
CHARM-EU Micro-credentials policy

1. Context

- 1.1. Lifelong learning is a key segment of the European educational landscape, prioritized by CHARM-EU, to consolidate and extend our innovative educational model. By enhancing social inclusion, active citizenship, personal development, competitiveness, and employability (UN, 2016), lifelong learning aligns strongly with CHARM-EU values and mission.
- 1.2. Micro-credentials are becoming central to this varied, flexible, and innovative lifelong learning ecosystem. As such, they are growing as a means to enhance lifelong learning in Europe; a tool for all learners to gain or upskill relevant labour market skills through transformative learning opportunities.
- 1.3. CHARM-EU recognizes the need to address this evolving landscape of lifelong learning and align with the European Approach to Micro-credentials for Lifelong Learning and Employability¹.
- 1.4. It envisages that micro-credentials will be a valuable tool to foster internal and external transformation, increase our networks and stakeholder interactions, and provide the ability to share CHARM-EU values, transdisciplinary education, and inter-institutional knowledge.
- 1.5. CHARM-EU has committed to preparing 120-140 ECTS worth of micro-credentials during the CHARM8 project, ending in December 2026.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. The purpose of this policy is to define and establish the process of proposing, developing, implementing, administrating, evaluating, and recognition of CHARM-EU micro-credentials.

¹ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

3. Benefits

- 3.1. This policy clarifies the process for CHARM-EU micro-credentials to ensure consistency, efficiency and transparency in their development and implementation.
- 3.2. This policy introduces quality assurance mechanisms for CHARM-EU micro-credentials to ensure that they meet high standards of academic quality and rigour. This ensures that the development and relevance of micro-credentials are quality assured, as well as their issuance to learners.
- 3.3. This policy reduces ambiguity and misinterpretation of CHARM-EU micro-credentials.

4. Scope

- 4.1. This policy is limited to CHARM-EU micro-credentials prepared during the CHARM8 project as defined in the definitions section of this policy. After the CHARM8 project, this policy may be reviewed and revised where appropriate.
- 4.2. Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctorate programmes or any other educational programmes outside of the definition of a CHARM-EU micro-credential are outside the scope of this policy.

5. Definitions

- 5.1. A **micro-credential** is *“the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined standards. Courses leading to micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs. Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, can be shared and are portable. They may be standalone or combined into larger credentials. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity (Council of the European Union, 2022)”*.

- 5.2. **Formal learning** is defined as the “acquisition of knowledge, know-how, information, values, skills and competences in an organised and structured environment in terms of learning objectives, time or resources (e.g. an education or training institution or a company).” CEDEFOP; 2024.
- 5.3. **Informal learning** is defined as “Acquisition of knowledge, know-how, information, values, skills and competences in the framework of daily activities – work, family or leisure – which are not explicitly designated as learning activities in terms of objectives, time or learning support.” CEDEFOP; 2024.
- 5.4. **Non-formal learning** is defined as the “Acquisition of knowledge, know-how, information, values, skills and competences in the framework of planned activities – in terms of learning objectives, time or resources – where some form of learning support is present (e.g. student-teacher/trainer relationships).” CEDEFOP, 2024
- 5.5. A **CHARM-EU micro-credential** is defined as a micro-credential following the Council of the European Union definition above. Within CHARM-EU, micro-credentials may apply to both formal educational programmes (e.g. single and jointly developed formal CHARM-EU educational programmes within the scope of this policy), and informal/non-formal learning activities (e.g. workshops, hackathons, networking events).
- 5.6. **Formal educational programmes** leading to the issuance of a micro-credential are those that have been formally approved in accordance with specific regulations of a CHARM-EU member university.
- 5.6.1. Formal educational programmes that lead to the issuing of a micro-credential and can be included in the CHARM-EU micro-credential catalogue include the following characteristics:
- 5.6.1.1. Are aligned to the micro-credential definition above.
 - 5.6.1.2. Align with at least four CHARM-EU [educational principles](#).
 - 5.6.1.3. Align with key areas relevant to CHARM-EU’s overall [vision](#).
 - 5.6.1.4. Address skill gaps identified at national and European levels.

- 5.6.1.5. Be accredited and quality assured by a CHARM-EU university prior to submission to the CHARM-EU Academic Council.
- 5.6.1.6. Have been approved by the CHARM-EU Academic Council for inclusion in the CHARM-EU micro-credentials catalogue.
- 5.6.1.7. Use a CHARM-EU digital credentialing format where possible.
- 5.6.2. There are different ways of setting up formal educational programmes issued as micro-credentials.
 - 5.6.2.1. Offered by a single CHARM-EU university that is responsible for the accreditation of the micro-credential.
 - 5.6.2.2. Offered jointly by a minimum of two CHARM-EU universities in a collaborative way. Additional partners involved in the development of the micro-credential can act as co-leads without being required to accredit the micro-credential.
- 5.7. CHARM-EU **informal and non-formal learning activities** that lead to the issuance of a micro-credential are those that differ from formal learning activities in that they do not constitute formal educational programmes with defined ECTS workload or accreditation requirements. Instead, they recognise engagement, and/or demonstrated acquisition of skills within shorter, flexible learning or professional contexts.
 - 5.7.1. For a CHARM-EU informal and non-formal learning activity to be recognised with a CHARM-EU digital credential, it should:
 - 5.7.1.1. Be collaboratively developed by a minimum of two CHARM-EU universities
 - 5.7.1.2. Align with at least three CHARM-EU educational principles
 - 5.7.1.3. Align with key areas relevant to CHARM-EU's overall vision
 - 5.7.1.4. Have been proposed to and approved by the CHARM-EU Academic Council

- 5.7.1.5. Provide supportive documentation for the delivery of this activity from a CHARM-EU manager or institutional contact.
- 5.7.2. These credentials are not assigned ECTS credits or formal EQF levels but may reference relevant skills or competencies (e.g. ESCO, GreenComp, DigiComp) where appropriate.
- 5.8. An **educational programme** is defined as a coherent set or sequence of educational activities designed and organized to achieve pre-determined learning objectives or accomplish a specific set of educational tasks over a sustained period. Within an educational programme, educational activities may also be grouped into sub-components variously described in national contexts as ‘courses’, ‘modules’, ‘units’, and/or ‘subjects’².
- 5.9. A **digital credential** is defined as an electronic, secured and verifiable statement issued by a competent authority (education or training provider, awarding body, professional organisation) describing a learning action(s), for example, activities (e.g. participation in a course, seminar or conference), achievements (e.g. learning outcomes, project), assessment criteria, professional entitlements (registration as a medical doctor, etc.) and certification or qualification obtained.³
- 5.10. An **accrediting university** is defined as the CHARM-EU university responsible for the process of quality assurance through which a programme of education or training is officially recognised and approved by the relevant legislative or professional authorities following assessment against predetermined standards.
- 5.11. A **co-lead** is defined as a CHARM-EU university involved in the development and/or delivery of the course leading to the micro-credential, but is not responsible for the accreditation of the course.

² <https://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/educational-programme?wbdisable=true>

³ <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-glossary/glossary?search=digital+credential>

- 5.12. **Stackable** micro-credentials are defined as those designed to be modular so that other micro-credentials can be added to create larger credentials⁴ by collecting a coherent set of credentials or completing learning pathways.

6. Principles

- 6.1. CHARM-EU will enhance and support micro-credentials by providing a collaborative, open, and innovative strategic approach where all applications, understandings, and delivery types of micro-credentials are considered, including formal, non-formal and informal.
- 6.2. CHARM-EU micro-credentials should align with the overall strategy, vision and mission of CHARM-EU.
- 6.3. CHARM-EU recognizes that micro-credentials are evolving at a rapid rate and can be understood in varied ways by universities, employers, learners, and teachers. To standardize our vision and strategy, we will use the Council of the European Union micro-credential definition as our anchor point.
- 6.4. CHARM-EU should provide quality-assured, transparent, and verified certification for learners taking part in micro-credentials through digital certification where possible and relevant.
- 6.5. CHARM-EU micro-credentials should provide learners with skills and competencies that respond to national and European market needs, social or environmental challenges, and are aligned with broad European skill frameworks.
- 6.6. CHARM-EU recognises that informal and non-formal learning activities such as professional development learning activities, including workshops, hackathons, training sessions, and collaborative activities, contribute to the development of skills, competencies, and professional practices aligned with the CHARM-EU mission.

⁴ <https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/micro-credentials%20brochure%20updated.pdf>

6.6.1. These activities align with the European approach which recognizes non-formal and informal learning: *“Obtaining micro-credentials is possible following assessment of learning outcomes, obtained either through a specific course leading to a micro-credential, or on the basis of assessment of learning outcomes resulting from non-formal and informal learning.”*

7. Policy

Proposing a CHARM-EU micro-credential

- 7.1. Each CHARM-EU micro-credential must be proposed to the CHARM-EU Academic Council for approval to ensure alignment with the characteristics of a CHARM-EU micro-credential, quality assurance requirements, and balanced institutional engagement.
- 7.2. Micro-credentials proposed through direct submission must use the designated CHARM-EU micro-credential proposal form (see Appendix 2).
- 7.3. Micro-credentials proposed through a CHARM-EU alliance-level call or initiative may follow an alternative submission and review process defined within that call or initiative.
- 7.4. The proposer(s) is (are) required to be a staff member of a CHARM-EU partner(s) who has approval via email to propose and deliver a micro-credential from their CHARM-EU Institutional Manager and/or accreditation department within their institution.
 - 7.4.1. The form is received by the JVAO responsible for Boards, and is shared in the Agenda of the next available Academic Council.
- 7.5. The proposer(s) is (are) expected to attend any discussions on their proposal at the Academic Council session.
- 7.6. The Academic Council is responsible for reviewing the proposal form and any other relevant documentation for the micro-credential, and ensuring the quality and relevance of the proposal for CHARM-EU.

7.7. If there are any financial ramifications or resource needs, the proposer(s) is (are) required to submit their proposal to the Executive Board for approval.

7.7.1. The Executive Board is responsible for reviewing the proposal form and any other relevant documentation for the micro-credential, with a particular focus on operational aspects.

7.8. If the micro-credential is approved by the Academic Council (and the Executive Board where relevant), the proposer(s) is (are) recommended to contact, where appropriate:

- WP12 to discuss professional development, educational principles alignment, or KCT establishment needs
- WP4/JVITO to discuss digital credential needs
- WP17 to discuss marketing and communication needs
- Quality Office to discuss evaluation and quality assurance

Developing a CHARM-EU micro-credential: Accreditation

7.9. At the time of the publication of this policy, CHARM-EU is not a legal entity and cannot accredit its own micro-credentials using the CHARM-EU identity. Consequently, at least one CHARM-EU university must assume responsibility for the accreditation of any formal educational programme issued as a micro-credential (single or jointly).

7.10. Formal educational programmes leading to a micro-credential will be issued by the CHARM-EU university responsible for the accreditation of the micro-credential when teaching staff are satisfied that the learner has achieved measurable and specific learning objectives and completed all assessments.

7.11. Informal or non-formal CHARM-EU activities not formally accredited will be approved by CHARM-EU via the Academic Council.

Developing a CHARM-EU micro-credential: Content and implementation

- 7.12. CHARM-EU micro-credentials are required to address relevant skill needs determined by labour market intelligence, needs assessment, stakeholders, and policy-makers, and should address the needs of specific target groups of learners.
- 7.13. CHARM-EU micro-credentials can be delivered through any modality (e.g. online, face-to-face, blended or hybrid) that is fitting for the attainment of learning objectives and educational delivery.
- 7.14. CHARM-EU micro-credentials should be offered at a time and location that allows for flexibility for lifelong learners.
- 7.15. CHARM-EU micro-credentials should be designed using the [CHARM-EU educational principles](#) as a scaffold.
- 7.16. CHARM-EU micro-credentials must align with [European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations \(ESCO\)](#) skills and competencies to enhance transparency, comparability, and improved alignment with labour market needs. They should be clearly described in the programme descriptor.
- 7.17. CHARM-EU micro-credentials will use standard elements for description contained within the proposal, on the CHARM-EU website and the accrediting institution website, where relevant, as per [Annex 1 of the Council of the European Union Recommendations \(Appendix 1\)](#).
- 7.18. Formal educational programmes leading to a micro-credential should be classified by a [European Qualification Framework Level](#).
- 7.19. Formal educational programmes leading to a micro-credential should use financial and budgeting models determined by the accrediting institution.
- 7.20. Non-formal or informal programmes may lead to either a CHARM-EU micro-credential, where learning outcomes are assessed against transparent criteria appropriate to the scope and nature of the activity, or a participation-based digital credential or badge recognising engagement or involvement in a CHARM-EU activity.

- 7.20.1. Assessment approaches may vary depending on the nature of the learning activity, including proportionate evidence of learning where appropriate.
- 7.20.2. Clear completion criteria must be defined for the issuance of non-formal or informal micro-credentials (e.g. participation, submission of outputs, or demonstration of engagement).
- 7.20.3. Non-formal or informal micro-credentials are issued centrally by CHARM-EU through its digital credentialing system to ensure consistency, visibility, and portability.
- 7.21. CHARM-EU Communication Office is responsible for publishing overviews of micro-credentials categories on the website.

Quality assurance of a CHARM-EU micro-credential

- 7.22. Formal educational programmes leading to a micro-credential should be quality-assured both internally within the accrediting institution and at a CHARM-EU level.
- 7.23. **Accrediting university quality assurance:** The accrediting institution should follow internal quality assurance processes that address quality standards outlined in the Annexe IV of the European Qualifications Framework and the European Standards and Guidelines for Higher Education, where possible.
- 7.24. **CHARM-EU quality assurance:** During the submission of a proposed micro-credential the Academic Council will ensure the micro-credential aligns with the characteristics of a CHARM-EU micro-credential. This will ensure that the quality of the micro-credential aligns with CHARM-EU principles and values.
- 7.25. Post-delivery, a staff and learner evaluation survey should be conducted and shared with any relevant parties including the CHARM-EU Academic Council to ensure the micro-credential is updated with any recommendations for quality improvement. This is the responsibility of the accrediting partner or person delivering the informal/non-formal activity and can be supported by the CHARM-EU Quality Office.

Delivery of a CHARM-EU micro-credential

- 7.26. The delivery of the educational programme leading to a CHARM-EU micro-credential is the responsibility of the proposer(s) of the micro-credential and/or the accrediting institution. This includes admissions, enrollment, attendance, participation, credit transfer where relevant, assessment, grading, academic integrity, appeals, finance, privacy and data protection.
- 7.27. CHARM-EU will endeavour to support the delivery of a CHARM-EU micro-credential through technology tools (e.g. hybrid classroom, digital credentialing), quality assurance support, professional development of teachers, and communication and marketing, where possible and relevant.

Recognition of a CHARM-EU micro-credential

- 7.28. Each CHARM-EU micro-credential will, where possible and relevant, use a verifiable digital credential to authenticate, recognize and validate student completion.

8. Responsibility

- 8.1. The responsibility of approving a CHARM-EU micro-credential is with the Academic Council. The Executive Board is involved only when financial implications arise.
- 8.2. The responsibility for the accreditation, evaluation, registration, funding etc... is with the partner university accrediting a formal micro-credential programme, or leading on an informal or non-formal micro-credential programme.

9. Related Documents

- 9.1 CHARM-EU Micro-credentials [Strategy](#)

10. Document Control

- 10.1 Date of initial approval: Academic Board 29/05/2026
- 10.2 Date policy effective from: 29/05/2026
- 10.3 Date of next review: 05/2028

Appendix 1: Mandatory elements to describe a micro-credential

- Identification of the learner
- Title of the micro-credential
- Country(ies)/Region(s) of the issuer
- Awarding body(ies)
- Date of issuing
- Learning outcomes
- Notional workload needed to achieve the learning outcomes (in ECTS credits, where possible)
- Level (and cycle, if applicable) of the learning
- Experience leading to the micro-credential (EQF, QFEHEA), if applicable
- Type of assessment, ideally in the context of a competency framework
- Form of participation in the learning activity
- Type of quality assurance used to underpin the micro-credential

Appendix 2: Proposal Form for a CHARM-EU Micro-Credential

Micro-credential Title

Relevance to CHARM-EU

Alignment with CHARM-EU Educational Principles

Criteria

Description

Calculation of hours

Comparable to ECTS

Learning outcomes

Language

Form of participation (highlight at least one below)

- Blended
- On-site
- Online
- Work Experience

Type of Assessment (highlight at least one below)

- Presentation / Oral exam
- Written exam
- Behavioural assessment
- Personalized type of assessment
- Portfolio / portfolio assessment
- Report / paper
- Development report / reflection report

- Professional product

Quality Assurance (i.e. Is this accredited by a CHARM-EU university, or is it supported by an internal Department, or approved by the CHARM-EU Academic Council)

EFQ Level (e.g. Level 8 PhD – if applicable)

Supervision of assessment (Yes/No)

ID Verification (Yes/No)