**Consolidated Comments on Microcredentials Naming Conventions and Review Process document: Version 1.0**

**(Prepared by Sasha Breger Bush, Ph.D., Faculty Assembly Chair, October 2024)**

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# **Summary of Consolidated Comments**

The comments below were collected and organized by Faculty Assembly Chair Sasha Breger Bush during September and October 2024, in response to a request for feedback from the TIPS office on a document entitled “Microcredentials Terminology and Review”.

Taken together, the comments suggest that there is substantial, additional work required to prepare this document for campus use, work that should be done in collaboration and partnership with faculty governance at the campus, school/college, and primary unit levels.

Among other key areas for additional dialogue, collaboration, and development around microcredential creation and approval, the following items were flagged by respondents as critical:

1. These naming conventions and processes should be codified in policy, likely a series of them involving revision of CAP 1001s, development of a microcredential approval policy, and creation/revision of bylaws for Grad Council and/or UCC.
2. These new policies should be part of a larger process of strategic development of microcredentials. There are deep and reasonable concerns among faculty about duplication, excessive competition, and cannibalization, as well as the devaluation of current credentials in face of a potential onslaught of microcredential offerings. At the very least, microcredential offerings should be informed by market research (including on student demand), campus budget and enrollment strategies, and the 2030 strategic plan.
3. Microcredential rollouts will increase workload, including for faculty developers, primary units, staff and faculty advisors, and faculty approval bodies. All planning at all levels should account for and be responsive to concerns about workload. Administrative organizers in the microcredentail space should be prepared to offer compensation and other supports to faculty, staff and PU employees working on microcredentials. We cannot do more with less. In this context, badges that encourage service overload, or that reward extra service with recognition rather than financial remuneration, should be viewed critically and discussed at length.
4. The naming conventions proposed by TIPS are not yet well matched to the needs of campus stakeholders. Among other items that require dialogue and revision, there needs to be discussion of certificates, transcripted versus nontranscripted credentials, and “badges” of various kinds.
5. Student-facing credentials, even if non-credit bearing and non-revenue generating, should be the exclusive domain of *academic* units and programs. Administrative units shall not issue student-facing credentials of any kind, but could offer internal, employee-facing credentials related to professional development.

**Feedback from Campus Faculty Governance**

**(FA, BPC, UCDALI, UCC)**

# **From Faculty Assembly**

**FA.1**

* We need policies on all of this, probably a few of them, sent through as some kind of omnibus legislative package for microcredentials:

1. CAP 1001s needs to be revised to remove discussions of certificates, discussions that are unclear and unhelpful
2. We need a new policy on microcredentials naming and approvals. Guidelines or other light-touch regulations will not work for a complex issue like this one, and policy would ensure consistency in these processes in the face of personnel and organizational changes over time.
3. Bylaws creation/revision for Grad Council and UCC will need to be pursued in tandem with the microcredentials processes, so that we can split off (or not) graduate approvals from undergraduate approvals. UCC only does undergrad at this time, and Grad Council has no statutory authority other than that afforded to the Provost’s office. Codifying role is critical.

* Administrative units should not be allowed to issue student-facing credentials, even if non-revenue generating and even if non-credit bearing. Admin units can offer internal credentials to university employees, and that’s it (i.e., as professional development for staff, faculty, or other administrators; students may only be offered such opportunities in their capacity as staff or student workers).
* The document from TIPS doesn’t discuss certificates and how they fit into the microcredential mix.
* The UCC, to the extent that it takes on a larger role in this process, requires additional support in order to ensure quality and consistency of approvals and mitigate faculty burnout. UCC should also work closely with FA (including the EPPC, LETTS, and BPC) to ensure consistency and unity across faculty shared gov bodies.

# **From EPPC**

Comments expected at a later date.

# **From BPC**

“[T]his is not a policy. It is just a set of definitions with a random infomatic thing.  A formal CAP should be written and should be approved as such…

1): no proposed badge should have an exempt approval process so get rid of that entirely.

 2): approval process should be a completely different document and be an actual policy.  Approval process for anything credit bearing should be just like creating a course. If I have to do full review to change a course title or a course description, they should have too as well.

3) No administrative badging for anyone not employed by the university. In fact I’d like to say no administrative badging…but SESS may want to do it for professional development.  Maybe the youngsters want badges for PD. I don’t know. But no administrative micro credential for non-employees…

 4):  And what is up with the examples for consideration? That shouldn’t be in policy.”

# **From UCC**

“I can say that the UCC doesn't review any not-for-credit or D2 courses.  We only review undergraduate programs and courses, as I think I may have mentioned.  Anything that we do review would happen through the RO's CIM software system, and that already includes all transcripted courses and programs.  We were advised by the Provost at the time the steering committee was setting up the UCC that we should avoid getting into approving non-transcripted items (I don't have quite enough institutional history to remember the argument for that).”

# **From UCDALI**

**General Comments/Questions:**

* Do all of these microcredentials culminate in something "transcripted" by the University? If some do, and some don't, please specify.
* Who creates/teaches each of the types of course? Who will be creating the not-for-credit and credit bearing items that are department and/or topic specific? Will there be requirements around who at the University is responsible? Will administration seek out 3rd party groups to fill in the programs?
* Where will processes for proposing either credit or non-credit microcredential courses be determined (units, colleges, TIPS, etc.)? Who/what will determine support and credit for the work involved in proposing microcredentials?
* Are proposers intended to also be the faculty teaching the course?
* How does management of microcredentialing fit into faculty workloads?
* There is no mention in this document about compensation for faculty who are teaching these units, on or above load. What are expectations for employment of IRC Faculty in these roles? Who is supposed to develop these units, and how will people be paid for developing them? For maintaining and updating them?
* Are any of the microcredentials mentioned intended to be notated on transcripts?
* Are there any plans to put microcredentials into a central repository to allow faculty to suggest them to their students/colleagues?

**Microcredential Terminology/Taxonomies**

REQUIRED CHARACTERISTICS of MICROCREDENTIAL PROGRAMS

Required characteristics: (1) assessment of learning; (2) skills linked to career growth, change or professional development, (3) smaller scale. For more information, visit the [TIPS website](https://www.ucdenver.edu/tips/program-strategy/microcredentials) or [Working Group Report](https://www.ucdenver.edu/offices/provost/online-education/microcredentials-working-group).

MICROCREDENTIAL PROGRAMS for DEGREE SEEKING STUDENTS and NON-DEGREE LEARNERS

Student-facing education programs that award a credential are categorized in the following table based upon two characteristics: (a) course-based or not, (b) if required to be limited to current students or not.

**Student Facing Programs Categorization**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Name** | **Description** | **Example** |
| Course -Based | **Credit Bearing Program** | Award credit applicable toward a degree or microcredential. These are course-based, meaning they follow the requirements set for credit-bearing courses in time and scheduling. | Certificate Program consisting of four 3-credit courses by one of CU Denver’s Colleges or schools (e.g., Entrepreneurship Certificate) |
| **Credit Ready Program** | Programs offered not-for-credit but with for-credit courses. These are aligned with time requirements set for credit-bearing courses in contact hour equivalency. | Program that, upon successful completion, awards a badge and can be transferred to credit-bearing and applied to a degree program (e.g., Smart Cities modules) |
| No course-based requirement | **Continuing Education Program** | Programs offered not-for-credit by Continuing and Professional Education units embedded in academic units. These programs are typically not articulated for credit and are not required to be course-based. | Program offered by the College of Public Affairs for leaders in the Rocky Mountain Region that awards a badge. |
| **Career-Enhancing Program** | Programs offered not-for-credit and required to only be available to **current students**. This is a non-revenue-generating program. | Program offered by the CU Denver Career Center to augment skills of our current students that awards a badge |

**Open Enrollment & Advanced (Graduate)**

These terms typically are used to describe our credit-bearing and credit-ready programs only.

* **Open Enrollment P~~p~~rograms** are available to anyone interested in applying. They do not have prerequisites degree requirements.
* **Advanced (Graduate) Programs** require either a bachelor’s degree (post-bacc) or master’s degree (post-master’s) to apply.

MICROCREDENTIAL PROGRAMS for CU DENVER EMPLOYEES

**CU Denver Faculty/Staff Professional Learning Badge Programs** are available only to faculty and staff of CU Denver and awards a digital badge. An example of this might be a training on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion offered by CU Denver’s DEI office, after which attendees are awarded a Recognition Badge because the knowledge is not assessed. This is a non-revenue-generating program.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Credit Bearing

Course-Based

Credit Ready

Course-Based

Continuing Ed.

Career Enhancing for Students

CUD Faculty/Staff Prof. Learning

Audience: External or Internal Learners

Audience: Internal Learners

Proposer: Academic Units or CPE in Academic Units

Revenue Generating

Proposer: Any Unit

Not Revenue Generating

BADGE TERMINOLOGY

Digital badges are a kind of microcredential. Other examples of microcredentials at CU Denver are certifications, licenses, endorsements, and PDUs/CEUs. These artifacts serve as a verified recognition of the skills, knowledge, or competencies that a learner has acquired as a result of their completion of our programs. To learn more about badges at CU Denver, please visit the [TIPS Website](https://www.ucdenver.edu/tips/program-strategy/microcredentials/digital-badges) and the [Working Group Report](https://www.ucdenver.edu/offices/provost/online-education/badging-working-group).

**Skill Badge:** Digital record of one or a small set of skills in which the skill, knowledge, or competency is verified (assessed).

**Meta (Skill) Badge:** Digital record of multiple skills or competencies, earned through compiling multiple singe-skill badges or through other evidence of acquiring a larger set of skills. The skills, knowledge, or competencies are verified (assessed).

**Recognition Badge:** Digital record of a small set of skills ~~in~~ which can be earned by a learner for participating in a learning activity in which the skill, knowledge, or competency is not assessed. These can also be used to recognize academic achievement or service in support of the institution or community.

Proposal for Program Review

The levels of program review are meant to encourage expediency while maintaining quality. These review levels are described below along with which programs are proposed to fall under each type of review.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Full Review** | **Expedited Review** | | **Exempt** |
| **Expedited** | **Peer Review** |
| Review Description | Review Description | Review Description | Review Description |
| Check for required program characteristics.  Distributed to campus-wide UCC for duplication and comment | UCC chair checks for required program characteristics.  Option to send to full UCC review if proposed program is outside of proposer’s discipline or duplicative. | UCC chair checks for required program characteristics.  Option to send to peer-review if proposed program is outside of unit’s discipline. | Automatic approval |
| Programs | Programs | Programs | Programs |
| Credit Bearing  Credit Ready | Continuing Education  Career Enhancing | CUD Faculty/Staff Professional Learning |  |

**Review Examples for Consideration**

**Proposer:** A faculty member of the Recording Arts Department in the College of Architecture and Music

**Topic:** Recording software training

**Description:** 40 hours of training through facilitated, asynchronous training program that requires an assessed final project and demonstration.

**Credential:** Skill Badge

**Credit Ready:** No

**Proposer:** Human Resources Staff

**Topic:** Leadership in Higher Education

**Description:** Completion of four courses on leadership from their selection, for a total of 16 contact hours.The trainings are completed by successfully passing multiple choice quizzes that show knowledge of the topic.

**Credential:** Skill Badge

**Credit Ready:** No

**Proposer:** Staff in the International Office

**Topic:** Culture in the United States

**Description:** Participation in a two-day, 16-hour conference, introducing international students to the history of US culture and race relations. No assessment.

**Credential:** Recognition Badge

**Credit Ready:** No

**Proposer:** Librarian

**Topic:** Conducting Research

**Description:** Three-hour training on using the library resources for conducting research. No assessment

**Credential:** Recognition Badge

**Credit Ready:** No

**Proposer:** Staff member in the Career Center

**Topic:** Interviewing Skills

**Description:** 4-hour workshop that requires a demonstration of a successful interview graded using a rubric.

**Credential:** Skill Badge

**Credit Ready:** No

**Proposer:** An instructor in CLAS

**Topic:** Presentation Skills

**Description:** An existing course provides multiple opportunities for learners to demonstration their ability to present complex information. The presentations are rated using a rubric.

**Credential:** Skill Badge

**Credit Ready:** No

**Feedback from the**

**Schools and Colleges**

**(Faculty governance bodies, individual faculty, a couple of deans and ADs, and a few staff members)**

**From SPA**

**SPA.1:** “**Process for Determining Duplication**: The approval workflow assumes that UCC actually ever denies anything duplicative which might be just fine except that at least 5 S/Cs and student life think they own topics like leadership, org management, interviewing, advocacy, community partnership, race, gender, and social construction studies, civic engagement, policy studies, etc. etc. So who actually decides which academic unit or central campus unit gets to run and own the revenue generating microcredential? And who decides for graduate curriculum? How would students choose among 17 different ‘leadership’ badges? Also, there are not criteria or examples of what would actually be considered duplicative – 10% of the skill, 90%, again, who decides and how?

**Discounting Our Value Proposition with Skill-based Continuing Ed Badges and Career-Enhancing Student Badges**: Why are non-credit, continuing ed badges the equivalent of a credit bearing badge when there is no standard fee structure for continuing ed programs across campus? For example, if the Career Center charges $10 for that proposed program on interviewing skills and gives out a skills badge and our students take that same skill through a 3 credit course and get the exact same skill badge, the University is directly devaluing our credit hour production and driving student demand out of credit-bearing programs.

**What is the Vision for these Microcredentials?**

* + The proposed policy doesn’t provide guidance on what kind of microcredentials might actually help CU Denver grow or how to position them in a very crowded market space. How would campus advertise and recruit for these microcredentials? Will there be dedicated recruiters and marketers in Admissions and UCOMM? If these are aimed at increasing the recruitment funnel, what is the strategy for getting the word out about each newly adopted and existing microcredentials?

**Too little decision-making and administrative clarity from this document**

* + How / Who decides if the curriculum is exempt, expedited, or full review? Seriously. There aren’t definitions, criteria, or any way that I know of to determine this based on this policy proposal.
  + Who is doing the reviewing of descriptions? Jeremy himself? And then he alone decides what moves forward? How will he manage all this with his current role?
  + Are all badges subject to review? Skill and Recognition?
  + How does UCC / applicants/ whoever determine if the skill is at the open enrollment or advanced level? Or is this Jeremy doing this? Is this just based on if someone needs an undergrad degree to do the skill? When a skill moves from open to advanced, do different units own it?
  + Who and what assessment is required for the skill badges? Is that Kenny Wolf? He is on phased retirement right now and is one person. Is this feasible at all long term?
  + How does the Registrar’s Office merge non-credit experiences with credit bearing badges? There is not central registration required from continuing to what is the process to approving badges and who manages / staffs that? Is TIPS growing to do this or is this in the Registrar’s Office? How do skills embedded in credit-bearing courses transfer to Credly? Who do students go to if there are issues with processing badges? Would the Credly be totally separate from the Transcript and Learner Record? Is that helpful or useful to students or employers – receiving many different documents?
  + What are the admission criteria for grad and post-grad certs? Is that up to the program running them? Is that through Grad Council? Does Grad Council have that authority in their Bylaws? (hahaha that was a joke – they don’t have Bylaws!) What happens to current grad program admission requirements and processes when external audiences want to enroll in a credit-bearing microcredential if the only standard for admission to grad microcredentials in this document is having an undergrad degree? What about for accredited programs that have to maintain certain admission requirements?

**Further Disincentivizing Interdisciplinary and Cross-Campus Curricular Innovation**

* + This review structure and a lack of coordination among S/Cs and central units will incentivize departments and programs to entrench topic areas (“skills”) as within their discipline only. This is short-sighted and leads us down a path of trying to cannibalize each other.”

# **From CLAS**

**CLAS.1: Notes RE: Micro credential Terminology/Taxonomies**

Legend:

* ***Bold/Italics text*** = original text from MC Terminology and Review Levels document
* Blue text = comments from CLAS Staff

***Student-facing education programs that award a credential are categorized in the following table based upon two characteristics: (a) course-based or not, (b) if required to be limited to current students or not.***

This statement and categorization does not serve us well at CU Denver. The concepts of “course based” and “current students” are both too vague to reflect the reality of our flexible educational offerings and diverse student population who may identify in several different ways.

***No course-based requirement - Continuing Education Program - Programs offered not-for-credit by Continuing and Professional Education units embedded in academic units. These programs are typically not articulated for credit and are not required to be course-based.***

This information is untrue in our current state and has the possibility of creating enormous confusion among faculty, staff, and students. We offer many course-based noncredit programs that are scheduled in CU SIS and award continuing education units (CEUs) on a CU Denver noncredit transcript.

At CU Denver, we tend to refer to Extended Studies programs and Continuing and Professional Education programs interchangeably. This statement falsely implies that all CPE programs must be noncredit. We have many examples of credit-bearing CPE programs, so again, this statement has the potential to create enormous confusion.

***Open Enrollment & Advanced (Graduate) - These terms typically are used to describe our credit-bearing and credit-ready programs only.***

This statement is creating unnecessary limitations on our programming. Where do cohort-based programs fit in here? What about programs that have enrollment requirements based on something other than degree completion (i.e. age, professional experience, etc.)? We should have the ability to set up any enrollment requirements necessary for any given program.

***Digital badges are a kind of microcredential.***

This is confusing. Why did we stray away from the committee-recommended definition as follows? *Digital Badges are a type of credential that can be awarded for completing Microcredential Programs. Badges are to microcredential programs as diplomas are to degree programs.*

***Other examples of microcredentials at CU Denver are certifications, licenses, endorsements, and PDUs/CEUs.***

This statement is confusing and can lead to a misunderstanding and misuse of some of these terms which may have very specific parameters.

# **From CAM**

No comments at this time.

# **From BUS**

No comments at this time.

# **From SEHD**

Comments expected at a later date.

# **From CEDC**

Comments expected at a later date.

# **From CAP**

Comments expected at a later date.