for micro-credentials, including but not limited to portability, accessibility, coherence, and currency; and
c. establishes the unit value and credit recognition of the University's micro-credentials.

Section 4 - Principles

(7) The University will offer micro-credentials to:

a. support diversification of the University portfolio by catering to new types of learners who may not have previously considered studying at the University;
b. provide education opportunities through partnerships with industry, employers, and professional associations;
c. enable learners to diversify or enhance their skills and adapt to changing career opportunities driven by evolving industry and community needs; and
d. engage learners in research-informed learning and align with the University's areas of research strength.

(8) In line with the National Microcredentials Framework, microcredentials may:

a. contain assessable VET skillsets or units of competency;
b. offer modularised assessed components of existing higher education curriculum or courses;
c. offer industry learning that is assessed (such as but not limited to certifications); or
d. offer other forms of assessed learning or competencies (for example, higher education or industry courses not currently accredited by a regulatory authority).

(9) The following are not considered suitable to be offered as a micro-credential:

a. unassessed learning or courses, including work integrated learning that is not assessed;
b. badges which are obtained through participation only (i.e. no assessment); or
c. formal qualifications within the AQF and macrocredentials, including diplomas, certificates and masters degrees.

(10) The University of Newcastle's micro-credentials should:

a. primarily focus on acquiring skills to meet the needs of employers and/or industries;
b. be either credit-bearing or non-credit bearing;

(11) Credit-bearing micro-credentials may:

a. provide a pathway to a recognised award qualification offered by the University;
b. be stacked to enable the granting of credit towards an award qualification;
c. be delivered in different modes and formats to suit learner's needs and preferences.

(12) Credit-bearing micro-credientials should align with the University's strategic goals and be financially viable.

(13) Credit-bearing micro-credentials should not normally be co-taught alongside award courses.

Section 5 - Approval

(14) The establishment of micro-credentials requires the approval of the relevant College Pro Vice-Chancellor, who should receive a brief business case proposal that outlines the objectives, target market, and financial or strategic value of the initiative.

(15) Credit-bearing micro-credentials must be approved in accordance with the requirements for the establishment of a course as outlined in the Course Design and Management Manual and will be subject to the same approval processes as award courses.

(16) Non-credit bearing micro-credentials must be approved by the relevant College Board.

(17) The establishment of micro-credentials that involve a third party require the approval of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and Vice President, following endorsement by the Portfolio Strategy Group (PSG) and must comply with the relevant provisions in the Global Partnership Framework and the Third Party Arrangements - Education Policy and Procedure, including provisions in relation to due diligence.

Section 6 - Quality Assurance

(18) Colleges are responsible for implementing robust oversight and management of academic, reputational, and commercial risks, and should consider impacts on existing offerings and revenue.

(19) The University's guidelines for teaching qualifications for delivery and coordination as outlined in the Appendices to the Course Design and Management Manual apply to the delivery of micro-credentials.

(20) Colleges must internally review each micro-credential every three years to determine if they should continue to be offered. The review must consider:

a. financial viability;
b. strategic value;
c. alignment with market needs, industry skills and/or knowledge;
d. student satisfaction; and
e. student completion rates.

(21) Micro-credentials that have been internally reviewed and are deemed unsatisfactory against the review criteria in Clause 17 should be discontinued or revised to address any identified issues.

(22) Colleges will provide an annual overview to Academic Senate of their credit bearing and non-credit bearing micro-credential offerings including current offerings and discontinued offerings.

Section 7 - Learner effort and credit recognition

(23) Learner effort for credit bearing micro-crednetials should be captured as units.

(24) Learner effort for non-credit bearing micro-credentials should be captured in hours and may include:

a. online interactions;
b. peer interactions;
c. self-study; and
d. assessment preparation.

(25) Decisions about Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) of credit-bearing micro-credentials will be detailed in the Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy.

(26) Credit-bearing micro-credentials can be used as part of a portfolio for admission, following defined pathways.

(27) Standard expectations for RPL apply, including an equivalency of learning outcomes, content, hours, and assessments.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	17th July 2025
Review Date	7th March 2027
Approval Authority	President Academic Senate
Approval Date	15th July 2025
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Belinda Yourn Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & Global)
Enquiries Contact	John Radvan Senior Manager, Academic Governance & Compliance Student and Academic Administration

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Risk" - Effect of uncertainty on objectives. Note: An effect is a deviation from the expected, whether it is positive and/or negative.

"Award" - When referring to a University qualification, this term means an academic qualification approved by Academic Senate that is conferred when a student has met the relevant program requirements. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Course" - When referring to a course offered by the University, a course is a set of learning activities or learning opportunities with defined, assessed and recorded learning outcomes. A course will be identified by an alphanumeric course code and course title. Course types include core courses, compulsory courses, directed courses, capstone courses and electives. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Credit" - When referring to course credit, credit is the recognition of equivalence in content and learning outcomes between different types of learning and/or qualifications. Credit can reduce the amount of learning required to achieve a qualification. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Pathways" - A mechanism to allow students to move through qualification levels with full or partial recognition for the qualifications and/or learning outcomes they already have.

"Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)" - Means an assessment of an individual’s prior learning to determine where credit will be granted. RPL includes formal, informal, and non-formal learning.

"Learning outcome" - In accordance with the AQF definitions, the expression of a set of knowledge, skills and the application of the knowledge and skills a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate as a result of learning.

"Program" - When referring to learning, a program is a sequence of approved learning, usually leading to an Award. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Research" - As defined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, or any replacing Code or

document.

"School" - An organisational unit forming part of a College or Division, responsible for offering a particular course.

"Unit" - When referring to an academic unit, unit means the proportional amount of academic credit allotted to a course. This term is used to define the requirements for a program award of the University and indicate a student's enrolment load. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Unit value" - The unit value for the course: 5,10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 50, 60, 70 or 80 units.

"Continuing professional development (CPD)" - Means formal learning activities which are required to be undertaken by professionals to maintain their ongoing industry accreditation or registration.

"College" - An organisational unit established within the University by the Council.

"Work integrated learning" - In the context of the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (HES Framework), work-integrated learning (WIL) encompasses any arrangement where students undertake learning in a work context as part of their course requirements. WIL can be undertaken as part of coursework or research training.