

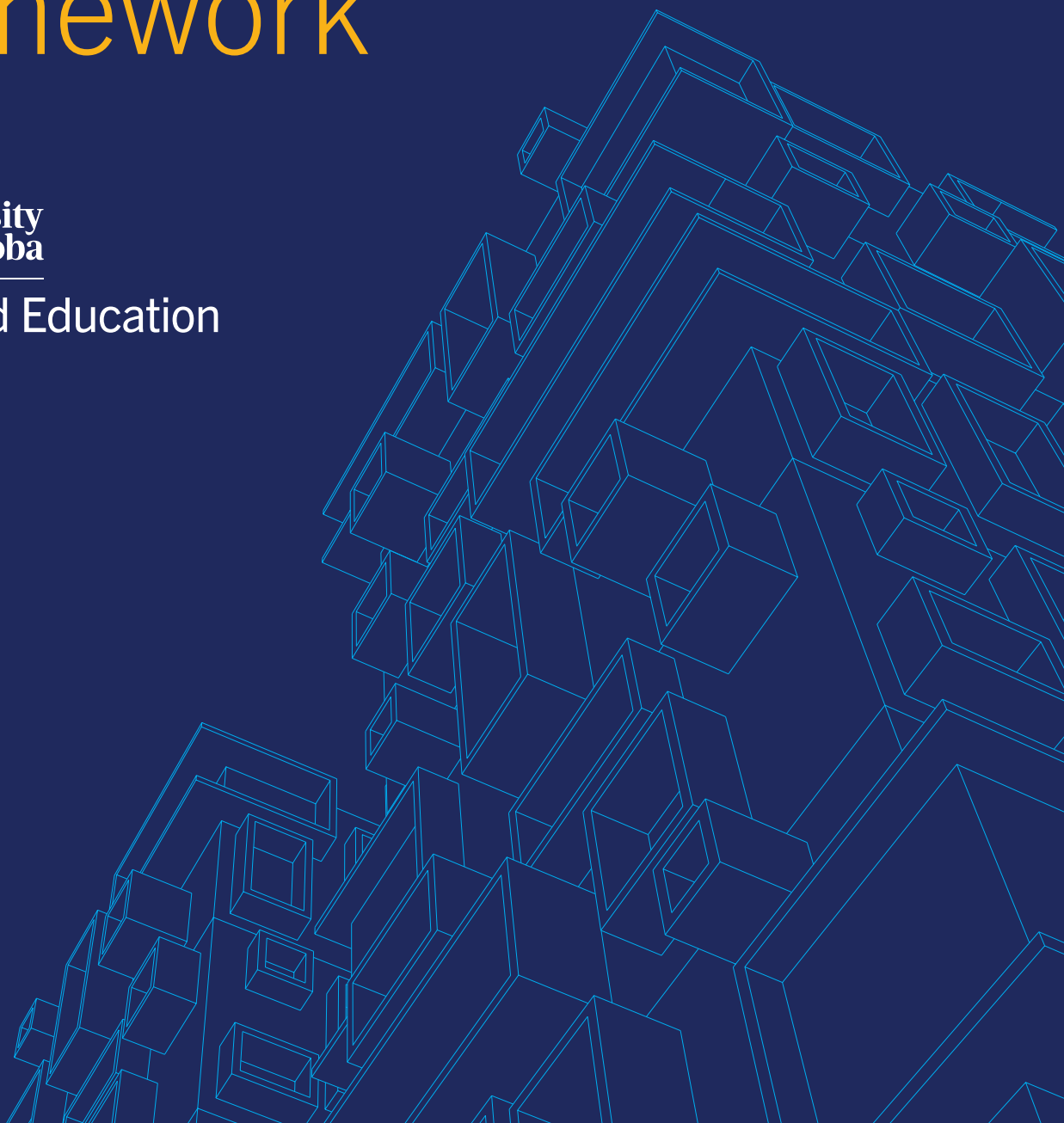
IDEAS → PRACTICE

Lifelong Learning & Alternative Credential Framework



**University
of Manitoba**

Extended Education



The Division of Extended Education's Guiding Principles of Program Design: Responding to the Evolving Needs of Learners and Organizations

Preamble - Alternative credential programs are founded on the principles of flexibility and adaptability to accommodate a wide array of learners needs. As such, these programs come in diverse formats—ranging from modular and condensed courses to more extensive, lifelong educational pathways. The objective is to address the escalating demand for upskilling, and reskilling by offering a multitude of tailored options for both individuals and organizations. These options, which include online, in-person, and hybrid modalities, are particularly crucial in an era where both learners and organizations are facing increasing constraints on time and resources. This focus on creating flexible programming options is not just a matter of convenience; it's a commitment to embedding principles of inclusivity and equity. By acknowledging the challenges posed by limited time and resources, we make it more feasible for a broader range of participants to engage in education and training pathways, thus promoting more equitable access to learning opportunities. This guiding principle of adaptable customization is central to all continuing education endeavors, ensuring that education stays relevant, practical, and accessible. Such efforts empower individuals and organizations realize their unique potential.

Alternative Credentials

Definition and purpose - Alternative credentials encompass a wide range of educational offerings that exist outside of traditional degree pathways but are designed to authenticate a learner's attainment of specific knowledge, skills, or competencies. Recognized by educational institutions, employers, and professional organizations, these credentials can take various forms, including workshops, seminars, open enrolment courses, micro-credentials, and comprehensive certificate programs (Fig. 1). These are offered through diverse delivery methods, such as online, in-person, blended or hybrid formats.

Known for their adaptability, alternative credentials are available in a multitude of formats, ranging from short-term, modular, and compressed open enrolment courses to more extensive, long-term learning pathways. Designed to be flexible, accessible, and timely, these credentials serve multiple purposes: they act as important instruments for workforce development (including upskilling and reskilling) and can also be tailored to support civic or socially responsive education. Overall, alternative credentials offer a highly customized (bespoke) approach to lifelong learning, catering to the constantly evolving societal, professional, and personal goals of both individual learners and organizations.

At the University of Manitoba alternative credentials are governed by the 2021 Certificate and Diploma Framework.

https://umanitoba.ca/governance/sites/governance/files/2021-02/Certificate%20and%20Diploma%20Framework_2021_02_03.pdf

The following is a summary of the Divisions alternative credential offers (see [Fig. 1](#) for more detail):

1. CUSTOM TRAINING

- **Details:** No formal approval process
- **Custom training:** Our custom training solutions are tailored to give your organization a competitive advantage. By tapping into our extensive network of industry and academic experts, we create programs that effectively bridge theory and practice. With a focus on quality and meeting customer needs, we deliver accessible options for lifelong learning. The training curriculum incorporates both skill-based exercises and real-world applications, resulting in a balanced approach to professional development. Whether on-campus or off-campus, we provide the flexibility to deliver training where and when you need it.
- **Informed Skills Training:** Curriculum aligned with your corporate goals, delivered by one of the world's top universities.
- **Modality of Offer:** Flexible, interactive delivery in multiple formats—on-site, online, or blended.
- **Development to Delivery Cycle:** 3-4 months.
- **Assessment:** Learning is typically not assessed. Learners obtain a certificate of completion.

2. CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES OR PROGRAMS:

Our Continuing Education courses and programs are designed to empower individuals looking to improve their skills, transition careers, or achieve accredited qualifications. In collaboration with subject matter experts both within and beyond the University, we deliver tailor-made programs that cater to the unique needs of lifelong learners. Our offerings include standalone courses, Letters of Accomplishment as well as specialized credentials like university micro-credentials and more comprehensive university certificate programs.

2.1 COURSE(S)

- **Details:** Open enrolment courses
- **Content:** Can be developed based on need; over 100 courses available in our catalog.
- **Modality of Offer:** In-person, blended, hybrid, or online (synchronous and/or asynchronous).
- **Development to Delivery Cycle:** 4-5 months, depending on contact hours and other considerations.
- **Assessment:** Learning is assessed (letter grade or pass/fail); no credential is issued. Digital badges may be available.

2.2 LETTER OF ACCOMPLISHMENT (LOAS)

- **Details:** Short-cycle learning programs composed of short courses or workshops. LOAs are approved by Extended Education's Council. Learners are not considered UM students
- **Modality of Offer:** In-person, blended, hybrid, or online (synchronous and/or asynchronous).
- **Development to Delivery Cycle:** 4-6 months, including and dependent on university approval processes.
- **Assessment:** Learning is assessed (letter grade or pass/fail); Digital badges may be available.

2.3 MICRO-CREDENTIAL PROGRAMS

- **Details:** Short learning programs consisting of a minimum of 36 to a maximum of 108 contact hours composed of at least two courses. All micro-certificate programs are approved by Extended Education's Council and the UM Senate
- **Modality of Offer:** In-person, blended, hybrid, or online (synchronous and/or asynchronous).
- **Development to Delivery Cycle:** 5-7 months, including and dependent on university approval processes.
- **Assessment:** Learning is assessed (letter grade or pass/fail); micro-certificate is issued. Digital badges may be available.

2.4 CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

- **Details:** Comprehensive programs with > 108 to a maximum of 400 contact hours.
- **Modality of Offer:** In-person, blended, hybrid, or online (synchronous and/or asynchronous). All certificate programs are approved by Extended Education's Council and the UM Senate
- **Development to Delivery Cycle:** > 10 months, including and dependent on university approval processes.
- **Assessment:** Learning is assessed (letter grade or pass/fail); certificate is issued. Digital badges may be available.

Extended Education’s Alternative Credentialing Model

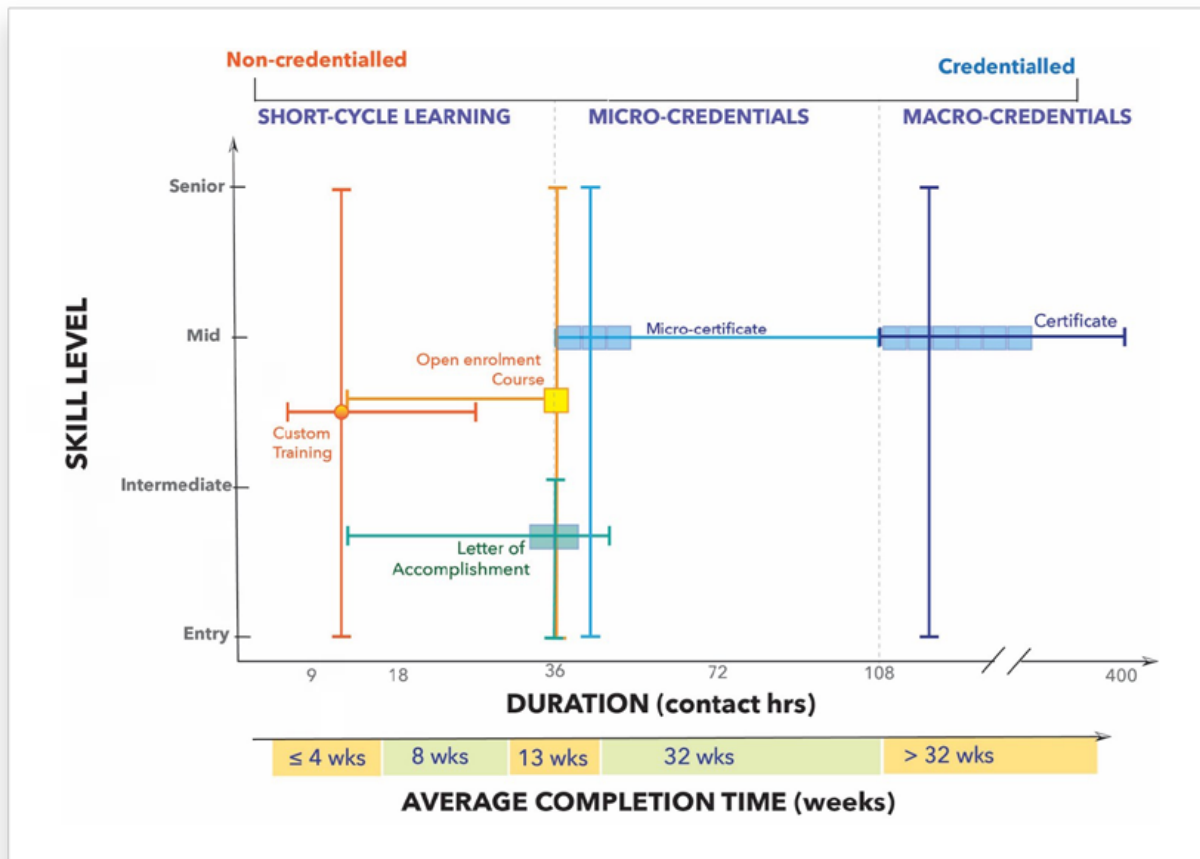


FIGURE 1. Comprehensive Overview of the Division of **Extended Education’s Alternative Credentialing Model**. This model categorizes alternative credentials into several types and dimensions for educational pathways. Alternative credentials encompass short-cycle learning opportunities such as **workshops, seminars, courses,** and **Letters of Accomplishment** as well as university-approved **Micro-Credentials (University Micro-Certificates)** and **Macro-Credentials (full-length University Certificates)**. The model delineates these credentials along three axes: 1) Duration, specifying the contract hours of learning and the average time required for completion; 2) Skill Level Attained, ranging from entry-level to senior-level expertise; and 3) Credentialed Status, distinguishing between programs that are formally recognized by the University Senate and those that are not. **Custom training (bespoke)** workshops or seminars are specialized, high-intensity offerings tailored for organizational needs, where participants receive a Letter of Completion solely based on attendance. **Stand-alone open enrolment courses** may vary in length from short-term (less than 18 contact hours) to standard term (up to 36 contact hours, approximately spanning 12 weeks), and offer grading options ranging from pass/fail to letter grades, along with academic digital badges that articulate assessed learning outcomes. Both custom training and stand-alone courses cater to a range of skill levels, from entry to senior. **Letters of Accomplishment** are short courses/programs typically targeting entry-level skills, and the learning assessments for these can also be recognized through digital badges. **Micro-Certificates** span skill level and range from 36 to 108 contact hours. Lastly, comprehensive **Certificate programs**, are designed for either entry-to-mid-level or advanced skill sets and range from greater than 108 contact hours up to 400 contact hours of teaching. Importantly, learners who enroll in Micro-Certificate or Certificate programs are considered University of Manitoba Students.