

D2L



**Micro-Credentials: A Case for
Member Engagement and Upskilling**



Foreword From Regional Director Tony Maguire

Two years of working from home have forever transformed the concept of work. The rise of the hybrid workplace has set expectations for how we work and how we return to the office. There is a greater focus on flexibility, better work-life balance and meeting the needs of employees across all industries.

This **transformation** is also leading many people to rethink their approach to the way they want to work in Australia. With historically low unemployment rates almost 40% of workers plan to change jobs, according to research conducted by PwC and Deloitte. When there is a continual **skill shortage**, changes in **employee expectations** have a greater impact on technical capabilities. And soft skills, such as interpersonal skills, collaboration and critical thinking, often become the keys to success.

In this evolving and dynamic environment, associations need to find ways to establish themselves as membership organisations of choice and drive growth for the business.

This is where micro-credentials come into play. Micro-credentials are mini qualifications that demonstrate skills, knowledge and experience in a given knowledge area or capability space. They're a targeted and effective way to engage and upskill your members to meet the immediate and long-term needs of both members and their industries. Plus, they're flexible. For members, they're designed to be quick and easy to complete. For associations, existing micro-credential programmes can be readily adapted, and new ones can be created as industry and business expectations change.

This eBook takes a deep dive into micro-credentials, defining what they are and providing best practices for developing and deploying them. It identifies why association members and organisations value micro-credentials and how they can motivate people to pursue professional development.

Adapting to the New Normal

The events of the past few years may not have completely changed the workplace landscape, but they have accelerated already shifting sands. Prior to the pandemic, a [McKinsey Global Institute report](#) estimated that 375 million workers will need to change jobs due to technological advancement by 2030. Now, this trend is hitting close to home. In 2021, the National Skills Commission's [Skills Priority List](#) revealed shortages in 153 occupations. In 2022, that figure jumped to 286 occupations.

The increased focus on member upskilling during such changes isn't surprising. Hybrid work often requires a greater variety of soft skills to maintain productivity, adapt to new technology and processes, and collaborate with colleagues in both in-person and remote environments. It's imperative to address these skills gaps so that your members have the capabilities they need to future-proof their careers while increasing association revenue streams at the same time.

Almost 60% of organisations want to make a significant or moderate investment in learning and development. Due to skills gaps and the reality that hybrid work is here to stay following the pandemic, this push has intensified. According to [LinkedIn's 2021 Workplace Learning Report](#), from 2019 to 2020, the number of enterprise learners doubled. At the same time, the amount of learning too increased by 58% per learner.

Increased worker expectations include embracing the concept of a learning-integrated life—one in which learning is incorporated into every aspect of people's lives, preparing them for rich life experiences and successful careers.





What Are Micro-Credentials?

Australia's National Microcredentials Framework, developed by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment, defines micro-credentials as, “a certification of assessed learning or competency, with a minimum volume of learning of one hour.”

This definition is intentionally broad to avoid limiting micro-credentials' responsiveness and innovation, but in practical terms Micro-credentials should be

- a. outcome-based,
- b. adaptive to industry needs,
- c. customised to encourage lifelong learning as well as
- d. transparent and accessible.

There are several unifying ideas that support their broader acceptance and uptake.

In some cases, micro-credentials are the **building blocks of education**. They offer a targeted, modular and structured method for rapidly acquiring new skills and reflect the demonstrable development of a skill or proficiency in a specific target area. They also show that a learner has tangibly improved rather than simply attended class. A **badge or certificate** typically represents their achievement. Micro-credentials can be stackable,

providing a means for demonstrating the mastery of learning across technical and soft skill domains. This means that a micro-credentials programme can be structured to provide immediate benefits. As part of a longer-term career or professional development, micro-credentials could also count towards a recognised qualification accreditation of certified membership.

Under the National Microcredentials Framework, micro-credentials can be complementary to, or a part of, an Australian Quality Framework award qualification—from a certificate 1 course to a doctoral degree.

Association members like micro-credentials because they are quick, focused and centred around outcomes. They could allow learners to pursue higher qualifications more flexibly, supporting the development of their careers. Dividing a valuable qualification into manageable micro-credentials makes it easier for members to commit to a long-term study while deriving more immediate workplace, wage or career benefits.

Meanwhile, associations favour micro-credentials because they add “stickiness” and can quickly upskill members as a value add to membership fees. They can also excite your members about available learning opportunities and professional development.

Micro-Credentials: What Do They Mean for Members?



AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SELF-IMPROVEMENT

Members who earn micro-credentials have the chance to improve their circumstance and feel a sense of choice and control of their futures. Micro-credentials also help to build new skills, whether advancing lifelong learning or achieving short-term objectives.



A BITE-SIZED APPROACH TO LEARNING

Pursuing a major qualification can be challenging. Micro-credentials offer a clear and doable route to success by breaking topics down into bite-sized learning pieces. This approach enables the creation of a highly tailored programme that facilitates members' specialisation.



A REWARD FOR LEARNING NEW SKILLS

Micro-credentials offer a structured approach to supplementary learning. They motivate members to learn new skills by rewarding their efforts with documented and recognised credentials. Plus, they also help people advance within their sector.



A SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT

Members can position themselves as subject matter experts in specialised areas through micro-credentials. This can help with career development and act as a currency in their workplace, helping attract internal recognition and create new opportunities.



A TOOLBOX FOR CAREER PROGRESSION

Micro-credentials are an excellent way for members to show they have embraced lifelong learning and self-improvement. They also make it easier for people to provide others with insight into their professional development over time.



A LIFELONG ACCREDITATION

Micro-credentials achieved by the members don't attach to a particular employer or job. Their value lasts longer. They're recognised regardless of where a person's employment journey takes them.

Micro-Credentials: What Do They Mean for Associations?



A WAY TO INCREASE MEMBERSHIP VALUE

Associations can agilely fill knowledge gaps and upskill their members to increase value for membership. Micro-credentials offer associations a valued and efficient way to engage their members and provide a practical way to stay competitive and adapt to shifting markets.



A PRACTICAL WAY TO STAY COMPETITIVE

For associations in any industry, assisting members to build skillsets to fill the skills gap is an ongoing challenge. Developing a tailored plan to help members close the gap and prioritise the most needed skills can go a long way to solving it. In addition, providing access to training can help increase an association's appeal and attract the members needed.



AN OPPORTUNITY TO EMPOWER MEMBERS

Micro-credentialing empowers training programmes by delivering training on demand. Associations can work with members' schedules to provide training when it's most convenient in scalable ways and with incremental commitment benefits. Mentorship opportunities can be expanded by identifying people and groups with recognisable skills in particular fields. Additionally, micro-credentials can foster a culture of strong engagement and continuous upskilling.



A SYSTEM TO BRACE FOR AND TACKLE CHANGES

Adopting micro-credentials across sectors can help align the skills needed for continuous improvement. Associations can assist members to engage in specific courses, allowing them to capitalise on developing market possibilities or respond to technological changes. By identifying the up-and-coming skills throughout their specific industry, associations can ensure their members are ready to address future challenges in their respective industries.



A VALUED AND EFFICIENT WAY TO ENGAGE MEMBERS

It's an affordable strategy tailored to members' evolving appetites and career needs. Ensuring they acquire the knowledge and skills they want for their jobs could aid associations in retaining membership numbers.



A STEP TOWARDS LEARNING CULTURE

A culture of learning helps associations attract highly motivated members by showing a strong focus on lifelong learning, skill development and support for recognisable credentialing.



How to Build an Effective Micro-Credentialing Strategy

Micro-credentials must support the best short- and long-term business outcomes while also aligning with the overall business strategy. It's important to balance member preferences with organisational requirements when developing a successful micro-credentialing strategy.

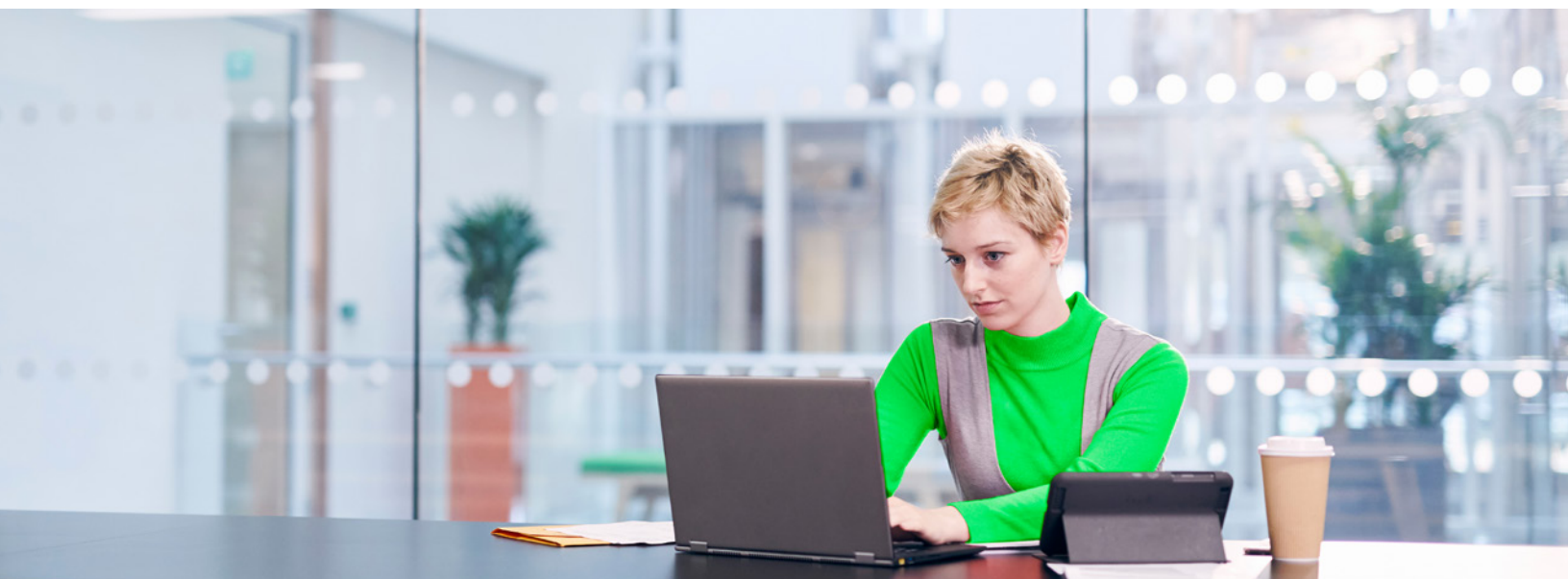
A successful micro-credentialing strategy is one co-designed by both members and the association. The first step is to understand members aspirations and goals, identify their current knowledge, skills, and credentials and help them connect with learning targeted at what they wish to expand or enhance. Surveys, workshops and analyses can help with this process.

While the best industry strategy for success is to match willing and enthusiastic participants with the micro-credentials that the sector demands, an effective micro-credentialing strategy is founded on a solid adult learning theories, robust methodologies and a strong sense of community and support.

Bloom's taxonomy for example is a hierarchical model used to classify learning goals into levels of complexity and specificity. The taxonomy's cognitive domain focuses on knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis and creation. Curriculum developers frequently use this taxonomy to structure curriculum learning goals, assessments and activities.

A competency-based learning framework recognising that education and training must be more than a simple knowledge transfer is also important. There must be a focus on outcomes and real-world performance based on predetermined competencies. Scaffolding, for example, supports members as they learn new concepts and shows how to apply them.

Members should consider micro-credentials as steps in their career-long learning process, whether the credentials stand alone or as a part of a large skill set. Badges and certifications are effective tools for gamification because they encourage participation and let them store a digital record of their credentials. The aim is to establish and maintain a culture of career engagement and upskilling among members.



D2L Brightspace and Micro-Credentials

Brightspace supports creating a robust and holistic micro-credentials strategy that is workplace ready. It offers a personalised, immersive learning experience based on an inclusive design, making it available to members anytime, anywhere and on any device.

Brightspace incorporates audio and video while mapping learner aspirations to badges and certifications. It also keeps members and facilitators feeling connected and motivated by providing rich, engaging and more diverse feedback options.

The platform offers the ability to personalise at scale, with tailored journeys and data-informed learning paths leveraging the advantages of gamification. The goal is to motivate every individual to reach their full potential while delivering maximum value to the organisation.

On the back end, intuitive learning analytics help associations track and understand the performance of courses and individuals to make more informed decisions.

Accessing content across multiple platforms is a significant benefit for remote learners. Brightspace offers a great mobile experience to learners and educators on any device, adapting to any screen size. It's paired with mobile apps to optimise common tasks.

It contains a flexible suite of tools for creating dynamic custom content and adding content from other tools. An intuitive design makes it easy to carry out tasks quickly, leaving more time to focus on what matters: learning.



Automation tools allow facilitators and administrators to easily automate daily tasks, such as quiz grading and release conditions. At the same time, developers can use APIs to access and integrate the functionality of Brightspace with other applications and platforms.

A cloud-based learning platform, Brightspace is scalable across AWS availability zones with an architecture that offers maximum scalability, reliability, availability, security and peace of mind.

Conclusion

In an un-certain future and a growing skills shortage, Associations are searching for ways to optimise their membership's experience. To attract, retain and nurture lifelong membership, ongoing professional development and upskilling are non-negotiables.

A solid micro-credentials strategy proves to be a key differentiator for those looking to stand out as an association of choice. It can provide immediate benefits in alignment with the organisation's needs, rather than taking a piecemeal approach to upskilling.

It can count towards a recognised qualification as part of a member's professional development and support both short- and long-term business needs. Members' skill levels can be quickly assessed through self-paced training so they focus on their shortcomings rather than their strengths.






Associations can help members unlock their true potential to benefit everyone by providing them with the right training and support to meet their needs. D2L Brightspace is the foundation of a robust, holistic and personalised learning experience that offers members an individualised and immersive learning experience. Using Brightspace to break qualifications into bite-sized micro-credentials makes it easier for members and association employees alike to commit to long-term study and allows for a highly tailored curriculum.



ABOUT D2L

D2L is a global learning innovation company, reshaping the future of education and work. We're leading the way into a new era of personalized learning, driven by the belief that everyone deserves access to high-quality education, regardless of their age, ability or location. Our signature technology products—D2L Brightspace and D2L Wave—enhance the learning experience for millions of learners at every stage of life, from the earliest days of school to the working world.

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