L2L MicroCred

Learning Design Toolbox

A Step-by-Step Guide for Inclusive Micro-Credentials



Co-funded by the European Union

Micro-Credentials Promise Access

Micro-credentials are designed to provide:

- **Flexibility**
- **Workforce relevance**
- **Lifelong learning opportunities**
- **Alternative pathways into education**

Access alone does not guarantee engagement.



What We Did

Research conducted across:



SME employees



Labour market transitioners



At-risk youth



Teachers

Methods included:

- Stakeholder consultation
- Needs analysis
- Learner interviews
- Comparative thematic analysis

What Learners Told Us

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Key barriers they face and what they value in learning experiences.

Barriers

- Time
- Confidence
- Digital skills
- Access
- Competing responsibilities

Preferences

- Practical learning
- Real-world application
- Flexible pathways
- Clear structure
- Supportive environments
- Learning by doing

The Research Pointed Us Towards Existing Theory

The learner evidence strongly aligned with the following established theories:

- Learner-Centred Design
- Social Constructivism
- Adult Learning Theory
- Self-Efficacy Theory
- Constructive Alignment
- Universal Design for Learning
- Experiential Learning
- Cognitive Load Theory



The Learning Design Cycle

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Learner evidence → aligned design → active learning → supported delivery → continuous improvement



Building Confidence Through Design

Research highlighted:
Fear of failure; Low confidence; Previous negative experiences

Our goal:
Design learning experiences that build confidence and momentum.

TOOLBOX RECOMMENDATIONS

- Early success ✓
- Clear instructions ✓
- Scaffolded support ✓
- Regular feedback ✓
- Manageable workload ✓

PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Self-Efficacy Theory
Build belief in one's ability through mastery experiences and progress.

Scaffolded Learning
Support learners with structured, gradual steps toward independence.

Designing for Access and Inclusion

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The Toolbox promotes:

Multiple ways to engage
Learners can engage with content in different formats and modes.

Flexible participation
Learners can choose when, where, and how they engage.

Accessible resources
All learners can access content through inclusive, barrier-aware design.

Choice and adaptability
Learners have choice and control over their learning journey.

PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATIONS



Universal Design for Learning

Design learning experiences that are equitable, flexible, and usable for all.

Reducing Cognitive Load Without Lowering Standards

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Research showed: Complexity and overload contribute to disengagement.

TOOLBOX RECOMMENDATIONS

Modular learning
Break content into manageable, digestible units.

Consistent structure
Use predictable patterns to support understanding and reduce effort.

Simple navigation
Make it easy to find, follow, and focus on what matters.

Focused activities
Design purposeful tasks that build skills without unnecessary complexity.

PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Cognitive Load Theory
Design learning experiences that reduce unnecessary mental load and support working memory.

Multimedia Learning (Mayer)
Combine words, visuals, and audio intentionally to enhance understanding and retention.

Step 1: Know Your Learners

Main Output: Learner Snapshot

IDENTIFY:

Barriers
What stands in the way?

Motivations
What drives them?

Support needs
What help do they need to succeed?

Learning preferences
How do they prefer to learn?

Evidence vs assumptions
What do we know—and what should we validate?

PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATIONS:

Learner-Centred Design
Place learner needs, goals and context at the heart of design.

Human-Centred Design
Understand the whole person—experience, environment, and aspirations.

Step 2: Design Your Course

Main Output: Course Blueprint; Storyboard

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Translate learner insight into:

Outcomes	What learners will achieve
Format	How learning is structured
Assessment	How progress and learning are measured
Support	What help learners need and when
Communication	How we keep learners informed and engaged

PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATIONS:

Constructive Alignment

Ensure learning outcomes, teaching activities, and assessments are aligned for meaningful learning.

Constructive Alignment

Design experiences that connect with learners' realities and support engagement and relevance.

Step 3: Build Learning Experiences

Main Output: Course Activities

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CORE STRUCTURE

01 **Learn** | Introduce key ideas

02 **Discuss** | Reflect and share

03 **Apply** | Use knowledge in real contexts

PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Experiential Learning

Learning through experience strengthens understanding and retention.

Social Constructivism

Knowledge is co-created through interaction, dialogue and collaboration.

Adult Learning Theory

Adults learn best when content is relevant, practical and self-directed.

Step 4: Run & Improve

Main Output: Delivery and Improvement Plan

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01 Support learners before and during delivery

Provide the right support at the right time to promote engagement and success.

02 Track what works

Monitor participation, performance and engagement to identify what's effective.

03 Collect lightweight feedback

Gather quick, actionable feedback from learners and stakeholders.

04 Improve the design for the next run

Use insights to refine content, activities and delivery for continuous improvement.

PEDAGOGICAL FOUNDATIONS:

Design-Based Research

Validate and refine learning solutions through real-world implementation and evidence.

Iterative Learning Design

Build, test, learn and adapt in cycles to create more effective learning experiences.

Evaluation for improvement

Use data and feedback to drive decisions and enhance outcomes over time.

The Learning Design Cycle

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Learner evidence → aligned design → active learning → supported delivery → continuous improvement



What We Learned

Inclusive design is not a specialist activity.
It is good learning design.

KEY LESSONS

1. Start with learner realities
2. Design for confidence
3. Reduce unnecessary complexity
4. Make learning practical
5. Improve continuously

When we design for real lives,
more people succeed.



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Through Micro-Credentials
in a Regional Setting
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