



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **CGS Member Universities to Examine Graduate-Level Microcredentials and Workforce Needs**

Washington, DC — Today the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS,) an organization of approximately 500 universities that grant master's and doctoral degrees, and ETS announced a new project to explore graduate-level microcredentials. Requiring fewer credit hours than a degree, microcredentials – certificates, badges and other types of short-term, for-credit educational offerings—are increasing rapidly, but little is known about how they are changing the graduate education landscape. The project will seek to clarify the types of credentials offered by post-secondary institutions and assess how those credentials are valued by employers.

As a recent Credential Engine report notes, as of 2021 there were over 350,000 degrees and certificates offered by post-secondary educational institutions. These allow current and prospective graduate students to earn credit for developing professional skillsets, such as Supply Chain Management, clinical specialization for healthcare fields, or college-level instruction, as well as special areas of knowledge and expertise. Because some microcredentials are “stackable”—meaning they are eligible for cumulative credit resulting in a master's degree—they may also provide students a low-stakes pathway into master's degree programs.

“Microcredentials hold great promise and appeal because they involve a shorter time-commitment and cost for students” said Suzanne Ortega, President of the Council of Graduate Schools. “This can be a great way for a student to get a taste of more specialized training in a particular field or some expertise that is specific to their career goals. What we don't yet know—and what this project will help us to better understand—is the extent to which their investment in these programs pays off over time. We need to understand the extent to which employers understand and value microcredentials, and what the relative return on investment is for microcredentials and full degree programs at the master's level.”

The eighteen-month project will be guided by a panel of thought leaders from CGS member institutions, employers, and non-profit organizations. CGS will also hold focus groups on a variety of high-priority issues central to post-baccalaureate microcredentialing to inform surveys of graduate program directors and employers. The project will conclude with a convening in 2023, where CGS will release guidance on definitions of microcredentials as well as a framework for how programs might develop non-degree certificates and include them in their post-baccalaureate credential portfolios.

“Microcredentials in the graduate education space can help provide an additional layer of flexibility to students who are juggling many priorities in their academic journeys today,” said Alberto Acereda, Associate Vice President of Global Higher Education at ETS. “As we continue to see demands for new and innovative degree completion methods from

both students and employers, ETS is proud to fund this project as CGS leads the charge in uncovering the ways in which microcredentials can change the graduate education landscape.”

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**About CGS**

*The Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) is an organization of approximately 500 institutions of higher education in the United States and Canada engaged in graduate education, research, and the preparation of candidates for advanced degrees. The organization’s mission is to improve and advance graduate education, which it accomplishes through advocacy in the federal policy arena, research, and the development and dissemination of best practices.*

**About ETS**

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