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ACE-WIL Virtual Town Hall: Microcredentials

Hosted by Helena Prins, Advisor, BCcampus

Presenter: Anne-Marie Fannon

Helena Prins

BCcampus

hprins@bccampus.ca

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Association for
Co-operative Education
and Work-Integrated
Learning

BC/Yukon



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Since time immemorial, the səliłwətaʔt təməx^w (Tsleil-Waututh), Skwxwú7mesh-ulh Temíxw (Squamish), x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), WSÁNEĆ (Saanich), and the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations of the Lək^wəŋən (Lekwungen) Peoples have walked gently on the unceded territories where we are grateful to live, work, and play. We are committed to building relationships with the first peoples here, based in honour and respect, and we thank them for their hospitality.

Microcredentials and WIL

Presented by: Anne-Marie Fannon,
Director, Work-Integrated Learning Programs



HOW DO MICROCREDENTIALS “FIT” WITH WIL?

And how can we ensure they are meaningful to learners and employers?

What are microcredentials?

At the most basic level, **micro-credentials verify, validate, and attest that specific skills and/or competencies have been achieved.** They differ from traditional degrees and certificates in that they are generally offered in shorter or more flexible timespans and tend to be more narrowly focused.

-The State University of New York

Purposes of microcredentials

- **Provide evidence of skills and competencies not evident through attainment of degrees, diplomas or a review of transcripts**
- Recognize competencies achieved through co-curricular experiences
- **Provide rapid training for in demand skills**
- Create pathways into traditional post-secondary programming
- **Recognition of skills and competencies developed through on the job learning, including professional development programs**

VERIFICATION OF SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES NOT EXPLICITLY IDENTIFIED WITH DEGREES, DIPLOMAS OR TRANSCRIPTS

WORK TERM RECORD

Work Term	Employer	Evaluation
Jan - Apr 2015	PepsiCo Foods Canada Frito Lay Canada Cambridge Health & Safety Assistant	VERY GOOD
May - Aug 2016	The Norfolk Fruit Growers' Association Simcoe Pest Management Scouts - Tree Fruit	EXCELLENT
Jan - Apr 2017	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Research Branch Guelph Ontario Canada Agri-Environmental Science Development Assistant	EXCELLENT
Sep - Dec 2017	University of Waterloo Professional Development Program (WatPD) Waterloo Ontario Canada Teaching Assistant	OUTSTANDING

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO'S FUTURE READY TALENT FRAMEWORK

Expand + Transfer Expertise	Develop Self	Build Relationships	Design + Deliver Solutions
information & data literacy	self-assessment	communication	critical thinking
technological agility	self-management	collaboration	innovation mindset
context-specific knowledge & skills	life-long learning & career development	intercultural effectiveness	implementation

PILOT PROJECTS AND RESEARCH

Microcredential pilot projects

- Received funding from eCampus Ontario
- Partnered with Electricity Human Resources Canada and Electrical and Computer Engineering
- Focused on two skills within the FRTF (communication and teamwork/collaboration)
- Students eligible to earn a microcredential when they met two benchmarks:
 - 80% in professional development course (Communication or Teamwork)
 - “Superior Performance” rating on student performance evaluation on related competencies

Examining Employer and Student Perceptions of Microcredentials

- Surveys of employers and students conducted in partnership with Waterloo's Work-Learn Institute
- Surveys ran for one week in February 2020 – paper survey for employers and online survey (via PD courses) for students
 - ~120 employer responses; ~1000 student responses
- 3 main research questions:
 - How familiar are employers and students with microcredentials?
 - What is the perceived value of microcredentials to employers and students?
 - How motivated are students to earn microcredentials in a WIL context?

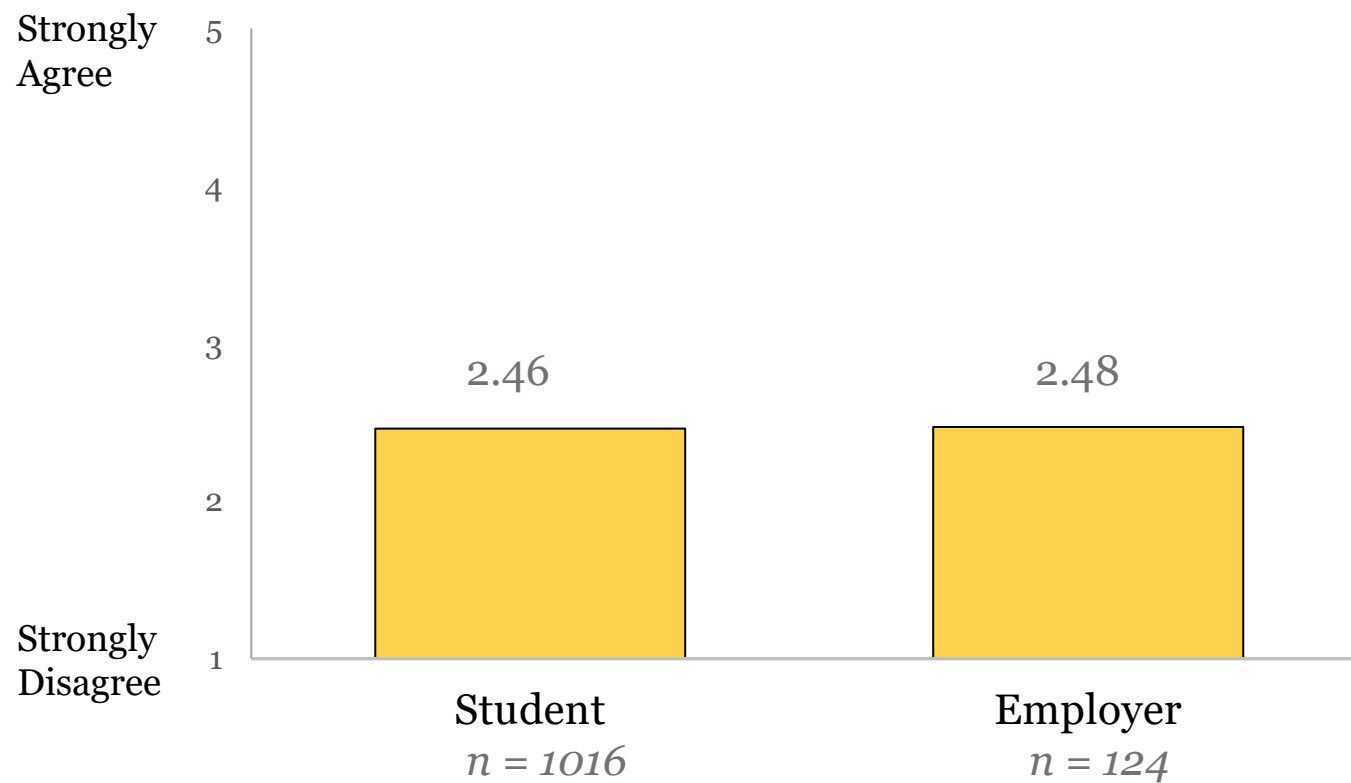
Method

Employer and student surveys

- 'I am familiar with microcredentials' } *Awareness*
- 'Microcredentials are a good signal to potential employers about the skills a candidate possesses'
- 'Microcredentials are valuable for demonstrating competence in a technical skills' }
- 'Microcredentials are valuable for demonstrating competence in a soft skills (e.g. communication, teamwork)' } *Perceived value*
- 'I would exert more effort in my PD course if I could earn a microcredential' }
- 'I would exert more effort in my workplace if I could earn a microcredential' } *Motivation*

Awareness

'I am familiar with microcredentials'



Results

Perceived value –*employers*

	<i>n</i>	Mean	% agreed
I would encourage co-op students to earn microcredentials as a signal for the competencies they have developed.	124	3.51	57%
All other qualifications being equal, I would be more likely to interview a co-op student who has a relevant microcredential.	124	3.62	61%

1= Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Perceived value

Conditions affecting perceived value

- Microcredentials demonstrating both knowledge acquisition *and* competence in a workplace > microcredentials demonstrating knowledge acquisition alone
- Complement > substitute to a degree
- Technical skills > soft skills
- Microcredential issued by the University of Waterloo > microcredential issued by an online educational platform (E.g. LinkedIn Learning).

Results

Student motivation ($n=1013$)

‘I would exert more effort in my...if I could earn a microcredential’



1= Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Summary of results & limitations

- Awareness of microcredentials remains low, but increasing familiarity could improve perceptions of value. Awareness of microcredentials is positively correlated with perceptions of value.
- Employers & students perceive moderate value in microcredentials
- The perceived value of microcredentials is influenced by the granting body of the credential, the completion criteria, and the skills recognized through the credential

Limitations

- Low awareness
- Survey method

Second pilot project and research findings

- Focused on the skills of problem solving and communication
- Employed Electrical and Computer Engineering co-op students enrolled in Communication (9) or Problem Solving (176) courses
- Students eligible to earn a microcredential when they met two benchmarks:
 - 80% in PD course (Communication or Problem Solving)
 - “Superior Performance” rating on student performance evaluation of related competencies
- 1 student met both benchmarks in communication; 71 students (40%) met both benchmarks in problem solving; 62 (35%) students requested the microcredential
- Interesting findings with respect to engagement in the PD course; 51% of students earned 80% or higher (range is typically 20-40%, depending on term)

Themes from interviews

- Interviewed 7 students who participated in pilot projects
 - 2 students in the communication pilot and 5 students in the problem solving pilot
- Themes:
 - Stricter criteria added legitimacy
 - *It's very similar, like, most candidates probably have similar performance evaluations for their Co Ops. So, if there was like, that little badge there that said, like, oh, during this Co, op, this student showed problem solving skills and here's the credential to prove it. I guess that would give them a further differentiator between candidates to maybe help them decide who they want to interview.*
 - Employer perception of the value of the microcredential is key and not all students were convinced that earning a microcredential would add value to their application package
 - *At least for me, like the micro credentials, I don't think my employer would really place much emphasis on it. I think like, other stuff my resume is probably stands out more [...] Yeah, I'd say work experience, volunteer experience, extracurriculars.*

Themes from interviews

- Themes continued:
 - Students were focused on the learning and skills, not necessarily certification
 - *I think like learning the actual skills are more important than the actual, like, certificates. So, I think the most value is, like, learning those skills, like putting into practice at work. Or, I guess in your daily life, whether it be academics or you know, professionally.*
 - For some students, the ability to earn a credential did motivate them to put in more effort in their PD course and in the workplace
 - *Yeah, I think I tried a little bit harder because there was that bar to get the micro credential. So I definitely put a little more effort.*
 - *I think micro credentials having a stamp to sort of certify that you put in that work. I think it will motivate more work.*

Next steps in pilot projects

- Further analysis of results from first two pilot projects
- Employer survey on microcredentials, specifically within the electricity sector, in partnership with Electricity Human Resources Canada
- Exploring integration of microcredentials within our recruitment software (i.e., ORBIS) such that students could display earned microcredentials when applying for jobs
- Offering version of Communication course through continuing ed; exploring models for an “on the job” evaluation of learners’ competencies
- So many more research questions!!

Digital skills fundamentals

- Spring 2020, in response to COVID and the need to help so many SMEs go online, developed a series of online modules for our students to help upskill them in key digital skills
 - Developed in partnership with industry including Deloitte, Shopify, Vidyard, Kiite Academy and more
 - Introduction to topics like digital marketing, web design, video marketing, sales skills, eCommerce and cyber risk
- Structured and functioned very much like a MOOC, prepackaged content with small completion assessments
- Not “microcredential” worthy but an interesting experiment in co-creating content with industry partners to help upskill our students

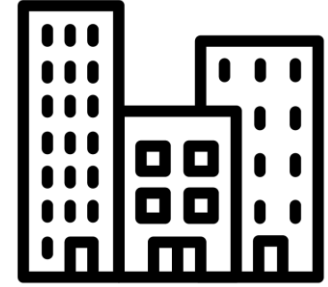
CHALLENGES ASSESSING LEARNING IN WIL



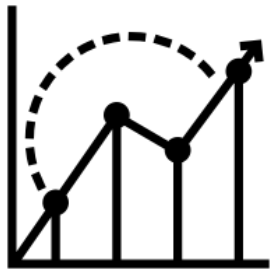
**Uniqueness of
each student**



**Student self-assessment
challenges**



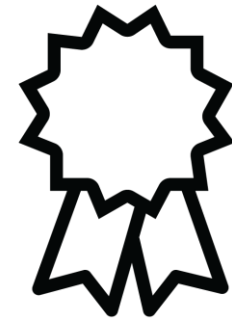
**Uniqueness of each
WIL setting**



**Identification of
'career-readiness' benchmarks**



**WIL supervisor
as assessor**

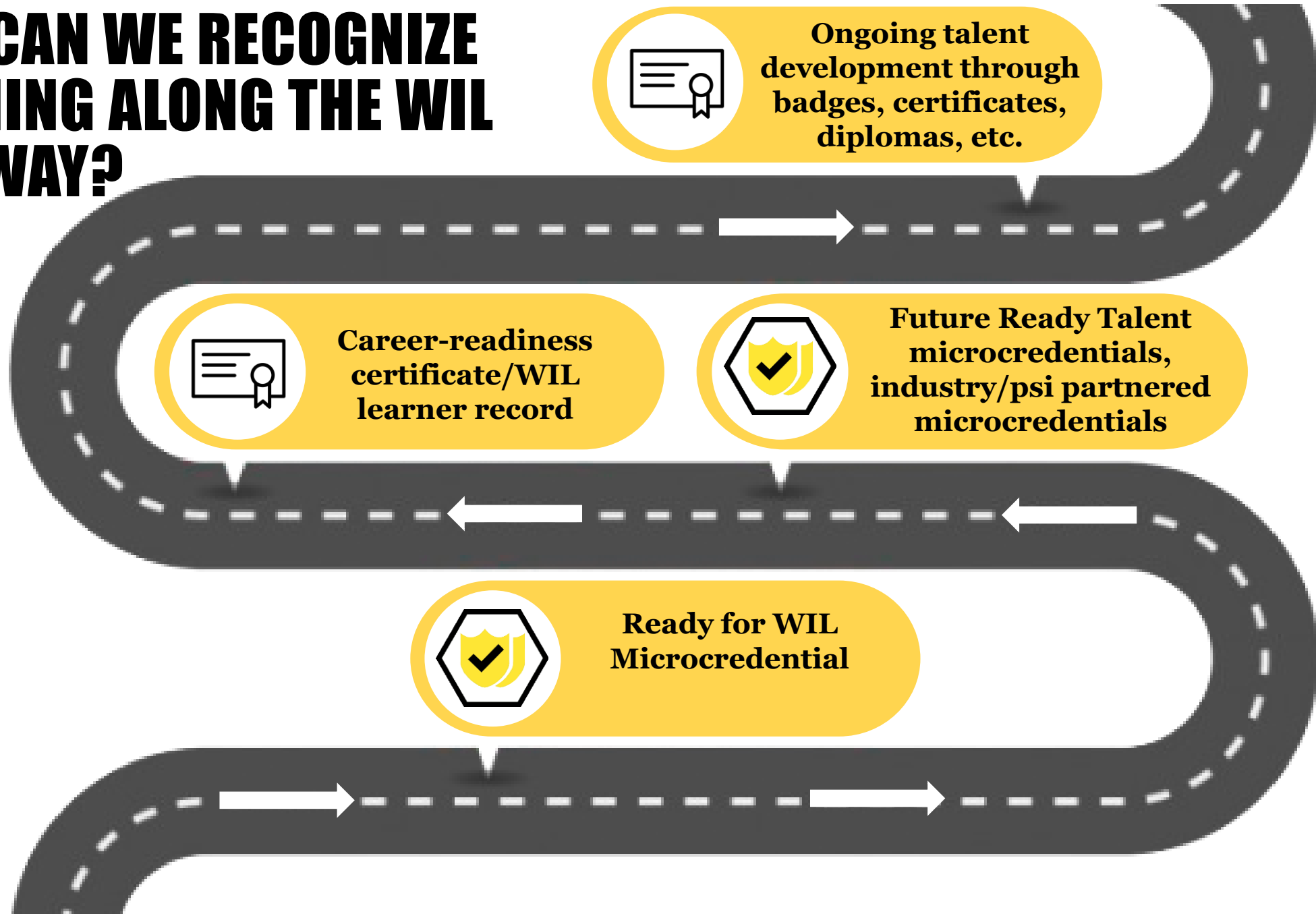


**Employers' willingness to publicly
endorse talents**

Where to from here?

- Taking what we've learned in our pilot projects and developing strategy for verifying and validating the skills/competencies that students have acquired (and demonstrated) through out the WIL experiences
 - Aligned with our Future Ready Talent Framework and Waterloo's microcredential framework
- Exploring further co-creation of microcredentials with strategic industry partners which would allow our students to develop and demonstrate skills in particular competencies (technological agility, information and data literacy, context and discipline specific skills, implementation)
- Top down vs. ground up – or a little bit of both

HOW CAN WE RECOGNIZE LEARNING ALONG THE WIL PATHWAY?



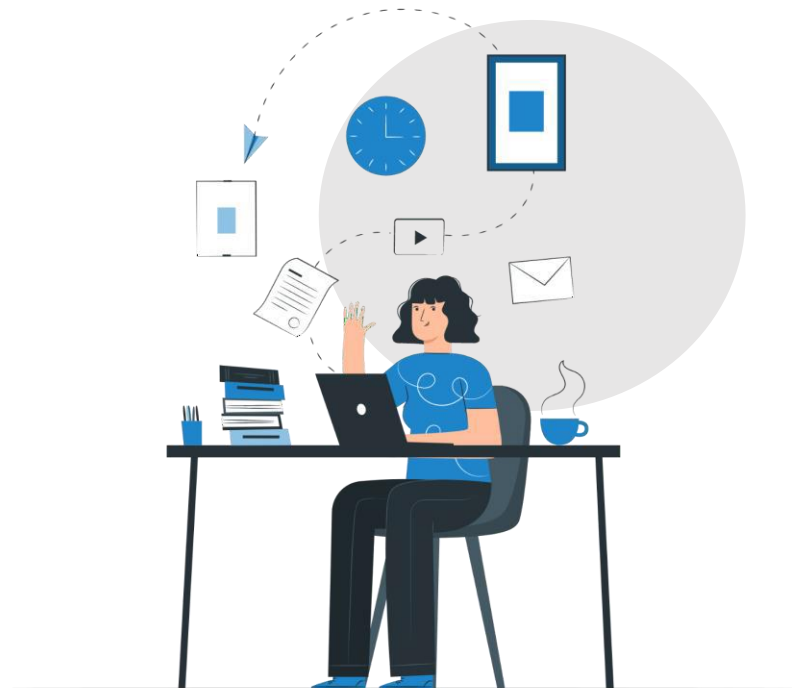
QUESTIONS

Introducing: Talent MATCH

**> A new partnership with Alliance for Arts + Culture,
BC Museums Association, and go2HR.**

Matching students with
work integrated learning
opportunities at

- > Museums,
- > Arts,
- > Tourism,
- > Culture, and
- > Hospitality organizations.



Questions? More information?
Contact Project Manager
Debby Reis at
debbyreis@uvic.ca



FLO MicroCourse: Micro-credentials in the B.C. Context

March 1, 2021 – March 12, 2021

Registration is open!





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Thank you everyone!



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