

## ACADEMIC COUNCIL REPORT

---

**SESSION:**

Public

**ACTION REQUESTED:**

Decision   
 Discussion/Direction   
 Information

**TO:** Academic Council

**DATE:** April 27, 2021

**PRESENTED BY:** Lori Livingston, Provost and Vice-President, Academic

**SUBJECT:** Not-for-Academic Credit Digital Badges, Microcredentials, and Stackable Credentials Policy

---

- In accordance with Article 1.3(b) of By-law No. 2, the Academic Council will be consulted on the establishment of Administrative Policies, which is also reflected in the university's Policy Framework
- The Office of the Provost is presenting the draft Not-for-Academic Credit Digital Badges, Microcredentials, and Stackable Credentials Policy to Academic Council (AC) for consultation

**BACKGROUND/CONTEXT & RATIONALE:**

- Not-for-academic credit digital badges, microcredentials, and stackable credentials are growing in popularity and are increasingly being delivered by post-secondary education institutions
- The Province and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities is injecting funding to support the development of these types of credentials within post-secondary institutions
- The University does not have a Not-for-Academic Credit Digital Badges, Micro-credentials, and Stackable Credentials Policy, but has been developing and offering these types of credentials to interested learners
- A Not-for-Academic Credit Digital Badges, Microcredentials, and Stackable Credentials Policy strengthens the University's commitment to recognize, integrate, and use these not-for-academic credit credentials

**RESOURCES REQUIRED:**

- Terms of Reference for a Not-for-Academic Credit Digital Badges, Micro-credentials, and Stackable Credentials Committee have been established
- Resources to support the development of these credentials will be budgeted by the unit driving their development

**IMPLICATIONS:**

- Digital Badges, microcredentials, and stackable credentials provide an opportunity for Ontario Tech to diversify its offerings and attract non-traditional students to our institution
- Digital badges, microcredentials, and stackable credentials must be awarded on the basis of the achievement of outcomes appropriate to their level and not just in recognition of participation. They must be monitored in order to ensure that this criterion is met.
- The Ministry of Colleges and Universities recently declared OSAP-eligible funding to support students in their pursuit of completing these types of credentials
- Ontario Tech currently offers 29 OSAP-eligible microcredentials, some of which are not-for-academic credit

**ALIGNMENT WITH MISSION, VISION, VALUES & STRATEGIC PLAN:**

- As per our Mission, these credentials allow us to “...respond to the needs of our students and the evolving world by providing superior....lifelong learning experiences” and “...[adapt] to the ever-changing landscape through the provision of flexible and dynamic learning and research opportunities.”

**CONSULTATION:**

- Senior Academic Team (December 7, 2020)
- Policy Advisory Committee (Policy Assessment - March 26, 2021)
- Academic Council (April 27, 2021)

**NEXT STEPS:**

- Online consultation (Mandatory Consultation)
- Administrative Leadership Team (Deliberation)
- President (Approval)

**SUPPORTING REFERENCE MATERIALS:**

- Not-for-Academic Credit Digital Badges, Microcredentials, and Stackable Credentials Policy
- Not-for-Academic Credit Microcredentials Committee Terms of Reference



Classification Number	<i>To be assigned by Policy Office</i>
Framework Category	<i>To be assigned by Policy Office</i>
Approving Authority	<i>To be assigned by Policy Office</i>
Policy Owner	Provost and Vice-President, Academic
Approval Date	
Review Date	
Supersedes	

## NOT-FOR-ACADEMIC CREDIT DIGITAL BADGES, MICROCREDENTIALS, AND STACKABLE CREDENTIALS POLICY

### PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this Policy is to provide a framework for the university’s recognition, integration and use of not-for-academic credit digital badges, microcredentials, and stackable credentials branded and/or issued by Ontario Tech University.

### DEFINITIONS

2. For the purposes of this Policy the following definitions apply:

“**Digital Badge**” refers to the validated digital image and its associated metadata that documents when, where and how an accomplishment, skill, quality, interest, microcredential or other stackable credential was completed.

“**Horizontal Stacking**” refers to the stacking of units of study with little or no explicit hierarchical order. Corequisite learning is the norm but prerequisites may be required in some instances.

“**Microcredential**” is a micro-certificate that includes a suitable evaluation of the acquisition of a competency, skill, or learning outcome through a single learning experience or a collection of learning experiences.

“**Stackable Credential**” is a credential that combines units of study to accurately reflect an accumulated body of knowledge, skills and abilities.

“**Stacking**” refers to the practice of assembling, or stacking, units of study.

“**Value-Added Stacking**” combines the concepts of horizontal and vertical stacking while allowing for additional, non-related units of study to be added.

“**Vertical Stacking**” refers to the stacking of units of study in an explicit hierarchical order guided by prerequisite accomplishments.

### SCOPE AND AUTHORITY

3. This Policy applies to digital badges and microcredentials issued by Ontario Tech University earned through not-for-academic credit activities.
4. The Provost, or successor thereof, is the Policy Owner and is responsible for overseeing the implementation, administration and interpretation of this Policy.

## **POLICY**

### **5. Requirements**

- 5.1.** Badges, Microcredentials, and Stackable Credentials must be awarded on the basis of the achievement of outcomes appropriate to their level and not just in recognition of participation.
- 5.2.** Microcredentials may be standalone or grouped to contribute to a Badge or Stackable Credential.
- 5.3.** The Microcredentials being considered herein are only those which are not-for-academic credit in nature.
- 5.4.** Stackable Credentials may or may not require prerequisite qualifications. This will be dictated by the approach (i.e., Horizontal, Value-Added, or Vertical Stacking) taken to create the credential.

### **6. Delivery**

- 6.1.** Microcredentials may be delivered face-to-face, online, by distance, or through a combination of these methods.

### **7. Development and Approval for Not-for-Academic Credit Digital Badges, Microcredentials, and Stackable Credentials**

- 7.1.** Proposals for new or changes to existing not-for-academic credit microcredentials, badges, or stackable credentials must be reviewed by the Not-For-Academic Credit Microcredentials Committee.
- 7.2.** If there is an intention to develop or deliver a not-for-academic credit microcredential, badge, or stackable credential in conjunction with another unit or third-party, the proposal must include details of the respective roles of the parties in the development and delivery of the credential.
- 7.3.** The Not-for-Academic Credit Microcredentials Committee monitors the ongoing quality assurance of any not-for-credit academic badge, microcredential, or stackable credential developed. Regular reviews should take place every three years so as to ensure the content is current and aligned with ever changing user needs.

## **MONITORING AND REVIEW**

- 8.** This Policy will be reviewed as necessary and at least every three years. The Provost, or successor thereof, is responsible to monitor and review this Policy.

## **RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

- 9.** University of Ontario Institute of Technology Act, 2002, S.O. 2002, c. 8, Sch. 0

**RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES & DOCUMENTS**

**10. Program Nomenclature Directives**

DRAFT

## Not-for-Academic Credit Microcredentials Committee

---

### 1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Ontario Tech University is committed to creating, recognizing, integrating, and using high quality not-for-academic credit digital badges, microcredentials, and stackable credentials to support learning by all members of the Ontario Tech University community.

The Not-for-Academic Credit Microcredentials Committee (“NACMC”) is a forum for collaborative discussions regarding the quality, implementation, and use of these digital products bearing the Ontario Tech University name.

The NACMC is an advisory body that provides input and feedback, advice and written recommendations on topics such as:

- The development of new badges, microcredentials, and stackable credentials ensuring adherence to the Not-for-Academic Credit Digital Badges, Microcredentials, and Stackable Credentials Policy and Procedures;<sup>1</sup>
- Quality assurance as it pertains to the development, planning, implementation and evaluation of non-for-academic credit microcredential offerings;
- Define a consultation process to include multiple academic and administrative units when discussing cross-institutional initiatives;
- Ensure currency with existing or forthcoming legislation regarding non-academic microcredentials;
- Ensure engagement with industry and/or community partners where appropriate; and,
- Promote offerings to members of the university and broader communities, including students, staff, faculty, alumni and external partners.

### 2. ACCOUNTABILITY

The NACMC is accountable to the Provost and Vice-President, Academic and the Senior Academic Team.

### 3. MEETINGS

The NACMC will meet in non-public sessions as needed. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the NACMC may hold public meetings for the purposes of consultation.

---

<sup>1</sup> These policy and procedures documents are currently being developed.

#### 4. **MEMBERSHIP**

The NACMC will be composed of:

- Provost (or designate) (Chair)
- AVP, Planning and Analysis
- Registrar
- Dean, School of Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies
- One (1) Faculty Dean appointed by the Provost
- Manager, Quality Enhancement, Centre for Institutional Quality Enhancement
- Manager, Teaching and Learning Centre (or designate)
- Strategic Project Manager

#### 5. **QUORUM**

Quorum is achieved when the majority of members (or their delegates) are present. The Committee shall seek to operate by consensus.

#### 6. **REPORTING**

Meeting notes will be recorded at every meeting. A copy of the meeting notes and recommendations (if any) will be provided to the Provost and Vice-President, Academic, the Senior Academic Team, and committee members following each meeting.

#### 7. **ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT**

Administrative support to the NACMC, if needed, will be provided by the Provost and Vice President, Academic.