TEMPLATE SUNY MICROCREDENTIAL POLICY

Policy Name: _____
Policy Number: _____

Responsible Office/Administrator:
Approved By: [Provost and College Council or Board of Trustees]
Effective Date: 00/00/00
Latest Revision Date: 00/00/00

Definition

Microcredentials verify, validate, and attest that the earner has gained specific skills and competencies. Microcredentials differ from traditional degrees and certificates in that they are generally offered in shorter or more flexible timespans and tend to be more narrowly focused, with a clear connection to work. SUNY microcredentials are compact academic credentials taught by SUNY faculty designed to empower learners with essential skills, knowledge, and experience needed to get a job or advance in a job in a high-demand field; and wherever possible, award academic credit to provide a pathway to a certificate or degree (the latter being required for eligibility in key New York State programs).

SUNY Policy in Practice

SUNY was the first university system in the country to adopt a system-wide microcredential policy, approved by the SUNY Board of Trustees for all campuses, in 2018. SUNY microcredentials are known for academic rigor, partnership with business and industry, stackability to the certificate and degree, and portability. Through faculty leadership and innovation, microcredential programs are now present on 52 of 64 SUNY campuses.

SUNY microcredentials are recognized by New York State business leaders and state agencies as valuable tool for employee recruitment and retention. SUNY microcredentials are recognized by the students who earn them as both personally and professionally transformational. As of this writing, in SUNY's system-wide catalogue, there are microcredentials where the credits earned can be applied to meet the credit requirements of the certificate, associate, bachelors, advanced certificate, master's, Ph.D., PharmD, DDS, OD and MD.

While each campus program is offered under the umbrella of the System-wide microcredential policy, local campus policy and related practices ensure continued alignment, address common questions and concerns, and facilitate consistent internal and external messaging and progress toward goal completion.

SUNY Microcredential Framework

The SUNY microcredential framework consists of five key areas: academic quality, alignment to business and industry, use for multiple audiences, stackability and portability.

- SUNY microcredentials support faculty innovation and must be approved through established faculty governance processes.
- There is a clear connection between microcredentials and work.

- Faculty engage business and industry, degree program advisory boards, and alumni, in developing each microcredential.
- Each SUNY microcredential delivers sufficient skills, knowledge and experience to allow earners to obtain a job, advance in a job, or gain specialized skills to allow them to keep pace or advance.
    - Goals for designing microcredentials for SUNY degree-seeking students include skillsets complementary to a student's major to help them stand apart in the job market and/or recognition of complex skill mastery to support their ability to get a discipline-relevant part-time job, fellowship or to prepare for graduate school.
- Skill acquisition is verified by achievement of learning outcomes (for courses and the microcredential as a whole) as well as assessments and completion of student work.
    - Microcredentials connect to significant/priority industries for the region or state.
        - Connection to industries identified in 'one of three previous year's NYSDOL Significant Industries reports' at the state-wide level, is required for the microcredential to be eligible for the Part-time TAP Non-Degree program.
        - Microcredentials developed in partnership with industry or that receive three letters of support from industry support campus applications to register microcredentials for Federal WIOA funding.
    - Bundling coursework with preparation for an industry certification is a value-add that a SUNY microcredential provides.
    - Bundling coursework with an internship, particularly for non-matriculated students, is a value add that a SUNY microcredential provides.
- Important to both degree-seeking students and non-matriculated students is the ability to complete in a timely manner.
    - Ex. If sequenced courses in the microcredential are only offered every fall so that it takes two years to complete, the content no longer carries the benefit of being a microcredential. Scheduling modifications ensure timely completion.
    - Ex. If each course in a three-course microcredential has a pre-requisite, it is really a six-course offering and no longer carries the benefit of a microcredential. Consider adding a new course (that can fit into an existing related degree program) or a course modification to streamline; consider applicability of a series (where each component has career value).
    - Where pre-requisites must remain, consider advance standing with approval by the department chair; consider flexible delivery options such as 7.5 week classes.
- SUNY microcredentials provide a pathway to certificates and degrees in the related discipline; in this way the microcredential is stackable, i.e., the credits earned in the microcredential can be applied to meet the credit requirements of the related degree program.
    - NYSED regulations require that any new course created for a microcredential fit into an existing degree program.

- Stackability to a degree is a requirement for Part-Time TAP Non-Degree (currently open to community colleges and technology colleges) and the NYS Virtual Career Center (open to all sectors).

- Data collection on microcredential students and student outcomes is essential for assessment of each microcredential, individual campus microcredential programs, and System-level progress toward strategic priorities and goals.
  - Established processes have been developed to capture and report microcredential data in the Student Information System via regular SIRIS reporting and continue to be refined.
  - Key data points include application information, date of enrollment, retention, date of completion, next steps (did the student complete another microcredential, enroll in the related degree program).
  - The SUNY SICAS Center can assist campuses in establishing relevant programming.
- As SUNY microcredential programs are access points to SUNY degree programs, all microcredential students are to be issued a SUNY Global ID and provided with access to the same library, tutoring, and other student success/student welfare supports as degree-seeking students.
- Transparent and audience-focused marketing and communications are essential supports for all microcredential programs.
  - Top requested information includes cost, estimated time to completion, stackability to a degree (number of credits and to what degrees can they be applied), instructional mode, and skills learned.
  - Essential to transparency, are clear, learner-focused microcredential descriptions that answer what completion of a microcredential allows a student to do:
    - Ex. "Successful completion of this microcredential prepares all for continued study; *readies those new to the profession to apply for XXXX; *provides existing professionals with specialized skills to keep pace/advance; *connects to apprenticeship
  - Links to Request for Information (RFI) forms and links to Apply/Register must include the word microcredential and list microcredential options.
- Information/training for admissions advisors must be provided.

Policy

Types of Microcredentials

A. Credit-Bearing

- A credit bearing microcredential stacks in its entirety to one or more existing academic certificates and degrees in the related content area.
- Microcredentials are a minimum of 6 credits and a maximum of 12 credits. Microcredentials exceeding 9 credits should be carefully considered.
  - Financial aid (Part-Time TAP for Non-Degree Credentials) for microcredentials at community colleges and technology colleges, is capped at 11 credits per semester.

- Credit-bearing microcredential naming conventions may not resemble certificate or degree program names that have been approved by NYSED.

B. Non-Credit

- While the majority of SUNY microcredentials are credit-bearing, there are circumstances where non-credit microcredentials are appropriate.
- SUNY's microcredential program was created to be distinct from continuing education offerings.
    - While recognition of participation, community building, multi-hour or multi-day trainings alone can be important components of continuing education or workforce development, those things are not, by definition, SUNY microcredentials.
- Campuses may use non-credit microcredentials to advance an existing non-credit curriculum, assessing it to stack into an existing related certificate or degree program via the award of academic credit by evaluation process or an articulation agreement.
    - The benefit of the award of credit by evaluation, especially for adult learners, is that it can help to motivate them to enroll in the related degree program. A non-credit program is a good candidate for PLA if faculty see opportunity to award a *minimum* of three credits.
        - Note: Part time TAP Non-Degree can apply to non-credit microcredentials at community colleges and technical colleges provided that they are stackable to a degree via a Prior Learning Assessment or articulation process (and meet other program requirements).
        - Note: Microcredentials must be credit-bearing and stackable to be included in the NYS Virtual Career Center.
- Campuses may use non-credit microcredentials to provide specialized skills to those who already have degrees (note: microcredentials can stack to graduate degrees so consider stackability toward the master's or beyond if possible).
- Non-credit microcredentials have learning outcomes, assessments and produce student work. Consider the learning outcomes of the microcredential as a whole.
- Non-credit microcredential naming conventions may not resemble certificate or degree program names that have been approved by NYSED.

Program Principles

- Academic quality is paramount for microcredentials, and faculty governance participation is required.
- Microcredentials are designed to meet market needs and developed in partnership with and informed by business and industry, regional and state economic development priorities.
- Microcredentials are initiated locally, developed and approved according to local governance policies and procedures, consistent with campus mission and strategic goals.
- Microcredentials provide a pathway to or back to higher education and pathways to registered certificates and degrees.
- Microcredentials are inherently flexible and innovative.

- Microcredentials are portable and stackable.
- Microcredentials can be delivered online, in the classroom, or a hybrid combination of both.

Potential Audiences for Microcredentials

- Current Students
- Prospective Students
- Adult Learners
- Alumni
- Business/Industry Partners
- K-12 Partners
- County and State Agencies
- Community Partners
- Faculty/Staff

Additional Considerations for Local Policy:

- At the discretion of faculty, completion or eligibility criteria may be set for microcredentials; keeping in mind that microcredentials are an access point to degree programs. Ex. minimum GPA to pass; basic knowledge of chemistry to enroll; must pass related certification exam to earn microcredential.
- Microcredentials are covered under SUNY's Seamless Transfer policy. For transfer outside of SUNY, courses in credit microcredentials will be considered according to the receiving institutions' transfer policies.
- Grandfathering may be considered for inclusion in campus policy, i.e. students who previously completed microcredential requirements in the prior semester (or earlier) may apply to earn the microcredential. It is recommended that individual departments determine any time restrictions with a cap of three years prior.
- Campuses should consider a policy for enrollment, i.e., in a two-course microcredential where a smaller percentage of students opt to enroll in the second course, all attempts should be made to run the second course to allow students to complete.