

# Section 10C



Nottingham Trent  
University

## Quality Handbook

**Part C: Assuring And Enhancing Quality**

### **Section 10C: Micro- credentials - Requirements**

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## 1. Definition of Micro-credentials

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- 1.1 Micro-credentials are standalone credit-bearing, skills-based, short courses designed to upskill and re-skill learners. They may be delivered internally or with a partner organisation at Levels 4-7 and should have no pre, post or co-requisites. University micro-credentials can be awarded from 5 to 20 credits in 5 credit increments. Advisory entry requirements may be given, but micro-credentials should be accessible to all learners. Assessment completion should be built into the learning hours of the micro-credential.

## 2. Strategy and Governance

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**The Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) maintains overall academic oversight of learning provision on behalf of the Academic Board. In respect of micro-credentials, oversight is delegated from the ASQC to School Academic Standards and Quality Committees (SASQCs).**

- 2.1 The academic governance of micro-credentials aligns to standard University processes as defined in the University's Quality Handbook (QH) Section 1.
- 2.2 Executive oversight and determination of strategic direction of micro-credentials at the University rests with the University Executive Team (UET), in conjunction with ASQC, SASQCs, Micro-credential Expert Panel (McEP), and the Online Learning Steering Group for those courses operating solely with online delivery.
- 2.3 SASQCs are responsible for assuring the standards and quality of micro-credentials within their remit. Micro-credentials are subject to the standard SASQC processes applying to all its courses, and as set out in QH Supplement 1A: Requirements for ensuring the currency and health of a course, with any exceptions identified.
- 2.4 Day-to-day oversight of each micro-credential rests with its Course Leader.
- 2.5 Any modifications to micro-credentials should be implemented for the following cohort.
- 2.6 Where changes affect the material information provided to current and prospective students, the University will ensure appropriate and timely communication of these changes in line with CMA guidance.

## 3. Business Evaluation

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**Business evaluation ensures that new micro-credentials and proposed changes to micro-credentials align with the University's strategic goals, will be**

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**appropriate to market, are financially and operationally viable, and will not contravene consumer rights legislation.**

- 3.1 All proposals for new courses and changes to existing courses are assessed for their market, financial or consumer rights impact.
- 3.2 The platform for delivery of micro-credentials should be discussed with the Flexible Learning Team within CADQ as part of the business case development.
- 3.3 CourseLoop should be used to complete the Business Evaluation process for all micro-credentials.
- 3.4 For changes to micro-credentials, a Short Course Change Form must be completed prior to engaging in Business Evaluation. This is used to determine whether Business Evaluation is needed.

## 4. Categories of Course Approval

**Principle: All University courses are subject to academic consideration and approval through the University's course development and approval process.**

- 4.1 New micro-credentials will be considered and approved through SASQCs in accordance with the process for Category 4 courses outlined in Quality Handbook Supplement 5I.
- 4.2 Modifications to micro-credentials (very low, low, and medium impact changes), will be considered and approved by SASQCs.
- 4.3 New award titles ('stacked' qualifications) will be approved through a course design process.

## 5. Delivery Model

**Micro-credentials may be delivered online by an NTU or external learning platform supported by NTU digital infrastructure, through a blended approach, or in person.**

- 5.1 Course leaders are responsible for defining the academic curriculum content and assessments for micro-credentials.
- 5.2 It is anticipated that the majority of micro-credential learning will be asynchronous, but synchronous delivery is permitted.
- 5.3 Open-source reading and learning resources may need to be supplied for courses delivered with learning partners and should be agreed as part of contract negotiations.

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## 5.4 Micro-credential staffing:

- a. The School has responsibility for the recruitment and appointment of suitably qualified staff including online learning moderators and other key staff for online courses delivered on University-operated platforms.

## 5.5 Micro-credential online learning platforms:

- a. The University is responsible for the quality of its online learning platform and related software for NTU-delivered courses as well as ongoing delivery and support that enables successful student outcomes and a quality academic experience.
- b. Partners are responsible for the quality of their online learning platforms and related software as well as ongoing delivery and support that enables successful student outcomes and a quality academic experience.

## 5.6 All University staff involved in the delivery of micro-credentials should be provided with staff development opportunities including access to NTU online teaching strategy courses for those involved in online learning and orientation of the learning platform used for delivery.

## 5.7 Current University students are eligible to apply for micro-credentials in addition to their present programme of study as long as there is no duplication of content. Micro-credentials should not be taken in order to exceed the maximum number of permitted attempts.

## 5.8 Applications to micro-credentials delivered through partners will be made directly with them.

## 5.9 Applications to University micro-credentials are to be made using the University Admission System (UAS).

## 5.10 An NTU student record will be created by the NTU Systems team for all students studying an NTU micro-credential directly with the University or with a partner.

## 5.11 Students will be awarded a digital badge for completion of each micro-credential rather than a certificate of achievement.

## 6. Student Participation and Engagement

**The University values the important perspective that students have on their own learning experience. A range of feedback opportunities will be available for students to engage in educational enhancement.**

### 6.1 Students will be given the opportunity to complete a survey through MySay following completion of a micro-credential. The Course Leader uses the results to inform an annual report which is a modified version of the interim course report for each micro-credential or set of micro-credentials at the discretion of academic Schools. Student feedback is considered alongside, and in the same way, as student feedback on the other courses that the School delivers.

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- 6.2 A mechanism should be made available for students to provide ad-hoc feedback at any point during their micro-credential studies. Course Committee meetings are not appropriate for micro-credential delivery.
- 6.3 Course Leaders should provide partners with any relevant information arising from feedback that may have an impact on micro-credential design and delivery.
- 6.4 The relevant principles of the University's Student Code of Behaviour apply to students undertaking micro-credentials.
- 6.5 NTU support services available to those undertaking micro-credentials should be clearly communicated in marketing and course materials.
- 6.6 Online learning:
  - a. Courses delivered online endeavour to provide an engaging learning experience that builds community and guards against the potential for isolation and frustration that can challenge online learners.
  - b. Student engagement with their learning is nurtured in a number of academic, motivational and administrative ways, for example:
    - i) learning activities have directed and highly interactive elements built in, which include: rich multimedia content; online exercises; films / videos; case studies; reflections in blogs; online facilitated discussion forum and wikis.
    - ii) a variety of online delivery methods and learning activities used to stimulate engagement and cater for different learning styles.
    - iii) students are encouraged to interact and learn from other students using discussion forums and threads to facilitate knowledge transfer.
    - iv) directed learning time (as specified in the definitive micro-credential information in CourseLoop), is allocated to enable students to engage with the online materials and with their peers.
    - v) links to academic study, writing and other skills resources should be provided to learners.
    - vi) course staff should provide academic advice in an effective and timely fashion.
    - vii) all materials and assessments are delivered to a defined schedule for each micro-credential; materials and activities are organised into bite-size and manageable sections.
    - viii) it should be clear to students of their weekly progress throughout the course; deadlines and reminders should keep students on track.
    - ix) an induction is provided for all micro-credentials. This induction includes a variety of activities to introduce a student to the learning environment.
    - x) The Course Leader is responsible for monitoring data and statistics including student attendance and engagement.
- 6.7 Where a partner is involved, the expertise of third-party learning designers should be utilised.

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## 7. Course Design

**The design of all new courses and changes to courses that are high in impact is achieved through a collaborative and supportive design process.**

- 7.1 Micro-credential design should align with the University's principles for course design as set out below:
  - a. Micro-credentials are flexibly designed to offer a standalone qualification in one area or key skill in order to re-skill or upskill students.
  - b. Micro-credentials are standalone qualifications but can be considered for inclusion into University-approved 'stacked' course pathways.
- 7.2 Guidance for designing micro-credentials can be found in Section 12C Principles for High-Quality Online Learning.
- 7.3 Advisory minimum skill and language entry requirements may be suggested at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.
- 7.4 Micro-credentials are standalone qualifications and should have no pre, post or co-requisite learning.
- 7.5 Micro-credentials may range from 5 to 20 credits in 5 credit increments with the following recommended notional hours:
  - a. 5 credits of study                      50 hours
  - b. 10 credits of study                     100 hours
  - c. 20 credits of study                    200 hours
- 7.6 Assessment completion should be built into the notional learning hours of the curriculum.
- 7.7 Micro-credentials at Levels 4-7 should not normally be longer than 12 weeks in duration. By exception, modules may be delivered over an alternative duration where there is a clear rationale.
- 7.8 Micro-credentials will not follow standard academic year patterns and may be offered flexibly with start dates at any point during the calendar year as agreed by School Executive Teams (SETs).

## 8. Quality Monitoring and Review

**Micro-credentials are included in the standard quality monitoring and review processes that apply to all other courses, and the same overarching principles of monitoring, review and reporting apply.**

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- 8.1 All Schools delivering micro-credentials should monitor the quality and standards of these qualifications through SASQCs.
- 8.2 The efficacy of the University's approach to the management of the quality and standards of micro-credentials will be tested through a thematic review and report by CADQ.
- 8.3 Individual micro-credentials should be reviewed in line with Quality Handbook Section 6: Monitoring, Review and Reporting. Schools should give consideration to the timing and scale of review for micro-credentials, in the context of the size of the course(s). CADQ will support Schools in this process. The review should include: recruitment analysis, grades awarded, and student feedback, to be presented at a SET meeting. The principles of the process can be found in QH Section 6.
- 8.4 A modified version of the Interim Course Report should be completed for each micro-credential. The principles of the process can be found in QH Section 6.
- 8.5 Course Leaders have responsibility for providing feedback to partners that may impact upon micro-credential design and delivery.
- 8.6 The University's standard external examining and moderation arrangements apply to micro-credentials as outlined in Quality Handbook Sections 9 and 15.

## 9. External Examiners

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**All Micro-Credentials will have one or more External Examiner(s) to carry out the role defined in QH Section 9.**

- 9.1 Schools are responsible for ensuring that all micro-credentials have an external examiner approved and appointed by the University's External Examiner and Assessor Appointments Panel (EEAP).
- 9.2 The external examiner must be present at micro-credential conferring Board of Examiner (BoE) meetings and must signify their written agreement with the decisions taken by the board. An external examiner who is unable to be present at a board meeting should subsequently indicate by written notification, via the Course Leader, their involvement in the assessment process and their agreement to the decisions made at the board.
- 9.3 External Examiners must submit an annual report within four weeks of the BoE meeting at which micro-credentials are conferred.

## 10. Board Of Examiners

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**All micro-credentials are required to have a formally constituted Board of Examiners meeting. The conduct of the Board aligns to the terms of reference, membership and procedures that are set out in QH Section 15.**

- 10.1 A formally constituted BoE meeting will be held following the completion of each micro-credential cohort. These BoE meetings will consider recommendations for the final award. The external examiner(s) must attend this meeting or indicate by written notification, via the Course Leader, their involvement in the assessment process and their agreement to the decisions made at the board.
- 10.2 A senior academic from within the School offering the micro-credential acts as Chair of the BoE.
- 10.3 The BoE is conducted according to the criteria set out in QH Section 15. The BoE applies the Common Assessment Regulations for Bachelor's and integrated Master's Degrees QH 16A, and Taught Postgraduate Degrees QH 16C.
- 10.4 Course Leaders represent their micro-credentials at BoE meetings; other course staff are not required to attend.
- 10.5 School administration should ensure that all data is available for BoE meetings, liaising with partners where applicable.
- 10.6 Partner representatives should not attend BoE meetings. The BoE chair may share with partners any relevant or material information arising from a BoE meeting, as appropriate.
- 10.7 BoE meetings may be held flexibly throughout the calendar year as required by cohorts and as agreed at SET.

## 11. Assessment of Micro-Credentials

**The undergraduate and postgraduate grade based assessment (GBA) schemes for non-degree awards are used for the assessment of micro-credentials.**

- 11.1 Students will receive a grade point as outlined in the undergraduate or postgraduate GBA framework as appropriate to the level of micro-credential being undertaken, as outlined in Quality Handbook Section 16D. Classification bands are also identified on the GBA frameworks.
- 11.2 If a student has not achieved a passing grade for their micro-credential, then they are deemed to have failed.
- 11.3 Following initial failure of a micro-credential, the student will be offered the opportunity to be reassessed on one further occasion in order to achieve a pass. The grade for this second attempt will be capped at a pass.
- 11.4 The maximum number of attempts normally allowed for a student to pass a micro-credential will be two – first attempt and referral or repeat.

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- 11.5 A student may not demand reassessment in a micro-credential that is no longer offered by the University.
- 11.6 For reassessment of a micro-credential, a student will be required to resubmit their assignment within 2 weeks of communication of BoE outcomes.
- 11.7 Termination of study on a micro-credential will occur if:
  - a. The student has exhausted the total number of permitted attempts.
  - b. The student has committed serious academic misconduct as outlined in paragraph 18.7 of Quality Handbook Section 17C.
- 11.8 Once the total number of attempts has been exhausted, students are able to re-enrol on the same micro-credential but full course fees will again be payable.
- 11.9 No reassessment is permitted for a student to improve upon a grade above the pass level required including students with substantiated extenuating circumstances.
- 11.10 Course regulations must establish the conditions under which assessments are carried out and specify the materials or equipment which students are permitted to use.
- 11.11 Course Leaders are responsible for ensuring procedures for requesting reasonable adjustments to micro-credential assessment arrangements are clearly communicated to students with disabilities so that they are not substantially disadvantaged.
- 11.12 The Course Leader is responsible for considering requests for reasonable adjustments to micro-credential study and will agree arrangements, referring to Student Support Services and Academic Registry for guidance as necessary.

## 12. Notification of Extenuating Circumstances

**Students studying micro-credentials are able to make Notification of Extenuating Circumstances (NEC) requests.**

- 12.1 Students studying on a micro-credential who are unable to complete an assessment to deadline are entitled to:
  - a. Self-certify in order to apply for an extension for 7 calendar days using the online NTU NEC portal. The grade will not be capped for students submitting by the agreed revised deadline.
  - b. Defer their assessment to the next available assessment opportunity of their choice (in agreement with the Course Leader), using the online NTU NEC portal. They may only defer their assessment once. The grade will not be capped.
- 12.2 Students studying micro-credentials making a 7 calendar day extension or next available opportunity request through the NEC portal are not required to provide supporting evidence.

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- 12.3 Students may only make one NEC request per sitting of a micro-credential.
- 12.4 Students making an initial late submission (within 7 calendar days of the original deadline), will automatically be deemed to have failed. Students will be eligible to make one further attempt (capped at a pass) by completing referral work or repeating the micro-credential at the next available opportunity of their choice (in agreement with the Course Leader).
- 12.5 It is not possible for a student studying a micro-credential to vary their rate of study. A student may instead defer their assessment once to the next available assessment opportunity of their choice (in agreement with the Course Leader). The grade will not be capped.
- 12.6 Should a student wish to take a break in study from a micro-credential they may defer their assessment once to the next available assessment opportunity. The grade will not be capped.
- 12.7 Students must be fully informed of the implications of taking a break in study from their learning.
- 12.8 Students on a break in study will not have access to learning content from their initial micro-credential or NTU services.
- 12.9 No unfair academic advantage should be gained by the agreement to take a break in study.
- 12.10 A student may withdraw from a micro-credential by submitting an NTU Permanent Withdrawal Form and submitting it to the relevant School Subject Administrator.
- 12.11 The student's access to the micro-credential will be withdrawn with immediate effect of confirmation of withdrawal by the School.
- 12.12 As outlined in NTU's Online Learning – Fee payment conditions, paragraph 6.1 students will be eligible for a full fee refund if withdrawing 7 days or less from the start of their micro-credential.
- 12.13 Students withdrawing from a micro-credential after 7 days of the start date will be liable for full fees. Where a student experiences any difficulties after this point, the NEC procedure should be followed.

## 13. Academic Appeals and Complaints

**The University provides clear policy and process with regard to academic appeals and complaints.**

- 13.1 Students studying micro-credentials adhere to the University's Academic Appeals Process as set out in QH Section 17B.
- 13.2 The Course Leader is responsible for handling academic appeals and complaints. A Request for Consideration (R4R) or appeal must be submitted through the Academic Appeals portal. Students must follow the Academic Appeals Process, as set out in QH Section 17B.

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- 13.3 The R4R process should be clearly communicated to students.
- 13.4 Students studying micro-credentials adhere to the University's policy on Complaints, QH Section 17E.
- 13.5 The submission of an R4R or complaint should have no detrimental impact upon a student's study.

## 14. Academic Integrity

**The University provides clear policy and process with regard to academic integrity.**

- 14.1 Students studying micro-credentials should be provided with clear guidance on good academic practice, and the implications of failing to abide by the values and behaviours of academic integrity as part of their induction activity.
- 14.2 The Course Leader is responsible for initiating the Academic Integrity process.
- 14.3 Schools are responsible for keeping Academic Integrity records.
- 14.4 Academic misconduct reviews may be conducted in person or online.
- 14.5 Students studying micro-credentials will adhere to the University's policy on Academic Integrity, Quality Handbook Section 17C with the following exceptions to the Academic Integrity Penalty Framework listed in order of severity:
  - a. **Improving Academic Integrity (IAI):** where potentially accidental poor academic practice has been identified, the student will receive an IAI notice that will be held on their student file should they choose to study another micro-credential with NTU. A discussion will also be scheduled between the learner and their Personal Tutor to provide Academic Integrity support. Issue of an additional IAI notice in subsequent micro-credential study will result in an academic misconduct review. (Details of the Academic Misconduct Review process can be found in subsection 7 of Quality Handbook Section 17C.)  
*Penalty:* No penalty
  - b. **Misconduct:** where IAI has been recorded across two or more micro-credentials. (Details of the Academic Misconduct Review process can be found in subsection 7 of Quality Handbook Section 17C.)  
*Penalty:* Grade of the individual micro-credential capped at a pass.
  - c. **Serious Misconduct:** Serious Academic Misconduct has been upheld at an Academic misconduct review. (Paragraph 9 of Quality Handbook Section 17C).  
*Penalty:* Automatic fail of the individual micro-credential.
- 14.6 A student who has committed an academic integrity offence and not met the minimum pass grade for a micro-credential is permitted to be referred, or to sit the

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course at the next available opportunity of their choice (in agreement with the Course Leader). The mark will be capped at a pass.

<b>Policy owner</b>
CADQ

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