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Development of a Joint Micro-credential

The following guiding questions can help initiate the development of a joint micro-credential. In this step-by-step guide, an example of a micro-credential designed by the CHARM-EU alliance is provided, namely innovative teaching in inter-institutional hybrid classrooms. This example might help you shape your own practice.



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Step 1 – Conduct a needs analysis

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Courses leading to micro-credentials equip learners with targeted knowledge, skills, and competences aligned with societal or labour market needs. To ensure relevance, begin with a needs analysis and engage your target group before designing the course.

- Is there a need or interest from your institution/nationally/EU to create more flexible lifelong learning? Can you find institutional support for you MC?
- Has the target group/s been defined?
- Can you develop a survey to explore the interest of the target group/s? Or organize focus group?
- Is there a funding need for the development and implementation of the course? Is there funding opportunities related to the micro-credential?

Example: Needs analysis

1. What is your current role in your organisation?
2. What are your experiences with [topic MC]?
3. Would you generally be interested in taking part in a micro-credential module about [topic MC]
4. Please describe why you would or would not be interested (if relevant).
5. What topics would you be interested in? (multiple answers possible)
   Mention different learning topics that you have in mind for the MC here
6. How much time would you be willing to spend on such a course?
   Equivalent to X ECTS
7. In what format would you like to attend such a course?
   Online / hybrid / blended / on-campus
8. How much would you/your organisation be willing to pay for this training opportunity? (multiple answers possible)
9. If you are interested in finding out more about this initiative in the future, please share your email address below.



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Step 2 – Initiate and formalize

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Formal accreditation enhances the value of micro-credentials. Plan for it from the start by ensuring alignment with institutional requirements. If this is not feasible, consider an informal alternative such as recognising participation with a digital badge.

- Consider whether your micro-credential is recognizing informal or formal learning activities?
- If it is a formal learning activity who will be examiner? Which university can give credits?
- Are their institutional policies that you can use to support the implementation of the micor-credential?
- If you aim for an informal learning activity, are there available badges schemes in the consortia that could be used?
- How will the learning goals and course description be developed?

Accreditation

For the micro-credential innovative teaching in inter-institutional hybrid classrooms several universities were involved in the design: Trinity College Dublin (Ireland), Åbo Akademi University (Finland) and Utrecht University (the Netherlands). We chose to do formal accreditation of the micro-credential at Åbo Akademi University, because of the following criteria:

- Timeline for accreditation procedure was short.
- Existing process for handling and issuing micro-credentials.
- AAU had a big target group with need for hybrid teaching skills, due to two distant campuses in their university.
- Clear national and local strategy to increase continuous learning in general and micro-credentials in particular.



Step 3 – Staffing

Consider the teaching and administrative staff needed to jointly develop a micro-credential across institutions. Collaborative delivery builds key competencies and shares the workload, making the process more efficient and rewarding.

- Who will design the micro-credential?
- How will the formation of the design-team from different institutions/disciplines be established?
- Is there committed and motivated staff available? And do you need clear role descriptions or team building?
- Is the team willing and able to develop the competencies required for jointly delivered programmes, such as intercultural skills, collaborative curriculum design, and digital literacy?

Joint development

For the micro-credential innovative teaching in inter-institutional hybrid classrooms, qll institutions showed commitment, by providing motivated staff to design the course.

The curriculum of the micro-credential was jointly developed through a series of collaborative design workshops and iterative content review cycles where content ideas and teaching methods were shared, and technology tools (e.g. Miro) were used for collaboration.

This joint development exposed the developers to novel technological and pedagogical approaches used in other institutions, fostering pedagogical creativity, and inter-institutional learning. Developers reflected that this approach differed from single institutional programme design in a way that they themselves learned new forms of curriculum design and discussions allowed for space for creative design. In effect, they became both curriculum developers and participants of professional development through this design process.



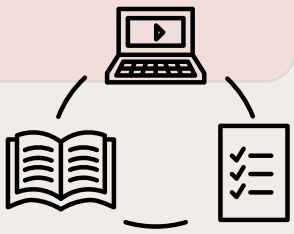
Step 4 – Plan the content

Professionals in continuing education are diverse, time-constrained, and seek practical, immediately applicable learning. Design micro-credentials to be flexible, relevant, and coherent, with clear alignment between learning outcomes, activities, and assessment.

- Is there a curriculum design method in use, or could an activity-based approach such as the ABC method be useful?
- What learning activities will be used? How, will the participants be assessed? Are the learning activities in-line with the learning goals?
- Do you have a clear course-structure and timeline for the course that also can be communicated to the participants?
- Do you have a clear division of tasks for the detailed planning of the course, based on interest and competences among the team?
- How will the course respond to the needs of professionals (e.g. flexibility, relevance, practical application)?

ABC method

For the design of the micro-credential innovative teaching in inter-institutional hybrid classrooms, we used the ABC method, which is a rapid curriculum design method created by University College London (UCL) in 2015. It builds around a 90-minute workshop that focuses on the student learning journey concentrating on learning activities, engagement and e-learning techniques to redesign courses or entire curricula.



Step 5 – Plan the format

Based on your educational design, and the learning objectives, you choose the format for your micro-credential.

- Which learnings methods will be used? Plan which learning methods are suitable and will be used during the course?
- Will there synchronous and asynchronous elements? Who will you make sure to guide the participants during the asynchronous elements?
- Which virtual learning environment will be used? Will the VLE be open without registration? How will the assessments be stored? Other on-lines tools that contribute to clarity?
- How will you and your participants communicate? Is there a platform to support the communication process?

Blended structure

For the micro-credential innovative teaching in inter-institutional hybrid classrooms, a blended learning structure was selected, combining asynchronous and synchronous learning over six weeks. The course alternated between asynchronous and synchronous weeks, beginning with an asynchronous week and ending with a synchronous one.

A flipped-learning approach was applied throughout the course. During asynchronous weeks, students engaged with readings, videos, and podcasts to prepare for discussion and reflection during synchronous sessions. In the final session, students received feedback on their assignments, and upon submission of their final product, they passed the course.

Used tools: Thinglink, MIRO, MS Teams



Step 6 – Implementation

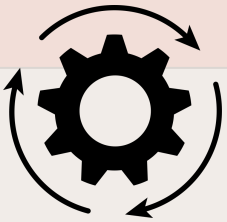
Everything is designed! Now it's about implementation. Clarify responsibilities early to ensure a smooth implementation:

- Who manages communication with participants before, during, and after the course?
- Who is responsible for teaching, facilitation, and moderation in each session?
- Who is responsible for assessment, feedback, and grading?
- Are the time zones checked so it works with the participants? And are they properly communicated?
- Are the technical platforms checked so they work with the participants?
- How will material and material be shared?
- Is it clear in every step what is required by the participants?

Practice what you preach!

The topic of our micro- credential was hybrid teaching. In our micro-credential, we tried to show good practices of online interaction, the flipped-classroom approach and online reflection.

Try to decide for your micro-credential what topic you are preaching and try to put that into practice as well.



Step 7 – Evaluation

Of course, a good evaluation of your micro-credential will help you improve the design in the future. Try to think of the following questions:

- Do you need a mid-term evaluation to be able to adjust the course for the target groups' needs?
- What aspects of your micro-credential would you like to evaluate?
- How will the course evaluation be done? During, or after the course?

Did the course meet the needs of the target group (e.g. flexibility, relevance)?

Evaluation

For the micro-credential innovative teaching in inter-institutional hybrid classrooms, we used the following straight-forward evaluation questions.

Mid-course evaluation

- What should we stop doing? What does not work?
- What should we start doing? What is missing?
- What should we keep doing? What is working well?

Final evaluation

- In what way did the course support your professional development?
- I found this very interesting…
- I found this not so interesting…
- Did we fulfill the learning goals?
- In this way the course would support me better…
- Any other issues?

