APPROACHES TO QA OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS

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STARTING POINT

- Micro-credentials are not new – but have gained prominence and new terminology

- Previous work on QA of micro-credentials in HE has confirmed:
  - Applicability of Bologna Process QA tools to micro-credentials
  - Providers have primary responsibility for quality and QA of micro-credentials
  - External QA should be proportionate

- IMINQA project is exploring further the state of play and preparing 'reflective questions' for internal and external QA of micro-credentials

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STATE OF PLAY

- Wide variety of approaches and stages of implementation

- Preferable to use and adapt existing approaches as far as possible

- Further work needed on RPL, stackability, portability etc.

- QA agencies expect guidance from national/European level

WHAT DEFINES QUALITY OF MICROCREDENTIALS?

Quality is contextual

Defined in relation to fitness for purpose

What is the purpose of micro-credentials?

WHY DO HEIS OFFER MICRO-CREDENTIALS?

- To increase their visibility and reputation by widening geographical reach and attracting more diverse groups of students,

- To increase their responsiveness to students' and labour markets' demands by reskilling and upskilling in a shorter time than traditional degree programmes

- To experiment with new pedagogies and technologies and to generate additional income or reduce costs

(Jansen and Schuwer, 2015)

What has changed since 2015?

WHY DO LEARNERS TAKE MICRO-CREDENTIALS?

- Enrolled students
  - As elective modules required by their programme
  - Self interest / personal development
  - Professional development

- Lifelong learners
  - Professional development / upskilling / reskilling
  - Access to higher education
  - Self interest / personal development

APPROACHES TO (QA OF) MICRO-CREDENTIALS

- Unbundling existing programmes
  - Developed through the institution's usual curriculum design processes
  - Requires additional reflection on how the micro-credential sits when outside the usual context
  - Usually covered by institution's internal QA processes for programmes

- Micro-credentials developed independently
  - Usually part of institution's life-long learning provision
  - Could also be tailor-made and/or developed in partnership
  - Often covered by institution's QA processes for life-long learning (lighter touch)

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR INTERNAL QA

- Why does my HEI offer micro-credentials and who are the target audiences?

- How can the special characteristics of micro-credentials be captured in the internal QA approach?

- What are the specific considerations for micro-credentials that are
  - originally conceived as part of an existing programme?
  - developed independently from any existing programme?

- What are the specific considerations for micro-credentials developed and delivered in partnership with other organisations?

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR EXTERNAL QA

- What is the role of my agency in supporting the QA of micro-credentials?
  - Expert body
  - Facilitating dialogue
  - Offering support and guidance
  - Ensuring quality through external QA frameworks
  - Providing information

- To what extent do existing external QA procedures need to be adjusted to address how an institution quality assures micro-credentials?

- How can my agency support alternative providers that offer micro-credentials?

FINAL REFLECTIONS

Key principles

- Balance between regulation, flexibility and proportionality
- Communication and transparency of information
- Stakeholder engagement
- Supporting student success

And don't forget…micro-credentials are not unique to higher education…

Coming up: inclusion of micro-credentials and micro-credential providers on DEQAR

THANK
YOU

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