



# Advancing Educator Effectiveness through Micro-Credential Quality Assurance Standards and Rubric

*Tools for Assessing  
Micro-Credential Quality*

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*Developed by the Micro-Credentials Partnership of States,  
in partnership with digiLEARN and RTI International*

## Micro-Credentials Partnership of States Members



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## The MPOS Quality Assurance Standards

The MPOS Quality Assurance Standards provide criteria by which earners, developers, assessors, issuers, and recognizers can gauge the quality of a given micro-credential, establishing universal quality, portability, and value to educators across the nation.

Developed by experts and practitioners within the partnership, the MPOS Quality Assurance Standards include key quality indicators accompanied by a brief description of the standard. They also note responsible roles within the micro-credentialing process where applicable.

Recognizing the opportunity micro-credentials represent for professional learning across roles, the term “educator” within the standards refers to all educator groups within K-12 education including pre- and in-service teachers, paraprofessionals, instructional support staff, operational support staff, and school/district leaders.

Micro-Credential Quality Assurance Standards	
Indicator	Description
Distinct Competency	The micro-credential measures a discrete skill or capability that corresponds with the defined competency.
Naming and Framing	Developers and issuers label both individual and stacks of micro-credentials in a way that plainly and accurately describes the related competencies and requirements so that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pursuers can determine which micro-credentials meet their professional needs, and</li> <li>• Recognizers have the necessary information to determine where an individual or stack of micro-credentials fit into their broader system of professional learning.</li> </ul>
Evidence Basis	The micro-credential reflects a skill or competency that is supported by peer-reviewed research and best practice.
Informed and Rigorous Design	Micro-credential content and evaluation criteria are co-developed by content experts and practitioners from the intended audience. Development includes peer review to ensure high-quality outcomes for earners and the students they serve.
Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation measures competency using established criteria that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are specific to the competency being assessed,</li> <li>• clearly articulate the scope and format of the artifacts or evidence required, and</li> <li>• are authentic to the earner’s work processes and/or products.</li> </ul>

## Micro-Credential Quality Assurance Standards

Indicator	Description
Evidence of Competency	The micro-credential requires the pursuer to provide substantive evidence from their practice to demonstrate proficiency in the desired skill or competency.
Support Resources	Relevant, evidence-based, and publicly accessible resources, including exemplar submissions, are embedded to provide sufficient information, tools, and support for developing the competency.
Training	Developers and assessors are provided with training appropriate to their role to establish inter-rater reliability and ensure consistency in content and approach. Pursuer orientation includes how individual micro-credentials can improve their practice and addresses the process of submission and resubmission.
Feedback, Reflection, and Resubmission	Submission and resubmission processes emphasize a pursuer's continuous improvement and professional growth through reflection on professional practice and associated evidence. Feedback on submitted evidence is timely, targeted, and actionable.
Transparency	All components of the micro-credential are available to pursuers and recognizers upon request, including the description, learning resources, third-party independent research base, and evaluation criteria.
Recognition	Issuers provide a digital record of completion that includes documentation of evidence submitted to fulfill evaluation criteria. Issuers maintain micro-credentials on a digital platform that makes them readily accessible to earners and recognizers over time.
Continuous Improvement	Data-driven processes are in place for periodic review of content and evaluation criteria of existing micro-credentials based on emerging best practices and user feedback.
Access and Support	Developers and issuers use processes that reduce barriers (including, but not limited to, financial, geographic, and time-related barriers) and increase access to micro-credentials and related supports to ensure all educators can engage equitably regardless of experience, identity, or location. Synchronous and asynchronous supports are made available on a flexible basis to support access, including opportunities for collaboration among pursuers.

## Transforming State Systems to Support Micro-Credentials

Although the Quality Assurance Standards address the development and administration of individual micro-credentials, state agencies and other recognizers must create an environment in which micro-credentials can become an integral part of professional learning for any career in education.

The following recommendations identify important issues that need to be addressed with policies and procedures that establish an ecosystem where high-quality micro-credentials can equitably serve educators in varied contexts, thereby maximizing educator and student outcomes. By committing to implement these recommendations in concert with the quality standards, members of the MPOS aim to increase micro-credential value and portability within and between states.

### Systems-Level Recommendations

- 1. Integrate Micro-Credentials into Larger System of Professional Learning** | Micro-credentials represent one element of a comprehensive system of professional learning informed by adult learning best practices, where they serve as a conduit to additional opportunities for learning, leadership, and compensation. Micro-credentials should be aligned with and, when possible, offer an alternative to existing seat-time based professional learning requirements.
- 2. Balance Individual and System Goals** | Micro-credentials must be embedded within systems so that they align with the strategic priorities of states and districts, while also allowing individual educators to meet their own professional learning goals. Systems should clearly differentiate instances in which professional learning requirements are tied to a prescribed program, pathway, or certification process, like licensure or career advancement pathways, and those wherein educator development can be more self-directed.<sup>1</sup>
- 3. Maintain Educator Ownership and Agency** | Micro-credentialing provides an opportunity for educators to take ownership in their own development by selecting micro-credentials that align to their professional needs and the needs of students. To the extent possible, state systems should seek to preserve the element of educator choice when linking micro-credentials to licensure, career advancement, or compensation.
- 4. Establish Currency** | Individual and stacks of micro-credentials must provide educators with personal and professional value within state and local systems. This can include recognizing micro-credentials as part of licensure, re-licensure, career advancement, graduate coursework, and/or compensation.

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<sup>1</sup> New America further clarifies the need to develop policies that address the intended outcomes of incorporating micro-credentials in different contexts, including license renewal, ongoing professional development, and career advancement. See [Harnessing Micro-credentials for Teacher Growth: A Model State Policy Guide](#).

- 5. Embed Micro-Credentials into Career Pathways** | Policies should identify clearly defined pathways where micro-credentials can be combined, linked, and stacked with others in the system to enable the earner to develop and demonstrate a broader set of competencies known to improve professional practice. Pathways should maximize opportunities for choice within the system to leverage the power of relevant, personalized learning for educators.
- 6. Prioritize Collaboration and Support** | Support structures and processes should encourage and facilitate collaboration among earners through feedback loops, professional dialogue, and other options to engage synchronously and/or asynchronously, while allowing earners to complete at their own pace. Support structures should be aligned with evidence-based approaches that support adult learning, including professional learning communities (PLCs), professional coaching, mentoring, etc.
- 7. Collect Earner Completion Data to Leverage Professional Expertise of Personnel** | Micro-credentials allow states, districts, and schools to identify and capitalize on the expertise of educators and staff. States should employ a data system that tracks completion of quality micro-credentials by earner to provide opportunities to strategically draw on professional expertise to improve student outcomes and reveal systemic gaps and inequities.
- 8. Employ Continuous Improvement Methods** | Issuers and recognizers should regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their micro-credentialing systems by collecting and acting upon valid and informative data on the earner experience and micro-credential's long-term effects on professional practice and student learning. Recognizers should also continually monitor processes and the personnel assessing the quality of micro-credentials to ensure continuity and fidelity to the standards.
- 9. Enact a Research Agenda** | Issuers should develop and enact a robust research agenda to investigate and demonstrate the value of micro-credentials as a tool for educator development, retention, and equity. A research agenda that identifies how micro-credentials improve practice and drive equitable student outcomes is especially important to ensure that all students ultimately benefit.



## Micro-Credential Quality Assurance Rubric

The micro-credential quality assurance rubric includes the full text of the thirteen micro-credential quality assurance standards (QAS) developed by the Micro-credentials Partnership of States. Each QAS is followed by specific components that clarify the quality criteria that must be met to meet the standard along with suggested evidence needed.

The rubric is intended for use as a tool for micro-credential design, development, administration, and quality control by micro-credential developers, issuers, and recognizers. It is important to note that the rubric is not intended to measure the rigor of a given credential within its content area. Instead, the focus is on evaluating the characteristics of high-quality micro-credentials that apply regardless of the content of any individual micro-credential

QAS 1   Distinct Competency: The micro-credential measures a discrete skill or capability that corresponds with the defined competency.				
Component	Criteria	Evidence	Scoring	Rationale
1.1 Grain Size	The competency assessed is specific, discrete, measurable, and sufficient to impact practice.	Micro-credential materials	Y	
			N	
1.2 Definition of Competency	The competency and its requisite skills or capabilities are clearly stated and well defined.	Micro-credential materials	Y	
			N	

**QAS 2 | Naming and Framing:** Developers and issuers label both individual and stacks of micro-credentials in a way that plainly and accurately describes the related competencies and requirements so that:

- Pursuers can determine which micro-credentials meet their professional needs, and
- Recognizers have the necessary information to determine where an individual or stack of micro-credentials fit into their broader system of professional learning.

Component	Criteria	Evidence	Scoring	Rationale
2.1 Naming and Framing of Individual Micro-Credential	Title and description of the individual micro-credential provides a clear overview of the competency and its relationship to professional practice.	Micro-credential materials and/or external-facing title and description for pursuers.	Y	
			N	

**QAS 3 | Evidence Basis:** The micro-credential reflects a skill or competency that is supported by peer-reviewed research and best practice.

Component	Criteria	Evidence	Scoring	Rationale
3.1 Evidence Basis (Peer-Reviewed/ Best Practice)	The micro-credential is supported by peer-reviewed research and/ or integrates evidence-based best practices that are aligned with the skill or competency.	Research references in micro-credential materials and brief description of how the competency aligns with the research references provided.	Y	
			N	

**QAS 4 | Informed and Rigorous Design:** Micro-credential content and evaluation criteria are co-developed by content experts and practitioners from the intended audience. Development includes peer review to ensure high-quality outcomes for earners and the students they serve.

Component	Criteria	Evidence	Scoring	Rationale
4.1 Development Team Members	Development team includes content expert(s) and at least one practitioner from the intended audience currently working in that role at the time of its development.	List of Development Team members including name, title, and organization; OR the criteria used to populate development teams.	Y	
			N	
4.2 Development Process	Micro-credential development includes a clearly defined process for peer-review to assess the content and process of the micro-credential with external content experts and/or practitioners in the field.	Description of development process.	Y	
			N	

**QAS 5 | Evaluation Criteria:** Evaluation measures competency using established criteria that:

- are specific to the competency being assessed,
- clearly articulate the scope and format of the artifacts or evidence required, and
- are authentic to the earner’s work processes and/or products.

Component	Criteria	Evidence	Scoring	Rationale
5.1 Evidence of Proficiency	Evaluation criteria provide clear description(s) of proficient implementation that can be measured by the artifacts or evidence required.	Micro-credential evaluation criteria	Y	
			N	
5.2 Specificity	Evaluation criteria are specific to the competency being assessed.	Micro-credential evaluation criteria	Y	
			N	
5.3 Job-Embedded Criteria	Evaluation criteria are job-embedded and reflect the intended earner’s work processes and/or products.	Micro-credential evaluation criteria	Y	
			N	

**QAS 6 | Evidence of Competency:** The micro-credential requires the pursuer to provide substantive evidence from their practice to demonstrate proficiency in the desired skill or competency.

Component	Criteria	Evidence	Scoring	Rationale
6.1 Relevant Evidence	The required evidence or artifact is <input type="checkbox"/> clearly stated <input type="checkbox"/> aligned to the evaluation criteria <input type="checkbox"/> aligned to the pursuer's practice or role <input type="checkbox"/> collectable within the micro-credential's established timeframe	Micro-credential materials	Y	
			N	
6.2 Substantive Evidence	The pursuer is required to submit specific evidence from their practice that demonstrates proficiency in the desired skill or competency.	Micro-credential materials	Y	
			N	

**QAS 7 | Support Resources:** Relevant, evidence-based, and publicly accessible resources, including exemplar submissions, are embedded to provide sufficient information, tools, and support for developing the competency.

Component	Criteria	Evidence	Scoring	Rationale
7.1 Skill-building Resources	Pursuers are directed to evidence-based content that can help them understand and develop the skill(s) they need to complete the micro-credential.	Link to resource list included in micro-credential materials	Y	
			N	
7.2 Exemplar Submissions	Pursuers have access to exemplar submissions.	Links to exemplar submissions included in micro-credential materials	Y	
			N	

**QAS 8 | Training:** Developers and assessors are provided with training appropriate to their role to establish inter-rater reliability and ensure consistency in content and approach. Pursuer orientation includes how individual micro-credentials can improve their practice and addresses the process of submission and resubmission.

Component	Criteria	Evidence	Scoring	Rationale
8.1 Developer Training	The process for training developers demonstrates a structured approach to ensure uniformity in quality assurance practices.	Documented developer training process	Y	
			N	
8.2 Assessor Training	Assessors receive initial and ongoing training and support around scoring and providing feedback, including calibration activities that support inter-rater reliability.	Documented assessor training process	Y	
			N	
8.3 Pursuer Orientation	Pursuer orientation is provided, communicates the value of the micro-credential, and provides clarity on the submission, scoring, and feedback process.	Documented pursuer orientation process	Y	
			N	

**QAS 9 | Feedback, Reflection, and Resubmission:** Submission and resubmission processes emphasize a pursuer’s continuous improvement and professional growth through reflection on professional practice and associated evidence. Feedback on submitted evidence is timely, targeted, and actionable.

Component	Criteria	Evidence	Scoring	Rationale
9.1 Submission Guidance	Instructions for submission of evidence are clearly stated and provided to ursuers prior to beginning the micro-credential.	Description of submission process, including what is being submitted, how, and when.	Y	
			N	
9.2 Resubmission	Issuers provide pursuers with clear instructions on how to resubmit their evidence of competency for evaluation and offer at least one opportunity to do so.	Description of resubmission process, including what is being submitted, how, and when.	Y	
			N	
9.3 Feedback Process	<p>The feedback process includes each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Evaluator feedback is made available to pursuers.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The timeline of the feedback and resubmission cycle is clearly defined and communicated.</li> </ul>	Description of the feedback process	Y	
			N	

**QAS 9 | Feedback, Reflection, and Resubmission:** Submission and resubmission processes emphasize a pursuer's continuous improvement and professional growth through reflection on professional practice and associated evidence. Feedback on submitted evidence is timely, targeted, and actionable.

Component	Criteria	Evidence	Scoring	Rationale
9.4 Quality of Feedback	Expectations for assessor feedback include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Feedback includes a rationale that explains the pursuers' performance based on the evaluation criteria.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Feedback clearly identifies which evaluation criteria have or have not been met and why.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Feedback includes actionable recommendations for any criteria that need to be further addressed in the resubmission process, when applicable.</li> </ul>	Description of the feedback process	Y	
			N	

**QAS 10 | Transparency:** All components of the micro-credential are available to pursuers and recognizers upon request, including the description, learning resources, third-party independent research base, and evaluation criteria.

Component	Criteria	Evidence	Scoring	Rationale		
10.1 Transparency	All components of the micro-credential are available to prospective pursuers and recognizers upon request, including the description, learning resources, third-party independent research basis, and evaluation criteria.	Link to hosting site and description of how to access these materials.	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="1085 363 1213 589">Y</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1085 589 1213 799">N</td> </tr> </table>	Y	N	
Y						
N						

**QAS 11 | Platform, Badging, and Recognition:** Issuers provide a digital record of successful completion that includes documentation of evidence submitted to fulfill evaluation criteria. Issuers maintain micro-credentials on a digital platform that makes them readily accessible to earners and recognizers over time.

Component	Criteria	Evidence	Scoring	Rationale
11.1 Record of Successful Completion	Earners are provided with a digital record of successful completion (e.g., digital certification, endorsement, transcript, digital badge, designation on a license, micro-credential).	Description of recognition system	Y	
			N	
11.2 Link to Metadata	The digital record includes a verified URL that shows the issuing organization, the competency assessed, and the evaluation criteria that the recipient had to meet to receive the micro-credential.	Description of components of digital record and the process for access/delivery	Y	
			N	
11.3 Platform	The micro-credential is maintained on a digital platform that makes the badge readily accessible to earners and recognizers over time.	Description of how the platform meets the stated criteria	Y	
			N	

**QAS 12 | Continuous Improvement:** Data-driven processes are in place for periodic review of content and evaluation criteria of existing micro-credentials based on emerging best practices and user feedback.

Component	Criteria	Evidence	Scoring	Rationale
12.1 Review	Micro-credential content and processes are reviewed and evaluated on clearly defined timelines, at least once per year.	Description of the review and evaluation process, including timelines for review cycles	Y	
			N	
12.2 Feedback for Continuous Improvement	Processes are in place to actively gather feedback from pursuers, earners, developers, assessors, content experts, and other constituents to inform changes to the micro-credential's content and process.	Description of feedback processes	Y	
			N	

**QAS 13 | Access and Support:** Developers and issuers use processes that reduce barriers (including, but not limited to, financial, geographic, and time-related barriers) and increase access to micro-credentials and related supports to ensure all educators can engage equitably regardless of experience, identity, or location. Synchronous and asynchronous supports are made available on a flexible basis to support access, including opportunities for collaboration among pursuers.

Component	Criteria	Evidence	Scoring	Rationale
13.1 Micro-Credential Access	Issuer provides evidence that the process of completing a micro-credential follows Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), seeks to limit the financial burden on pursuers, and has a reasonable timeline for completion.	Description of efforts to increase pursuer access	Y	
			N	
13.2 Opportunities for Collaboration & Support	The issuer or recognizer offers synchronous or asynchronous opportunities for support or collaboration with other pursuers, previous earners, or other mentors or coaches.	Description of collaboration and/or support opportunities	Y	
			N	

## Glossary

**Assessor<sup>2</sup>** – The individual that reviews evidence submitted by pursuers and applies criteria to assess and determine each pursuer’s proficiency.

**Best Practice** – An approach or technique that is based in research and has gained approval as the norm for achieving desired results.

**Competency** – The desired knowledge, skills, and behaviors displayed through the evidence submitted by an earner upon completion of a micro-credential.

**Content Expert** – An individual with extensive knowledge in a field of study acquired through research and/or practical experience, who may or may not be a practitioner.

**Developer** – The organization(s) or individuals that identify and establish the expected knowledge and skills to be recognized through the micro-credential (often the same entity as the issuer).

**Digital Badge** – A web-based, clickable icon issued upon successful completion of a micro-credential that contains verifiable metadata. Digital badges are not limited to recognition of micro-credential completion, as they can also be used to represent achievements earned in a computer game or other applications.

**Earners** – An individual awarded a micro-credential upon successful demonstration of proficiency as defined by the issuer.

**Grain Size** – The breadth or scope of the competency assessed by a micro-credential.

**Micro-Credential** – A verification of proficiency of a job-embedded discrete skill or competency that an educator has demonstrated through the submission of evidence assessed via defined evaluation criteria.

**Issuer** – The organization(s) or institution(s) that formally awards the micro-credential to earners who have successfully met the proficiency criteria (often the same entity as the developer).

**Job-Embedded** – Occurring in the context of a practitioner’s daily work.

**Maintenance** – The process by which earners can formally renew a previously earned micro-credential by demonstrating continued competency.

**Metadata** – Information contained in a digital badge that includes the issuer, micro-credential name, description of competency assessed, assessment criteria, evidence of completion, and date earned.

**Peer-Reviewed** – A formal evaluation process undertaken by qualified members in the same field of study to provide credibility.

**Practitioner** – An individual engaged in the practices of a profession or occupation.

**Pursuer** – An individual who is engaged in the process of earning a given micro-credential but who has not yet completed all criteria required to earn that micro-credential.

**Recognizer** – The organization(s) or institution(s) that recognize and give currency or value to the micro-credentials and allow them to be used by earners for various purposes.

**Stack** – A combination of a defined series of micro-credentials into larger skill sets and credentials.

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<sup>2</sup> The terms assessor, developer, earner, issuer, and recognizer have been adapted from <https://ccsso.org/resource-library/design-assessment-and-implementation-principles-educator-micro-credentials>. The term “pursuer” has been added to this list of micro-credential roles to indicate a potential Earner who is engaged in pursuing a micro-credential but who has not yet earned the credential.