# PROJECT SNAPSHOT

## Approaches to Stackability of Micro-credentials: Options for Ontario

**Type:** Research
**Project Number:** R2246
**Project Lead:** Higher Education Strategy Associates

## Project Summary

HESA developed a set of options for the possible stackability of micro-credentials in Ontario. The project

- Consulted with a range of personnel in colleges and universities, including those responsible for PLAR
- Mapped out the micro-credentials offered in Ontario
- Suggested possibilities for stacking micro-credentials in Ontario based on experiences in other countries

## Project Rationale

Ontario's current system of awarding credit for prior study presents significant barriers to stacking micro- credentials into degrees and diplomas.

## Methods

Semi-structured interviews, systematic analysis of open-source material such as the Ontario micro- credentials portal, literature reviews.

## Describe any limitations

Some key stakeholders (e.g. MCU) chose not to comment on elements of policy and we agreed not to make contact with the larger groups of PCC owners and managers originally planned.

## Research Findings

There are models for stacking micro-credentials which could benefit Ontario, we suggest possible improvements on the status quo. These include making meta-data more standardised, reducing the transaction costs involved in assigning fair credit to micro-credentials.

## Future Research

We have presented options for improving stackability, but coordinating change would require consultations with institutions to establish which options would be acceptable.

## Student Outcomes

Reforming the system would help students to avoid duplicating learning, saving time and money.

## Institutional Outcomes

The full report sets out the barriers to stacking in Ontario and sets out a number of recommendations for improving the current system for recognising prior learning.

## Sector or System Implications

The full report provides many insights into the barriers to stacking micro-credentials into degrees and diplomas within the current system and suggests several possible reforms. These include:

- mandating that providers publicly state what they think is the potential transfer value of the micro- credential in order to receive certain kinds of public support, for example
- funding or listing on a provincial portal having providers submit new micro-credentials to a third party for assignment of a transfer value
- creating a provincial bank of assessments which could be challenged by holders of specific micro- credentials to demonstrate their learning
- and, while we think this is unlikely in Ontario, potentially creating a new specialised institution with stacking micro-credentials at the core of its mission.