

# DIVERSE Policy on Micro-Credentials and Micro-Credentials Toolkit

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## Glossary

The Glossary included in the DIVERSE Policy on Micro-Credentials and the Micro-Credentials Toolkit provides key terms along with their widely accepted definitions and specific interpretations as applied within the DIVERSE European University Alliance. Its primary purpose is to promote a shared understanding among partners from diverse cultural and institutional backgrounds.

### Key Terms

**Accreditation** – the quality assurance or licensing of an organisation or a qualification.<sup>1</sup> In the context of the DIVERSE Policy on Micro-credentials, this refers to the formal procedure for approving a micro-programme within the institutional framework of a partner institution, in accordance with applicable national regulations.

**Accumulation of credits** – the process of collecting credits awarded for achieving the learning outcomes of educational components in formal contexts and for other learning activities carried out in informal and non-formal contexts. A student can accumulate credits in order to obtain qualifications, as required by the degree-awarding institution; or document personal achievements for lifelong learning purposes.<sup>2</sup>

**Allocation of credits** – the process of assigning a number of credits to qualifications, degree programmes or single educational components. Credits are allocated to entire qualifications or programmes according to national legislation or practice, where appropriate, and with reference to national and/or European qualifications frameworks. They are allocated to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://europass.europa.eu/en/stakeholders/qdr/accreditation>

<sup>2</sup> [https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/ects-users-guide\\_en.pdf](https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/ects-users-guide_en.pdf)

educational components, such as course units, dissertations, work-based learning and work placements / training period / internship / traineeship / placement, taking as a basis the allocation of 60 credits per full-time academic year, according to the estimated workload required to achieve the defined learning outcomes for each component.<sup>3</sup>

**Assessment** - the process or method used to evaluate, measure and eventually describe the learning outcomes acquired by individuals through formal, non-formal or informal settings. Assessment is performed by the provider or other recognised assessment providers.<sup>4</sup>

**Associated partner** – an external organisation that is formally linked to the Alliance and collaborates with it in a structured way but does not hold the status of a full Alliance member.

**Award of credits** - the act of formally granting students and other learners the credits that are assigned to the qualification and/or its components if they achieve the defined learning outcomes. Credits are awarded to individual students after they have completed the required learning activities and achieved the defined learning outcomes, as evidenced by appropriate assessment. If students and other learners have achieved learning outcomes in other formal, non-formal, or informal learning contexts or timeframes, credits may be awarded through assessment and recognition of these learning outcomes<sup>5</sup>.

**Award of micro-credentials** – the formal, institutional act of granting a micro-credential, to a learner who has completed the required learning activities and successfully met the defined learning outcomes of a micro-programme.

**Blended learning** – a way of learning that combines traditional classroom lessons with lessons that use computer technology and may be given over the internet.<sup>6</sup>

**Certified record** – a document that has been officially verified as authentic, true, and accurate by a qualified professional or authority.

**Competency framework** – a structure that defines the knowledge, skills, and behaviours required for employees to be effective in their roles.

**Course** – a set of classes or a plan of study on a particular subject, usually leading to an exam or qualification<sup>7</sup>. It may refer to the higher education context or to the lifelong learning context.

**Course Catalogue** – the Course Catalogue includes detailed, user-friendly and up-to-date information on the institution's learning environment (general information on the institution,

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<sup>3</sup> [https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/ects-users-guide\\_en.pdf](https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/ects-users-guide_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627\(02\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627(02))

<sup>5</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/da7467e6-8450-11e5-b8b7-01aa75ed71a2>

<sup>6</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/blended-learning>

<sup>7</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/course>

its resources and services, as well as academic information on its programmes and individual educational components) that should be available to students before entering and throughout their studies to enable them to make the right choices and use their time most efficiently.<sup>8</sup>

**DIVERSE Course Catalogue** is the central, Alliance-wide catalogue that lists all approved micro-programmes leading to the attainment of micro-credentials developed within the DIVERSE European University Alliance. It is published on the DIVERSE European University Alliance website.

**Cross-border recognition of a micro-credential** – the recognition of a micro-credentials in a country other than the one where it was obtained.

**Degree** – the qualification given to a student after they have completed their studies.<sup>9</sup>

**Degree programme** - the set of educational components leading to the award of a degree to a student after successful completion of all the requirements.<sup>10</sup>

**Delivering Partner** – an institution that implements and delivers a micro-programme originally developed and accredited by the Lead Partner. Delivering Partners may adapt the programme to local contexts – such as language, teaching staff, or institutional practices – while operating under the Lead Partner’s academic oversight.

**ECTS credits** – express the volume of learning based on the defined learning outcomes and their associated workload. 60 ECTS credits are allocated to the learning outcomes and associated workload of a full-time academic year or its equivalent, which normally comprises a number of educational components to which credits (on the basis of the learning outcomes and workload) are allocated. ECTS credits are generally expressed in whole numbers.<sup>11</sup>

**European Qualifications Framework (EQF)** – an 8-level, learning outcomes-based framework for all types of qualifications that serves as a translation tool between different national qualifications frameworks. This framework helps improve transparency, comparability and portability of people’s qualifications and makes it possible to compare qualifications from different countries and institutions. The EQF covers all types and all levels of qualifications, and the use of learning outcomes makes it clear what a person knows, understands and is able to do. The level increases according to the level of proficiency, level 1 is the lowest and 8 the highest level. Most importantly the EQF is closely linked to national qualifications frameworks,

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<sup>8</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/da7467e6-8450-11e5-b8b7-01aa75ed71a2>

<sup>9</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/degree?q=Degree>

<sup>10</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/da7467e6-8450-11e5-b8b7-01aa75ed71a2>

<sup>11</sup> [https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/ects-users-guide\\_en.pdf](https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/ects-users-guide_en.pdf)

this way it can provide a comprehensive map of all types and levels of qualifications in Europe, which are increasingly accessible through qualification databases.<sup>12</sup>

**Formal learning** – learning which takes place in an organised and structured environment, specifically dedicated to learning, and typically leads to the award of a qualification, usually in the form of a certificate or a diploma; it includes systems of general education, initial, continuing and tertiary vocational education and training and higher education.<sup>13</sup>

**Hybrid learning** – instructional model in which education or training is followed simultaneously by learners in either face-to-face or online.<sup>14</sup>

**Informal learning** – learning resulting from daily activities and experiences which is not organised or structured in terms of objectives, time or learning support; it may be unintentional from the learner’s perspective. It does not automatically lead to a micro-credential but can be considered in the context of validation arrangements which may identify, document, assess and/or certify an individual’s learning outcomes.<sup>15</sup>

**Issuing of micro-credentials** – the formal process by which an authorised institution provides the learner with an official, verifiable document or digital record certifying that they have successfully completed a micro-programme and achieved the defined learning outcomes.

**Lead Partner** – the institution within in the Alliance that holds primary responsibility for the development and academic oversight of a micro-programme. This includes designing the programme, coordinating the accreditation process, ensuring compliance with the DIVERSE quality assurance framework, as well as awarding and issuing the final micro-credential.

**Learner** – an individual who participates in the Alliance’s learning opportunities outside of formal study programmes, such as micro-programmes or other short learning activities.

**Learning Management System (LMS)** – software that helps one create, manage, organise and deliver online learning materials for learners.<sup>16</sup>

**Learning opportunity** – a situation, event, or experience that provides individuals with the chance to acquire new knowledge, skills, or insights. It is a broad term that encompasses various formal and informal activities designed to enhance one’s understanding or capabilities in a particular area.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> <https://esco.ec.europa.eu/en/about-esco/escopedia/escopedia/european-qualifications-framework-eqf>

<sup>13</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627\(02\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627(02))

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-glossary/glossary?letter=H>

<sup>15</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627\(02\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627(02))

<sup>16</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6faa00f0-4b29-11f0-85ba-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

<sup>17</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6faa00f0-4b29-11f0-85ba-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

**Learning outcomes** – statements of what the individual knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process. The achievement of learning outcomes has to be assessed through procedures based on clear and transparent criteria. Learning outcomes are attributed to individual educational components and to programmes at a whole. They are also used in European and national qualifications frameworks to describe the level of the individual qualification.<sup>18</sup>

**Lifelong learning** – learning in all its forms, whether formal, non-formal or informal, taking place at all stages in life and resulting in an improvement or update in knowledge, skills, competences and attitudes or participation in society from a personal, civic, cultural, social or employment-related perspective, including the provision of counselling and guidance services; it includes early childhood education and care, general education, vocational education and training, higher education, adult education, youth work and other learning settings outside formal education and training and it typically promotes cross-sectoral cooperation and flexible learning pathways.<sup>19</sup>

**Micro-credential** – a certified record of the learning outcomes consisting of a workload expressed in ECTS ranging from 3 to 30 ECTS – aligned with EQF levels 5, 6 or 7 (QF-EHEA short, first and second cycle). It does not lead to a full degree but functions as a complement to full degree studies.<sup>20</sup>

**Micro-programme** – a short, structured learning programme designed to develop specific, targeted knowledge, skills, and competences that address clearly identified learner or labour market needs. It consists of a coherent set of learning outcomes, learning activities, and assessment methods, and upon successful completion it leads to the award of a micro-credential.

**Module / Course unit** - a self-contained, formally structured learning experience. It should have a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes, defined learning activities consistent with the time allocated within the curriculum, and appropriate assessment criteria.

**Non-formal learning** – learning which takes place outside formal education and training through planned activities in terms of learning objectives and learning time and where some form of learning support is present.<sup>21</sup>

**Non-traditional learners** – an adult who acquires knowledge and skills outside of a traditional classroom setting, through flexible programmes like part-time or distance learning, and

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<sup>18</sup> [https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/ects-users-guide\\_en.pdf](https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/ects-users-guide_en.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-d/glossary-common-terms>

<sup>20</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627\(02\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627(02))

<sup>21</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627\(02\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627(02))

sometimes through non-formal or informal learning like on-the-job training. To support these learners, the European Union is increasing the validation of prior learning from non-traditional paths, allowing for access to higher education, and developing frameworks for recognising skills gained through micro-credentials and online courses.

**Portability** – the ability for a credential-holder to store their micro-credentials in a system of their choice, to share the credential with a party of their choice (whether national or transnational) and for all parties in the exchange to be able to understand the content and verify the authenticity of the credentials. This enables portability between and within education and training sectors, in the labour market and across countries.<sup>22</sup>

**Qualification** – a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards.<sup>23</sup>

**Recognition of prior learning (RPL)** – The validation of learning outcomes, whether from formal education or non-formal or informal learning, acquired before requesting validation.<sup>24</sup>

**Stackability** – the possibility, where relevant, to combine different micro-credentials and build logically upon each other. Decisions to ‘stack’ or combine credentials lie with the receiving organisation (e.g. education and training institutions, employers, etc.) in line with their practices and should support the goals and needs of the learner. Stacking does not create an automatic entitlement to a qualification or a degree. Such decisions are made by regional and national authorities or institutions in line with their awarding processes.<sup>25</sup> Micro-credentials are designed to be modular so that other micro-credentials may be added to create larger credentials. Stackability refers to the ability to combine multiple smaller, focused learning experiences (micro-credentials) to build towards a larger, more comprehensive credential, like a degree or a more specialised skillset. Decisions to stack or combine credentials lie with the receiving partner institution in line with their practices and should support the goals and needs of the learner.

**Stakeholder** – any individual, group, organisation, or entity that has an interest in, is affected by, or can influence the development, delivery, evaluation, or outcomes of an initiative, programme, or institution.

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<sup>22</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627\(02\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627(02))

<sup>23</sup> <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-d/glossary-common-terms>

<sup>24</sup> <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/da7467e6-8450-11e5-b8b7-01aa75ed71a2>

<sup>25</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627\(02\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627(02))

**Student** – an individual who is formally enrolled in a study programme within the Alliance. Students pursue structured academic pathways leading to recognised qualifications and have an official student status at their home institution.

**Transfer of credits** – the process of having credits awarded in one context (programme, institution) recognised in another formal context for the purpose of obtaining a qualification. Credits awarded to students in one programme may be transferred from an institution to be accumulated in another programme offered by the same or another institution. Credit transfer is the key to successful study mobility. Institutions, faculties, departments may make agreements which guarantee automatic recognition and transfer of credits.<sup>26</sup>

**Workload** – an estimation of the time the individual typically needs to complete all learning activities such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, work placements / training period / internship / traineeship / placement and individual study required to achieve the defined learning outcomes in formal learning environments. The correspondence of the full-time workload of an academic year to 60 credits is often formalised by national legal provisions. In most cases, workload ranges from 1,500 to 1,800 hours for an academic year, which means that one credit corresponds to 25 to 30 hours of work. It should be recognised that this represents the typical workload and that for individual students the actual time to achieve the learning outcomes will vary.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> [https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/ects-users-guide\\_en.pdf](https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/ects-users-guide_en.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> [https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/ects-users-guide\\_en.pdf](https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/ects-users-guide_en.pdf)

# DIVERSE Policy on Micro-Credentials

## Introduction

To achieve its agreed objectives, the DIVERSE European University Alliance requires a strategic approach to the development and implementation of micro-credentials. This effort forms a key component of its broader **lifelong learning strategy**, one of the three key pillars of the DIVERSE European University Alliance, and strengthens collaboration of institutions within the Alliance. Following a review and exchange of current system-level and institutional practices related to micro-credentials among partner institutions, the Executive Board of the DIVERSE European University Alliance adopts the DIVERSE Policy on Micro-Credentials that represents an important step in advancing the Alliance's strategic goals. *The DIVERSE Policy on Micro-Credentials* describes the approach that the Alliance takes to the development and delivery of micro-credentials.

## Objective

The strategic goal of the DIVERSE European University Alliance is to offer learning opportunities to a diverse group of learners by opening-up higher education to lifelong and non-traditional learners through micro-credentials allowing for accumulation of credits and cross-border recognition of achieved learning outcomes. Micro-programmes leading to the attainment of micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs.

In order for a micro-credential to be recognised within the DIVERSE European University Alliance, a DIVERSE Micro-Credentials Toolkit shall be used and specifically the Methodology for Identifying Labour Market Needs and Requirements and the Methodology for Curriculum Design, Learning and Teaching. The micro-programmes and the related micro-credentials need to be described in the DIVERSE Standardised Template for Describing DIVERSE Micro-Credentials included in the Toolkit. If these micro-programmes are consistent with the DIVERSE approach, comply with this Policy, and are approved by the DIVERSE Micro-Credentials Committee, they may be recognised as DIVERSE micro-credentials and included in the DIVERSE Course Catalogue.

## Definition and Main Features

In line with the Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials (2022)<sup>28</sup>, the DIVERSE European University Alliance adopts a definition that aligns with the higher education systems of the partners. The definition is followed by the description of the main features of the DIVERSE micro-credentials.

*A micro-credential is a certified record of the learning outcomes consisting of a workload expressed in ECTS ranging from 3 to 30 ECTS<sup>29</sup> – aligned with EQF levels 5, 6 or 7 (QF-EHEA short, first and second cycle). It does not lead to a full degree but functions as a complement to full degree studies.*

We distinguish between **micro-credentials** and **micro-programmes**: micro-programmes describe the intended learning outcomes, objectives, and the ways in which these outcomes are to be achieved, whereas a micro-credential serves to certify that the learning has been successfully assessed and demonstrated. Micro-programmes in the DIVERSE European University Alliance may be embedded in the existing and accredited study programmes and delivered separately as stand-alone micro-programmes or designed independently aiming at upskilling in a specific field or a discipline.

The DIVERSE micro-programmes have the following characteristics:

- Micro-programmes are intended to provide a targeted learning experience that focuses on the acquisition of a specific, well defined learning outcome(s). They are designed to meet the needs of the industry, working life and lifelong learning purpose as expressed by employers or by students and learners.
- Strategic partnerships between the DIVERSE partner institutions and employers are used to research labour market needs and engage employers in the delivery of the micro-programmes. The steps in consulting employers on the skills needed in the labour market are presented in the DIVERSE Methodology for Identifying Labour Market Needs and Requirements.
- Micro-programmes are modular, stackable and portable, which allows for flexible learning paths and personalised curriculum for learners across the DIVERSE

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<sup>28</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627\(02\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627(02))

<sup>29</sup> In most DIVERSE partner countries (Belgium-Flanders, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Turkey), there are no specific national regulations governing micro-credentials. In contrast, Ireland has a regulated framework under the state external quality assurance agency Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), specifying micro-credentials must be between 5 and 30 ECTS at EQF levels 6 and 7. In Croatia, partial qualifications at levels EQF 5 to 7 involve at least 10 ECTS. The workload for micro-credentials is not regulated.

campuses. As such, micro-programmes and micro-credentials play a key role in advancing flexible learning pathways and promoting student-centred learning.

- The Methodology for Curriculum Design, Learning and Teaching outlines a specific approach to offering micro-programmes leading to the attainment of micro-credentials including options for online, onsite and blended delivery that therefore incorporates specific online learning strategies. Innovative pedagogies are applied combining a mix of face-to-face and virtual components, flipped classroom, transdisciplinary and transnational challenge-based co-creation teams.
- Micro-credentials that are issued to individuals successfully completing the micro-programmes are described in line with the Annex I of the Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials (2022) which means that they include the following mandatory elements:
  - a) identification of the learner;
  - b) title of the micro-credential
  - c) country(ies)/region(s) of the issuer;
  - d) awarding body(ies);
  - e) date of issuing;
  - f) learning outcomes;
  - g) notional workload needed to achieve the learning outcomes (in ECTS);
  - h) level of the learning experience leading to the micro-credential (EQF, QF-EHEA);
  - i) type of assessment;
  - j) form of participation in the learning activity;
  - k) type of quality assurance used to underpin the micro-credential.

### **Three Models of Micro-Credentials**

Within the DIVERSE European University Alliance, various models of micro-credentials exist, distinguished by the level and nature of collaboration involved in the design and delivery of learning units leading to the award of a micro-credential. More specifically, these models differ according to the following questions:

- a) Who is responsible for designing the micro-programme?
- b) Who is responsible for accreditation and issuing?
- c) Who is responsible for delivery?
- d) Who is responsible for financial management?
- e) Who awards and issues the credentials?

### **Model 1 (Single Micro-Credentials)**

The micro-programme is developed, accredited, delivered, financially managed and credentials are issued within the framework of a single partner institution. However, if both the process and outcomes of each step are consistent with the DIVERSE approach and comply with this Policy, the micro-credentials may be recognised as DIVERSE micro-credentials and included in the DIVERSE Course Catalogue. This model also applies to all existing micro-credentials offered by individual DIVERSE partners, provided they are approved for inclusion in the Course Catalogue in accordance with the procedure outlined in this document.

### **Model 2 (Cooperative Micro-Credentials)**

Accredited micro-programmes developed by a Lead Partner may be opened for delivery by other institutions within the DIVERSE European University Alliance. In this model, a programme originally designed by the Lead Partner is adapted and delivered by one or more Delivering Partners. The Lead Partner provides access to the existing learning and teaching materials as well as other resources developed for the programme and validates the Delivering Partner(s). The Delivering Partner(s) undertake the necessary adaptations, such as contextualisation for local needs, language adjustments, integration of their teaching staff, and alignment with institutional practices, all under the academic oversight of the Lead Partner. The delivery of the programme is the responsibility of the Delivering Partner(s) and may involve contributions from teachers of other partner institutions. The Delivering Partner(s) manage the financial aspects of programme delivery, while the Lead Partner retains responsibility for awarding and issuing the micro-credentials, which include a statement indicating that the programme was delivered by the Delivering Partner(s). All aspects of this collaboration are governed by a formal partnership agreement between the Lead Partner and the Delivering Partner(s).

### **Model 3 (Joint Micro-Credentials)**

The micro-programme is jointly designed by all partner institutions that express an interest in participating in its development. Partners collaborate under the coordination of a Lead Partner, who is responsible for managing the accreditation process in accordance with its institutional and national regulations. The Lead Partner also oversees the approval procedure for including the micro-credential in the DIVERSE Course Catalogue. Delivery of the micro-programme is a collaborative effort among all participating institutions, coordinated by the Lead Partner. Each institution contributes in line with the roles and responsibilities defined in the partnership agreement. The authority to award the micro-credential rests solely with the Lead Partner, which issues the credential including a statement identifying the partner institutions that participated in its delivery.

# MODELS and RESPONSIBILITIES

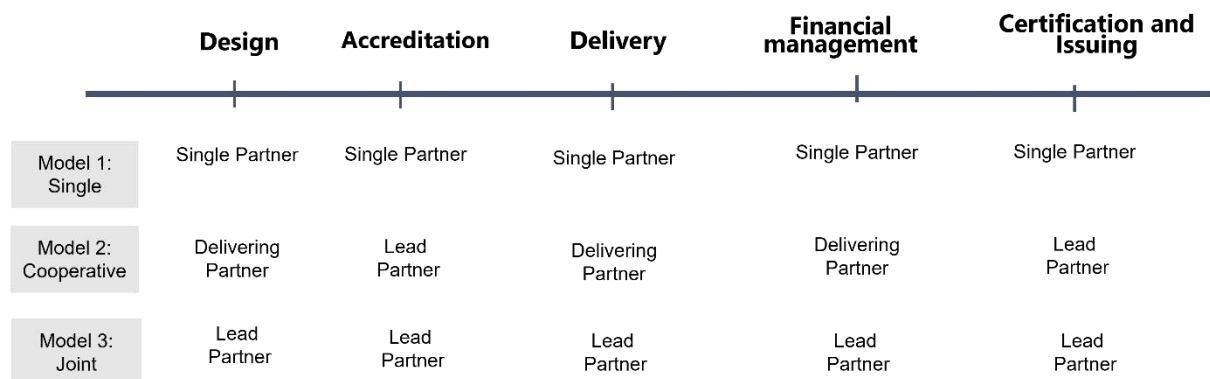


Figure 1. DIVERSE Micro-Credential Models and Responsibilities

Regardless of the model, all learning opportunities offered as micro-programmes are accessible to all DIVERSE students and learners and are regularly updated in the DIVERSE Course Catalogue. All DIVERSE micro-credentials are fully portable across the Alliance, ensuring automatic recognition of achieved learning outcomes and the corresponding ECTS credits, in accordance with the learning pathways defined in each micro-programme description.

## Quality Framework

DIVERSE micro-credentials are subject to internal and external quality assurance and underpinned by a quality framework of the DIVERSE European University Alliance that relies on agreed principles and processes to develop, approve, deliver, certify and mutually recognise micro-credentials, effectively and efficiently supporting the introduction and implementation of micro-credentials.

Quality assurance of DIVERSE micro-credentials has been developed to fit the purpose and to meet the needs of learners and stakeholders. The processes are clearly documented in this Policy, supported by the DIVERSE Micro-Credentials Toolkit, published on the DIVERSE website.

To harmonise the procedures governing the inclusion of micro-credentials in the DIVERSE Course Catalogue, the following workflow defines the steps to be undertaken by DIVERSE partners. This is a macro-workflow and does not limit or conflict with the internal procedures and processes of each partner; on the contrary, it assumes that all internal procedures have

already been followed within the Lead Partner institution before any micro-credential is presented to the DIVERSE Micro-Credentials Committee and shared with all partners. This assumption not only provides a high degree of flexibility to accommodate the diversity of legal frameworks and practices among the partners, but is also a quality assurance prerequisite, as prior to this workflow the micro-credential must have already passed through the Lead Partner's quality assurance mechanisms, in which all partners mutually trust.

The workflow comprises the seven actions described below:

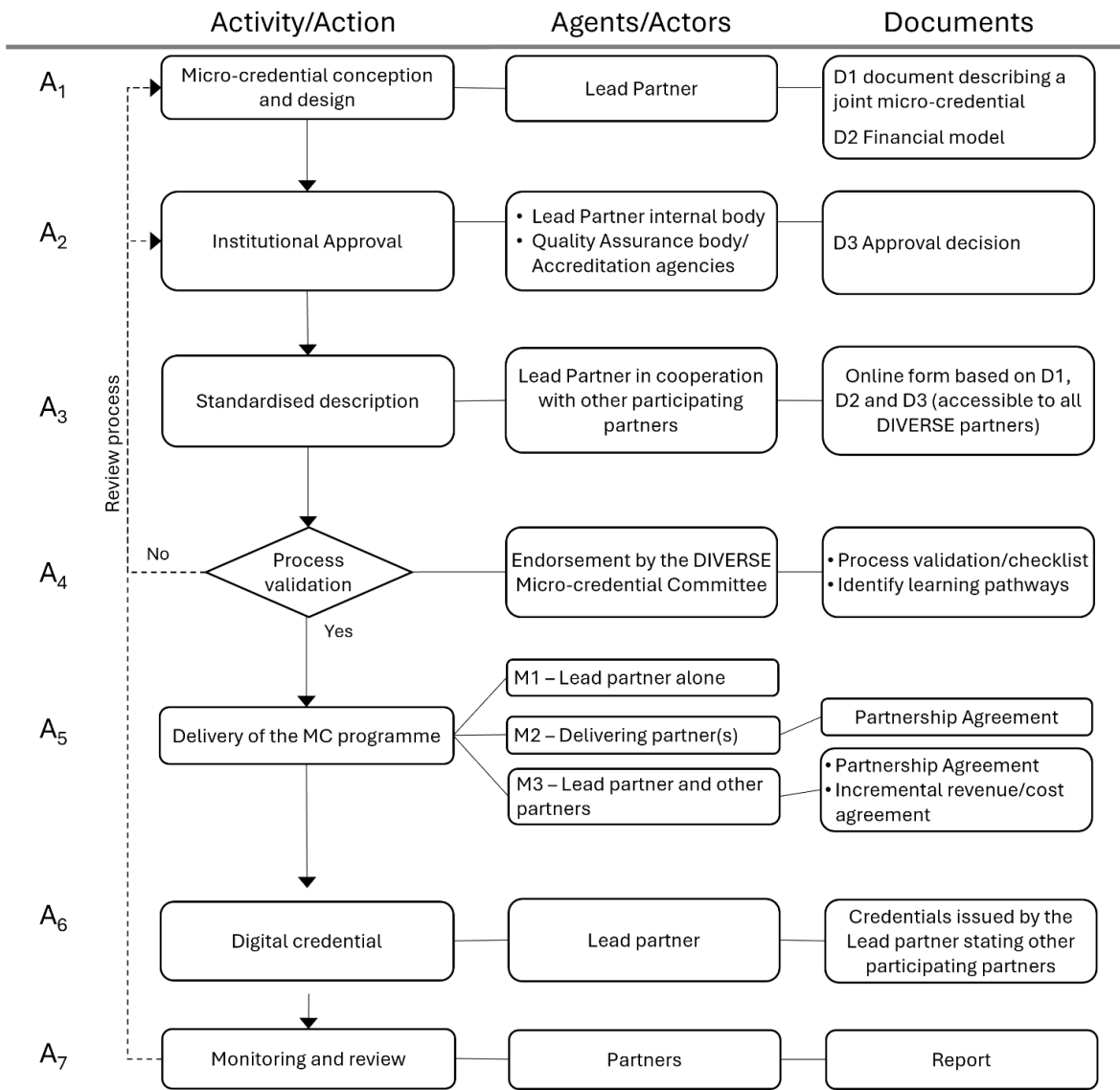
- A1. **Design.** One or more DIVERSE partners design the micro-programme, with all its details, content, teaching and assessment methods, delivery modes, labour market analysis, promotional plans and financial model, using its own internal procedures, complying with local legal frameworks and quality assurance practices.
- A2. **Institutional Approval.** Micro-credentials are subject to the internal quality assurance system of the DIVERSE partners and by the external quality assurance of the system where the Lead Partner is established, in compliance with the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area \(ESG\)](#). The decision on the institutional programme approval by a scientific committee, quality assurance body, academic council or any other institutional body and external validation (where applicable) is made accessible to all DIVERSE partners in English.
- A3. **Standardised Description.** After completing its internal approval process, the Lead Partner submits a description of the micro-programme using the DIVERSE online form (D1), accompanied by the financial model (D2) and the official approval document (D3). All documents must be provided in English.
- A4. **DIVERSE Endorsement.** Based on the information provided in the online form (D1) and the accompanying documents (D2 and D3), the Micro-Credentials Committee within the Learning & Teaching Working Group verifies that the DIVERSE Policy on Micro-Credentials has been properly followed and, if compliant, endorses the programme as an official DIVERSE micro-credential. This endorsement authorises the use of the DIVERSE logo in all related communications and promotional materials and enables the inclusion of the micro-credential in the DIVERSE Course Catalogue. No additional academic assessment is conducted at this stage. The Micro-Credentials Committee performs a process verification and validation, in recognition of and trusting in the prior approval procedures completed by the Lead Partner, as described in steps A1 and A2. In the event of any non-conformity, the Micro-Credentials Committee requires the Lead Partner to address and complete the necessary steps before the micro-credential can be authorised for inclusion in the DIVERSE Course

Catalogue. In addition to that, the Micro-Credentials Committee assesses the extent of the collaboration between the partners based on the collaboration criteria included in this Toolkit.

- A5. **Delivery.** The micro-credential may be delivered by the Lead Partner, and depending on the adopted model, additional partners may also participate, either by providing experts or teachers, or by delivering the programme in their own country. In such cases, a partnership agreement must be signed, specifying the operational and financial conditions under which the additional partners join the approved micro-credential. As a result, the information in the DIVERSE Course Catalogue may need to be updated to reflect these changes.
- A6. **Certification and Portability.** When students or learners successfully complete a micro-programme, credentials are awarded (certification is issued) by the Lead Partner, containing the DIVERSE logo and stating all other partners participating in the delivery. Micro-credentials are owned by the credential-holder (the learner) and may be stored and shared easily by the credential-holder, including through secure digital wallets ([Europass](#) will be considered), in line with the [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#). The infrastructure will ensure interoperability and seamless exchange of data and will allow for smooth checks of data authenticity.
- A7. **Monitoring and Review.** An on-going monitoring and periodic review of the quality of micro-programmes is conducted including the following elements:
- a) the overall quality of the micro-credential itself, based on the Annex IV of the EQF Recommendation and the ESG;
  - b) the quality of the micro-programme leading to micro-credential;
  - c) learners' feedback on the learning experience leading to the micro-credential;
  - d) peers feedback, including other providers and stakeholders, on the learning experience leading to the micro-credential.

After each cohort, a short report shall be made available to all partners identifying possible improvement opportunities.

## Joint Micro-credentials workflow



## **Financial Model**

To ensure their long-term viability and scalability, a self-financing model is proposed, where, by default, learners cover the cost of participation. However, whether a student is required to pay a fee depends on the specific rules and policies of the institution that is responsible for delivering the micro-programme. Therefore, to assure self-sustainability, at least reaching the breakeven within a 3 edition/cohort time window, when a partner decides not to charge fees to its students or to award them some discount, the corresponding fee/discount must be allocated to the programme's profit & loss account by the partner, using its own institutional budget or any other funds (see illustrative model in the annex).

The Lead Partner of a particular micro-programme shall define a financial model that complies with the principles set in the DIVERSE Policy and fits the specificities of the micro-programme they propose. The Lead Partner of a particular micro-programme who designs the programme, makes the labour market analysis and plans all delivery details is best prepared to define the financial model of that specific programme. All partners delivering the micro-programme must clearly inform students about any applicable fees prior to enrolment in the micro-programme.

## **Upscaling DIVERSE Micro-Credentials**

Teachers from partner institutions are invited to identify modules that currently support student mobility in the Alliance, or have the potential to do so, and adapt them to function as stand-alone micro-programmes suitable for micro-credential delivery and can lead to the acquisition of DIVERSE micro-credentials. Existing modules mean a clear progression path exists for learners because completion of this micro-programme is then recognised toward a full degree or any other non-degree programme.

Micro-programmes can also be designed by starting with the labour market needs assessment for specific subject areas and modules, following the Methodology for Identifying Labour Market Needs and Requirements.

In order to boost and scale up the DIVERSE learning opportunities through micro-credentials, any partner may join any existing micro-programme delivery as an active partner, adopting it at its own institution, providing teachers, etc. irrespectively of the institutions participating in the design and the delivery, learning opportunities are open to all the DIVERSE students and learners.

## **Methodology for Identifying Labour Market Needs and Requirements**

DIVERSE micro-programmes are to be designed, and micro-credentials issued as distinct, targeted learning achievements and learning opportunities leading to them are to be continuously updated to meet identified learning needs. Collaboration with employers, social partners and other providers and users of micro-credentials is envisaged to increase the relevance of the micro-credentials for the labour market.

Strategic partnerships between the DIVERSE partner institutions and employers (possibly associated partners) should be used to research labour market needs and engage employers in the delivery of the micro-programmes. The Methodology for Identifying Labour Market Needs and Requirements defines the steps in consulting employers on the skills needed in the labour market as an evidence base for the design of micro-programmes.

Micro-credentials can be sourced from already existing study programmes, existing modules within larger credentials or parts of existing modules. By using existing modules, programme designers rely on the previously completed labour market research conducted during initial development. This can provide a market-based rationale for the accreditation of the micro-credential as a stand-alone award. Existing modules mean a clear progression path exists for learners as partial completion of a larger award or a full degree. This is good practice for accreditation purposes, and also a marketing tool to attract learners. Micro-programmes can also be designed based on a comprehensive implementation of the labour market needs assessment for new subject areas and new micro-programmes.

Considering the ambitious scope and scale of the DIVERSE European University Alliance partnership, this methodology combines practicality and pragmatism with a systematic approach. It attempts to identify a process that can be executed in a timely manner, through the use of some working assumptions and expediencies, but also includes robust quality assurance and validation of findings. It aims to achieve agility and innovation in the design process, while ensuring emerging micro-credentials are complementary to the existing work of the partners, and the strategic direction of the Alliance overall.

## Steps in the Design of Micro-Programmes

1. Ideation (creation of working assumptions – brainstorming). Agree on parameters of micro-credential: determine broad subject area – agree if micro-credential is transversal or discipline specific.
2. Agree broad programme details (parameters on the size, level, delivery mode, access, transfer, progression etc.). Initial anecdotal evidence may be used to identify potential areas/narrow down the focus.
3. Define the data collection strategy. A mixed-methods approach is required, combining quantitative and qualitative data sources. Secondary data sources should be reviewed first. A funnel approach should be taken. This means completing a review of national and international labour market reports to identify, at a high level, the major identified skills gaps. This stage should cross-reference data from multiple sources to identify consistent themes and ideally use statistical analysis to identify significant trends, rather than anecdotal evidence. A traffic light system for assessing the skills areas could be used. It may be necessary to consider regional or sectoral segmentation at this stage. Types of data: EU-wide reports, government labour market statistics, national sectoral skills reports, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies publications, etc<sup>30</sup>.
4. When the topic is sufficiently clear, primary research (and more granular and/or qualitative secondary sources) can be consulted. Types of data: employer surveys, roundtable discussions, structured interviews, LinkedIn/job market websites, etc.

## Stakeholder Identification and Engagement

Initially, work should be undertaken to establish the existing networks of all partner institutions. There will need to be a process of invitation to participate undertaken, before the industry partners can be contacted by the Alliance. Once such a database is established, it will serve as the starting point to build new, additional partnerships. These partners, invited by the members of the Alliance, will need to agree to be listed in the DIVERSE Industry Partner Network as a formal recognition of partnership. MOU's or similar agreements will need to be drafted to provide clarity on roles, responsibilities, benefits and expectation management. The partners are initially approached by the Alliance members, for GDPR purposes, and once

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<sup>30</sup> [Skills-OVATE \(Skills online vacancy analysis tool for Europe\)](#), powered by Cedefop's and Eurostat's joint work, can be a useful resource for identifying up-to-date labour market and skills trends as it offers detailed information on the jobs and skills employers demand based on online job advertisements (OJAs) in 32 European countries.

permission is received, the ongoing engagement in the process of active collaboration will be managed by the DIVERSE Industry Partner Network steering group.

Industry partners can include employers, trade associations, professional bodies, Chambers of Commerce, trade unions, and employee representative groups. Proportionality will be important to ensure adequate coverage of both traditional industries and emerging sectors, and for identifying and representing sectoral or regional labour market needs.

Industry partners can be categorised into three levels, with increasing levels of engagement:

- Level 1: Contributors who provide input through surveys and basic feedback, with minimum commitment.
- Level 2: Advisors – members of the industry advisory panel – engage with the development team to understand current gaps and elucidate more in-depth insights. Participation in roundtable discussions, focus groups, structured interviews etc.
- Level 3: Partners – industry members with whom the institutions have an active collaboration. They are part of the feedback loop (ongoing participation), may be (or provide) learners (staff) and may be part of teaching/assessment.

Several key considerations and suggestions:

- Ensure representation across type and size of companies, geographical spread, sector
- Use standardised communication templates for partners for initial contact
- Appoint a communication lead coordinator for ongoing engagement
- Establish a cross-institutional steering group to account for variations in skills demand across different geographic areas
- Maximise and prioritise consulting intermediary organisations (e.g. sector bodies, regional alliances) for greater efficiency
- Identify mechanisms that will enable employers to contribute to both curriculum design and delivery aspects of micro-programmes.

### **Skills Gap Analysis Framework**

All data collected should be inputted into a framework which can identify and prioritise skills gaps. Using a scoring mechanism/traffic light system, the framework will assess current workforce capabilities against projected requirements, considering both technical and soft skills. The use of competency frameworks will ensure consistent categorisation across different roles and sectors, though agreement on the most appropriate framework needs to be decided. In particular, the temporal criteria can be used to flag emerging skill shortages before

they become critical, to allow for a more proactive, responsive approach to micro-programme development. The key features of the framework include:

- Multi-dimensional scoring system uses weighted criteria with a 10-point scale and traffic light system (red/amber/green). Conditional formatting will improve ease of use and visualisation.
- Temporal analysis distinguishes between immediate (0-12 months), short-term (1-3 years), medium-term (3-7 years), and long-term (7+ years) requirements for prioritisation.
- Comprehensive data validation of employer reports against broader market data with reliability indices and quality assurance indicators.
- Transferability assessment categorises skills from highly transferable (cross-sectoral) to highly specialised with a 5-point transferability index.
- Standardised reporting provides opportunity for dashboard creation and detailed skills profiles that translate directly into actionable micro-programme development recommendations.

The framework contains standard criteria for prioritising micro-programme development. It flags emerging skill shortages before they become critical, to allow for a more proactive, responsive approach to micro-programme development. Framework components:

- Skills taxonomy<sup>31</sup>
- Sectoral and regional classification codes
- Skills gap severity
- Number of workers affected
- Economic impact
- Delivery feasibility
- Strategic alignment

By presenting a standardised reporting format that translates complex labour market data into actionable insights, it provides a clearer pathway for micro-programme development. The linked reports/data sources will provide a rich starting point for programme development

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<sup>31</sup> Existing frameworks can be applied – or adapted for use within the Alliance Toolkit. Examples include: [Skills & competences | European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations \(ESCO\)](#), [International Standard Classification of Occupations \(ISCO\) - ILOSTAT](#), [World Economic Forum](#), etc.

teams, including learning outcomes, curriculum development, delivery modes, recruitment and promotion strategies, etc. Monitoring and control – critical success factors:

- Create feedback loops with stakeholders to validate preliminary findings
- “Finger-on-the-Pulse Approach” – informal processes to maintain accuracy, currency, and participant engagement
- More formal, regular review cycles to ensure the Skills Gap Analysis methodology and scoring/ranking system remains current as labour market conditions evolve
- Resource heavy project (resource/capacity-dependent, e.g. steering group and communications coordinator)
- Collaboration across the Alliance is needed
- Positioning the benefits for industries and incentivising participation

# Methodology for Curriculum Design, Learning and Teaching

The Methodology for Curriculum Design, Learning and Teaching is robust and flexible enough to support the design and the delivery of micro-programmes that meet the agreed concept and can be easily adjusted to any subject and target group in the EQF levels from 5 to 7.

## Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes described in a micro-programme must encompass both knowledge and operational skills, i.e. observable behaviours. They should demonstrate the learner's ability to generate a useful output (such as a product, business solution, or similar result) in a consistent and replicable manner. Moreover, these outcomes should be adaptable to different contexts through the learner's awareness, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities, and should consider cross-cultural and intercultural factors, as outlined below:

- Critical thinking in a global context
- Understanding global issues and sustainability
- Cultural awareness and sensitivity
- Ability to communicate across cultures
- Openness, adaptability, and respect for diversity.

Learning outcomes are the end result of a learning process that is scaffolded on tested learning frameworks such as Bloom's Hierarchy of Learning Objectives (Figure 2). Learning outcomes are used to describe the level of skills and knowledge by applying the EQF level descriptors<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> [EQF level descriptors](#)



*Figure 2 Bloom's Hierarchy of Learning Objectives*

### **DIVERSE Educational Approach**

DIVERSE educational approach can be distinguished by several features:

- Learner-centred methods
- Flexible, self-paced journey
- Modular, output-oriented programming
- Learner-centred delivery modes
- Learners' involvement in co-design
- Co-delivery by transnational teaching teams
- Authentic, evidence-based, transparent, flexible and inclusive assessment

### **Learner-Centred Methods**

The learning outcomes can hardly be achieved by traditional learning methods only, based on one-way, teacher-centred lectures. Instead, they require a learner-centred methodology designed to maximise learner engagement and combining the following approaches:

- Active, participatory learning is an approach where learners are directly engaged in the learning process through hands-on activities, discussion, and reflection, rather than passively receiving information. It serves as a broad umbrella for approaches that involve learner action in various forms.
- Inquiry-based learning is an approach where learners investigate questions, problems, or scenarios, fostering critical thinking through exploration and discovery. It is specifically driven by curiosity and structured around questioning and investigation.
- Challenge-based learning is a multidisciplinary approach in which learners collaborate to solve real-world challenges, emphasising the design and implementation of practical solutions. It stands out by connecting learning to authentic, real-life issues and often

involves engagement with third parties.

- Collaborative learning (also termed peer learning is an approach where learners interact with each other to achieve shared learning goals, enhancing understanding through peer interaction and cooperation. Its defining feature is the centrality of group dynamics and knowledge construction through social interaction.

### **Flexible, Self-Paced Journey**

A substantial portion of the learning journey should be delivered asynchronously, through a structured programme of (online) learning activities and experiences that learners complete individually and at their own pace, within defined timeframes. Although these activities are designed for individual progression, they should intentionally incorporate elements of interaction, including peer-to-peer engagement and dynamic exchanges with purpose-built generative AI chatbots.

Asynchronous learning periods should be punctuated by synchronous learning experiences, live, instructor-led sessions involving all learners, which provide structure, foster a sense of community, and reinforce the knowledge and skills developed through individual study.

The sequence from asynchronous to synchronous learning can be effectively implemented through the flipped classroom model, whereby learners first engage with new content independently, typically through readings, videos, or interactive tools, and then participate in synchronous sessions focused on applying, analysing, and discussing that content collaboratively under the guidance of an instructor.

Figure 3 outlines the standard structure of a flipped classroom, emphasising the transition from asynchronous to synchronous learning and illustrating how this sequence aligns with the progression through Bloom's levels of learning.

All learner interactions – whether during the asynchronous or synchronous stages, including peer-to-peer quizzes, collaborative problem-solving, group discussions, or role plays – can be designed as interdisciplinary and cross-border learning experiences. These activities provide opportunities for learners to engage with diverse perspectives and apply their knowledge in culturally and professionally varied contexts.

Stage	Learning step	Sample learning activities & materials
Asynchronous learning activities  (individual and interactive)	Remembering & understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Textbook chapters</li> <li>▪ Articles</li> <li>▪ Videos</li> <li>▪ Quizzes</li> <li>▪ Personalised quizzing by GPTs <i>(Curated sources of information)</i></li> </ul>
	Applying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Exercises</li> <li>▪ Problem solving (“known knowns”)</li> <li>▪ Complex quizzes</li> <li>▪ Games</li> <li>▪ Roleplaying with GPTs</li> <li>▪</li> </ul>
	Analysing Evaluating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Case reading</li> <li>▪ Problem solving (“known unknowns”)</li> <li>▪ Asynchronous chats with peer learners</li> <li>▪ Dilemmas and ambiguities</li> <li>▪ Reflective journals</li> <li>▪ Reviews of peer learners’ deliverables</li> </ul>
	Creating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Deliverables: plans, working models, proposals, presentations, articles, rehearsed practice, etc.</li> </ul>
Synchronous class	Analysing Evaluating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Large group / small group discussions</li> <li>▪ Presentation by learners</li> <li>▪ Arguing a case</li> </ul>
	Creating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collective ideation</li> <li>▪ Storytelling</li> <li>▪ Problem-solving: solutions, courses of action</li> <li>▪ Roleplaying, creating a persona, demonstrating specific behaviour</li> </ul>
Post-synchronous wrap	Evaluating and creating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reviews of peer learners’ deliverables</li> <li>▪ Post-session review and improvement of submitted deliverable</li> </ul>

*Figure 3. Flipped Classroom Structure*

Similarly, generative AI chatbots can be configured to simulate virtual peers from different countries and backgrounds, offering learners the chance to interact with alternative viewpoints and experiences, thereby enriching the learning process through diversity and global relevance. The learning activities suggested in Figure 3 demonstrate the wide range of possibilities available in both the asynchronous and synchronous stages, all of which are closely aligned with the learner-centred approaches outlined earlier.

Micro-programmes are designed to be modular so that other micro-credentials may be added to create larger credentials supporting the goals and needs of the learner, in line with the learning pathways opportunities described in the micro-programme and in line with the awarding processes of the partner institutions.

In principle, obtaining micro-credentials should be possible following assessment of learning outcomes, obtained either through a specific micro-programme leading to a micro-credential, or on the basis of assessment of learning outcomes resulting from non-formal and informal learning. These opportunities should be clearly described in the micro-programme description.

### **Modular, Output-Oriented Programming**

The asynchronous-to-synchronous sequence is shaped by several factors. First, only a limited amount of learning can be effectively addressed during the asynchronous period between consecutive synchronous sessions. This necessitates careful selection of asynchronous learning experiences, ensuring they are realistic in scope and aligned with what learners can reasonably accomplish given their available time and the objectives of the upcoming teacher-led session. Second, given the output-oriented nature of micro-programme learning outcomes, each asynchronous–synchronous cycle should culminate in a specific deliverable – ideally a tangible output that serves as a “building block” toward the micro-programme’s outcome. An effective approach to meeting this criterion is to frame each cycle as a Mission, guiding learners through a structured progression in which they incrementally develop the intended output (e.g. a presentation, project, publication, product outline, process map, etc.).

Given the Alliance’s international dimension, these deliverables could be jointly developed by learners from different countries, working in pairs or in triads, involving, for instance, cross-cultural interviewing, collaborative writing, and joint problem solving and storytelling. In this context, a micro-programme consists of a defined number of Missions, determined by its overall scope and complexity.

### **Learner-Centred Delivery Modes**

Micro-programmes are to be designed to meet the needs of the target group of learners. The flipped classroom model is both flexible and robust, making it well-suited to a variety of delivery formats – ranging from fully in-person to fully remote learning environments. Figure 4 outlines three distinct delivery models and illustrates how each one influences access to learning materials, the format of synchronous sessions, and the teacher’s role across both

asynchronous and synchronous stages. The “fully remote” model is the most suitable option for supporting the international collaboration in the Alliance. However, in the context of a micro-programme comprising multiple Missions – and therefore multiple synchronous sessions – it is both conceivable and potentially beneficial for at least one of these sessions (such as the opening or closing) to be held in person.

Stage	Fully in-person	Hybrid	Fully remote
<i>Asynchronous activities</i>	Off site Learning materials delivered online or in hard copy	Off site Learning materials delivered online	Off site Learning materials delivered online
<i>Teacher support during asynchronous stage</i>	On site and off site	Typically remote (online)	Remote (online)
<i>Synchronous class</i>	Interactive classroom on site	Interactive classroom on site	Interactive videoconference online
<i>Teacher's role during synchronous stage</i>	Leads active, collaborative learning experiences on site. No lectures!	Leads active, collaborative learning experiences online. No lectures!	

*Figure 4. Delivery Models*

Figure 5 outlines a robust, tested process that can be followed by the instructors involved in designing a micro-programme, once its subject and scope have been defined.

Step	Key content	Guidelines
Specify learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Precise learning objectives</li> </ul>	Outcomes must be verifiable
Mission breakdown structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of missions</li> <li>Mission deliverables</li> <li>Relevant content for each mission</li> <li>Missions time frame</li> </ul>	Beware oversized missions to avoid fatigue and demotivation.
Asynchronous stage planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop or curate learning materials aligned with Bloom's learning sequence, eg.:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remember/understand: reading material, articles, videos, quizzes, interviews...</li> <li>Apply: quizzes, exercises, games, roleplays, field interviews, problems, chatbot interactions...</li> <li>Analyse: cases, scenarios...</li> <li>Evaluate / create: opinions, presentations, models, demos, proposals, storytelling, complex problems...</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Learning activities must include a balanced mix of individual pursuits and interactions with fellow learners (or with chatbots trained as virtual counterparts). The former can take place in chatgroups, for a, or similar discussion platforms.</p>
Synchronous session planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish goal in connection with planned asynchronous learning: consolidate? Evaluate? Create? All of them?</li> <li>Select facilitation methods: small group discussion? Large group discussion? Roleplays? Case discussion? Etc.</li> <li>Decide on learner's participation, eg. who presents what?</li> <li>Which output consolidation method – ie. conventional oral reporting vs Mentimeter-style tools, etc.</li> <li>Session time-frame: total duration, when to break into small groups, what for and for how long?</li> </ul>	<p>In the flipped classroom model, synchronous sessions should, in principle, avoid introducing entirely new content. However, it is acceptable for the instructor to present brief, targeted inputs that enrich or contextualize the subject under discussion.</p> <p>Session length: online synchronous sessions should not exceed a total duration of 2 hours (ideally 90 minutes). Since most learning takes place in small group settings, time allocated to break-out groups should be maximised. Group output consolidation can be shortened and streamlined with the help of online apps like Mentimeter.</p>

Figure 5. Teacher's Roles

## **Learners' Involvement in Co-design**

Learners can take part in designing the micro-programme or, more generally, to influence its content, in several ways:

- Learning outcomes are determined by labour market needs and learners' needs expectations.
- The asynchronous learning materials can be in part selected by learners, within the instructors' broad definitions or recommendations, as i.e. when learners research material available online which is relevant to the tasks they must complete.
- Learners are involved in the internal and external quality assurance processes and their feedback, both throughout the learning process and especially upon completion of the micro-programme, is taken as essential for the continuous improvement of the quality of the micro-programme.

## **Co-Delivery by Transnational Teaching Teams**

Since micro-programmes are co-delivered, teachers from the participating institutions must adhere to a shared set of guidelines to ensure that learners experience a consistent and coherent learning environment, regardless of which teacher leads a given Mission or set of Missions. In particular, the following recommendations are key:

During the asynchronous stage:

- Monitor learners' progress closely throughout the programme. Modern Learning Management Systems (LMS) offer real-time data and analytics that help educators track the completion and quality of assigned activities.
- By default, adopt a responsive rather than proactive stance – intervening only when prompted by the learner, and ensuring timely, supportive responses.
- When warranted by LMS insights, take a proactive approach to support learners who appear to be struggling or falling behind.
- Encourage consistent peer-to-peer assessment, ensuring that each learner both provides and receives at least one constructive review of deliverables.

During the Synchronous Sessions:

- Facilitate dynamic, engaging learning experiences by applying proven active learning strategies such as small-group discussions, case analyses, role plays, panels, and other interactive formats.

- Be proficient in the technical and pedagogical skills required to deliver these activities effectively in an online environment (e.g. using platforms like Zoom or Microsoft Teams).

As a general rule, adopting an active, collaborative, and challenge-based learning approach requires educators to shift from the traditional “sage on the stage” role to that of a “guide on the side,” supporting and facilitating the learning process rather than directing it.

### **Authentic, Evidence-based, Transparent, Flexible and Inclusive Assessment**

Learning outcomes included in the micro-programmes are to be assessed against transparent criteria. Assessment methods should be tailored to the subject matter and scope of each micro-programme. However, regardless of these variables, all assessments must prioritise the highest levels of Bloom’s taxonomy. In particular, learners must demonstrate the ability to:

- Create a tangible product and show how it can be used in practice.
- Evaluate and adapt the product for use in varied contexts and under changing conditions.

This "golden rule" emphasises that assessment must go beyond the mere recall and abstract application of knowledge. Consequently, traditional methods such as written tests or exams focused solely on abstract problem-solving, or analysis are insufficient on their own. Effective assessment for micro-programmes must provide clear evidence of applied high-level learning outcomes to support meaningful certification.

In practical terms, assessments that follow this "golden rule" should be:

- **Authentic:** Assessments must closely mirror real-world tasks and contexts. Learners should demonstrate how they apply knowledge and skills in professional or practical scenarios. Examples include portfolios, simulations, case studies, performance tasks.
- **Evidence-based and verifiable:** Assessments must produce concrete, verifiable evidence of the learner’s achievements.
- **Transparent:** Assessments must clearly define and communicate the learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and performance standards to learners. Transparency helps ensure fairness and enables learners to self-assess and improve.
- **Flexible and inclusive:** Assessment must offer diverse formats to accommodate different learning styles, needs, and contexts (e.g. workplace-based projects, oral presentations...). This is especially important for adult learners or professionals seeking upskilling.

Figure 6 presents a set of learning objectives aligned with Bloom’s levels of learning. This rubric demonstrates how well-formulated objectives can serve as transparent and verifiable assessment criteria to confirm the achievement of “beyond knowledge” outcomes (i.e. the “analysing” and “evaluating / creating” levels) specifically within the context of a micro-programme that includes an intercultural skills dimension.

	Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyse	Evaluate / Create
<b>Critical thinking in a global context</b>	Recognizes global themes.	Understands basic global issues without in-depth analysis.	Applies simple critical thinking skills to global issues.	Analyses global challenges with awareness of complexity and perspectives.	Evaluates or creates alternative perspectives or solutions.
<b>Openness, adaptability, and respect for diversity</b>	Recognizes that differences in backgrounds, values, and identities exist.	Explains why openness, adaptability, and respect for diversity are important.	Demonstrates openness and adaptability in familiar diverse settings.	Reflects on how personal biases or behaviours influence inclusion or exclusion.	Advocates for and creates inclusive practices that value diversity.
<b>Ability to communicate across cultures</b>	Identifies basic features of communication styles in different cultures.	Explains why communication must be adapted in intercultural situations.	Applies simple strategies to adjust communication in diverse contexts.	Analyses misunderstandings or cultural barriers in communication and improves solutions.	Designs or facilitates effective, culturally-sensitive communication.
<b>Cultural awareness and sensitivity</b>	Identifies basic cultural differences (e.g. language, customs, values).	Explains how cultural background affects behaviour and communication.	Demonstrates respectful behaviour in familiar intercultural situations.	Analyses cultural assumptions, norms, and perspectives critically and empathetically.	Develops or integrates inclusive and culturally responsive strategies.
<b>Understanding global issues and sustainability</b>	Identifies and lists examples of global issues and sustainability topics.	Describes the causes and consequences of key global and sustainability challenges.	Applies basic sustainability concepts to assess real-world situations.	Compares and evaluates the effectiveness of different sustainable approaches.	Develops or justifies innovative, context-sensitive solutions to global challenges.

*Figure 6. Assessment Rubric*

## Standardised Template for Describing DIVERSE Micro-Programmes

The purpose of the standardised template to describe micro-programmes of the DIVERSE European University Alliance is twofold. First, it ensures that the Micro-Credentials Committee receives all necessary information to assess whether a micro-programme has been designed in accordance with the DIVERSE approach to micro-credentials. Second, it serves to gather all required details for registering the micro-programme in the DIVERSE Course Catalogue.

	ITEM	<i>Guidelines for micro-programmes designers</i>
1	Title of the micro-programme (micro-credential)	<i>Provide a concise and meaningful name for the micro-programme that clearly reflects its focus.</i>
2	Model	<p><i>Specify which of the three models presented in the DIVERSE Policy on Micro-Credentials applies to this micro-programme. Support your choice by answering the following questions:</i></p> <p><i>a) Have the partner institutions developed a joint student profile and student selection procedure?</i></p> <p><i>b) Have the programme objectives been defined jointly?</i></p> <p><i>c) Do the partner institutions have complementary expertise and reinforce each other in terms of educational concept?</i></p> <p><i>d) Will programme participants work together, with explicit attention to super-diversity?</i></p> <p><i>e) Does more than one higher education institution have an active role in teaching and coaching within the micro-programme?</i></p> <p><i>f) Will a common evaluation framework be used for the micro-programme; will feedback and evaluation be conducted jointly?</i></p> <p><i>For reference, please have a look at the Collaboration Matrix presented in the DIVERSE Micro-Credentials Toolkit.</i></p>

	ITEM	Guidelines for micro-programmes designers
3	Lead Partner	<i>Indicate the DIVERSE partner institution having a role of the Lead Partner by writing the full name of the partners institution and the country of the Lead Partner that has the role of the awarding body and the issuer of the respective micro-credentials.</i>
4	Programme Director	<i>Indicate the Programme Director (main person responsible for the design and the delivery of the programme).</i>
5	Programme Board	<i>Indicate the names and institution(s) of the Programme Board (persons involved in the programme as teachers).</i>
6	Labour market relevance	<i>Describe the methodology used to assess labour market needs and explain how the micro-programme has been designed to address those needs.</i>
7	Target learner profiles	<i>Describe the intended target group: education level, professional background and any other relevant learner characteristics.</i>
8	Entry requirements (if applicable)	<i>State prerequisites for admission and describe the selection process.</i>
9	Recognition of prior learning (RPL) arrangements	<i>Explain how prior learning (formal, informal or non-formal), if applicable, may be recognised for admission or credit.</i>
10	Study programme (if applicable)	<i>Indicate the study programme(s) at all DIVERSE partner institutions in which the micro-programme is embedded.</i>
11	Stackability / Learning pathways (if applicable)	<i>Describe how this micro-programme can lead to further learning or qualifications within or across DIVERSE partner institutions.</i>
12	EQF level	<i>Specify the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level corresponding to the micro-programme learning outcomes.</i>
13	ECTS credits	<i>Indicate the total workload expressed in ECTS credits corresponding to the micro-programme learning outcomes.</i>
14	Programme description	<i>Provide a brief summary of the micro-programme, including its main objectives and purpose. For stand-alone micro-programmes, explain why the programme should be treated as a stand-alone programme.</i>

	ITEM	Guidelines for micro-programmes designers
15	Programme learning outcomes	List what learners are expected to know, understand and will be able to do after a successful completion of the micro-programme.
16	Delivery mode	Specify the mode of the delivery and the form of learners' participation in the micro-programme delivery, namely synchronous, asynchronous, onsite, online, hybrid, blended.
17	Duration and frequency	Specify the frequency (e.g. weekly, block sessions) and the duration of the micro-programme delivery.
18	Language	Specify the language(s) to be used in the delivery of in the micro-programme and the student assessment.
19	Programme structure	Outline the programme structure by listing all the modules included in the micro-programme.
20	Module 1 title <sup>33</sup>	<p>Provide a brief overview of the topics and content areas of course/module 1; module learning outcomes and link and them with the programme learning outcomes (matrix).</p> <p>List the qualifications of teaching staff required to deliver the module.</p> <p>Describe the teaching and learning methods planned to be used in the course/module and describe how learners will be assessed.</p> <p>List essential and supplementary readings or resources learners should consult in the course/module.</p>
21	Prior approval	Attach the decision of internal and/or external body responsible for the micro-programme approval.
22	Financial arrangements	Explain the financial arrangements between the DIVERSE partner institutions in the design and the delivery of the micro-programme.
23	Promotion and outreach campaign	Describe the envisaged promotion and outreach campaign to support the launch of this micro-programme

<sup>33</sup> Repeat as necessary (for each module).

# DIVERSE Framework for Assessing Jointness in Micro-Programmes

To support micro-credential designers in the joint design and delivery of micro-credentials, an assessment framework with a checklist has been developed for use during the planning, implementation, and review phases. It aims to help institutions, micro-programme designers, and teachers to verify that key educational, pedagogical, and market-oriented criteria are addressed. For programmes involving multiple partners, the checklist also supports coordination, facilitates collaboration, and promotes a shared understanding of expectations. The checklist is designed as a practical tool to ensure quality and consistency in the design, development, and delivery of microcredentials.

The purpose of the checklist is the following:

**Quality Assurance** - It provides a structured overview of essential characteristics that a micro-credential should meet, helping to maintain high standards and alignment with institutional and the Alliance policies.

**Guidance for Micro Programme Development** – It supports micro-credential designers in systematically considering all relevant aspects, including learning outcomes, study load, modularity, and international competences.

**Transparency and Communication** - It offers a clear framework that can be shared with stakeholders, including learners, partner institutions, and accrediting bodies, to demonstrate the quality and intended outcomes of the micro-credential.

**Evaluation and Recognition** – It serves as a reference for internal or external evaluation, helping to ensure that micro-credentials are consistent with broader educational frameworks, labour market needs, and international standards.

**Encouraging Best Practices** – It Highlights key elements of learner-centred, flexible, and internationally oriented learning, promoting pedagogical innovation and the alignment of microcredentials with global competencies.

The checklist consists of two parts: a first part containing general criteria, and a second part comprising criteria specific to the joint design and delivery of micro-credentials. The second part is specifically designed to support the assessment and guidance of micro-credential designers seeking recognition as joint micro-credentials within the DIVERSE European University Alliance. It ensures that programmes demonstrate a sufficient level of inter-institutional collaboration across all key aspects required by the Alliance.

<b>✓</b>	<b>General Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Learning Outcomes	Clearly defined and measurable learning outcomes are formulated following the Methodology for Curriculum Design, Learning and Teaching
<input type="checkbox"/>	Workload	The micro-credential carries a workload of 3 to 30 ECTS corresponding to the intended learning outcomes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Modular & Stackable	The micro-credential is modular in design and can be stacked towards a larger credential or qualification.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Labour Market Alignment	The micro-credential is aligned with an analysis of labour market needs following the Methodology for Identifying Labour Market needs and Requirements
<input type="checkbox"/>	Knowledge & Skills	The learning outcomes include a solid knowledge base and practical skills.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Critical Thinking & Global Perspective	The learning outcomes include critical thinking, a global perspective, and understanding of global issues and sustainability.
<input type="checkbox"/>	International & Intercultural Competences	The learning outcomes include international and intercultural competences, such as cultural awareness, ability to communicate across cultures, openness, adaptability, and respect for diversity.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Useful Output	The micro-credential leads to a useful output (e.g. a presentation, project, publication, product outline, process map, etc.).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Learner-Centred Approach	A learner-centred educational approach is used (e.g. active participatory learning, inquiry-based learning, challenge-based learning, or collaborative learning).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Blended & International Learning Activities	Part of the learning activities are organised asynchronously, combined with synchronous activities that allow for international collaboration.

✓	Specific Criteria	Description
<input type="checkbox"/>	Student Profile & Selection	Partner institutions develop a joint student profile and joint selection procedure.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Objectives	The objectives are jointly defined.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Relevance of Partners	Partner institutions have complementary expertise and reinforce each other in terms of educational concept.
<input type="checkbox"/>	International Student Collaboration	Students work together, with explicit attention to super-diversity.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teachers & Coaches	More than one higher education institution has an active role in teaching and coaching.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Evaluation & Feedback	A common evaluation framework is used; feedback and evaluation are conducted jointly.

### Collaboration matrix

The Collaboration matrix provides a visual overview of how different micro-credential models vary in terms of collaboration across key criteria. It is designed to clarify the degree of cooperation required at each stage of micro-credential development, delivery, and evaluation. It allows institutions and programme developers to visualise collaboration expectations for each micro-credential model and highlights which criteria require formal agreements and which aspects can be flexible, especially for the Cooperative Micro-credential (Model 2), where collaboration may range from limited to full. Institutions can use this as a guide when planning new micro-programmes, ensuring alignment with the DIVERSE Alliance Policy on Micro-credentials.

Collaboration Criteria	Single MC (Model 1)	Cooperative MC (Model 2)	Joint MC (Model 3)
<b>Student Profile: Joint selection procedure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Selection procedure is fully managed by one institution; clear and structured, but no joint input from any partner.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Limited collaboration:</i> The selection procedure is primarily managed by one institution, with minimal joint input from partners.</li> <li>● <i>Moderate collaboration:</i> The Lead Partner coordinates the process partially with Delivering Partner(s), sharing some responsibilities.</li> <li>● <i>High collaboration:</i> All partners fully contribute to and jointly define the selection procedure with full shared input and decision-making.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Jointly developed selection procedure with all partners contributing criteria, assessment methods, and final approval.</li> </ul>
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Objectives are defined by one institution; ensures clarity and internal consistency, but no input from other partners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Limited collaboration:</i> Objectives are primarily defined by one institution without input from others.</li> <li>● <i>Moderate collaboration:</i> Objectives may be partially co-defined with Delivering Partner(s), coordinated by the Lead Partner.</li> <li>● <i>High collaboration:</i> Objectives are fully aligned and jointly adapted while maintaining shared goals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Objectives are jointly defined by all participating institutions, reflecting shared goals and combined expertise of all partners.</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance of Partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programme is delivered by one institution; complementary expertise is limited, but internal coherence and quality are maintained.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Limited collaboration:</i> Relevance and responsibilities mostly rest with one institution.</li> <li>● <i>Moderate collaboration:</i> Delivering Partner(s) contribute, overseen by Lead Partner with partial leveraging of complementary expertise.</li> <li>● <i>High collaboration:</i> Complementary expertise is strongly shared and coordinated fully among partners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strong complementary expertise across all partners; educational concept co-created and reinforced collaboratively.</li> </ul>
<b>International Student Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collaboration mainly occurs within one institution; students engage internally but international interaction is limited.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Limited collaboration:</i> International collaboration is minimal and mainly within one institution.</li> <li>● <i>Moderate collaboration:</i> International collaboration may be partially facilitated and coordinated by Lead Partner.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Structured international collaboration between all participating students; explicit focus on super-diversity and intercultural learning.</li> </ul>

Collaboration Criteria	Single MC (Model 1)	Cooperative MC (Model 2)	Joint MC (Model 3)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>High collaboration:</i> Fully structured international collaboration with active involvement of all partners and students.</li> </ul>	
Teachers / Coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Teaching is provided by one institution's own staff; consistent delivery ensured, but limited involvement from other partners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Limited collaboration:</i> Teaching is mainly managed by one institution's staff.</li> <li>● <i>Moderate collaboration:</i> Delivering Partner(s) may contribute instructors under Lead Partner oversight.</li> <li>● <i>High collaboration:</i> Active teaching and coaching roles shared across all partner institutions according to agreed responsibilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Active teaching and coaching roles shared across all partner institutions according to agreed responsibilities.</li> </ul>
Evaluation & Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Evaluation and feedback are conducted internally by one institution; consistent assessment ensured but limited shared evaluation or benchmarking.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Limited collaboration:</i> Evaluation is mainly conducted by one institution.</li> <li>● <i>Moderate collaboration:</i> Lead Partner may provide common evaluation framework, partially coordinate with Delivering Partner(s), or delegate evaluation responsibility.</li> <li>● <i>High collaboration:</i> Evaluation framework is co-developed and jointly implemented; feedback and assessment conducted collaboratively by all partners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Common evaluation framework co-developed and jointly implemented; feedback and assessment conducted collaboratively by all partners.</li> </ul>
Collaboration / Partnership Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No formal collaboration agreement is required as the programme is managed by one institution.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Limited collaboration:</i> No formal agreement needed; programme mainly managed by one institution.</li> <li>● <i>Moderate collaboration:</i> Formal collaboration agreement required with Delivering Partner(s), outlining roles, responsibilities, quality assurance, and oversight.</li> <li>● <i>High collaboration:</i> Formal collaboration agreement mandatory; clearly defines roles, responsibilities, teaching, assessment, financial arrangements, and shared governance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Formal collaboration agreement mandatory; clearly defines roles, responsibilities, teaching, assessment, financial arrangements, and shared governance.</li> </ul>

# Sustainable Promotion and Outreach Campaign

To ensure a successful launch and broad uptake of DIVERSE micro-credentials, a comprehensive communication campaign needs to be planned building on the existing communication infrastructures of all partner institutions. The primary goals of the campaign are to raise widespread awareness of the DIVERSE micro-credential offerings, drive interest and enrolment in the micro-programmes, position the DIVERSE European University Alliance as a leader in innovative, flexible education and foster a sense of shared European academic identity through cross-institutional cooperation.

The campaign needs to be directed toward multiple target groups, with tailored messaging and outreach strategies for each:

- High-school students preparing for higher education or the labour market
- Higher education students interested in diversifying their academic portfolios
- Adult learners and professionals seeking to enhance their skills or shift career paths
- Employers and industry stakeholders looking to support employee development
- Policymakers and institutional leaders engaged in shaping micro-credentials.

Every campaign needs to focus on a set of core messages:

- Flexible and accessible learning through short, focused programmes that accommodate learners' diverse needs and schedules
- High-quality education: delivered by higher education institutions within the DIVERSE European University Alliance
- Recognised and transferable credits and credentials: micro-credentials that hold value across European educational and employment contexts
- Career and educational advancement: a pathway to further study, job mobility, or personal development.

The campaign shall apply a multi-channel approach to reach audiences across different landscapes and can include:

- Targeted campaigns on LinkedIn and Meta (Instagram and Facebook)
- Email newsletters sent to institutional and professional mailing lists
- Paid advertising where appropriate to increase reach
- A dedicated webpage on the DIVERSE European University Alliance website to showcase all available micro-credentials with filtering by topic, mode of delivery, location and institution
- Search engine optimisation (SEO) to improve visibility in search engine results

- Press releases issued to European and global education outlets and local media
- Blog posts and opinion articles authored by curriculum developers or learners
- Virtual info sessions before programme launches
- Webinars with testimonials from educators and alumni
- Recorded sessions hosted on YouTube and embedded on campaign pages.

To measure the effectiveness of the campaign and inform future efforts, the following key performance indicators (KPIs) shall be tracked:

- Number of programme registrations and completed micro-programmes
- Web traffic and click-through rates on promotional materials
- Social media impressions, reach, shares, and engagement rates
- Newsletter open and click rates
- Attendance and engagement at virtual events
- Media mentions and backlinks.