
Scottish Tertiary Education Network for Micro-Credentials Minutes

The seventh meeting of the Scottish Tertiary Education Network for Micro-Credentials was held on 30 May 2025 via Teams

Present:	Anne Tierney (Co-Chair)	Luke Millard
	Jon Buglass (Co-Chair)	Alen MacKinlay
	Sally Smith	Glykeria Penna
	John Kerr	Donnie Wood

Officers:	Karen Gray	Phil McGuiness
	Stewart Squire	

Apologies:	Pauline Hanesworth	Steve Osbourne
	Debra Willison	Sara Rae
	Lee Lappin	Sharon Rankin
	Siobhan Wilson	Iain Hawker
	Eni Adesida	Erica Russell-Hensens

1. Welcome and Introductions

This item was chaired by Jon Buglass.

The Chair welcomed members of the network and provided a note of thanks to Sheila Dunn for her contributions and informed members that Sheila had stepped down from the network. The Chair extended a special welcome to Donnie Wood who would be representing Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP) in Sheila's stead.

The Chair also provided a note of thanks to Douglas Dickson for his part in the group and informed members that Douglas would be stepping down due to his recent appointment as Principal of Dumfries and Galloway College. The Chair welcomed Glykeria Penna from the Scottish Government who was standing in for Eni Adesida. The Chair also noted members' apologies.

The Chair provided an update on activities since the previous meeting and highlighted the release of a survey to network members to confirm the red lines for a future framework proposal. The Chair thanked members for completing the survey and noted this would be discussed later in the meeting.

The Chair invited Anne Tierny as Co-Chair to provide an update on recent meetings that were held.

The Chair explained that there had been two meetings, one with colleagues from Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), and another with colleagues from Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and Education Scotland (ES). Members were informed that both had been positive and that it was discussed with SQA representatives to invite them to join the network. It was noted that during the meeting with SQA there had been a discussion about their future use of digital badges and electronic portfolios for learners.

Members were supportive of SQA representatives joining the network as observers due to their involvement in delivery of micro-credentials. Members were informed that it would provide alignment in the skills landscape and that SQA had undertaken a lot of work on international qualifications.

2. Minute of previous meeting (MCN/Min6/25)

The Minutes of the last meeting were approved with no amendments.

3. Mirco-credential Survey Results

This item was chaired by Jon Buglass.

The Chair introduced the agenda item and explained that the survey had a total of 19 questions and that some would require further discussion during the meeting.

During the presentation members discussed the following points:

- Members were informed that the survey responses were reflective of the network's membership and a good response overall with a total of 14 submissions received.
- On the question of who the framework audiences were, there was a strong response highlighting institutions, employers and employees and prospective students.
- It was explained that on reviewing international frameworks some had built in a place where there was access to or links to Micro-credentials (MC). It was reported that about half of responders felt the framework should reference a potential marketplace, with 28% responding "Maybe".
- Members discussed the inclusion of the "marketplace" in the framework. It was felt that the ability to look at developing a marketplace, provided a next step and would drive forward the implementation and operationalisation of the framework. It was also suggested that if the marketplace was not mentioned, it may leave questions unresolved.
- It was reported that most responders were in favor of Digital Badges being included in the framework. Members discussed whether it meant that there should be an option to create digital badges in the framework. It was explained that in the past there were issues around the issuing of the badges and the robustness of the meta

data, but from discussions with SQA, school qualifications were moving to e-portfolios and that was the direction of travel for the education sector. There was agreement that it should be included but cannot be mandated at this stage.

- Members were informed that there was a strong response to the issuing of a certificate from a credit rating/awarding body. Members discussed the use of electronic certificates and security measures. It was suggested that the use of electronic certificates could link to the development of e-portfolios. It was noted that students often want something that confirms they joined a course and the use of “certificates of participation”, which do not hold credit, but provided learners with evidence was also mentioned.
- There was further discussion on the use of certificates and retention policies. It was noted that SQA has a long data retention policy, and it was felt that there may need to be some specification on this in the framework. It was felt that it should align with existing institutional policies. Members discussed institutional examples which identified that the process to enroll MC students was the same as other students.
- Members were informed that 97% of responders agreed with the QAA characteristics statement as a starting point for the definition of micro-credentials, but 21% thought it needed discussion. It was suggested that the definition could be copied into the framework, though it was noted that it was four years old and although it could be revisited in the future it gave a good direction of travel in the first instance.
- There was a discussion on the purpose of stackability to support progression vertically and horizontally. Results indicated that there was a strong agreement to support this, but there might need to be some explanation required to understand what it meant.
- Members were informed that there was a strong feeling that MC’s must be recognised by all institutions for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Members agreed that there should be a reference in the framework to recognising RPL but that it should not direct how institutions implemented it. It was raised that a challenge would be MC credit size and mapping it. It was suggested the framework could capture some of the Scottish Government and SCQFP work on RPL and provide a strong statement of intent.
- It was reported to members that there was a strong leaning towards SCQF recognition and it was suggested that individual MCs could be a mixture of skills and knowledge.
- There was agreement from the survey that MCs must be quality assured and should be on the SCQF register, though the differences between an ad hoc session and something with more value was noted.
- It was reported that responders felt that unless awarding bodies were SCQF registered then they should not provide MCs.
- Members then discussed the size of MCs. It was noted that the minimum size of 1 credit was agreed, but that there was a question around the maximum size which was not clear. There was consensus that the number of credits should not be the same as a full-time programme, it should be small, and previous work with the QAA had put forward that an MC should be lower than an award. It was highlighted that it would be hard to regulate between colleges and universities, and it was difficult to know where to draw the line.

- Members continued and noted that it would depend on how it was worded in the framework and emphasized that micro meant “small”. It was also considered that direction was needed and a discussion on how this would affect RPL. The use of language and use of credits between universities and colleges was raised, and it was pointed out there were SQA credits as well. It was suggested that it was a balance between the volume of learning that was valuable and not creating something that was too big and that it was worth reviewing the credit work of SCQF and SQA. Members discussed the issue of consistency, and it was suggested that it could be described as aligning to existing course and module sizes and to utilise some examples to provide guidelines.
- It was reported that responders agreed that on completion of an MC there should be demonstration of mastery and show some competency.
- Considering funding models and if funding should be attached to regional or national priorities, members were provided with a range of comments from the survey with support for funding to be linked to regional priorities. It was noted that The City Deal for Edinburgh includes consideration of rural skills and that there are likely to be differences in priorities across the regions.

On the completion of the presentation, the Chair noted the worth of the survey and invited further discussion. The following points were raised:

- There was further discussion on funding and if it would be attached to institutions or individual MC’s or the learners. It was noted as a big topic and there had been discussions on funding following the learner. The funding model in England was raised and that learners could access funding in different ways, but it was noted this was an advanced approach.
- Members were informed that the value of the framework would be in providing flexibility for institutions and potentially enabling colleges and universities to use core funding differently. It was noted that a new funding model would be needed, with an allied reporting architecture, if funding was to follow learners and that would take some time to develop.

In closing, members noted that funding was a big question and that the framework should allow opportunities to flow from it and that a funding mechanisms had developed in other countries.

4. Next steps in MC Framework Development

This item was chaired by Anne Tierney.

The Chair introduced the next item and outlined several key areas that required discussion by the network and highlighted the timeline for the proposal.

During discussions the following points were raised:

- Members enquired about the framework development approach and if it would be a distributed model or a main author with support of the network. It was highlighted that at the last meeting, work had been undertaken by the SFC looking at international frameworks and work had been started on the framework's design. It was suggested that this could be distributed to volunteers, and members provided agreement to the approach.
- There was discussion on Data Protection requirements and that members consent was needed to share their emails, so access could be given to the draft framework.

Action Point: SFC to collate members consent to share email addresses with Co-Chairs for the purpose to provide access to a SharePoint site.

- Members discussed the timeline and agreed the target for the draft framework would be September. It was felt that it was important for the network to take time to draft the framework.
- It was noted that there were currently five sections, and it was agreed that the link to the document would be provided first with additional explanation for members who were not present at the meeting.

Action Point: Link to the draft framework to be sent to network members for review with contextual explanation.

- There was some discussion on access and editing and it was agreed that it should be kept within the group. It was further suggested that a clean document with the headings could be set up that would allow members to add to it and that the survey results could be included.

5. Micro-credentials Event

This item was chaired by Anne Tierney.

The Chair provided an update on the Brest Practice Sharing event on Friday 06 June. It was explained that after meeting Finnish colleagues a discussion was had on inviting them to the network and it was decided to bring key people together to talk about current MC practice.

Members were encouraged to attend, and the Chair provided the speaker list. It was noted that Finnish colleagues were at the beginning of their development and that the discussion might inform some of the networks thinking.

6. Next Steps/Close

This item was chaired by Jon Buglass

The Chair noted the end of the agenda and that there were not AOCB items.

The Chair noted the positive step forward and ended the meeting.