EPICUR POSITION ON MICROCREDENTIALS

13th July 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In brief, EPICUR's position towards the European approach to micro-credentials is as follows:

1. **EPICUR adopts the shared definition of micro-credentials**;
2. **EPICUR's perspective** is that micro-credentials should be
   - **Competency-based**
   - **Distinguished from badges**:
     - *Micro-credentials* certify, reward and recognise academic learning outcomes
     - Badges are a means to capture, certify, reward and recognise (personal) *skills and achievements*
   - **Optimising flexibility** in shaping student-centred learning pathways and mobilities as well as life-long learning programmes
3. **EPICUR offers two concrete opportunities** for deploying micro-credentials and badges:
   - EPICUR learning pathways and other types of short learning programmes
   - EPICUR Gamification framework

EPICUR SUPPORT FOR THE EUROPEAN APPROACH AND DEFINITION OF MICROCREDENTIALS

EPICUR European University welcomes the European approach to micro-credentials, outlined in the [Final Report of the Micro-Credentials Higher Education Consultation Group](#) published in December 2020. EPICUR would emphasise the importance for European Higher Education Institutions to act now by helping to shape this important development and embedding micro-credentials into their learning environments.

One of the key issues in the European context is the importance of harmonisation and compatibility, which all starts with the adoption of a common definition. EPICUR, therefore, strongly supports and adopts the proposed shared definition of micro-credentials. EPICUR is committed to contribute to the further iteration of the 10 key building blocks identified in the aforementioned report.

EPICUR considers it is of paramount importance for the Higher Education sector to underline the importance of anchoring micro-credentials into quality assurance standards. This is the unique feature HEIs can offer to constitute a robust academic asset to all learners in this context.

EPICUR firmly believes that embracing and further shaping micro-credentials is a fantastic opportunity for helping to facilitate *harmonisation* of quality standards between the teaching offerings of the alliances. Furthermore, the technical support for issuing, tracking and monitoring micro-credentials calls for *compatibility* between the learning infrastructures deployed by the alliances, to allow for optimising student/staff ownership and portability of micro-credentials.

> **A micro-credential is a proof of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a short learning experience. These learning outcomes have been assessed against transparent standards.**
> *The proof is contained in a certified document that lists the name of the holder, the achieved learning outcomes, the assessment method, the awarding body and, where applicable, the qualification framework level, and the credits gained. Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, can be shared, are portable and may be combined into larger credentials or qualifications. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards.*

EPICUR PERSPECTIVES

Competency-based

For EPICUR, micro-credentials and badges are a means to help achieve educational innovation by the development of (1) novel mobilities, (2) student-centred learning and teaching. The key pillar for any (future) EPICUR micro-credential and badge is that it is defined on the basis of competencies and skills acquired by the learners. For instance, these tools could be used for the recognition of co- and extracurricular skills acquisition and life-long learning programmes.

Distinction between micro-credentials and badges

EPICUR defines the distinction between micro-credentials and badges as follows:

- Micro-credentials are a means to certify, reward and recognise academic learning outcomes: the learning outcomes of any EPICUR micro-credential are based on defined competencies, such as solid academic acquisition of knowledge and critical thinking in the (inter)disciplinary context of the short learning experience. Micro-credentials can be stackable and potentially combined in to broader programmes of study (it should be noted that stacking micro-credentials cannot lead to awarding a full degree). In the future, these could effectively be micro-qualifications.
- Badges are a means to capture, certify, reward and recognise (personal) skills and achievements: the achievements leading to the awarding of any EPICUR badge are based on a demonstration of successful attainment of a specific personal skill or achievement in the context of a programme of study or a short learning experience.

Flexibility

EPICUR believes that one of the most promising features of European micro-credentials is the potential they offer for flexibility in designing learning options. In the context of the EPICUR teaching and learning offers, micro-credentials can be issued after successful completion of learning pathways (a modular pocket of courses). Furthermore, an adapted version of a micro-credential, a so-called nano-credential can be offered upon successful completion of part of a course, acknowledging the attainment of a specific learning outcome or academic skill. In both cases, the learning outcomes are clearly defined beforehand and the assessment criteria are transparent and compliant with Quality Assurance standards. The nano credentials could become very important for

- Current HEI courses (especially interdisciplinary ones): these will be **revitalised** through the participation of students with different backgrounds; directly recognised by other HEI's, programmes of studies and employers. **This will lead to a boost in student mobility/exchange in practice.**
- Students/trainees/staff: the obvious advantage is the motivation of the students to receive recognition for their skills and competences. In addition, the clear description of learning outcomes, skills and processes at a micro-level will help students/trainees/staff to choose/create their own **personalised learning pathways**.

EPICUR OPPORTUNITIES

EPICUR offers a wide range of opportunities for experimentation and deployment of micro-credentials and badges, including:

- Learning pathways in European languages
- Short Learning Programmes in Liberal Arts and Sciences
- Internship exchange programmes

EPICUR will develop an inclusive gamification framework in order to reward student's activities. This framework will be used in order to **motivate** and **steer** the students to choose and follow meaningful learning pathways by exploiting the concepts of **Badges** and **Nano-Credentials** in order to create stackable Micro-Credentials.