

# *Welcome!*

## **Quality Without Borders: Strengthening Trust in Macro- and Micro-Credentials for the Global Labour Market**

*A principle-based approach to trust, recognition, and system integration*

---

February 5th, 2026

INQAAHE Forum 2026, Sun City, South Africa  
Christiane Butler, Deputy Division Manager  
Certifications at FIBAA



# Why this topic now?

## Micro-credentials promise agility

- Skills needs are evolving faster than traditional qualifications
- Micro-credentials promise flexibility, responsiveness, and inclusion
- But what about quality assurance?

## Where Macro-Credentials Fit

Macro-credentials remain the backbone of trust, recognition, and qualification frameworks. Micro-credentials increasingly operate **within, alongside, or towards** macro-credentials — enhancing flexibility, lifelong learning, and responsiveness **without replacing them.**

# Strengthening Trust in Macro- and Micro-Credentials for the Global Labour Market



## Workshop Goals:

- Explore what 'labour market relevance' means in terms of QA
- Explore **QA Principles** and reflect on adaptability across contexts
- Explore how QA Principles can enable **recognition for Micro-credentials**
- **Strategic Reflection:** Explore QA mechanisms to ensure labour market relevance across contexts

# Who's in the Room?



FIBAA

10.02.2026

FIBAA

4

# What Do We Mean by Micro-credentials?

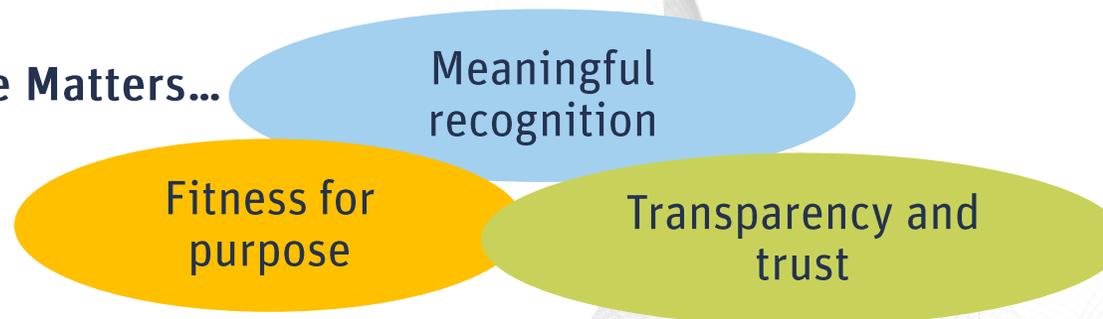
## FIBAA's Working Understanding of Micro-credentials/Short courses

- Short, focused learning experience (1 to ? credits)
- Defined learning outcomes assessed against transparent and clearly defined criteria.
- Relevant (for up-/reskilling)
- Offered by HEIs and “others”
- Underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards (e.g. in EHEA: ESG, ECTS Users Guide, EQF)
- “Stackable” (LLL, RPL -> “Individual Educational Biography”)

## What Do We Mean by Macro-credentials?

Degree-programmes  
Formally framed and recognized

## Why Quality Assurance Matters...



# FIBAA's "Triple-E" approach – A Principle-Based Quality Assurance Model for Micro-credentials/short courses

For HEIs & alternative providers

“Triple E” = “EQF” + “ECTS” + “ESG”:

- “EQF” level determination → Competence-oriented learning outcomes (min. EQF level 5 = QF-EHEA short cycle) → Clear purpose and target skills
  - Outcome-based design and assessment coherent with QF level
- “ECTS” credit recommendation (min 25 hours = 1 ECTS credit)
- “ESG”: Transparency and recognition pathways (e.g., Certificate Supplement)
  - Proportionate QA processes (e.g., based on ESG)
  - Stakeholder involvement (incl. Employers, direct or indirect involvement)

[Explore all FIBAA Standards for Continuing Education Courses and Micro-credentials](#)

*Aligned with European Principles and Guidelines – adaptable across contexts*



# Representing Absent Stakeholders in QA Processes

Quality assurance often represents:

- Learners → through outcomes, assessment, protection mechanisms
- Employers → through standards, data, consultation, and validation
- Society → through public interest and accountability

*Presence is not the only form of representation.*

# From QA Design to System Integration: A Cross-Border Example

- US-based company delivering industry-aligned micro-credentials (e.g. “IBM IT Support”, “Google Business Intelligence”, “Microsoft Cybersecurity Analyst”)
- Learners seek RPL within European higher education
- Aim: alignment with European QA expectations without changing provider identity

## QA Approach:

- Micro-credentials reviewed against **European Principles and Guidelines**
- Learning outcomes and assessment mapped to academic expectations
- **Credit recommendation** issued based on EQF level, workload, and outcomes

## System Integration:

- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**
- **Flat-rate recognition agreements** while maintaining institutional decision-making autonomy
- Micro-credentials integrated into existing programmes



# Workshop Core Question

**How do you quality-assure micro-credentials using evidence of societal and labour-market needs?**

e.g., in areas such as digital transformation, entrepreneurship, and sustainability ?

# Group Task 1 – Identifying Skill Needs Through Evidence

In your group, choose **one domain**:

- Digital transformation
- Entrepreneurship
- Sustainability

**Discuss:**

- What societal or labour-market needs are relevant in your context?
- What evidence would your QA system expect to see to justify these needs?
- Which stakeholder interests are represented through this evidence?

## Group Task 2 – Labour Market Relevance in QA Practices

Discuss:

Should labour market relevance be assessed at the level of:

- learning outcomes
- assessments
- credential design
- or post-completion outcomes – and *How?*

What else would an internal or external reviewer need to see to be confident the design is fit for purpose?

# Group Task 3 – QA and Recognition: Scope and Limits

**Where does QA enable recognition?  
/  
Where does it legitimately set limits?**

# Zooming Out: Principle-Based QA Across Borders

If you had to define 3–5 *principles* or *mechanisms* for QA of labour-market-relevant micro-credentials that work across borders, what would they be?

Examples:

- Periodic QA review cycles
- Framework alignment and revision processes
- Monitoring labour-market data
- Governance structures and roles
- Feedback loops between providers, QA bodies, and policy



FIBAA

# Thank you!

---

## Info

For more information, please contact:

[butler@fibaa.org](mailto:butler@fibaa.org)