Non-Degree Credentials: Defining and Assessing Quality

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Agenda

• Definitions of microcredentials
• Discussion of how best to assess quality
• Results from CGS Graduate Certificate Survey
• Contextualizing the results with participant activity
Microcredentials: Definition(s) and Use(s)

• For our practical purposes here, we will use the simple definition of microcredentials as educational credentials (both non-credit and for-credit) that are shorter than a degree. (Northeastern University Report: Getting Started with Microcredentials: A Primer for Higher Education Leaders)

• Our talk today will also focus primarily on microcredentials as standalone offerings for/to new students
  • Should still be designed to enable later stacking or conversion into credit toward a degree
Certificate program enrollment, Spring 2023
N=196

Source: (CGS, 2023, Program-Level Survey)
How often does institution review the quality and content of graduate certificate offerings?

- Student learning outcomes assessment (16.7%)
- Size of enrollment (15.9%)
- Faculty qualifications (13.7%)
- Completion rates (11.9%)
- Career outcomes (6.5%)
- Employer satisfaction (2.3%)

Quality in context: local and regional career and employment factors in designing successful microcredentials
Re-Orienting Data Used to Design and Evaluate Microcredentials

• Consider re-prioritizing the data points used to evaluate microcredentials: shift from more university/faculty centered evaluation to student employment outcome/employer centered evaluation

Data points that are used to evaluate the curriculum and the quality of certificates:

• Career outcomes (6.5%)
• Employer satisfaction (2.3%)
• Student learning outcomes assessment (16.7%)
• Size of enrollment (15.9%)
• Faculty qualifications (13.7%)
• Completion rates (11.9%)
Graduate Certificate is Seen as Valuable for Job Retaining and Reskilling

How valuable do you believe graduate certificates will be over the next decade in...?

Providing pathway into graduate study

Percent

Just in time training for entry

Percent

Job retraining and reskilling

Percent

Local and Regional Design based on Demand:

Re-prioritizing how to evaluate microcredentials means designing backward to what students and employers most want and need

• Requires regular collaboration with employers
• Requires knowledge of local/state/regional workforce challenges/shortages
• Consider the workforce needs that can be met by your institution’s strengths
• Focus on most in-demand workforce needs may provide funding streams for prospective students to enroll in and complete microcredentials
  • Employers pay
  • State/local government funds
  • Partnerships with industry for paid internships, employer-designed course projects, hiring interviews post-completion
Most common fields and delivery models of certificates

Top five certificate type categories

- Teaching: 20
- Data science/analytics/informatics/modeling: 20
- Interdisciplinary: 15
- Management: 14
- Psychology/Mental Health: 12
- Health Care Leadership/Management/Administration: 10

Certificate Program Delivery Models

- Fully online: asynchronous: 59.0%
- Hybrid: 39.3%
- Fully in-person/on-site: 37.1%
- Fully online: synchronous: 19.1%

What do employers think about certificates?
A sneak peek at the 2023 NACE Recruiting Benchmarks Survey

National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE)
2023 Recruiting Benchmarks Survey

Fielded in the Spring of 2023

Employer responses = 339

Survey invitees tend to skew to larger companies

Source: (NACE, 2023, Recruiting Benchmarks)
Higher education & industry/associations are seen as being of higher quality than others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>High/Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online providers</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (NACE, 2023, Recruiting Benchmarks)
Certificates are more of a deciding factor at the undergraduate level than at the graduate level.

20% Are currently seeking candidates with certificates

Source: (NACE, 2023, Recruiting Benchmarks)
Re-Emphasizing Local/State/Regional Context(s)

• National survey data from NACE and others, as noted, skews toward larger employers, many of which may not have a local/state/regional presence in our respective markets
  • Survey your local/state/regional employers; work with regional Economic Development Corps and Chambers of Commerce to distribute and encourage engagement with survey
  • Collaborate with EDCs and CoCs members on identifying most pressing needs
    • What content is most needed?
    • What delivery method would be most productive and beneficial, given local/state/regional context(s), including technology access?
Participant Activity

- Identify the workforce needs in your university’s service region and the employers and state/local government agencies that could advise you regarding desired knowledge/skills for their current or prospective employees.
- What steps could you take to engage employers with faculty to develop microcredentials to meet those desired knowledge/skills?
- How might you work with employers to support funding for students to pursue these microcredentials?
- How will you assess the quality of these microcredentials in terms of...
  - employer satisfaction
  - student career outcomes
Report Out and Discussion
Keep the conversation going....

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