Duquesne University Micro-credential Policies and Guidelines
Policy, Academic Affairs, May 2021

What are Micro-credentials
Micro-credentials are largely stand-alone programs created to provide professional development opportunities to equip enrollees with specific knowledge, skills, and proficiencies.

Demand for Micro-credentials
The current information and knowledge-based economy requires individuals to continuously update their skills and abilities to remain current. As industries shift and companies evolve, individuals require new and varied skills to stay competitive and be marketable for employment and advancement opportunities in their sector.

This population seeks not only professional development, but a clear way to showcase their skills via representation in the form of a verified credential added to their CV or professional networking social media profile. A micro-credential earned through focused coursework in a specialized area can thus represent and verify a proficiency or level of achievement that these individuals require.

Often, those who already possess a degree or degrees and are now looking to acquire more focused skills or proficiency in a certain area. They may not have the need, interest, time, or financial resources to enroll in full degree-granting programs. They seek to earn a credential as quickly as possible to pursue new employment opportunities, to advance in their career, or to refine and update skills to better align with current industry best practices and expectations.

EAB identifies 6 personas who benefit most from micro-credentials. These personas are Upskilling in Place, Seeking Promotion, Facing Replacement, Returning to Workforce, Preparing for a Switch, and Pursuing a Passion.

Strategic Value of Micro-credentials
The micro-credential allows Duquesne to leverage existing capabilities and expertise to meet learner needs at multiple levels. With focused determination and imagination, many existing programs and courses can be adapted and marketed to the greater community in the form of a micro-credential. Through interdisciplinary partnership, expertise can be leveraged to enable Duquesne to offer specialized micro-credentials that few competitors can offer. This provides Duquesne with greater access to a more diverse range of individuals who otherwise might not be in the market for a traditional degree program. This expands the reach of Duquesne to a larger population in alignment with the strategic vision to meet learners wherever they may be.

By offering more educational opportunities to a larger and more diverse audience in the form of micro-credentials, Duquesne University is positioned to remain a leader at the forefront of innovation as universities adjust to meet changing needs.
Micro-credentials are Student-centered

Micro-credentials are intended to be functional and customized to student needs. Students who enroll in micro-credential programs comprise a diverse population. They may be aspiring or early-career professionals looking to gain new skills to change fields, mid-career professionals looking to sharpen or update their skills, or even those who seek personal enrichment for a variety of reasons.

To meet the varied expectations and needs of learners, micro-credential courses should be designed to be student-centric, allowing students a high degree of flexibility in the way that they complete course requirements and demonstrate achievement of course learning objectives. Instructors should avoid a one-size-fits-all approach to course design and assessment. Courses should offer variety, choice and as many pathways to successful completion as possible. Online learning and instructional design experts may assist faculty in the development of pedagogical strategies that enable learners the opportunity to apply their learning toward personal and professional development.

Micro-credential Program Requirements and Considerations

Generally there are two types of micro-credential programs at Duquesne University – credit-bearing and non-credit bearing. Both types seek to enhance professional development and advance career opportunities. Participants enrolled in any micro-credential program should be aware of the difference between credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing micro-credential programs.

Credit-bearing micro-credential programs consist of college-level courses, often stackable toward a certificate and/or degree program. Duquesne University credit-bearing courses must follow the Pennsylvania Department of Education Credit Hour Policy for earned credit hours. These micro-credential programs often require minimum standards for enrollment and continued participation, e.g. (minimum 3.0 GPA, etc.). Schools and programs may consider implementation of additional admissions standards. Schools are encouraged to consider the full picture of the applicant when making admissions decisions including professional experience and other relevant factors.

Non-credit micro-credential programs are offered in a variety of formats ranging from stand-alone courses to a series of courses or modules, focused on a specialized set of competencies. These micro-credential programs are encouraged to establish minimum admission standards to help ensure student persistence, program completion and retention. Non-credit micro-credential programs are not directly transferrable toward a certificate or degree program.

In all cases, if a student wishes to pursue a formal degree-seeking program, clear information should be provided about official admission application requirements that exist, including whether or not micro-credential course units or credits may transfer to the degree program, and if so, which degree-program requirements they might fulfill.
Students should work with their program of interest to determine potential transferability of courses or credits from any micro-credential program toward a degree-seeking program.

Schools may determine advanced standing equivalencies, if applicable, for either type of micro-credential program.

**Micro-credential Program Assessment and Effectiveness**

Micro-credential programs and courses should be reviewed annually by the creating school to ensure continued viability. This cyclical review will ensure that programs remain effective at meeting students’ educational needs. Updates to the curriculum, courses and teaching strategies should be implemented regularly in the pursuit of continuous improvement.

All courses should be reviewed prior to release to students to ensure effective design and delivery strategies are in place to support engaging learning experiences and student achievement of learning objectives. Instructors who teach online micro-credential courses should first complete professional development to ensure they are prepared to teach students in the online learning environment.

**Micro-credential Program Duration**

Credit-bearing micro-credential programs are generally 9 or fewer credit hours. Non-credit micro-credentials vary in length.

Micro-credential programs should balance time-to-completion considerations (either credit hours, units, etc.) with the time necessary for students to demonstrate competency and achievement of program outcomes. Micro-credential programs should enable participants to achieve program outcomes in as timely a manner as possible.

**Tuition & Aid**

Micro-credential programs pursued as a stand-alone programs do not qualify for federal financial aid. Micro-credential participants may apply for other forms of funding that may be available. However, some micro-credential programs may be completed while students are pursuing a degree. Those degree-seeking students may be eligible for federal financial aid.

Innovative pricing models are encouraged to make programs widely accessible given that federal financial aid is generally not available to participants.

**Awarding Micro-credentials**

Upon successful completion of micro-credential program requirements, digital acknowledgement of achievement will be granted to students.

Programs are encouraged to develop ways for micro-credentials to be highly-visible, with connections to professional networks (i.e., LinkedIn) leveraged as much as possible.

**Establishing a Micro-credential Program**

Duquesne welcomes the creation of new micro-credential programs. View the [micro-credential program proposal form](#) for considerations to guide initial exploration into the creation of a new
micro-credential program. New proposals should have prior approval from affiliated Academic deans prior to submission of the micro-credential program proposal form.

**Micro-credential Program Proposal Review and Approval**

Review and Approval Steps:

1. Dean’s office approval (all affiliated schools)
2. Submit [micro-credential program proposal form](#)
3. Academic Affairs - Office of the Provost approval