Microcredentials Protecting Consumers Through Quality Assurance
Transcript

Dr. Michelle Claville: Greetings, everyone.

We are getting ready to start the webinar in just a minute or 2. We are allowing more of our registrants to enter.
So, if you would just be patient with us, we will get started. Very shortly.

Greetings, everyone. My name is Michelle Claville, and I am the vice president for Research and Policy Analysis at the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.
I also serve as liaison to CHEA's international quality group. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the first of our 2024 CHEA CIQG webinar series. And today, as you've heard, our title is Microcredentials: Protecting Consumers through Quality Assurance.

We welcome all 300, and at last count, 314 of you registrants from Over 36 nations outside of the United States.
We still do not have a final count of our total number of registrants, but please know that we are very excited to have such a, an enthusiastic response to our invitation to participate in this webinar.

It is my pleasure to introduce today's moderator of the conversation that you will hear today. This is, it is my pleasure to introduce Dr.
Jamil Salmi. Most people who know anything about quality assurance has, you would have heard that name before.

He is a global tertiary. Higher education. Expert and especially in the field of quality assurance. Dr. Salmi. He is offered. Policy advice, consulting advice. To several governments, universities, multilateral banks and bilateral agencies. He's had years of experience at the World Bank. He is an author of numerous publications in the field of quality assurance and matters that pertain to tertiary or higher education.

And so, and then one of the things that is most important to us, that is that he is one of the members of our CIQG advisory council. And so, without further ado, we welcome Dr. Jamil Salmi, and we leave the rest of the webinar in his hands.

Dr. Jamil Salmi: Thank you very much, Michelle, for this kind introduction. Good morning, afternoon and evening. Wherever you are joining us from.

And welcome to this webinar on microcredentials and quality assurance. As Michelle mentioned, I lived for many years in Washington, DC. And I remember when my oldest son went to study computer science in Canada at the University of Toronto. To tell you the truth, this is because it was relatively cheaper than in the US, but still quite expensive for international students.

So, imagine my surprise when in the course of his studies, at some point he asked me to pay additional fees because he had to take a Cisco certificate. And then again, the following year, an Oracle certificate. But later on after he started to work, he explained to me how important these short trainings,

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focused on professional skills, had been. And in fact, we hear today of employers who are more inclined to hire university graduates who have a few microcredentials, than those who don't. Or even of successful job seekers who have microcredentials instead of a university degree.

With the proliferation of microcredentials however, come many questions. How do we know which ones are useful? Which ones are not? What competencies and skills participants actually acquire? How to compare microcredentials across institutions and countries? Indeed, recognition and validations of these microcredentials have become an essential part of the equation. And to help us understand these issues today, I feel so privileged to have with us today three distinguished experts in these fields.

And these are not people who study microcredentials as an academic topic, but practitioners who organize and deliver them and or who participate in their assessment and validation.

So each of our three guests will make a 10 min presentation, to introduce the topic from their own professional perspective, and then they will spend 25 minutes answering your questions. You have all seen their bios in the webinar announcement.

I will just say a few words about each one of them. We will start with Dr. Quentin McAndrew, who is the Global Academic Strategist at Coursera in the US. And she has a very interesting professional itinerary because she came from a traditional university. Where she had break new path through design and use of professional master programs and MOOCs by the University of Colorado in Boulder. And then she moved to one of the most innovative institutions today in the world, Coursera.

Quentin has won many awards for her writing and research. And she's now going to share her combined private sector and higher education experience. Before I give her the floor, let me introduce - Well, maybe I'll introduce the next speaker when it's her turn.

Quentin, the floor is yours.

Dr. Quentin McAndrew: Thank you so much, Jamil, for that lovely introduction. Good morning. Good afternoon.

Good evening to all of you. We're really looking forward to the discussion today and answering your questions.

As Jamil said, let me just share and give you just a touch of background about Coursera. So I always like to start with Coursera's mission. And Jamil, so kindly said, I was at the University of Colorado Boulder, a public institution, and I moved to Coursera, which is a publicly traded company, but I moved to Coursera because we envision a world where anyone anywhere has the power to transform their life through learning.

And we're a certified B Corp in the United States, which means we're a benefit corporation and we are required by law and by regulation to actually live our mission.

And so, I know like many of you, this is, this is what we are all passionate about. And so, at Coursera, we like to talk about our triangle. We have over a hundred million registered learners on our platform for from all over the globe.

I have a course on Coursera myself that I did when I was in Colorado and I have learners from 165 countries in my course. We have 300 educator partners. University partners who are creating content on the platform in non-credit formats and degrees.

And we have world-class industry partners who are creating those microcredentials that Jamil just just mentioned on the platform for learners everywhere.

And then we work with 7,000 institutions all over the world, other universities, government agencies, workforce development to help provide opportunities and pathways to build economic health in the regions of the world that we work in.

And Coursera's content, facts - it goes from very small units all the way into a degree and we have an enormous catalog of opportunity for students. And what we do is we watch trends in higher education across that whole platform. So as Jamil suggested, we're seeing globally a rising demand for credit-eligible industry microcredentials. So taking that Cisco certificate that his son had as in college and saying I want to actually not just earn the certificate but earn credit for it and apply it to a degree.

We're also in as we all know and we're talking about exhaustively in this moment of extraordinary change in transformation where gen AI is putting even more pressure on us to upskill and reskill and keep pace with change. As it accelerates. And we're seeing a heightened focus by employers on skills-based hiring. And the way to make those skills very apparent for learners is to earn an industry certificate. So we're seeing across those 140 million learners on our platform, rising demand, as I said, for credit eligible industry certificates.

And what we see is that 76% of degree interested students are more likely to enroll in a degree that also has a certificate. And in speaking to these students in a qualitative study. They don't devalue the degree. They don't want to replace their degree. They want to enhance the degree. So they still believe in the value of that ultimate credential, but they want something that complements that degree that shows that they're job-ready when they graduate and one in 2 students want that professional students.

And then the import from the employer side, what we're seeing is that they're considering, almost all of them, moving to skills-based hiring that says, do you know how to code? Do you know how to write and how can I validate those skills when I'm hiring a student? And 88% of employers believe that an industry microcredential enhances the job application for learners. So, as we face, you know, the idea that we must provide our learners with a return on investment of their tuition, the industry credential becomes more and more important. As I talk about this, I also want to make clear I have three degrees in English.

I'm a humanist. I believe in the wonderful ability of education to totalize a human being and education for education sake is a valid goal, but in today's world where we're increasingly charged with delivering education to learners who've never had access to that education, what we're doing is providing them with economic mobility. So that's very important for us to deliver.

So we help students at Coursera earn valuable professional certificates from world-class brands that are job-relevant, and a lot of them are entry-level so that learners can get their first job, and then continue their education. And get their next job, and manage their careers and one of the ways that we're ensuring quality, is not for Coursera, or for our corporate partner like Google or IBM or Microsoft to say, "these credentials are worthy," (We do say that) But we are working with credit recommended, recommending bodies all over the world, to say as a third party, we agree that this content is worth credit.

So we're working with ACE in the United States, 5, and ECTS, in a Mia, and in India, we're working with NSQF to provide the same credit recommendation so that our university partners can then take the certificates to the faculty. Of course, the faculty review the content and must agree the credit record, the ultimate credit award comes from the university, but that allows universities to say, okay, we can really consider this as a possibility. And so what we're seeing on the platform. Is that learners are coming in. They can take these certificates. And they can either and or, it's not linear, move into a career, and now, increasingly, move into a degree via recognition of prior learning for that credit so that we're able to say to them as they're moving their way.
For instance through the Google Data Analytics certificate, did you know that you could earn credit towards a degree? And what that what we see increasingly is that gives learners confidence that they can do a It makes them happy because they've earned something that's really valuable for them and it lowers for the price of the degree.

As transfer credit into the. So it's incredibly valuable for learners that gives them outcomes and we're tremendously excited about the work that we're doing.

Jamil, thank you so much. I'll turn it back over to you.

Dr. Jamil Salmi: Thank you, Quentin, for this very summary, but very insightful overview and for keeping to time.

I will turn now to Dr. Tina Sufert who is going to be our, second, sorry Seufert, who is our second speaker.

She hails from Ulm University in southern Germany where she is presently the scientific director of the School of Advanced Professional Studies. And her university, is a leader in Germany and in Europe, I would say, in the implementation of microcredentials, as part of individual career path and continuing education. A psychologist is by training, is an expert in teaching and learning in both the digital and analog format. Without further ado over to you Tina.

Dr. Tina Sufert: Thank you so much, Jamil, for the nice introduction and for the opportunity to be here. I'm happy to share my expertise and my views and thoughts about microcredentials which are actually at the top of our discussions for the last few months, and even years. So I share my slides that you can see a little bit more about what I'm talking about.

It's The School of Advanced Professional Studies, the higher continuing education institution at Ulm University and also of the University of Applied Sciences in Ulm. And, yeah, we are happy that, we can, I'm sorry, do you see my slides actually in the right form?

I have another picture. So, yeah, it's a shared institution of two universities and, my position there is to be a kind of educational manager on one hand and I'm also a researcher on learning instructions. So I'm also interested in how learning is affected and how learning can be organized so that it is effectively. And of course I'm a teacher in these courses. And with these 3 perspectives, I want to give you a short overview of what we are doing when we talk about microcredentials and about stackable units for degrees.

We have this continuing pieces of individual learning courses and learning. Learning. Parties. So we have the nuggets. This is the smallest unit actually. Then we have a certificate course and we can put bundles of certificates together for a certificate of advanced study or diploma of advanced studies. This is a Swiss kind of new bundled system which is certificated and graduate and eligible in all over the world. And we have the master degree programs of course and to understand a little bit more how these different pieces go together to one picture for individual path is within different goals for each individual.

I will show you an example from my Master degree program, which I developed. It's a microcredential course and we start first with the few information about microcredentials. It's in Germany defined now as a certificate course with one to 9 credit points regarding the ECTS scheme for example. It's a course and regularly also an exam or performance report. So it's not only taking a course, listening to videos and simply doing nothing. So you have to report what you learn and you have to reflect on that and hand in a kind of exam or you have to reflect on that and hand in kind of exam or performance report.

So this is the microcredential. Which which is defined in our ways. So the certificate of advanced studies means that we we sample together one to 3 certificate courses.

It's about 10 credit points at least. And it's booked separately, so we have these different courses and afterwards we can decide, oh, now we make a practical transfer project for example and then we can be certificated for this CAS this Swiss kind of system for crediting. And of course you can do even more with 30 credit points. You have a bundle of 4 to 6 certificate courses which are also booked separately and then you have to write a small thesis.

It's about 30 to 40 pages in our case mostly And of course then you can decide to even go further when you make the experience that it's you to that you are able to learn in this form.

It's for example, we very often have blended learning formats and of course not everyone is used to that kind of learning and if you make the mastery experience that you really gain knowledge and competence and not only certificates and you see okay that's my way my individual pass for learning, you can even enroll for the master program and the program with the master thesis.

And now I'm coming to my example in my instructional design course. So I have a study program for instructional design. It's for teachers, it's for psychologists, it's even for computer scientists and we teach how to design information and instruction digitally and in analog words.

So we start with a micro nugget master nugget is teaching with digital media. It's only one credit point, 25 to 30 h and it's about €230. And if you book this teaching with digital media nugget, you also can use that for the next level for the micro credential with 6 credit points. It's the digital

teaching and learning module so-called module. And when we sample different modules, you can have a diploma of advanced studies and we have one, for example, with 30 credit points.

For teaching and learning in analog and digital learning environments. And again, you can see that the courses are stackable and reusable for the even higher degrees and you can use them and they are credited for the Master of Science program and it's not only credited regarding the competencies but also regarding the costs.

So you can decide step by step what is your learning path, what is your learning, necessity, what do you need to know in your working environment at the moment. So you booked the microcredential, the simple course, the single course and learn that and if you see there is more need for more competences or more motivation or more interest, then you can sample and stack the things together.

For your individual learning path. That's, the organization which I'm dealing with as an educational manager, so to say. And now I'm coming to the perspective. In which way is this micro credential in the head of the learners stacked together to a competence and to a larger picture to a bigger picture.

And this is my interest as a learning and research learning and instruction. And, what I'm highlighting here is the kind of sandwich I hope for those who have lunch time. It's not too embarrassing here. So we have this. Digital, didactical Concept for, for example, where we have input videos and activating prior knowledge.

So not only we have microcredentials which are stackable in terms of courses, but also when we take a closer look into the courses, there are also snippets and nuggets of knowledge which are then refined and discussed in groups for example. And this is also kind of stackable nugget piece in this term. It's the sandwich.

And of course you have then many sandwiches when you have, for example, three microcredentials and the question is how to combine these in your mind and of course you need practical transfer projects.

This is what we introduced in our, for example, DAS, the diploma of advanced studies, or we have e-portfolios, so that you really see the bigger picture, how things fit together.

And of course in the end you can have a DAS or a master thesis where you meet all the competencies with all your mini nuggets in your head and combine these for larger competencies. From the formats we use blended learning. We have this module choice. We have this modular concept with the stackability and the creditability.

And of course we have learning settings which sued continuing education while working. So we have adaptive learning speed or individual learnings times with blended learning and very large online. Parts in our courses. So that's my introduction and I am happy to answer any questions. Back to Jamil, thank you.

Dr. Jamil Salmi: Thank you very much, Tina. This is very didactic. Very instructive. Last but not least, it is my pleasure to introduce Dr. Padraig Walsh, who is the chief executive officer of

Ireland's main agency responsible for quality assurance and the qualifications framework is called QQI, Quality and Qualifications Ireland. And, I want to add that, Dr. Walsh is a chemical engineer by training.

And before heading the island's QA agencies in various shapes and through the history he has had also important positions at universities in Ireland and he's also served on governance bodies for quality assurance agencies in several European countries and in the US. And he was also the elected president of ENQA. And if you work in quality insurance, you would know that this is the umbrella body for all quality assurance agencies in Europe.

Over to you, Padraig.

Dr. Padraig Walsh: Oh, thanks very much, Jamil, for that very kind introduction. And thanks to CHEA for inviting me on this.

And follow up with colleagues who've spoken there. I'll just share my presentation.

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Okay, as Jamil said, my name is Padraig Walsh, I am the Chief Executive Officer of Quality and Qualifications, Ireland.

QQI was established back in 2012. We are the National External Policy Assurance Agency for Post-secondary Education. So everything except the school system in Ireland. We're also the bodies that are responsible for the Irish national framework for qualifications like most countries in in Europe, we have the national framework qualifications for all levels, general school education, further, vocational education and higher education.

We're also unusual in that we are the validating awarding and certifying body for post-secondary providers that do not have their own awarding power. So outside of the public universities, you actually get your programs credited or validated by QQI and you would receive QQI certificate from that. So we're both a quality insurance body, but also a certifying body.

Okay, so, the Irish National framework is one of the oldest in Europe and hence one of the oldest in the world. It's over 20 years old.

It's a 10-level framework that covers general, school, vocational as we term 'further education' and higher education and the national framework contains the awards of the self accrediting for the public university and all of QQI awards.

So that includes those from the public and private further education and from private higher education providers. You can see the diagram there.

That's the fan diagram. The TPI developed a number of years ago and that's been borrowed or copied by a number of countries around the world shows the 10 levels that we have for our national framework qualification just for reference level 5 is to kind of high school, graduate diploma, level 8 would be bachelor's degree, level 9, a master 3 and level 10, within that.

So all public universities are required to have their qualifications included in the national framework for qualifications. Our awards are all learning outcome space, so they're based on standards of knowledge, scale and competence.

The artist framework for us from its inception. Contained major awards so the standard bachelor masters and doctoral degrees that you would have but also facilitated the use of having smaller term minor, and special purpose awards. A minor award is a single module which can be completed and certified individually and all minor awards are linked to a major award and can be stacked towards gaining a major awards.

Mine awards are largely found in further our vocational education because they were meant really to facilitate people. Who couldn't learn in the single goal wanted to be able to stack those over time. Rise, recognize learning, with updating, upscaling, of continuing education and training.

And special purpose awards are developed for specific areas of learning that have a more narrow scope. So, minor supplement and special purpose awards and that's the terms that we use back in 2003.

You can see share characteristics of what we would now term microcredentials. All programs, major, non-major, that lead to awards in the Arch, National Fraser qualifications, are included in the Irish Register of Qualifications, which is maintained by DQI.

And the IRQ, which is top. dot.dot.ie, is searchable so that for instance someone looking at them could find all awards in say the higher education space that have awards of 30 or less ECTS credits, which most people would understand as being in the domain of microcredentials.

So someone can go in and see what is being offered. That is within the National Friend for qualifications that really would look like a microcredential. That's what our IRQ site looks like, the hyperlink is in there on that.

That's a register that includes all of the qualifications of the provider who offer those and all the individual courses that lead to any award in the National Framework of Qualifications, answers and doctoral degrees, but also any of the short micro credential type awards that are offered by Irish education providers. Do the search in advance of this here and if you search between 0, 30, ECTS for higher education.

So at level 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10, you'll find about 2.5,000 qualifications that are in there.

Some of the ones you can see if you assume in their certificate, digital sign of fabrication. Action research, interior design methods. These are all 15 or 30 credit modules. So these are all available to take individually, but many of them can also be used to stack towards an award.

So all qualifications, I suppose importantly in the Irish NFQ, have a level associated with them. And that allows the learner to understand how the learning in a module like a microcredential will compare to say a bachelor's degree that which is that level 8 or level 8 micro credential would be comparable in learning difficulty if you like to what you'd expect to meet in a bachelor's degree at the opera levels of that.

The volume of learning then, say, 10 ECTS would also allow the learner to compare with, say, a four-year bachelor's degree, which has 240 CTS. So the learner in those case both knows the degree of difficulty and as suppose the volume of learning that's associated with that.

All qualifications that are included in the Irish NFQ, including microcredentials, must undergo quality assurance procedures according to the European standards and guidelines. That's the Sanders of guidelines for quality insurance in the European higher education area. Just a couple of initiatives in our own country around national microcredentials recently.

There has been funding from the Irish government for human capital, They are funding a project called Microcreds.ie, which the initiative of the 7 largest and oldest public universities in Ireland. A valuable of government funding of about 12 million euro close to 12 million dollars for a 5 year period.

That's the website for microcreds. This is put together by the 7 public universities and looks at the type of courses that are available within they're just 3 iPhone read down there one on advancing health care one in climate leadership one on layering technology and innovation. And in a further guide. This year the Irish government has decided to provide a subsidy or a for learners who wish to take those or higher education authority which is the funding body for higher education.

In Ireland and the Department of further and higher education so the relevant industry department has introduced an 80% learner subsidy on 300 individual microcredentials offered by the universities in particular areas and there are areas that they are our government was prioritized for particular skills.

So, 3.4 million your funding in areas like renewable energy, sustainability, construction, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity. On the European side, there is micro credential project called Micro B, which microcredentials link to the key belonging process and in June, the twentieth 22 the council of the European Union had a recommendation on the European approach to microcredentials and lifelong learning and a recommendation on the European approach to microcredentials and lifelong learning and deploy.

That's also the quality insurance agency, and lifelong learning and the European approach to microcredentials and lifelong learning and applied.

That's obviously the quality insurance agency and quite the one which tried is depressed in which QUI is a member more recently in February, 2024, published a working group report on quality insurance of microcredentials. Within that, there's a specific report of a case study from QQI about our development of micro Okay.

Thanks very much.

Dr. Jamil Salmi: Thank you so much, Padraig. And thank you all 3 for keeping to the time and you've generated lots of questions.

So I suggest we move directly to the questions. Tina and Quentin have even started to answer in writing and there is one for you, Polic, but I think these are very important questions that I it would be good to share your answers to all pass with all participants.

The first one is about stacking. Is it just a theory, a nice thought or is it happening in concretely and perhaps Tina and Quentin could stay from the perspective of all university and course era how it is happening.

Maybe we start with Tina in home and then move to Quentin.

Dr. Tine Surfert: Okay, thank you. Yeah, I've already written that. Our students, that course is a lot. So they use this opportunity. It's not only theoretical, it's really practice and it's very individual. It's not that they stack all in the same way that they all use the same 3 pieces to one bundle. So but each and every one has a single and individual sample. So it's done very often and it's very much appreciated and I think this is what Quentin also answered that the students love that way to test and to stack and to be individual in their course choices.

Dr. Jamil Salmi: Thank you. Quentin.

Dr. Quentin McAndrew: Tina. I, that was an amazing presentation. What I really loved was the intentional design of every piece of content that builds all the way into a degree. I thought I thought that was extraordinary. I was so inspired by that. And what I shared when I typed my answer is that university partners on Coursera come to us to enact stackability. And so one of the things that we have the ability to do is to link non-credit content so that it stacks into a degree either through recognition of prior learning or CPL in the United States or learners can start in non-credit courses and take that progress and transfer it into a degree course, which is wonderful.

Think about if you if you're not quite sure if you're ready for a degree or you want to test it before you pay tuition, you can go in and say, okay, I, Quentin, I'm interested in graduate level photonics. Can I do it with my 3 English majors and I can give it a try and then that progress moves into the degree with me and the other piece of sackability that we've enacted on the platform is admissions stackability.

We also have a partner that the University of Illinois that has an MBA that's highly competitive to get into. They have a master's of management. And so students who complete the Masters of Management. If they couldn't get into the MBA in the first place, that Masters of Management is the first year of the MBA. And so then they're able to get the highest credential available. So a lot of partners on Coursera being very innovative with Stackability. Maybe I can.

Dr. Jamil Salmi: Thank you very much. Could you comment on that? What is happening in Ireland in that respect? And then you could also take on the specific question about possibly having 3 different definitions of microcredentials. I don't know if you saw that question.

Dr. Padraig Walsh: Okay. I did and I answered it directly to that. Maybe that's the question. That's maybe it's only went back to the individual.

I mean, there's there's always a challenge around that. As I said, we were using like confidential before people use the actual the actual term but everyone hasn't come to come to a common definition on it but in the case of the 3 bodies there were actually the awarding body in relation to the funding for further education.

So all the should be no real confusion there and as I point to I actually came from meeting on Monday when we were meeting with the institution, the seventh traditional.

Universities just to try and make sure that the information that we provide to learners on microcredentials is consistent. I think as a quality insurance agency, we have we have to do that. And following up maybe on what I'm what Quentin was talking about. The, the real issue that we say we see now is, is the cache ability or the currency exchange of qualifications.

People know that particularly vendor type awards like Cisco type awards are internationally transferable. What they can't do to date is level them against their own understanding of where does these fit on our national framework. So we actually have a new scheme that will come into operation later this year, that will allow us term where we can post listed rewarding bodies. Okay. These are bodies other than universities that will be able to come to QUI to make sure that their awards can be compared with similar type of awards and that those then could be used are stacked or used in an intercalated manner by learners.

We've even had Microsoft this year who were interested in coming to QUI to get a QQI award for some of their CPD type programs. So that's something that that we will be, we recognize the international transferability but there also has to be some way of locally leveling these and that's something that we're actively working on. If you were doing this this time next year, I thought we'd able to update people.

Dr. Jamil Salmi: Thank you very much. We're getting now even more questions that I think we will have time to answer. But let me try to bring some of them together. I mean the big question is how do you provides good quality. Assurance, solid quotations, reliable quality insurance for this various microcredentials. Are we really being as rigorous as we are for traditional degrees? That's 1 question and then over time, you know, the beauty of microcredentials is that you can organize your own path and it can take time if you are working. But how 1 1 of the question was how do you make sure that the microquadential I took 4 years ago is still valued and I'm still killed in that specific area.

Who wants to start answering this question?

Dr. Quentin McAndrew: I'll take a, a stab at, at that question.

Dr. Jamil Salmi: Thank you, Quincy. Go ahead.

At first, of course, the first part of the question is how do we know that microcredentials are are as rigorous as you learning and paring I the work that you're doing is amazing to make the value of the micro credential transparent to the learner and validated. I think that is a big question with this proliferation of options from boot camps and what is a micro credential and how long is it and what are the skills that that you really get for Coursera, you know, for us it rests with our university partners.

And so the credit recommendation from an independent body is exceptionally important, but that doesn't actually award credit as all of you know, the university faculty still have to go through and validate the content and say yes. This is worthy of our institution's award of credit. So there's

always deep faculty review. And then in India, We're working on an initiative to provide an additional verified assessment. So that learners and institutions know that that skill is still current. So that that's one way that we're addressing it.

Dr. Jamil Salmi: Thank you. Tina or Padraig?

Dr. Tina Surfert: Yeah, maybe the question about how can we know that the knowledge the learner gained 5 years ago is still present or is still valid or even relevant. I think it's a tricky one. I think when universities They need to be open and I think this micro credential idea is an openness of universities. So we credit things the learner brings with them by different certificates. We look at that, we value it, and we we credit that. So it's important that we are open even for things that have been learned 5 years ago. And I think what is needed is the transparency, how like, like, presenting here and we need a really good and clear description of what the competences really are. For example, in with our courses, we also deliver a diploma supplement with all the learning goals and all the competencies even for the little slightest nugget.

We provide that. So that the learner really can. Can tell and show and visualize what is learned and what is earned in a way. So this is the way we try to ensure quality and to provide information about the competencies even if they are 5 years ago.

Dr. Jamil Salmi: Thank you, Tina.

Dr. Padraig Walsh: Maybe if I, on the currency issue, I took graduate courses in Syracuse University in New York in 1,984 and even back then it was possible to take the same course twice over the course of the doctors in the area of microprocessor, processor design because the reckoning was that it would be out of date 2 years later.

So the currency issue has been around for I've just said that's 40 years ago. Sorry I'm showing the the on the term of actually a credit thing within or as Quentin said, it's often important for the person that a recognized body can recognize the micro credentially in a way that people will trust. And this was for us the values that we are an awarding body and certifying body as well as the universities.

You don't have to, so someone can come directly to QUI to do that. But you have to go through a process. And this is the problem I think that people have is that it's very hard to do, right, to do high quality and to do it quick. You can do maybe 2 of those 3. So if what you're doing is you don't want to subject you to that then maybe you don't really want us to be as part of this firm. It doesn't mean it has value, but if you wanted to have some currency you have to be prepared to go through some form of appropriate policy insurance process for.

Dr. Jamil Salmi: Thank you. One question that has also been raised is Do you see microcredentials in all? Fields or do you see some specialization in in recent year and even one of the Richard justice was asking one of the participants whether you have seen Michael could actually in the field of theology.

Dr. Tina Surfert: I don't know about a micro-potential on theology, but one of my students is a theology student who just learned about instructional design, but one of my students is a theology student who just learned about instructional design, who just learned about instructional design,

so there might be something out at the end of the year when she just learned about instructional design so there might be something out at the end of the year when she's finished her courses. I thought that might be an option. I think it's maybe it's prone to some domains more than to others, the micro credential idea because some of the Do, I'm talking for example with our engineers, they say our knowledge base is not not so easily put it into pieces.

They see they see it themselves as a whole theory or a whole model. And you cannot learn that in different little pieces. So sometimes I think the domain thinking and the epistemological ideas and attitudes. Might stand in the way of that, but I'm sure that even then they have courses and they have lectures with different weeks where they present stackable pieces. And that's what I am trying to to tell them and convince them that they can use even then when they have larger models and bigger pictures. To break them down into pieces. But it's, it might be a domain specific. Culture thing.

Dr. Jamil Salmi: Quentin, Coursera works in so many countries. What do you see at this point? And then I will ask for Rick to give the European perspective. Go ahead.

Dr. Quentin McAndrew: Yes, what we're seeing what we're really seeing is not so much. Domain adherence of microcredentials but cross-disciplinary use of microcredentials to enhance a degree. So, you know, my 3 English degrees, we have more and more liberal arts students taking technical microcredentials to help them. Signal that they're durable skills from the humanities are augmented with immediate workplace skills.

So that's one real value of the micro credential that I see is that students can cross-pollinate and build their skills outside of their domain with a micro credential.

Dr. Jamil Salmi: Thank you. Padraig?

Dr. Padraig Walsh: I always take these things back to the personal. My, daughter works as a brand manager for, in, in Europe. She's an undergraduate, commerce business degree, but she didn't want to spend either the time or felt that she needed to do master's degree in an area like digital marketing, but she was interested in the area of digital marketing. And the problem was until relatively recently All that was open to her was to take a full master's program because there simply weren't microcredentials available.

She didn't need to do all of what she needed to do at particular pieces of it. So I think in many cases the market has been in the in the sort of components of master's degree area for people and to be honest I think and I asked this of the number of universities when they met them earlier this week. The majority of people in Ireland take microcredentials already have qualifications. They already have bachelor or master's qualification. So and the sort of fields that they're picking them up in are along the lines of what went and just talked about their, in, in more technical areas where they want to add and knowledge and skills.

But it's great now that these are available. Where they weren't on that the student doesn't have to commit to a year or 2 years to advance themselves and to get certified accredited training in particular areas.

Dr. Jamil Salmi: The last 2 questions. The first one is about pricing of microcredentials and the availability of financial aid. You mentioned Padraig, that in Ireland there are public resources. Are you aware of any other, the 3 of you, of any other countries or institutions that provide file financial aid for microcredentials and the last question is about the impact of microcredentials on industry itself. Is it becoming a model for our standard for employability of graduates? Or non-graduates.

Dr. Quentin McAndrew: I can take a quick stab and then turn it over to like my good colleagues. We, we see even entire national governments around the world providing microcredentials to their population because of the economic benefit for them. So for instance, Kazakhstan. So that's really interesting. And then also regional and local governments. Will do that as well as employers and universities. And there is financial aid available on Coursera. I think one of the things about microcredentials, especially for a degree interested learner, is that on Coursera so I can just give the Coursera example, so forgive me, I don't mean to just be Coursera centric, it's about $49 a month for a six-month credential at self-pace so learners can either expand or contract that timeline.

But relative to a credit hour, that's a big savings and having that outcome is really useful and I love I think this is a really provocative question which is if you're entering the job market and a job can in it doesn't have a micro credential and a job candidate does does it actually increase the pressure that that becomes the standard?

I think that's That's provocative and possibly the direction that that we're moving. That's really interesting. I hadn't thought of it that way.

Dr. Jamil Salmi: Thank you very much, Quentin. Tina?

Dr. Tina Surfert: Yeah, we also have financial aid, but it's very limited actually and I think that might be a problem actually because the employers don't see the benefit directly. Sometimes and even in our case, there were questions whether employers are aware of microcredit interests. I'm not sure about that in Germany. I think they just start to learn that there are these micro nuggets mini courses which they can use and which they can ask for. I think that's the perspective we haven't taken by now. And I think it's very important that we also think of the teacher side or the university as a provider site. We have the expertise but we don't know what the employers need. For competences for their employees, so they there must be a kind of communication process and we need to learn about the needs in the firms.

Then we can develop. The microcredentials together maybe with the employers. And then we can offer it to this one. Employer but also to the broader public. So it's It's interesting and very important. I think that we have this communication process to see what is needed. And then of course the employer is also very often willing to pay for it because it's directly that what he's asking for, or she's asking for. And what the employees. We can learn with us. So. It's but it's in German it's just a starting point where we are with this discussion and this communication process. Yeah.

Dr. Jamil Salmi: Thank you so much, Tina. Padraig?

Dr. Padraig Walsh: Yeah, I mean, the, I suppose you've a check in egg and cart and horse thing here, first of what, drive spot. The, we had a review in Ireland of skills review by the OECD in 2,023 and one of fish is coming around that has to do it. And the necessity for scales in particular areas, ones that you'll all be familiar with, you know, green skills, environmentally sustainable skills, stuff like eco driving or access to driving, etc.

And the driver for this often is government policy. And government drives policy and drives action by putting money on. And that's often the case. And then the universities will follow in those cases and develop the particular programs that are there. That cycle is there in these particular cases on the the type people who take these off I found it very interesting in my in my own case. Quite a number of my own staff have taken, microcredentials.

Again, these are people that would have patch or master's degrees, but wanted things in the area of governance, for instance, are in public policy or public procurement. So it was a very valuable short lesson for them and I've noticed we've done quite a lot of recruitment recently and I've been interviewing and going through cvs how many people in addition list the microcredentials that they've taken. And in my case, if they're credentials in our framework, I know what they are. I know what level there are. So I think that's becoming increasingly important in the market.

Dr. Jamil Salmi: Thank you so much. I have the unfortunate task of bringing this session to a close. Before Michelle, so last few comments, but.as you can see, I cannot summarize the rich conversation that we had. Because we don't have time and and I would not really do justice to The great information, insightful experiences that our 3 panelists have shared.

I hope you have all learned as much as I have learned and Michelle you can see that obviously we need to have a follow-up. Seminar or webinar because we were not able to respond to all the good questions. So we'll have microcredentials too and since it's stackable it's a that would be very very useful and I started with a personal and I got I would want to finish with one if you allow me back in 74 I was finishing my So, degree in Paris ahead of going to the US for a master's degree. And my mother told me at that time that she would buy me a personal portable typewriter because she said in the US students were used to typing their papers which didn't exist in in France at that time.

But my mom put a condition, she said, but you have first to go to, secretary of school to learn to touch type. And so for one hour a day, 14 days, I learned to touch type. And you know, many years ago, or maybe 8 years later, when I bought my first personal computer. I was ready and I realized that this first experience of what we could call today a micro credential prepared me so well for the digital world of the future. I tell you what I joined the World Bank, they were not using computers yet. And then they introduced computers and they told all the professionals you have to type for yourself. And I remember how so many of my colleagues suffered to go through this transition.

Please join me in thanking very heartily, our 3 panelists who really shared very insightful views and perspective and gave us a lot of learning in this webinar. Michelle over to you.

Dr. Michelle Claville: Thank you so much. Jamil. I agree with you. I thank you, Jamil, for being our moderator for today's webinar.

And as I've already said, I agree that this has been certainly a very rich session. So I join you in thanking our speakers, doctors, Quentin, McAndrew, Dr. Tina Surfert and Dr. Padraig Walsh. We also thank you the audience for joining us as we launched our 2024 webinar series and we hope you'll join us again.

When we when we announce our second one because we will have more certainly later this year. Please know that the recording for this webinar will be available to you. We will be certain to email all participants that the webinar is available on our website. So please be on the lookout for that.

The questions, as Jamil has mentioned, should you have more questions, feel free. To, you know, contact us at CHEA/CIQG to see how you may engage with, our speakers.

That being said, We thank you again for joining us. Again, last count, we were just really pleased that there were over 300 participants out not including those from the United States. We hope to see that same kind of enthusiasm as we continue throughout the year. And by the way, I'll put a plug in for CHEA/CIQG you have not been a member today, this is the time to do. Thank you so much and you enjoy your rest of your day, night and week.