

Office of Quality, Standards  
and Partnerships



UNIVERSITY OF  
**LINCOLN**

## QUALITY ASSURANCE MANUAL

### Approval – Short Courses and Microcredentials

SECTION **02A**

## Short Courses

A Short Course is a named programme of study made up of one or more modules/units that is being specifically marketed as a named Short Course.

There are two areas of delivery for Short Courses:

### 1. MODULAR SHORT COURSES:

*One, or a collection of, **new / existing** credit bearing or non-credit bearing module(s), given a specific title and having programme learning outcomes*

*Up to 60 credits at UG or 45 credits at PG level*

### 2. MICROCREDENTIALS:

*A stand-alone named unit of UG or PG level study, with a value of 5 or 10 credits*

*Microcredential Units are stackable towards larger awards or single modules*

*Up to a value of 60 credits to the award of a PGCert or 120 credits to UG Certificate, and recognised as prior learning towards larger awards*

*Masterclasses are stand-alone non-credit bearing courses*

Short Courses may be credit bearing or non-credit bearing. Credit bearing Short Courses will be defined by a specified number of credits, and a specified level aligned to the FHEQ. Non-credit bearing Short Courses may or may not be specified in this way, and would normally be defined in terms of notional

learning hours. Short Courses that are non-credit bearing will not be eligible for external HESA/OfS funding.<sup>1</sup>

Where a Short Course is deemed 'non standard', the following process may be strengthened at the discretion of the Director of Quality, Standards and Partnerships. This would include Short Courses that are delivered off-campus, and/or by a Partner institution, or delivered by distance learning. Advice should be sought from the Office of Quality, Standards and Partnerships.

Normally, Short Courses must be approved and processed at least three months before the first student enrolment on the course. Where shorter development timeframes are envisaged, early discussions with key stakeholders (Timetabling, Student Administration, Marketing) is required Short Courses may also be approved at a related programme (re)validation event if appropriate.

The Quality assurance Agency's (QAA) Characteristics Statement for Micro-Credentials – May 2022 has been reviewed and informed this document. Link below:

[Characteristics Statement - Micro-credentials \(qaa.ac.uk\)](https://qaa.ac.uk/characteristics-statement-micro-credentials)

## Short Course Definitions:

### ***15 Credit Module or Short Course***

The structure of a 15 Credit Module could take a number of forms.

A standalone 15 Credit Module at UG or PG level is currently defined as a Short Course within University Regulations hence already carries certification on completion. Existing or newly approved modules could be offered as continuing professional development and studied in their own right. Alternatively, 15 Credit Modules could be constructed in a progressive manner, with participants progressing through to a final Short Course award.

In order to receive 15 credits at UG or PG level participants would undertake assessment in line with the principles contained within the University's Assessment Framework. Notional learning hours will amount to 150 hours and, as with current University provision, will be offered in a variety of formats ranging from face-to-face contact, online learning, private study etc. As described in the approval process above, a specification detailing content, learning outcomes and assessment methods must be approved for each 15 Credit Module.

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<sup>1</sup> Although all credit bearing courses may be considered for funding by the OfS, it is recommended that the eligibility of proposals for funding is checked with the Planning and Business Intelligence department *before* proceeding to approval.

## Short Course Approval Process

College Leadership Team (CLT) must approve any Short Course proposal, in light of its strategy and current portfolio, particularly confirming that resources are available.

Further to CLT approval, a full Short Course proposal must be submitted to College Academic Affairs Committee (CAAC) for approval.

A Short Course specification and associated module/unit specification(s) must be developed within APMS. The course and module/unit specifications can be exported from APMS at any stage in the development for consultation and discussion as necessary.

Short Courses require external ratification of the level, credit size and coherency of the course. This will normally be done by the existing relevant subject External Examiner, but where there is no obvious existing External Examiner an academic member of another university with appropriate experience and independence may be used.

The documents required by CAAC for approval are:

Short Course Application Form or Microcredential Application Form  
(available from OQSP)

Course and Module/Unit Specifications  
(exported from APMS)

Confirmation of CLT approval

Confirmation of External Examiner approval

Confirmation of PSRB approval (if applicable)

CAAC may approve or reject the proposal, or ask for further work to be carried out. Once approval is granted, a copy of the documents must be sent to OQSP who will complete the approval process within APMS to generate new definitive Short Course documents.

## Microcredentials

A Microcredential is a named unit of UG or PGT level study, with a value at 5 or 10 credits

A Masterclass is a stand-alone course, with a value of 0 credits

Microcredential Courses are stackable towards larger awards.

## Microcredential Definitions

### ***5 Credit Unit***

The 5 Credit Unit would be the basic building block of the Microcredentials structure. In order to receive 5 credits at UG or PG level, participants would undertake assessment in line with the principles contained within the University's Assessment Framework. Notional learning hours will amount to 50 hours and, as with current University provision, will be offered in a variety of formats ranging from face-to-face contact, online learning, private study etc. The content could be comprised of elements of larger existing modules or could be developed in a bespoke manner. A specification detailing content, learning outcomes and assessment methods must be approved for each 5 Credit Unit.

### ***10 Credit Unit***

The 10 Credit Unit would be a larger, double version of the 5 Credit Unit but based on the same principles. In order to receive 10 credits at UG or PG level participants would undertake assessment in line with the principles contained within the University's Assessment Framework. Notional learning hours will amount to 100 hours and, as with current University provision, will be offered in a variety of formats ranging from face-to-face contact, online learning, private study etc. The content could be comprised of elements of larger existing modules or could be developed in a bespoke manner. 10 Credit Units are likely to be a progressive development from a 5 Credit Unit with additional content building on the learning from the first 5 credits, for example, in a Professional/Subject Pathway or where the 5 Credit Unit is a pre-requisite for taking the specified 10 Credit Unit, but could be designed as stand-alone 10 credit offerings in their

own right. A specification detailing content, learning outcomes and assessment methods must be approved for each 10 Credit Unit.

### ***Masterclass***

This sub element would carry no academic credit. Content, structure and duration will vary according to subject area, but Masterclasses will be short in duration, equivalent up to a small 5 credit unit (50 notional learning hours). Typical examples would include the Masterclass sessions currently offered in partnership with The Guardian. There would be no assessment associated with the Masterclass. The Masterclass would essentially be seen as a 'taster session' to engage potential students. Masterclasses will not be eligible for external HESA/OfS funding.

### ***Certification***

On successful completion, the achievement of a microcredential is to be evidenced through formal certification and/or transcript.

## **Microcredential Approval Process**

The approval process for Microcredentials follows the same steps as above with the following amendment:

As many Microcredentials will be stand-alone income generating courses in their own right, a business case, including financial costings, must be submitted to the University's Portfolio Oversight Group (POG) prior to approval by CAAC. A Microcredential proforma for this process is available. Similarly Microcredentials utilise their own CAAC application form.

Masterclasses however are not required to submit to POG for approval, and should just follow the standard Short Course approval process as set out above.

Microcredentials should be cognisant of *The Common Microcredential Framework* - <https://www.futurelearn.com/info/the-common-microcredential-framework>

## **PSRBs**

Where a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body accredits a Short Course, and students follow a national curriculum and gain no University of Lincoln credit, College approval is not required. It is

expected that CLT would have approved the development of, and resource requirements of, such courses. An outline of the modules studied should be presented to CAAC as a minimum, for recording and auditing purposes.

## Single, Validated Modules

Where a single module has already been validated as part of a University award, and is **not** being marketed as a named Short Course, there is no requirement for any further quality assurance. Examples include:

- The study of a single, existing, already validated module by a student
- The study of a single, already validated, supplementary module by an existing student (not contributing to their main award)
- A single, already validated module used for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activity for an external client
- A single, already validated module already used for CPD or widening participation activity for an external individual
- School/College Summer Schools (providing all modules are existing and approved)

Although no formal approval is required, CLT should approve the CPD or other study activity, particularly if additional resources are required.