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Stacking Micro-credentials

This document guides qualification and programme developers on stacking micro-credentials within a programme.

What is stacking?

Stacking, in the context of this document, means including *one or more* approved standalone micro-credentials within a programme that NZQA formally recognises.

Micro-credentials can form part of a programme that leads to a qualification if:

- the micro-credential aligns with and contributes to the qualification's outcomes and strategic purpose, and
- the overall design of the programme is coherent.

NZQA approval is required to stack micro-credential(s) in a programme.

Why stack micro-credentials in a programme?

A programme that includes micro-credentials can offer learners

- a meaningful learning pathway for accumulating relevant and necessary skills
- the opportunity to gain valuable skills in a shorter time
- the opportunity to check interest and aptitude before committing to a whole programme.

(For more information on the benefits of micro-credentials, see [Aotearoa New Zealand's rationale for micro-credentials.](#))

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Stacking micro-credentials in a qualification

Achievement of a qualification is always through the completion of a programme. Qualifications cannot include or require micro-credentials.

Micro-credential developers can write learning outcomes in a micro-credential to align with graduate profile outcomes (GPOs) of a qualification. Writing learning outcomes exactly as the GPOs of the qualification is not recommended. The learning outcomes should unpack the intended learning as prescribed in the GPOs.

This will facilitate an easy inclusion of the micro-credential in a programme.

Programme developers can then design a programme using the micro-credential or their own component.

Stacking micro-credentials in a programme

To include micro-credential(s) into a programme, the micro-credential must fit precisely in the programme as a component. This means the following should remain the same as the approved standalone micro-credential:

- Title
- Level
- Credits
- Learning outcomes
- Indicative Content
- Assessment method
- Unit or Skill standards
- Related Regulations.

Tertiary providers are not encouraged to design their programmes using micro-credential(s) developed by other tertiary providers unless a WDC has developed the micro-credential(s).

Tertiary providers seeking partnership arrangements in stacking micro-credentials in a programme are advised to consult Approvals and Accreditation in the first instance.

There are six key areas to consider. Questions and answers follow:

Rationale

<p>What is the rationale for stacking a micro-credential in a programme?</p>	<p>The rationale for including a micro-credential in a programme should be clear to establish meaningful learning pathways for the learners.</p> <p>Stakeholders' support for including a micro-credential in the programme should be evident.</p>
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Structure

<p>How will the micro-credential function as a programme component?</p>	<p>The micro-credential must fit precisely into the programme as either <u>a compulsory or elective component</u>. This means the following should remain the same as the approved standalone micro-credential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title • Level • Credit • Learning outcomes • Indicative Content – learning materials/resources/activities • Assessment method(s) • Unit or Skill standard(s) • Related Regulations. <p>The learning outcomes of the component (micro-credential) should align with the graduate profile outcomes (GPOs) of the qualification to which the programme leads.</p>
<p>Can the programme consist entirely of stacked micro-credentials?</p>	<p>Programmes at levels 1-6 can be comprised entirely of stacked micro-credentials.</p> <p>For programmes at the degree level, components at the end or in the last year are based on augmentation and scaffolding of the knowledge and skills learned initially in the programme. Therefore, having micro-credentials stacked at the end of the programme will not enable the learner to achieve the analytical rigour and mastery required at high-level qualifications.</p>

Enrolment

<p>Do students have to enrol in both micro-credential(s) and the programme?</p>	<p>If the student is enrolled in a programme that includes micro-credentials as components, the enrollment system should be set up to ensure the student is enrolled on the micro-credentials and the programme simultaneously.</p> <p>As for achievement of the micro-credential and qualification (programme), these must be reported to NZQA and included on the learner's academic record.</p> <p>If the learner has already completed/achieved a micro-credential, which is part of a programme, simultaneous enrolment in the micro-credential and programme is not required.</p>
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Alignment to the Programme

<p>What is the impact of stacking micro-credentials in a programme?</p>	<p>The learning outcomes of the component (micro-credential) should align with the graduate profile outcomes (GPOs) of the qualification to which the programme leads.</p> <p>Programme coherence should be checked to ensure alignment with the qualification, its conditions and requirements.</p> <p>Micro-credential entry requirements should be appropriate for the learner to enrol in the programme.</p> <p>The programme regulations should have been reviewed and confirmed to include each micro-credential.</p> <p>There should be no monitoring/moderation issues related to the existing programme in which stacking is proposed.</p>
<p>What more must be considered when stacking micro-credentials in a degree level 7 or above programme?</p>	<p>The intended delivery staff should be research-active if the stackable micro-credential is in a degree programme.</p>

Credit recognition transfer (CRT)

<p>What if the student has already completed the micro-credential before enrolling in the programme?</p>	<p>Clear and robust policies and procedures relating to CRT are essential when considering the stacking of micro-credentials to recognise the learner's achievement of the micro-credential if achieved before enrolling in the programme.</p> <p>Credit recognition transfer (CRT) is where one institution recognises credit gained at another institution towards a qualification or micro-credential. CRT generally describes credit from formal learning provided and credentialed by a tertiary provider.</p>
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Ongoing review (after stacking is approved)

<p>How is ongoing alignment between the micro-credentials and the programme ensured?</p>	<p>Changes made to the component (stacked micro-credentials) in the programme (via a change application) do not mean an automatic change to the standalone micro-credential will be applied by NZQA and vice versa.</p> <p>If a micro-credential is discontinued or set to an expiring status, this will have an impact on the programme in which the micro-credential is stacked. The programme must be updated before the standalone micro-credential is discontinued.</p> <p>Education organisations should note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• changing a micro-credential included in a programme requires confirming the alignment of the changes within the programme.• the programme change application (if reviewed) should be submitted at the same time as the micro-credential change application.
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