

Microcredentials in Language Education

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*Dalhousie University is located in **Mi'kma'ki**, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people.
We are all Treaty people.*





About Us

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Today's Session

Structure of the Session

- Key definitions: What's a microcredential?
- Microcredentials at Dalhousie University
- Microcredentials in Language Education
- Case study from Dalhousie Dept. of English Language Studies
- Questions and Discussion



What are microcredentials?

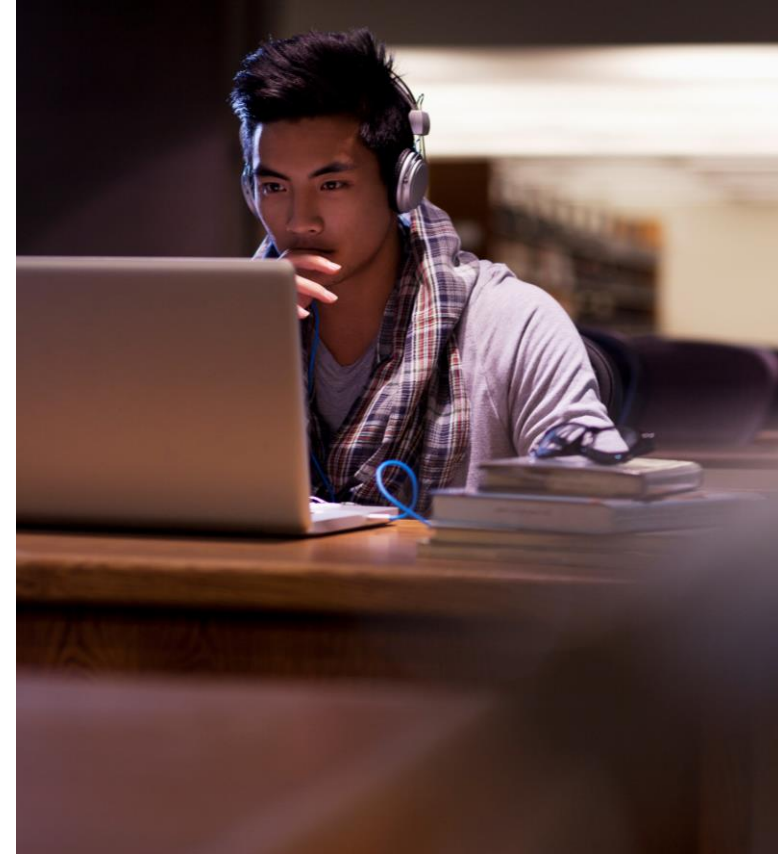


Definition of a **Microcredential**

A microcredential is a recognition of assessed skill or competency earned through a short duration or applied learning experience.

Microcredentials can stand alone or connect to other credentials and align with sector, employer, profession, community, or learner need.

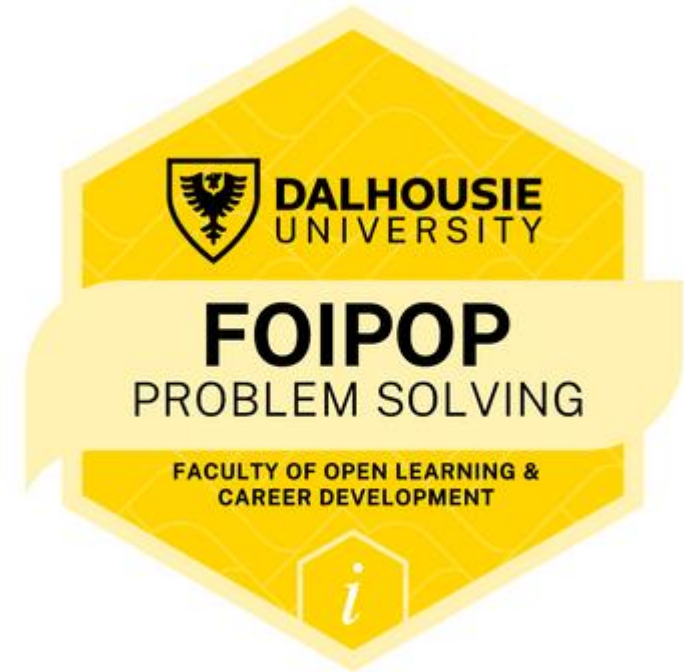
Nova Scotia Microcredentialing Framework v.1.1





About Dal Microcredentials

Dal Microcredentials are credentials that represent the achievement of specific skills or competencies, which are highly regarded by employers and have been validated by Dalhousie University.

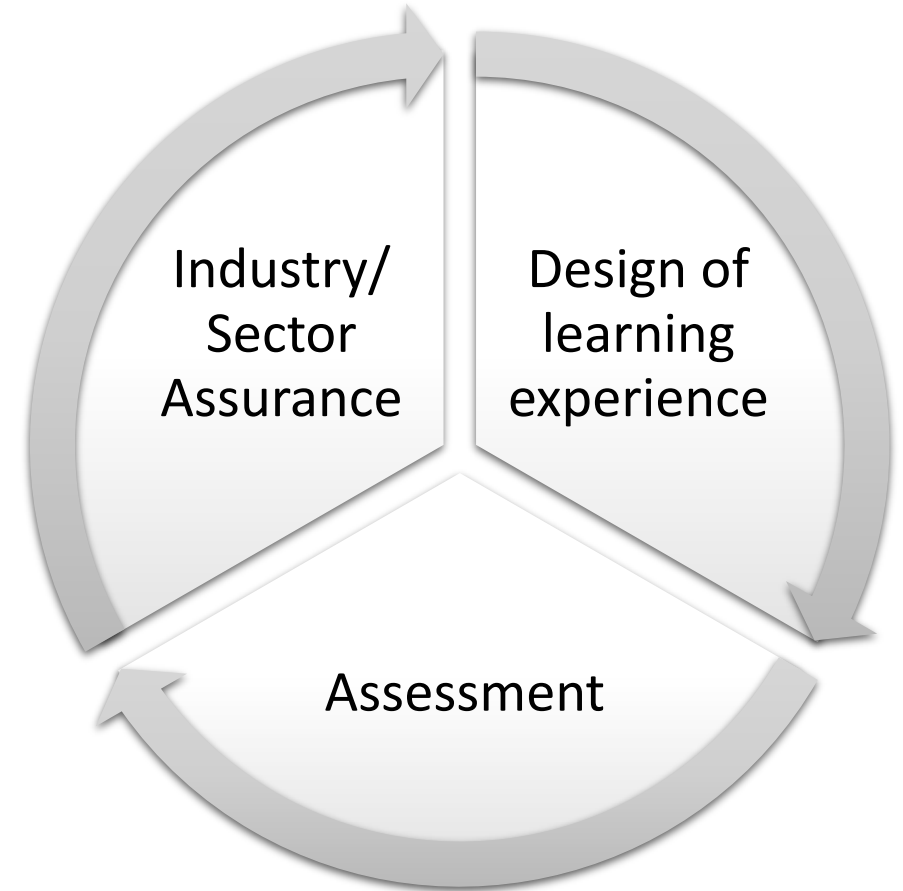




About Dal Microcredentials

What does it mean to be validated by Dalhousie University?

1. They represent a skill or competency that is **highly regarded** by employers, professionals, government, and/or communities.
2. They **represent the overall skill or competency** achievable within a learning experience.
3. They are earned by successfully completing a **competency-based assessment** that evaluates the demonstration of that skill or competency.





Dal Microcredentials - Design



Digital badges that can be added to electronic signatures, resumes, or shared across social media platforms. Every badge offers a detailed description of the skill or competency, how it was assessed, and the degree to which the skill had to be demonstrated, offering an assurance to employers that the candidate has demonstrated the skill required in a context that matters to them.



Dal Microcredentials - Design

A Dal microcredential may be designed with a focus on a specific or discrete skill or to build on a series of skills to achieve an overall competency.





Dal Microcredentials - Design

Dal microcredentials may be designed to be stackable into certificates

Learners can take one course and be recognized for this learning OR complete the certificate on their own time with **every skill they master recognized along the way.**



Courses Certificates

CERTIFICATE IN ADULT LEARNING FUNDAMENTALS

Faculty of Open Learning and Career Development

60.00 Hours Required

- 5 required courses
- 3 years to complete





Dal Microcredentials - Design

Dual branded microcredentials may be designed to support external partnerships.

They have been used to support:

- Internal employee training
- Educational programs that address labour market needs for a profession or employer
- FOLCD courses that are both designed and delivered in partnership with an employer or association





About Dal Microcredentials – **Potential**



- Lower barriers to entry for people with different educational and cultural experiences
- Increase pathway opportunities
- Add value to existing learning experiences
- Are meaningful at every stage of professional growth (starting a career, changing careers, advancing careers)
- Support lifelong learning



Practical Value for Learners

Learners can:

- Clearly explain what they are able to do
- The degree to which they are able to do it
- Provide an example of when they had to do it
- Confidently communicate this information
- Showcase the evidence (digital badge)

Learners leave their learning experience confident in their ability to both demonstrate and speak to their new skill/competency with some assurance that the skill is required by employers, communities, or professional associations.





Microcredentials in Language Education

What exists? What are the issues?



What MCs
exist in the
world of
language
education?

Languages

- [English Language \(Proficiency\)](#)
- [Workplace Skills for English Language Learners](#)
- “Foreign/World Languages”: French, Korean, Spanish, Japanese, Italian, [Tok Pisin Language and Culture](#)
- ASL
- [“Start Speaking \[French\]”](#)
- [Career Building with Languages](#)
- [Microcredential in intermediate language skills](#)
- Many exist as sub-majors/minors for university students (US)
- Not a lot in EAL



What MCs
exist in the
world of
language
education?

Training and PD for Language Teachers

- [TESOL: Insights into Language Teaching](#)
- [Supporting English Language Learners](#)
- [Cultural Proficiency & Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy in Refugee Education](#)
- [Modular Education: High-leverage teaching Practices](#)
- [Linguistics and Multilingualism](#)
- Add-ons and continuing professional development for already-trained teachers
- Orgs like TESOL Int'l, Digital Promise, Bridge; some universities and colleges



What MCs exist in the world of language education?



Communications Skills

- Intercultural Communication
- [Science Communication](#)
- Technical Communication Skills
- Business Communications

Language-Adjacent Skills

- Interpretation
- [Intérpretation médicale](#)



Microcredentials in Language Education

Strengths

- Established and validated competency-based frameworks in ELT: CEFR, CLB, ACTFL
- Transparency for employers, etc.
- Responsive and relevant

Weaknesses

- Lack of granularity: (Foundation, Intermediate, Advanced)
- Who is “industry”? Employers? Academia?

Opportunities

- Teacher PD. Does it have a place in initial teacher training?
- Non-benchmarked language courses
- Professionally-oriented language courses
- Exam prep

Threats

- Competition from well-established standardized exam industry, certificates and diplomas
- Lack of recognition in accreditation schemes



Case Study



Dalhousie Dept. of English Language Studies



- EAP pathway program
- English in Canada
 - 4-week course: English Language Communication + optional disciplinary elective + sociocultural program
- Professional Development
 - Language education
 - Certificate in English-Medium Instruction
 - Internationalization of the Curriculum
 - Writing for Academic Publication



Which courses should we microcredential?



Planning for a Dal Microcredential

Dal Microcredentials are credentials that represent the achievement of specific skills or competencies, which are highly regarded by employers and have been validated by Dalhousie University.

There are three defining characteristics of a Dal Microcredential:

- They represent a skill or competency that is highly regarded by employers and/or other stakeholders in the field.
- They represent the overall skill or competency achievable within a learning experience.
- They are earned by successfully completing a competency-based assessment that requires the demonstration of the skill or competency.

Learners must have these learning experiences confident in their ability to communicate and demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

To begin developing a Dal Microcredential you will need to ensure:

1.0 Determine if the learning experience (course/module/WIL) has the potential for a Dal Microcredential

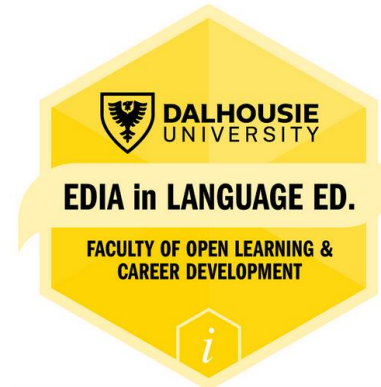
- What specific skill or competency can be considered? This should be the overall skill or competency that can be demonstrated/achieved through this learning experience.
- What are the performance expectations that learners will need to achieve? Do these expectations mirror what would be expected in a workplace setting?
- Will there be additional courses with higher level expectations (for example, a foundational course, an intermediate level course, or an advance course, etc.)

- ✗ EAP pathway program
 - English in Canada
 - ✓ 4-week course: English Language Communication
 - Professional Development
 - ✓ Language education
 - ✗ Certificate in English-Medium Instruction
 - ✓ Internationalization of the Curriculum
 - ✓ Writing for Academic Publication



Courses being Microcredentialed

- Leadership of Internationalization of the Curriculum Initiatives
- Writing for Academic Publication
- English Language Communication (A2, B1, B2, C1)
- Technology in Language Education
- EDIA in Language Education





Lessons Learned Thus Far

- Strong instructional design makes for smooth microcredentialing
 - Courses with clear learning outcomes with good alignment between learning outcomes, learning activities, and assessments
 - Courses that had been designed for online were fine; older courses that had evolved organically over the years needed more work
- Training and upskilling needed in competency-based assessment and curriculum design
- “Industry validation” is internal when prepping for academia
 - Writing for Academic Publication; Leadership of IoC Initiatives
- Credly is available in English only



Questions and Discussion

- 1) In what aspect of language education in Canada do you see the most opportunities for microcredentials?
Threats?
- 2) Those of you whose institutions also offer microcredentials, what has been your experience offering them in the world of ELT?
- 3) Food for thought: Is there a place for microcredentials in the LC accreditation standard?



Thank you!

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