

Utah Tech University Policy

619: Microcredentials



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I. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide the Utah Tech University (“the University”) community with a common taxonomy around microcredentials and outline the development and approval process for microcredentials.

II. Scope

- 2.1 Microcredentials may represent the content of credit and/or noncredit study; they can be offered online, in-person, or a hybrid of both. Microcredentials may be specifically recognized by certain industries, in which case they may have the advantage of providing validation and attestation of industry-specified and frequently highly sought-after competencies. Each microcredential awarded must be represented clearly and accurately, addressing elements such as associated costs, financial aid, transferability, and stack-ability toward a degree.

III. Definitions:

- 3.1 **Blockchain:** A blockchain is a distributed database of records or a public ledger of all transactions or digital events that have been executed and shared among participating parties. The blockchain contains a certain and verifiable record of every single transaction ever made.
- 3.2 **Career Pathway:** A career pathway is an organized approach to career planning specifically leading individuals to a first job or to improve skills for different or better job opportunities.
- 3.3 **Certificate:** A certificate is awarded by an educational institution upon completion of a program of study. Certificate programs usually focus on learners gaining practical skills related to a career field and/or knowledge of a specific academic discipline.

- 3.4 **Certification:** A certification is given by an industry association or a union to someone who has passed a test to verify that they have the specialized knowledge, skills, and experience to do a certain job.
- 3.5 **Co-curricular:** An activity or accomplishment a learner pursues alongside a normal course of study, such as service learning or leadership or club involvement.
- 3.6 **Competency:** A competency is the capability to apply or use a set of related knowledge, skills, and abilities required to successfully perform critical functions or tasks.
- 3.7 **Degree:** A degree is an academic credential conferred by a college or university after examination or after completion of a program of study. A degree program includes more courses than a certificate program and typically provides learners with a greater depth of knowledge of the field of study.
- 3.8 **Digital Badge:** An indicator of accomplishment or skill that can be displayed, accessed, and verified online.
- 3.9 **Learning Outcome:** A learning outcome is a statement that describes the observable and measurable knowledge, skills, and dispositions learners will gain by the end of a particular assignment, class, course, or program.
- 3.10 **Microcredential:** An award that verifies, validates, and attests that specific skills and/or competencies have been achieved, particularly those that are industry-aligned. They differ from traditional degrees and certificates in that they are generally offered in shorter or more flexible timespans and tend to be more narrowly focused. They can be for credit or noncredit, and the delivery mode can be via any combination of online or in person.
- 3.11 **Stackable Credential:** Stackable credentials are part of a sequence of credentials accumulated over time to build up an individual's qualification to help them move along a degree path, a career pathway, or up a career ladder to potentially different and/or higher paying jobs.

IV. Policy

4.1 Permissions, Usage, and Ownership

4.1.1 All microcredentials carrying the University name must have prior approval before being awarded in accordance with this policy (see section 6.2 below).

4.1.2 The University will permit the use of digital badges for the purposes

of acknowledging and rewarding the performance of students across relevant credit-bearing and noncredit-bearing programs.

- 4.1.3 The earning of a microcredential symbolizes the attainment of a competency, skill, knowledge, or behavior that is supported by evidence.
- 4.1.4 The awarding and ownership of a microcredential is the right of the University. It is also the right of the University to revoke a microcredential that has been issued to a person that did not possess the knowledge, skill, or behavior that was being assessed, or acquired the badge through fraudulent or dishonest means.
- 4.1.5 Microcredentials must be archived on a platform that is easily accessible on electronic devices and that offers security, transparency, and blockchain validation, thus ensuring effortless transportability.
 - 4.1.5.1 All official University microcredentials must be awarded through the approved platform and no other platform.

4.2 Academic Quality

- 4.2.1 Academic quality is paramount for micro-credentials, and faculty governance participation is required.
- 4.2.2 Microcredentials are competency-based, reflecting skills, attitudes, or behaviors mastered.
- 4.2.3 Microcredentials are meaningful and of high quality, with learning standards, assessments, and clear documentation of skills mastered that have meaning beyond one classroom, one program, or the University.
- 4.2.4 Any microcredential designed to meet market needs should be informed by current data from appropriate markets and aligned with relevant industry/sector standards.
- 4.2.5 Learners can use a University microcredential to share their expertise to prospective employers, those hiring for internship opportunities, and to other academic institutions.
- 4.2.6 Microcredentials are developed and approved according to University curriculum policies and procedures consistent with the University mission and strategic goals. (See Policies 602 and 702)

- 4.2.6.1 The Microcredential Oversight Committee provides approval for microcredentials unrelated to academic curriculum.
 - 4.2.7 Credit-bearing microcredentials should be stackable within degree programs at the associate's, bachelor's, or master's level.
 - 4.2.8 Noncredit-bearing microcredentials may be submitted for review for possible conversion to credit through the University's Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) process (See Policy 523 and the University's PLA web page).
- 4.3 Designations of Microcredentials.
- 4.3.1 A microcredential award may be in the form of a digital badge, an entry on a transcript, a document, or a combination of forms such as a certificate and a badge. Regardless of the form, an official University microcredential award will carry one of the following designations:
 - 4.3.1.1 **Academic:** Awarded for accomplishments that involve academic credits. A University-approved certificate or study abroad would qualify for this designation.
 - 4.3.1.2 **Career Pathways:** Work-based or experiential learning, real world projects and engagements with employers, as well as employer endorsement of curricula. An internship might be an example of this microcredential.
 - 4.3.1.3 **Co-curricular:** An award accomplished in addition to or in partnership with an academic course of study. Participation in leadership experiences, intramurals, performance teams, etc. would qualify for this designation.
 - 4.3.1.4 **Continuing Education:** Awarded for noncredit lifelong learning courses.
 - 4.3.1.5 **Professional Education:** Awarded for the acquisition of special competencies for professional practice. Examples of this award might be an award for faculty completing a professional development experience or for an engineer who wants to upskill by completing a short course in Data Science. Can be for credit or noncredit.

V. References

5.1 University Policy 523: Extra-Institutional Credit

- 5.2 University Policy 602: Undergraduate Curriculum Approval and Revision
- 5.3 University Policy 702: Administration and Governance of the Graduate Studies Program
- 5.4 [Utah Tech University Prior Learning Assessment web page.](#)
- 5.5 National Association of Colleges and Employers
<https://www.naceweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined/>

VI. Procedures

6.1 Development procedures

6.1.1 Each microcredential, whether credit-bearing or noncredit, must be developed around competencies and include learning outcomes aligned with each competency.

6.1.1.1 Career readiness competencies that prepare college graduates for a successful transition into the workplace as listed on the National Association of Colleges and Employers web site can be used.

6.1.2 Outcomes (aligned with competencies) must be directly assessed using samples of the learner's work produced in the program awarding the microcredential.

6.1.3 All proposals for microcredentials are submitted on the Microcredential Proposal Form available on the Microcredential webpage.

6.2 Approval Process

6.2.1 All proposals for microcredentials are submitted electronically on the appropriate form to the Curriculum Office for distribution to the appropriate approval committee.

6.2.2 Proposals for microcredentials requiring academic credit will go through the regular curriculum approval process with Academic Council being the final step (see Policies 602 and 702).

6.2.2.1 All academic certificates are microcredentials by definition and need no further approval. They may be awarded as a digital badge in addition to appearing on the official academic transcript.

- 6.2.3 All other microcredential proposals will be reviewed and approved or denied by the Microcredential Oversight Committee, under the direction of the Associate Provost for Academic and Budget Planning and composed of four additional members representing faculty and staff from applicable divisions.
- 6.2.4 Once a microcredential is approved, additional information will be required if the award includes a digital badge. This information will be posted on our vendor's web page and will document pertinent aspects of the badge including:
 - 6.2.4.1 Skill tags related to labor market data.
 - 6.2.4.2 Earning criteria identifying tasks learners must complete to earn the badge.
 - 6.2.4.3 Standards by which learners were assessed on the criteria such as accreditation standards or learning outcomes.
 - 6.2.4.4 Level: foundational, intermediate, or advanced.

VII. Addenda—N/A

Policy Owner: Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost

Policy Steward: Associate Provost for Curriculum and Budget Planning and Faculty Senate

History

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