



Improving relevance and responsiveness: Aotearoa New Zealand's early micro-credentials journey

In 2018, Aotearoa New Zealand was one of the first countries in the world to introduce micro-credentials as part of a regulated education and training system. This NZQA Insights Paper illustrates how micro-credentials are already showing benefits for learners and employers.

Introduction

Aotearoa New Zealand introduced micro-credentials as one means of increasing the relevance and responsiveness of the qualifications system, to augment the formal qualifications system.

The intent was to regularise sub-qualification training – to make the learning available and explicable to employers; and more valuable and transferable for learners. The means to this end was straight forward: extend the prescriptions of the NZQF to sub-qualification training.

Approved micro-credentials were given a credit value between 5 to 40 credits in size and providers could apply for approval of micro-credentials at any level on the NZQF. In this way, employers could understand the duration (credits) and the complexity (level) of the training and learners would be able to gain improved recognition for the learning completed or have micro-

credentials cross credit to full qualifications. With standard qualification system quality assurance processes applying, learners and employers could be confident in the quality and value of micro-credentials.

Aotearoa New Zealand's approach to micro-credentials provides a formal pathway to ensure short, relevant training could be credentialed and quality assured. It also seeks to encourage all stakeholders to think more laterally about the qualification system, the relevance of education and training and the place of end-users. This includes shifting policy, funding and regulatory settings that may have privileged the interests of tertiary education providers over end-users of education and training. A second Insights Paper (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2022b) outlines this rationale in more detail.

Early usage of micro-credentials has been encouraging. The micro-credentials approved to date fall into a small number of use case types: a **pathway** to full qualification enrolment; **upskilling** of existing employees, career changers and non-working learners; or fast to market responses to **unmet skill needs**.

Understanding the value derived from micro-credentials is at an early stage. This paper begins that process through illustrating the variety of use contexts with reference to five case studies.

Current Use of Microcredentials

Following three micro-credentials pilots between mid-2017 and mid-2018 and national consultation, NZQA enabled micro-credentials to be submitted for approval from August 2018. By June 2022, there were 249 micro-credentials on the Register of NZQA-approved Micro-credentials. These are being offered by a range of tertiary education organisations, as in Table One.

Table One: NZQA-approved micro-credentials by provider type and level on the NZQF, at June 2022

Provider type	Level of micro-credential offered										Total
	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9	L10	
Te Pūkenga ¹ (ITPs) ²	0	3	14	16	17	9	3	4	0	0	66
ITOs and Te Pūkenga (WBL) ³	0	12	49	19	3	0	0	0	0	0	83
PTE ⁴	0	4	19	21	30	11	5	7	0	0	97
Wānanga ⁵	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Total	0	21	82	56	51	20	8	11	0	0	249

The majority were sitting at lower levels of the NZQF with only 8% (19) at degree level (Level 7) or higher. A third of the total (83) were offered by Te Pūkenga's work-based learning (WBL) arm, which is made up of organisations which oversaw industry training before recent changes to Aotearoa New Zealand's vocational sector, or industry training organisations (ITOs) yet to transition.

Private training establishments (PTEs) offered 97 of the approved micro-credentials. Most were at Levels 3 to 5 on the NZQF. Only 32 (8%) of Aotearoa New Zealand's 397 active PTEs offer micro-credentials. The New Zealand School of Food and Wine had the largest number, offering 13 micro-credentials in the hospitality space. Future Skills Academy Limited had the next largest offering with 11 micro-credentials covering diverse skills such as welding and introductory software development.

Wānanga offered three micro-credentials, two at Level 2 and one at Level 5, delivered by the same wānanga, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. The two lower-level micro-credentials build life and employment skills and the Level 5 credential improves teachers' skills in supporting students struggling with literacy challenges.

¹ Te Pūkenga was created in response to the 2019 Government announcement that there would be an overhaul of New Zealand's vocational educational system. Te Pūkenga is a merger of Aotearoa New Zealand's 16 institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs) and 11 industry training organisations (ITOs). Once the merger is completed late 2022, Te Pūkenga will be the largest tertiary provider in New Zealand with more than a quarter of a million learners.

² Te Pūkenga (ITPs) includes micro-credentials offered by former ITPs, who blend on campus and online delivery modes, with work placements or simulated workplaces.

³ At the time of writing, some of the 11 ITOs have moved in part or whole to be part of Te Pūkenga's work-based learning (WBL) subsidiary, and others are yet to make the transition to provider status. ITOs and Te Pūkenga (WBL) includes micro-credentials offered by former industry training organisations.

⁴ PTEs are private training establishments providing education or training, many of whom are eligible for government funding for their programmes.

⁵ Wānanga are unique to Aotearoa New Zealand. A wānanga is characterised by teaching and research that maintains, advances, and disseminates knowledge and develops intellectual independence, and assists the application of knowledge regarding ahuatanga Māori (Māori tradition) according to tikanga Māori (Māori custom).

Micro-credentials were offered across all of NZQA's 12 NZSCED subject areas (see Table Two). Engineering and Related Technologies accounted for nearly a quarter of active micro-credentials. They range from introductory courses for school leavers, to courses upskilling those already working in the trades, such as electric vehicle battery repair. Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies has the second largest number of micro-credentials covering agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and wool and fibre.

Table Two: NZQA-approved micro-credentials by credit number and subject area, as at June 2022

NZSCED ⁶ Subject Area	5-10 credits	11-20 credits	21-30 credits	31-40 credits	Total
Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies	12	16	8	3	39
Architecture and Building	3	1	3	5	12
Creative Arts	8	0	0	0	8
Education	1	4	0	0	5
Engineering and Related Technologies	25	17	13	3	58
Food, Hospitality and Personal Services	16	2	2	4	24
Health (+n/a one)	11	9	3	1	24
Information Technology	10	2	6	2	20
Management and Commerce	12	8	3	0	23
Mixed Field Programmes	8	5	1	2	16
Natural and Physical Sciences	0	0	0	1	1
Society and Culture	10	5	4	0	19
Total	116	69	43	21	249

Immediately after NZQA enabled approval of micro-credentials in late 2018, a significant number of micro-credentials were approved. Numbers then dropped off, increasing in late 2020 with a rapid rise in the second half of 2021. In 2019, the Tertiary Education Commission made micro-credentials eligible for government funding. By February 2022, the Tertiary Education Commission had approved 80 micro-credentials for funding, supporting just over 6,000 learners to study. The largest number for a single micro-credential (1,390) were supported to study forestry operations through Te Pūkenga's Work Based Learning subsidiary.

Aotearoa New Zealand universities can also develop micro-credentials, with universities able to approve micro-credentials themselves. University uptake has been relatively low with only four of the eight universities offering micro-credentials by October 2021. Victoria University of Wellington was the main developer, offering nine of the 17 university micro-credentials.

Micro-credentials case studies

In Aotearoa New Zealand, micro-credentials approved to date fall into three use case types:

1. a micro-credential as a **pathway** to full qualification enrolment
2. **upskilling** of existing employees, career changers or non-working learners
3. fast to market responses to **new or emerging skill needs**.

⁶ The New Zealand Standard Classification of Education (NZSCED) is a subject-based classification system for qualifications at universities, Te Pūkenga, wānanga and private training establishments.

Micro-credentials as a pathway

A successful example of use of micro-credentials to enable learners to gain an opportunity to familiarise themselves with a particular career or industry and to provide a pathway to further study is MITO's *StartUp® micro-credentials*.

MITO – *StartUp®*

MITO is a business division of Te Pūkenga Work Based Learning. It supports on-job learning for people working in the automotive, commercial road transport, extractives, gas and logistics industries. In 2007, MITO launched a programme called *StartUp®*, designed to create a pipeline of talent from secondary schools to employers in the automotive industries. In the programme, learners earn credits towards NCEA Level 2 through completing unit standards while gaining practical experience in the workplace.

When micro-credentials were introduced into the formal education and training system in 2018, MITO saw an opportunity and applied to NZQA to make *StartUp®* into three micro-credentials. The advantage of this change was that learners would now be able to gain a discrete credential for their Record of Achievement, instead of just a collection of unit standards. This made the training easier for both learners and prospective employers to engage with and understand. Automotive industry associations signalled strong support for the micro-credentials.

StartUp® Ignition (Level 2, 20 credits) enables learners to acquire the foundation skills and knowledge required for further training in the motor industry. Learners do a mix of online and practical learning – completing eLearning modules for the theoretical components and then undertaking practical experience at a local automotive workshop. Learners can then choose to further their learning by enrolling into one of two *StartUp® Accelerate* Level 3, 21-credit micro-credentials - one in automotive engineering and the other in collision repair and refinishing.

These micro-credentials benefit learners by enabling those who have an interest in the automotive industry the opportunity to explore this career path via a 'mini apprenticeship' while gaining credits towards their NCEA. Other advantages include gaining valuable work experience for their CV and building a relationship

with potential employers. Employers appreciate the opportunity to meet potential candidates for an apprenticeship, developing positive relationships with local schools and giving back to the community through mentoring young people.

StartUp® Ignition has received highly positive feedback from learners, schools and employers. Since its launch as a micro-credential in 2019, 583 learners in 217 schools across New Zealand have completed it. Of these, 173 have subsequently enrolled in a New Zealand Apprenticeship in the automotive industry.

For Devansh, *StartUp® Ignition* was the stepping stone into his current career. He had always had an interest in the automotive industry and with the guidance of his career counsellor, enrolled in *StartUp® Ignition* while in year 11. Devansh enjoyed the experience – in particular the broad programme which gave him exposure to different aspects of the automotive industry and allowed him to figure out which career he wanted to pursue. He received excellent support from both the school and his workplace. The next year, he completed *StartUp® Accelerate* with a different employer doing Certificate of Fitness repairs and servicing, and was able to demonstrate that he had the skills he needed to excel in the role. That employer hired Devansh and he is currently completing a New Zealand Apprenticeship with them. He says doing *StartUp® Ignition* had a highly positive impact on his career and would recommend it for any learners looking to get into the automotive industry.

The Register now includes ten micro-credentials similar to *StartUp®* enabling learners to begin study towards a range of trades while still at school. The three micro-credentials offered by Te Wānanga o Aotearoa are also examples of pathway courses. They can also prepare second chance learners to move into further study and employment.

Micro-credentials for upskilling

Other micro-credentials are designed for learners to upskill while working to respond to changes in their industry, such as technological developments or new legislation. For example, Victoria University of Wellington is working with the Post Primary Teachers Association to develop small five-credit courses for teachers moving into leadership roles. These are being developed to be able to stack towards a 15-credit

paper that can then be counted towards a Masters programme.

Another upskilling example is *The Mind Lab's Digital Skills for the Workplace* micro-credential which aims to develop skills in response to technological developments.

The Mind Lab – Digital Skills for the Workplace

In August 2019, NZQA approved The Mind Lab to offer a Level 7, 15-credit micro-credential to support workers across a range of industries to be able to confidently use digital tools relevant to their work. Anticipated benefits for learners included greater productivity, improved well-being, and an ongoing ability to adapt to use evolving digital technologies. Anticipated benefits for employers included filling a skills gap to support innovation and economic growth.

Stakeholder feedback confirmed that demand for this upskilling spanned a wide range of industries, including agriculture, education, technology, financial, logistics, telecommunications, architecture, online retail, professional services, and recruitment industries. A Future of Work industry group survey and a focus group of potential learners helped The Mind Lab identify the top five topics to cover – finding and using data, adapting to digital change, security and privacy, user experience and remote working tools and other transferable skills. It also showed the importance of offering study flexibly so that learners could fit it around work commitments.

Since February 2020, just over 700 learners have studied the *Digital Skills for the Workplace* micro-credential. The first cohort started before COVID-19 struck, which, as businesses moved to work online, accelerated the uptake of digital technologies. In response to the pandemic, The Mind Lab moved the micro-credential to be offered at no cost and fully online which saw a rapid increase in numbers during late 2020. In May 2020, for the third cohort, the institution started offering two parallel streams – one for employees and one for small business owners – as it became clear that these two groups had different needs and would benefit more from online collaborative projects if they were able to work with others facing similar challenges.

Students came with diverse backgrounds and benefited from the training in different ways. Jenny runs two small businesses, as a sole medical practitioner and selling orthopaedic jandals, and heard of the micro-credential through a client. She found the first three weeks focused on online collaborative tools such as Zoom and Trello less relevant because she works on her own. However, halfway through her study, after a session on what was possible with Shopify, software she was already using for her retail business, Jenny became fully engaged. She selected redeveloping the website for her jandal business as her assessment project. As a 'one man band without lots of money to pay someone to do those types of things', Jenny was thrilled to discover what she was able to do herself with the tools covered in the programme, including adding videos, music and graphics. For her, being able to invest a short amount of time to develop relevant skills with expert and group support was important, more so than gaining a credential.

For Pete, running his own accounting business, the credential was important because he could choose to add to it later. The length of the micro-credential was good, 'covering off my needs for now'. For him, all the tools covered seemed relevant and working with tutors and peers in a safe inclusive environment gave him the knowledge and motivation to evaluate different software options, which he had been meaning to do. After the formal study ended, Pete was continuing to apply what he had learned, as he worked to implement the various options he had selected.

For Jen, working in a small-town public library, a micro-credential was a smaller commitment and easier to sell to her manager. She was already working with digital tools but found the study helpful in deepening her confidence with tools with which she was already familiar. Learning how to use new tools relevant to her role in managing digital projects for the library helped Jen develop in her use of tools, but also as a project manager. Coming from a small organisation, she benefited from being part of an online learning community who were able to 'point out something cool' about the various tools. Through starting with a small chunk of learning, Jen was able to see how study fit into her life and 'hoped to see more learning opportunities for ordinary people.'

The Mind Lab's micro-credential case study shows the benefits to learners with high levels of existing skills to be able to develop new skills through small chunks of formal learning. By contrast, Stratcom Security's micro-credential in pre-flight security is an example of upskilling to meet employer needs and enabling learners, many of whom did not have a post-secondary qualification, to gain a formal, quality-assured credential.

Stratcom Security – Pre-flight Security (Specific Airline Requirements)

Pre-flight Security (Specific Airline Requirements) is Level 3, 30-credit micro-credential developed by Stratcom Security, a private training establishment, in partnership with Secureflight, a company providing security services to international airlines operating around New Zealand. This micro-credential is designed to ensure that Secureflight's employees have the core skills and knowledge to succeed in their role as pre-flight aviation security officers.

Prior to the development of this micro-credential, Secureflight security officers were required to undergo large amounts of in-house training in order to meet the requirements of the individual airlines the company was contracted to deliver services to, however, there was no official recognition of their learning. Secureflight wanted these employees to have a quality assured credential that could be recorded on their Record of Achievement.

They partnered with Stratcom Security, who suggested that the ideal package for the training was a micro-credential, because it was smaller than a full qualification and allowed them to tailor it to the context that the security officers employed by Secureflight operate in. In contrast, the existing security qualification was too large and contained several unit standards which were not relevant to the security officer's roles.

The micro-credential they developed together requires around 300 hours of learning and is designed to fit around the work lives of the security officers. It includes a week of theory, then moves into individualised training in the workplace, guided independent study, computer-based training and assessment, and on-job observation for assessment. Since its launch in 2018, 67 Secureflight employees have completed the micro-

credential. More than half (60%) of these learners are female, and more than half (60%) are Pacific learners (Samoan, Tongan, Cook Island Māori and Fijian).

The micro-credential has had a reputational benefit to Secureflight. The extensive knowledge and skills that their staff have gained through their training are now recognised by a credential. This signals to potential clients that their staff are qualified and meet the strict requirements of the international regulations that these airlines operate under. The high esteem Secureflight employees are held in within the aviation and security industries was demonstrated in 2020 when a number of security officers needed to find a new role due to COVID-19's impact on the aviation industry and a significant number were immediately employed by other organisations, including the Auckland Council. This micro-credential also received recognition from the security industry when it won the Outstanding Security Training Initiative prize at 2019's NZ Security Awards.

It's also had a 'huge' impact on Secureflight's security officers. For many, it is their first ever qualification. This is a source of pride for them and gives them the confidence to succeed in their careers and go onto further study. Stratcom Security has been able to build on these gains by identifying employees who have yet to complete NCEA Level 3, and work with them so they can put their micro-credentials towards the certificate.

One of the learners, Natasha, joined Secureflight as a security officer in 2016. She had a Level 1 NCEA qualification, but after completing the micro-credential she was able to put the credits towards gaining her Level 3 NCEA qualification. She has now been working as an operations administrator at Secureflight for the last two and a half years and is also studying part-time for a Level 5 IT qualification with the Open Polytechnic. Natasha credits the supportive work environment at Secureflight and the micro-credential for encouraging her further study and career development.

Micro-credentials to address emerging or urgent skill needs

Another benefit of micro-credentials is that they can be developed quickly to meet an emerging or urgent need in industry or the community. Careerforce's micro-credential *Vaccinate a Person with a COVID-19 Vaccine in a Vaccination Setting* is a successful example of responding to an urgent need.

Careerforce – Vaccinate a Person with a COVID-19 Vaccine in a Vaccination Setting

Careerforce supports New Zealand workplaces to run workplace training programmes in the health, wellbeing, social and community sectors.

In March 2021, Careerforce was approached by the New Zealand Ministry of Health to develop an education product for the Ministry's new training and assurance programme for COVID-19 Vaccinators Working Under Supervision. The Ministry had identified that there would be a surge in requirements around COVID-19 vaccines and that the vaccination workforce would need to increase to support the vaccination programme. However, there was no capacity to expand within the existing pool of regulated health professions such as nurses and doctors. Instead, they decided to focus on upskilling *kaiāwhina* (unregistered workers in the health sector such as healthcare assistants) so they could administer these vaccinations instead, under the supervision of a health practitioner. They also aimed to increase the diversity of the vaccinator workforce, with a particular focus on Māori and Pacific representation.

Careerforce found there were no existing suitable qualifications, micro-credentials or unit standards on the NZQF specifically around vaccination, as vaccinating had previously been a function of the regulated workforce such as pharmacists, doctors and nurses. Working with Ministry of Health representatives and product developers, and with advice from the Immunisation Advisory Centre, Careerforce created two new vaccination unit standards and a Level 3, nine-credit micro-credential that would wrap around them. A concerted effort between these parties and NZQA meant development and approval of the unit standards was completed by July 2021, and the subsequent development and approval of the micro-credential was completed by November 2021 – an expedited timeframe. To meet the urgent and pressing need, some learners completed the training prior to the formal approval of the micro-credential, later gaining the credential through a Recognition of Prior Learning process.

A micro-credential was determined to be the best package for this learning because it allows *kaiāwhina* to have a nationally recognised credential

on their Record of Achievement. Many are already experienced and skilled workers but may not have any qualifications. It is anticipated gaining this micro-credential will encourage some learners into further study, creating long term intergenerational benefits for their *whānau* and the health sector.

Learners complete the micro-credential at their workplace, which must be a District Health Board or approved vaccination site. The micro-credential involves two Unit Standards – one covering theory and one covering the practical element. Competency assessments are completed by a fully authorised vaccinator with at least two years' experience. Once a learner has successfully completed the unit standards, and been authorised by the Ministry of Health, they can be awarded the micro-credential.

As of May 2022, 460 learners have met the requirements of the micro-credential and been authorised to administer the COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine. Of these learners, 55% identify as Māori and 12% as Pacific peoples, meeting the micro-credential's intended outcome of increasing the representation of Māori and Pacific peoples in the health workforce. This has benefited the health sector, with the increase in vaccinators taking pressure off the regulated workforce. In addition, it has helped enable outreach into the more rural areas of New Zealand, with three or four trained vaccinators working in mobile clinics with one supervisor.

Feedback from learners on the micro-credentials has been particularly positive, including feeling like doors have been opened for them, feeling that they can make a difference for their *whānau*, and feeling proud that they have a credential on their Record of Achievement.

One of the learners, Mere, joined a vaccination centre in Auckland in April 2021. Prior to that, she had been working as a landscaper at the community gardens of her *iwi* Ngāti Whātua ki Ōrākei, before being encouraged by the CEO to join the vaccination centre. She had started off as "flow coordinator" and administrator, before being asked if she would do the micro-credential to help assist with vaccinations. Mere was nervous, as she didn't have experience in this area, and it was out of her comfort zone. Mere found she was supported by leaders and her colleagues at the centre, and in the end found the experience "amazing". Mere is now working at a hospital in

Auckland as a Covid Oranga Coordinator, advocating for and providing a bridge between Māori positive COVID-19 cases, their whānau and the doctors and nurses treating them. She is proud of herself and her fellow learners for achieving this micro-credential and encourages anyone considering the micro-credential, saying “if you think you can't do it, you actually can. You've just got to put your mind to it”.

Another of the learners, Victoria, was working at a health vaccination centre as an administrator and was asked if she would enrol in the micro-credential to become a vaccinator to ease the pressure on the nurses. Victoria said the experience was fantastic, praising her supervisors and teaching nurse for their ‘amazing’ support for her learning. Victoria administered vaccinations for a short while until the pressure eased and is now working as an administrator for a specialist health provider. Her experience with the micro-credential has inspired her and she is now excited about a future in healthcare. Victoria is proud of her achievement in the micro-credential and for playing an important role in protecting the community from COVID-19.

The Ministry of Health and Careerforce are positive about the micro-credential's impact and see it as a ‘win’ for New Zealand. For Careerforce, it's an excellent demonstration of how micro-credentials can meet emerging needs, with quick development and approval times. They are now looking to the future and how this learning can benefit the health system in the long term.

Careerforce's need was urgent in response to a pandemic that appeared suddenly and required an immediate response. By contrast, Victoria University of Wellington's (VUW) *Introduction to Digital Accessibility: Delivering inclusive digital content* was developed to meet the emerging need of growth in awareness of the importance of designing digital services to meet the needs of disabled people.

Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) – *Introduction to Digital Accessibility: Delivering inclusive digital content*

The Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) is responsible for the leadership and governance of the New Zealand Government Web Standards which outline accessibility and usability requirements for public digital products

and services. Their role includes building capability across the government and supplier communities to ensure standards can be met. Government websites are vehicles for providing information and services to the public. Therefore, government departments need to ensure digital services are accessible and useful to everyone, including disabled people, if they are to serve the widest possible audience. As more services go online, people who are unable to access those services are increasingly disadvantaged.

DIA identified a significant gap in digital accessibility capability across government departments and approached VUW to help them build the necessary capability. The team decided to develop a small micro-credential (5 credits) to be able to meet this emerging industry need, one of the first to be approved and delivered by a university in Aotearoa New Zealand. VUW, DIA and disabled people's organisations worked together to define the learning objectives, learning activities and appropriate assessment. The programme of study was designed to draw on insights and lived experience from disabled people to support building empathy with a variety of users of digital services. The assessment tasks were designed to support the application of the learning into the workplace through designing, testing or developing accessible content, or through effectively communicating best practice in digital accessibility to others. Originally the micro-credential was offered with a mix of online and face-to-face workshops, but moved fully online from October 2021, after feedback from learners. This has meant people from outside Wellington have also been able to participate.

Between June 2020 and February 2022, just over 80 people completed the programme. The learners tended to be professionals in digital, web, UX, online or communications roles. They came from a range of public and private-sector organisations, including local and central government, for example, Wellington and Hamilton City Councils, DIA, MBIE, Sharesies, Meridian, MSD, and Office of the Prime Minister. Some of VUW's own staff also completed the micro-credential.

Fetu, a digital channels adviser, was chosen as the first in her team to do professional development in accessibility. Following her experience studying the VUW micro-credential, others are likely to follow. Fetu found the learning covered during her study to be ‘just

the right amount to get through the gate', and that it was also a good volume of study to fit in with her other work commitments. Since completing the micro-credential, she has presented to her team on what she learned which has 'brought the conversation to the fore', and use of tools to test accessibility is now part of the team's standard way of working. Gaining a formal credential was important to Fetu, and she believes this helped her receive a recent promotion to a more senior role.

Bev, a usability designer in a government department, found studying the micro-credential transformative. The first benefit was her increased confidence in understanding and applying accessibility in her work. Bev already had a passion for the topic and had taught herself a certain amount from the internet before enrolling in the programme. Gaining a credential meant that someone else believed she was competent. For her, it was valuable having content created by experts and getting up-to-date information in a fast-moving field. Secondly, through the micro-credential she was able to prove that she could fit study into her life as a worker, wife and mother. These experiences have given Bev the confidence to enrol in the International Association of Accessibility Professionals' Web Accessibility Specialist programme. The micro-credential has also changed her work life. She is now seen as a leader in accessibility within her organisation. Through her study, she was able to help her agency understand how they could meet new legislative requirements using existing resources. Bev has also founded a cross-division community of interest for accessibility at her workplace and been invited to speak to other agencies, businesses and charities on the topic.

Conclusion

Since introducing micro-credentials onto its national Framework, Aotearoa New Zealand has proven the value of formal pathways for short, relevant training in meeting the needs of learners and employers, the two end-users of qualifications. The use cases show the value of pathway courses for young learners considering first career options and for more mature learners considering the feasibility of further study to advance existing, or pursue new, careers. The use cases also illustrate how 'quick to market' education

products can help meet urgent skill needs, such as those required in response to the pandemic, and emerging skill needs, such as moving government services to better meet the needs of disabled learners. Micro-credentials have proved effective in upskilling learners while working, at lower and higher skill-levels, including giving learners their first formal credential.

In a second insights paper, we share in more detail NZQA's policy journey and how our thinking and practice is evolving.

Micro-credentials will remain a term covering a wide range of education and training some of which will be subject to recognised quality assurance process and some of which will not. As we continue our journey towards a more flexible, responsive system of lifelong learning the formalising and standardising of micro-credentials should not obstruct innovation and diversity. Above all, in the creation of more flexibility we seek to enable informed choices that lead to long-term benefits for iwi, industry, employers and learners.

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NEW ZEALAND QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY
MANA TOHU MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA

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The *Insights* series draws on NZQA's data and expertise to provide insights into qualification, assessment, and quality assurance matters. *Insights* papers have a particular focus on equity issues, good practice and bringing to life administrative data that will support education system improvement.

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