



ADVISORY NOTE NO. 2/2025

MULTIPLE CREDENTIALS

INTRODUCTION

1. Based on the MQA Strategic Plan 2021-2025, Strategic Thrust 2: Talent Availability, Strategy 2.2: Diversifying Approaches to Skilling, Reskilling and Upskilling, MQA is required to produce an Advisory Note on the implementation of Multiple Credentials (MuC) to promote diversity in knowledge and skills within MQA-accredited programmes. The implementation of MuC supports Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education. It is also aligned with the implementation of flexible learning pathways allowing students to gain added value and enhance their employability prospects through industry certifications.
2. This Advisory Note is structured into eight (8) sections to explain the implementation of MuC covering the objectives, definitions, scope, key elements of provision, benefits to students, benefits to higher education providers (HEPs) and industry, quality assurance and risk management related to the implementation of MuC.

OBJECTIVES

3. The implementation of Multiple Credentials (MuC) aims to provide significant benefits to HEPs, students, industry and other stakeholders. The objectives of MuC implementation are as follows:
 - 3.1 **HEPs:** Encourage HEPs to offer MuC as an approach that enables academic programmes to meet career requirements while maintaining curriculum quality and relevance. Furthermore, this allows HEPs to provide explanations to students to ensure they understand the concept and benefits of MuC, as well as how it can enhance career opportunities and lifelong learning.
 - 3.2 **Certification and accreditation bodies:** Ensure that certification and accreditation bodies consisting of associations, industry, government agencies and HEPs validate competencies and certify students based on specific modules or criteria. This is implemented either through the integration of MuC components as part of the academic programme curriculum or through these bodies validating the curriculum developed by HEPs.
 - 3.3 **Students:** Enable students to obtain certification through the implementation of MuC adding value to their existing academic qualifications and potentially enhancing their academic and career prospects.

DEFINITIONS

4. Multiple Credentials (MuC) refers to the attainment of competencies through various types of certifications, accreditation or awards in one or more fields and specific specialisations. This attainment can occur within a single course of study or through a series of learning. This includes MuC which can be obtained while pursuing or through the articulation process into an MQA-accredited academic programme. The implementation of MuC in HEPs involves efforts to manage, record, recognise or offer various certifications or awards as part of or in addition to the academic programmes offered to students. MuC is undertaken by students throughout the duration of their academic programme. Examples of MuC include industry competencies, professional bodies, Micro-credentials, Digital Badges and the Accreditation of Competent Persons from Licensing Bodies.
5. A digital badge is an electronic badge that represents an individual's achievement or skills acquired through a course or specific experience. This badge can be stored and shared on online profiles, helping to enhance employability and demonstrate skills to employers.
6. Stackable refers to the ability to combine multiple certifications or awards to form a higher-level certification or award enabling students to build their learning progressively.
7. These certifications or awards are divided into three categories: Macro-credentials, Meso-credentials and Micro-credentials. A description and comparison of these three categories are as follows:

Category of Certification / Award	Description		
	Macro-Credentials	Meso-Credentials	Micro-Credentials
Concept	Normally a formal and credit-bearing.	A moderate-scale learning certification earned through short courses normally stackable and may be credit or non-credit bearing.	A small-scale targeted learning unit that is specialised and may be credit or non-credit bearing.
Definition	Conventional higher education awards, such as diplomas, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and doctorates.	Higher education programmes that have been assessed and are complete programmes on their own, representing the acquisition of significant knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies.	Digital certification of assessed learning of knowledge, skills and competencies in a specific narrow area or field which can be components of MQA accredited programmes or stand-alone course supporting professional, technical, academic and personal development of learners.

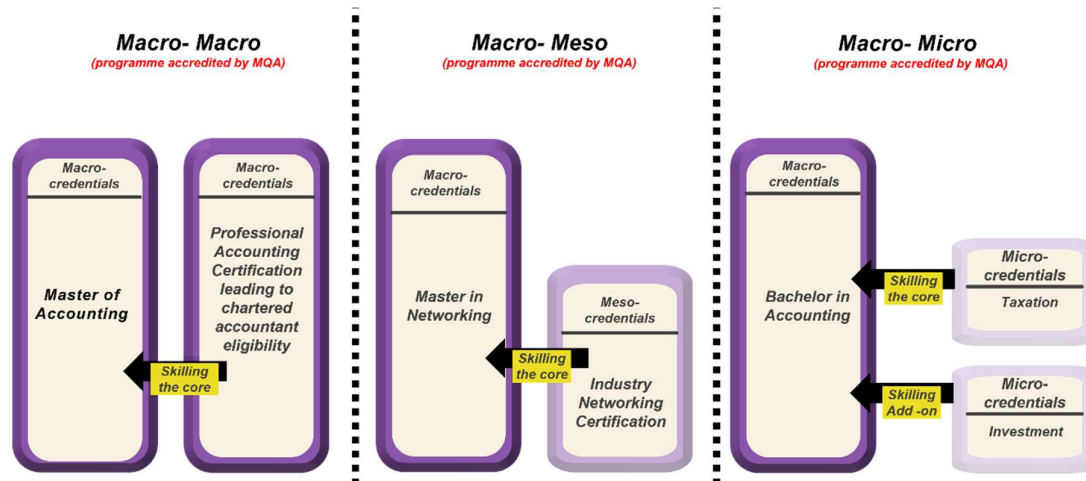
Category of Certification / Award	Description		
	Macro-Credentials	Meso-Credentials	Micro-Credentials
Purpose	To demonstrate high level expertise or comprehensive skills in a specific discipline or field.	To certify sufficient competence in a relevant field or skill.	To support an individual's professional, technical, academic and personal development by providing verified specialised skills quickly and efficiently.
Typical Learning Load	(≥20 credits)	Between macro – credentials and micro credentials.	(1-6 credits)
Use of MuC, (including industry and professional certifications)	Usually required for significant career advancement or academic research.	Certifications or awards officially granted to individuals who demonstrate knowledge, skills and competencies in a specific profession or industry.	Certification recognised by employers, professional bodies and industry associations, facilitating employment and required for professional practice or CPD fulfilment.
Form of Award of Certification	Master's Degree, Bachelor's Degree, Diploma, Professional Certificate.	Include certifications between micro-credentials and macro-credentials such as Professional Certifications, Postgraduate or Graduate Certificates.	Digital Certification, Digital Badge, Certificate.

SCOPE AND SCENARIO

8. Generally, MuC can be divided into two main categories: **Skilling the Core** and **Skilling Add-On**, as shown below:

Category of MuC	Description
Core Skilling	Certifications or awards that strengthen core knowledge and specialised competencies related to the student's field of study, involving key components of their foundational academic programme.
Add-On Skilling	Certifications or awards from learning or skill that complements and adds value to the core components of a student's field of study, enabling individuals to become more versatile and stand out in the job market.

8.1 The Skilling the Core and Skilling Add-on categories can be associated with scenarios as shown below:



KEY ELEMENTS OF PROVISION

9. In the provision of MuC, several key elements need to be considered:

- 9.1 **Planning and Design:** The implementation of MuC must comply with the structured curriculum framework and meet the requirements of the job market and student learning outcomes. HEPs must explain to students about flexible learning pathways, including how MuC aligns with the curriculum framework approved by MQA. The design of MuC must be based on industry needs. For example, it may be developed by or in collaboration with the industry.
- 9.2 **Certification or Award:** The implementation of MuC must be officially recognised by relevant institutions or professional bodies to enhance the value and credibility of the certification in the eyes of employers and the industry. This certification or award also requires review and approval by the highest academic committees in HEPs, such as the Senate or Academic Board, as well as evaluation by Subject Matter Experts (SME). Additionally, the implementation of MuC should allow for credit transfer to fulfil graduation requirements or be recognised as an additional certification or award.
- 9.3 **Flexibility and Personalisation:** The MuC system allows individuals to select courses or training that align with their personal or career needs. They can combine certifications or awards from various fields to create a more specialised and relevant learning pathway.
- 9.4 **Competency-Based:** The offering of MuC is integrated with the design of MQA-accredited programmes, where certifications are awarded based on the level of mastery of specific knowledge and skills.
- 9.5 **Employability:** The MuC offered must have high employability value meaning it is recognised across various places or organisations. This provides individuals with the flexibility to utilise their certification at institutions both domestically and internationally.

- 9.6 **Integration with Digital Certification:** In the digital era, many certifications or awards are now issued online and can be verified digitally using technologies such as blockchain. This ensures transparency and ease of verification.
- 9.7 **Lifelong Learning:** MuC supports the concept of lifelong learning by enabling individuals to continuously enhance their skills and knowledge in line with career development and industry changes. It also provides more affordable and accessible certification compared to traditional programmes, such as university degrees, allowing more individuals to acquire new skills and qualifications without the need for full-time commitment.

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND RISKS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTIPLE CREDENTIALS (MuC)

10. In general, the implementation of Multiple Credentials (MuC) requires a framework that ensures the quality of its execution is compliant and reliable. This helps mitigate risks such as failing to meet learning outcomes, not adhering to quality standards and lacking alignment with industry requirements, which could affect the institution's reputation and the employability of graduates. Weaknesses in MuC management can negatively impact the student experience, lead to the manipulation of certifications or awards as a shortcut and undermine the credibility of the programme. Therefore, the quality assurance framework for the implementation of MuC must be integrated into the programme's internal quality assurance system with a specific focus, adhering to the following quality assurance principles:

Quality Assurance Principle	Description
Academic Regulations and Guidelines	• HEPs must establish academic regulations that define clear learning levels and learning outcomes for each certification or award to ensure that students receive adequate support to succeed throughout their studies. • It is also important to prevent dubious certification or accreditation bodies that could undermine the credibility of a programme. • Academic regulations must consider student welfare by providing them with the flexibility to choose a suitable learning format, ensuring they can master the knowledge and achieve the intended learning outcomes.
Continuous Quality Assurance Monitoring Management	• Continuous monitoring of the MuC process and outcomes must be conducted for ongoing improvements to ensure quality standards and alignment with the growing demands of the industry. • HEPs must ensure that the quality assurance framework for the implementation of MuC is integrated into the internal quality assurance system of MQA-accredited programmes. This integration ensures adherence to established quality standards and keeps MuC aligned with industry needs, while also fulfilling the expectations of stakeholders involved in MuC components.

Quality Assurance Principle	Description
Stakeholder Engagement	• HEPs must collaborate with the industry to obtain continuous feedback on MuC components, particularly in terms of relevance and employability opportunities. • Ensure active involvement of stakeholders, such as employers, industry, alumni, students and professional bodies, in the development, implementation and evaluation of MuC. Regular meetings and feedback from them are essential to ensure that certifications and awards remain relevant to industry needs.
Instructor Development	• Continuous training and support for instructors must be strengthened in terms of expertise in specialised fields and a sufficient understanding of certification or award issuance.
Information and Records Management	• HEPs must ensure that the information management system is well-monitored and maintained to preserve data integrity. This is to ensure that the information and record management system for MuC implementation remains organised, secure and effective.
Mapping and Validation	• The mapping and validation process in MuC implementation must be reviewed and approved by the highest academic committees in HEPs, such as the Senate and Academic Board, and verified by Subject Matter Experts (SME) to ensure that the certifications or awards granted are relevant and meaningful.

RECORD MANAGEMENT FOR ACCREDITATION PURPOSES

11. The addition of MuC components to an MQA-accredited programme does not need to be reported to MQA. However, HEPs must maintain records and verification evidence, such as those from the Provisional Accreditation Assessment, Full Accreditation Assessment and Compliance Audit for review during audits.

BENEFITS TO STUDENTS

12. **Enhancement of Specialised Skills and Expertise**: Additional certifications or awards enable students to develop specialised skills relevant to their careers such as certifications or awards in project management or courses in information technology.
13. **Specialised Certification or Award**: MuC provides formal certifications or awards to students who engage in additional learning and self-development.
14. **Enhanced Career Opportunities**: The implementation of MuC enables students to acquire additional skills and enhance their expertise, thereby increasing their employability. Diverse certifications allow students to meet the requirements of various industries and job roles.

BENEFITS TO HIGHER EDUCATION PROVIDERS AND INDUSTRY

15. **Meeting Student Needs**: HEPs can tailor programme offerings to accommodate diverse student needs and interests.
16. **Offering Relevant and Flexible Programmes**: Diverse certifications or awards ensure that programmes offered by HEPs remain relevant to industry needs and provide flexibility for students.
17. **Increasing Student Enrolment**: Diverse and flexible HEP programmes can attract more students, including those with different interests and goals.
18. **Enhancing Graduate Employability**: Students with diverse certifications or awards are better prepared to meet the requirements of various industries and job roles, thereby increasing their employability.

CONCLUSION

19. Overall, the implementation of MuC in HEPs can be achieved through a single learning process or a series of learning experiences, including MQA-accredited academic programmes. The implementation of MuC can offer various certifications or awards as part of or in addition to the academic programmes undertaken by students throughout their studies. HEPs must provide clear guidelines on the implementation of MuC while ensuring that the established learning outcomes and principles of educational integrity are not compromised.
20. The flexible pathway element in the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) 2024 is an important step in supporting the Global Sustainable Agenda, particularly in terms of the quality of lifelong learning. Through this approach, students can choose a more flexible educational pathway tailored to their individual needs, whether in terms of time, learning methods or recognition of prior learning. This facilitates graduates access to further opportunities after completing their studies, while also supporting their entry into a competitive and inclusive job market. This flexible pathway further strengthens continuous learning in the context of the rapid growth of the digital economy and the transition toward sustainable development, aligning it with global quality education goals.

For further inquiries, please contact us through the Inquiry and Complaint Management System at www2.mqa.gov.my/sppa/.

MALAYSIAN QUALIFICATIONS AGENCY (MQA)
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NOTE:

This Advisory Note has also been distributed to relevant stakeholders to obtain input for refining and finalising this document.