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Micro-Credentials in Tourism Education: Evidence from Polish Universities in an International Context

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Abstract:

Purpose: *The main purpose of the article is to present micro-credentials as a form of improving the qualifications and knowledge of students at universities in its faculties and fields of study related to tourism and recreation, as well as hotel industry. The supplementary objectives concern the presentation of general theoretical aspects of micro-qualifications, their implementation status at Polish universities, and proposals for thematic training blocks within the framework of micro-qualifications covering a wide range of tourism topics.*
Design/methodology/approach: *The article uses the method of criticism and analysis of scientific literature. It analyzes professional literature, projects, research reports, and legal documents. The basic document containing recommendations related to the implementation of micro-qualifications at universities in European Union member states is the Council Recommendation of June 22, 2022, on a European approach to micro-qualifications for lifelong learning and employability. It also provides the basis for expanding the scope of micro-qualifications in Poland, including in the field of tourism and hospitality.*
Findings: *In Poland, there are only a few universities offering tourism-related courses that can be considered micro-qualifications. However, higher education institutions offering tourism studies are showing increasing interest in micro-qualifications. Such initiatives would help students supplement their knowledge and improve their qualifications for future employment in various professions in the tourism and hospitality industry.*
Research limitations/implications: *This article presents the current situation regarding micro-qualifications at higher education institutions with tourism profiles in Poland. Increased awareness-raising activities are a very important factor for their further development. The main barriers and concerns regarding the wider introduction of micro-qualification courses and training relate to the lack of knowledge among academic staff about their implementation and uncertainty among staff about the quality of certified micro-qualification courses and their recognition in the labor market.*
Practical implications: *Based on examples from countries with experience in micro-qualifications, combined with an assessment of Polish universities and the demand for skilled*

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workers in the tourism sector, the author of the article presented proposed thematic blocks of training within the framework of micro-qualifications in tourism.
Social implications: *Micro-qualifications are gradually becoming part of the education framework for students at universities in Poland. They complement the knowledge acquired during studies and can play an important role in job hunting. In tourism and hospitality programs, micro-qualifications can also be an important supplement to knowledge and improve students' qualifications.*
Originality/value: *In Poland, the micro-qualification system is only just beginning to be implemented by schools and universities, including in the field of tourism and hospitality. Therefore, it is important to prepare appropriate staff to manage the system, create appropriate thematic blocks of tourism training within the micro-qualification system, and promote the idea of this type of supplementary education.*

Keywords: *Micro-credentials, courses, tourism, hotel industry.*

JEL Codes: *I23, I28, J24, Z32.*

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1. Introduction

Micro-projects, also referred to as micro-credentials or micro-qualifications, play an important role in the development of higher education around the world. They are a complementary and additional form of education for students.

Micro-projects describe the learning outcomes that a learner has achieved with little effort in acquiring new knowledge and consolidating knowledge already acquired during their studies. The outcomes are assessed on the basis of transparent and clearly defined criteria, and completion of micro-credential courses is rewarded with an appropriate certificate.

Micro-credentials strengthen the image of individual universities as modern institutions. Higher education institutions that implement this educational option focus on innovative forms of confirming the acquisition of additional knowledge. In this way, they increase the attractiveness of their educational offer for students and employers by emphasizing the flexibility of their teaching methods.

The development of micro-credentials is part of the educational strategies of individual countries, which is an important diversification of learning opportunities

at the higher education level. Educational activities leading to micro-credentials are designed in such a way that the learner acquires specific knowledge, skills, and competences. They respond to social, personal, and cultural needs or to the needs of the labor market.

They are an additional form of acquiring competences and can be crucial in later professional life. Therefore, the development of micro-credentials at higher education institutions is important, and their organizers should make every effort to impart knowledge to students in a perfect manner.

The idea of micro-credentials is brought to life by Digital Badges. Digital Badges are issued using special software that encodes information in a badge image file. The best-known form are Open Badges, developed in 2013 by the Mozilla Foundation. Since then, they have been continuously developed to increase security and improve existing functionalities.

Open Badges are a digital representation of skills or achievements recorded in the form of a visual symbol that contains verifiable data and evidence. They are created according to a specific open standard, so they can be shared online. Open Badges have gained popularity around the world in recent years and have become a standard feature of many learning management systems (Liyanagunawardena and Williams, 2017).

The article presents the theoretical aspects of micro-credentials, which are a complementary type of education for students. Micro-credentials include courses and training related to selected topics. They supplement the knowledge that students acquire during their studies and result in the award of a certificate.

Having a certificate can be a strong asset for a candidate who will apply for a given job in the future. The development of micro-credentials, recognized as certificates confirming specific skills or knowledge, symbolizes an evolution in the approach to learning and competence validation (Tadejko, 2024, p. 27).

In this publication, the author focuses on micro-certifications in the fields of tourism, hospitality, and recreation. He presents thematic blocks of courses and possibilities for their implementation, using selected universities in Poland and abroad as examples. He also proposes his own training programs in this area, which could be implemented at Polish universities.

The following topics were selected as examples of thematic blocks: hospitality, tourist guiding, and two forms of tourism: culinary and cultural. The first type of tourism is defined as a type of the second, i.e., cultural tourism. Culinary heritage is an important factor in cultural and historical heritage, which is why it is worth taking a closer look at this topic. In the proposed topics for courses in the field of

hospitality, the author focused on the basic duties of hoteliers, such as reception staff in hotels, motels, or other facilities, managers, catering staff, and housekeeping staff.

Hospitality courses should be related to hotel guest service and management and marketing aspects. Completing this type of training as part of micro-credentials can be a strong asset for people intending to work in a hotel or for those already working in such a facility.

The last type of training, related to the work of tourist guides, is another important course for students, in the author's opinion. The profession of tourist guide has a long tradition in the country, dating back to the 19th century. There is a considerable demand for guides in mountain regions, field guides, and city guides. The work of museum guides is also very popular in Poland.

Micro-certificates obtained at universities offering education in tourism and hospitality complement the knowledge acquired by students during several years of study. The tourism industry in Poland needs experts in various professions.

Therefore, it is highly recommended that students participate in additional specialist courses in tourism. Another important issue is the selection of competent people to conduct training, who, in addition to academic teachers, may be tourism entrepreneurs, e.g., hoteliers, tour guides, or representatives of non-governmental organizations involved in tourism.

2. Micro-Credentials at Universities Around the World

The English term "micro-credentials" refers both to learning leading to qualifications and to qualifications confirming the achievement of relevant competences.

Micro-credentials have been widely used for many years, primarily at Australian, American, Canadian, and New Zealand universities. In Europe, they have a shorter history, as the need to launch this type of initiative coincided with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (Urbanikowa *et al.,* 2024).

First, it is worth considering the meaning of the term "micro-credentials." The name includes the word "credentials," which literally means official confirmation of the authenticity, conformity, or veracity of a certain fact, signature, or document.

It can also mean confirmation of the state of affairs by a person or institution authorized to do so. Table 1 shows the meaning of four words: certification, micro-certification, qualification, and micro-qualification.

Table 1. *Explanation of terms: certification, micro-certification, qualification, micro-qualification*

Term	Explanation
Credential	An educational credential is a document confirming a person's learning outcomes or other achievements. Credentialing is the confirmation of a learner's learning outcomes or achievements. It should be seen as part of the process of recognizing prior learning.
Micro-credential	Micro-credentials are sub-units of a credential or credentials (they can be micro, meso, mini, nano, etc.) that can be accumulated to obtain larger credentials or form part of a portfolio. In some languages (e.g., Lithuanian and Italian), there is a problem with translating the term micro-credential.
Qualification	A qualification is the formal outcome of an assessment and validation process, which is obtained when an appropriate institution determines that a person has achieved learning outcomes in line with specified standards. Qualifications are generally consistent with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). It is worth noting that, in light of the adopted definitions, qualifications are a subset of certifications. They are sometimes referred to as "macro-certifications."
Micro-qualification	Micro-qualifications are a type of micro-credential. Both terms refer to short, focused learning experiences that validate specific skills and knowledge in a particular area, offering a quick and flexible alternative to traditional degrees. They are designed for immediate application in the workplace, providing individuals with in-demand competencies for career advancement or transition

Source: *Own study based on: Brdulak J., Lewicki J., (2021), "Microcredentials and education..., pp. 6-7.*

No common definition of micro-projects has been developed, yet and there is a lack of standards for their description and recognition. This raises concerns about their value, quality, recognition, transparency, and "portability" between the education and training sectors and, within these sectors, on the labor market and between countries (Solarczyk-Ambrozik, 2024).

Micro-credentials are a global trend in higher education, offering short, skills-focused learning for specific outcomes and increased employability. Universities worldwide are increasingly offering these flexible, credit-bearing certifications to bridge the skills gap, allowing learners to stack them into larger degrees or use them for continuing professional development.

Platforms like Coursera and edX partner with universities to deliver these programs, blending academic rigor with practical, job-ready skills for learners at all stages of their career (Flasdick *et al.,* 2023).

Table 2 below presents selected definitions of micro-credentials.

Table 2. *Definitions of micro-credentials according to various sources.*

Source:	Definition
Deakin University, Australia	Micro-credentials certify achievement in a specific area of study or professional development in a form that is shareable with peers, employers and educational providers. Established by the University or a third party, Micro-credentials may be recognised for the purpose of admission and/or for credit to non-award or award qualifications. For the purpose of credit, micro-credentials are recognised as prior formal learning (A European approach…2020, p. 12).
MicroHE[4]	A micro-credential is a sub-unit of a credential that could accumulate into a larger credential or a degree or be part of a portfolio. Examples are Digital Badges, Verified credentials, MicroMasters, Nanodegrees". (Challenges and…, 2019, p. 12).
European Commission	A micro-credential is an evidence of learning outcomes acquired through short-term educational experiences (Gamage, Dehideniya, 2025, p. 2).
UNESCO	Micro-qualifications are a record of targeted learning and achievements confirming what a learner knows, understands, or can do. They involve assessment based on clearly defined standards and are awarded by a trusted institution. They have value on their own and can also contribute to or complement other micro-qualifications or macro-qualifications, including through the recognition of prior learning. Micro-qualifications meet the standards required by appropriate quality assurance.

Source: *Own study based on: Challenges and Opportunities of Micro-Credentials in Europe. Briefing Paper on the Award, Recognition, Portability and Accreditation of Micro-Credentials (2019), version 6. MicroHE[3], p. 12, available at: https://microcredentials.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2019/12/WP3-Interviews-with-Key-Stakeholders-Decision-Makers-Overall-Summary-Report.pdf*
European Commission (2020), A European approach to micro-credentials – Output of the micro-credentials higher education consultation group – Final report, European Commission, Brussels, available at: https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/european-approach-micro-credentials-higher-education-consultation-group-output-annex-1.pdf
Gamage, K.A.A., Dehideniya, S.C.P. (2025), „Unlocking Career Potential: How Micro-Credentials Are Revolutionising Higher Education and Lifelong Learning, Education Science, 15(5), 525, p. 1-21, https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15050525, availanble at: file:///C:/Users/Arek/Pobrane/education-15-00525.pdf
Murgatroyd, S. (2020), „Micro-Credentials and the Future of Skills-Based Learning: Looking at Canada, DOI: https://doi.org/10.56059/pcf10.6663, p. 9-10, available at: file:///C:/Users/Arek/Pobrane/Micro-Credentials_and_the_Future_of_Skills-Based_L.pdf

Micro-credentials have become a significant phenomenon in the global world of education, offering a unique approach to skills development and recognition that complements traditional degree programs and, according to some researchers, even

[4]*MicroHE is the organization which aims to provide the most comprehensive policy analysis yet conducted of the impact of modularisation, unbundling and micro-credentialing in European Higher Education*

replaces them (Varadarjan *et al.,* 2023). Micro-credentials offer short, skills-focused learning that allows learners to achieve specific outcomes and increase their employability.

Universities around the world are increasingly offering these flexible certificates to fill skills gaps, enabling learners to accumulate knowledge and skills toward higher degrees or for further professional development. Platforms such as Coursera and edX are partnering with universities to deliver micro-credential programs, combining academic rigor with practical job-ready skills for learners at all stages of their careers (Flasdick *et al.,* 2023).

Micro-credentials are characterised by short study duration (Oliver, 2019). They are potentially relevant to learners, in spite of their age and they support education accessibility and therefore they are being promoted as an alternative education pathway (Olcott, 2022; 2021a). Simultaneously, micro-credentials have been criticised as a threat to traditional forms of education. It results from the fact, that micro-credentials may facilitate gig work and join the education to a particular occupation (Wheelahan and Moodie, 2021a, 2021b).

In the US, micro-credentials, as a potential career path, are the focus of a few universities, given their total number. In 2023, out of the 1,860 universities listed in US News and World Report, only 127 (6.8%) offered any form of micro-credentials. However, it turned out that when universities offer micro-credentials, they do so on a large scale. In fact, two years ago, 127 universities offered a total of 2,308 micro-credentials (Lang and Sharp, 2023, p. 2).

Micro-credentials are an opportunity to meet labor market needs and support lifelong learning in New Zealand. They were introduced into the New Zealand Qualifications Framework in 2018. At universities, micro-qualifications include programs designed to fill skills gaps and increase employability (Martin, 2024, p. 5). In Australia, on the other hand, micro-qualifications are not regulated and remain outside the Australian Qualifications Framework.

The lack of regulation gives providers the opportunity to create innovative micro-credential offerings. In this country, the highest institution representing universities is Universities Australia, which brings together 39 universities. Each of them is an autonomous and independently accredited institution. It independently establishes and adheres to its own rules, procedures, and standards for the admission, certification, and recognition of micro-qualifications (Guidance for...2021, p. 4).

Micro-qualifications are also developing in European Union member states and other countries on the Old Continent. In 2020, the European Commission announced a new initiative in the field of micro-credentials, which will enable the flexible acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competences (Solarczyk-Ambrozik, 2023, p. 17).

In the context of micro-credentials, the Council of the European Union recommends (Council Recommendations..., 2022):

- Enabling individuals to acquire, update, and improve the knowledge, skills, and competences they need to develop their potential in a changing labor market and society. The idea behind micro-credentials is also to take full advantage of a socially just recovery and transition towards a green and digital economy, and to be better prepared to deal with the challenges of today and tomorrow.

- Supporting the readiness of micro-credential providers to improve quality and increase the transparency and flexibility of educational offerings in order to enable individuals to choose their own learning and career paths.

- Promoting social inclusion, accessibility, and equal opportunities, and contributing to resilience, social justice, and well-being for all, in the context of demographic change and across all phases of the economic cycle.

The Council of the EU also recommends that Member States, where appropriate, use micro-credentials as a tool that strengthens and complements existing learning opportunities and increases participation in lifelong learning.

The Council also recommends that micro-credentials contribute to the goal of at least 60% of all adults participating in training each year, as set out in the action plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights and endorsed in the Council resolution on the new European Pillar of Social Rights.

All adults participate in training each year, as set out in the action plan for the European Pillar of Social Rights and endorsed in the Council Resolution on a new European agenda for adult learning 2021-2030 (Council Recommendations..., 2022, p. 14).

To implement the above recommendations, an appropriate definition of micro-credentials is applied, and various definitions are implemented. Table 3 presents the definition of micro-credentials and the meaning of other related terms.

Table 3. *Definition of micro-credentials and related terms according to the Council of the European Union*

Term	Definition
Micro-credentials	They describe the learning outcomes that a learner has achieved with minimal learning effort. These outcomes are assessed on the basis of clearly defined criteria. Educational activities leading to micro-credentials are designed to enable learners to acquire specific knowledge, skills, and competences. Their purpose is to meet social, personal, and cultural needs, as well as the needs of the labor market.

Organizers offering micro-credentials	They refer to education and training institutions and organizations, social partners (i.e., organizations representing employees and employers), employers and industry representatives, civil society organizations, public employment services, regional and national authorities, and other types of organizers that develop, offer, and issue micro-credentials in formal, non-formal, and informal learning.
Learning environment	It refers to the diverse physical, online, blended, virtual, and digital locations, contexts, and cultures in which people learn, and encompasses all environments in which formal, non-formal, and informal learning can take place.
Formal learning	It refers to learning that takes place in an organized and structured environment specifically designed for learning and usually leads to a qualification, generally in the form of a certificate or diploma; it includes, among other things, general education, vocational education and training, including continuing education and higher education, and higher education.
Non-formal learning	It refers to learning that takes place outside formal education and training, is carried out through planned activities (in terms of learning objectives and time) and provides some form of learning support.
Informal learning	It refers to learning that results from everyday activities and experiences, which is not organized or structured in terms of objectives, time, or learning support; from the learner's perspective, it may be unintentional. It does not automatically lead to micro-credentials, but can be considered in the context of validation solutions that can identify, document, assess, or certify an individual's learning outcomes.
Portability	It means that the holder of a micro-credential can store it in a chosen system and share it with a chosen party (national or transnational), and that all parties involved in the exchange can understand the content of the credential and verify its authenticity. This allows micro-credentials to be transferred between and within education and training sectors, within the labor market, and between countries.
Possibility of accumulation	This means, where appropriate, the possibility of combining different micro-credentials and acquiring them gradually in a logical manner. Decisions on "accumulating" or combining credentials are at the discretion of the receiving organization (e.g., education and training institutions, employers, etc.) in accordance with its practices and should support the goals and needs of the learner. The accumulation of micro-credentials does not automatically entitle the learner to a qualification, title, or degree. Such decisions are made by regional and national authorities or institutions in accordance with awarding processes.
Evaluation	Refers to the process or method used to assess, measure, and ultimately describe the learning outcomes achieved by individuals in formal, non-formal, or informal settings. The assessment is carried out by the organizer or another recognized assessment organizer.

Source: *Own study based on: Zalecenie Rady z dnia 22 czerwca 2022 r. w sprawie europejskiego podejścia do mikro-poświadczeń na potrzeby uczenia się przez całe życie i zatrudnialności (2022/C 243/14, C 243/15), available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/PL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022H0627(02)*

In European Union member states, it has been recommended for several years that universities implement micro-credential training based on European Commission guidelines. The Commission has developed recommendations for micro-credentials entitled "Standard European elements for the description of micro-credentials." These elements include Council Recommendations (Council Recommendations..., 2022, p. 14):

1. Identification of the learner.
2. Title [name] of the micro-credential.
3. Country/region of the issuing body.
4. Issuing body [issuing institution].
5. Date of issue.
6. Learning outcomes.
7. The default workload required to achieve the learning outcomes (in accordance with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, ECTS, where possible).
8. Level (and cycle, where applicable) of the learning experience [learning activity] leading to the micro-credit (European Qualifications Framework, Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area).
9. Type [form] of assessment, understood as a method of verifying learning outcomes.
10. Form of participation in the learning experience, e.g., in the form of education.
11. Quality assurance method used as the basis for issuing the micro-credential.
12. Conditions to be met in order to participate in the learning experience [learning activity].
13. Supervision and identity verification during assessment [verification of learning outcomes] (no supervision and no identity verification / supervision without identity verification / online supervision or on-site identity verification).
14. Grade obtained*, understood as the assessment received by the learner applying for a micro-credential.
15. Integration/combination option (standalone, independent micro-credentials/integrated, combinable with other credentials).
16. Additional information.

3. Micro-Credentials at Polish Universities

The term "micro-credential" is not currently defined in Polish legislation. In literature and practice, micro-credentials are divided into two groups: micro-credentials and digital badges and Open Badges.

These terms refer to different forms of education, but they are not entirely separate. The term micro-credentials appears more often in the context of formal education and higher education, while the concept of digital badges is more closely associated

with the idea of lifelong learning, non-formal education, and informal learning (Nowakowski and Stęchły, 2021, p. 6).

On February 23, 2022, the Minister of Education and Science issued an order establishing an Advisory Team for micro-credentials in higher education. The Team's tasks include, among others (Minister's Order..., 2022):

- analyzing concepts related to micro-credentials developed within the European Union or international organizations, in particular verifying the proposed definitions of micro-credentials adequate to the needs of the Polish higher education and science system,
- conducting consultations with the academic community,
- analyzing differences and barriers in the recognition of documents confirming achievements in the context of international demands,
- developing recommendations for the ministry on the above-mentioned issues, primarily the feasibility of introducing micro-credentials and digital credentials into the Polish higher education and science system.

In December 2023, the Ministry of Science and Education published a report entitled "Micro-credentials as a new direction for the development of higher education." It covers the theoretical aspects of micro-qualifications and the results of qualitative research conducted at Polish universities.

The aim of the research was to find out the opinions of university staff on micro-credentials. It turned out that respondents' knowledge of the idea of micro-credentials varied.

Some of the respondents represented universities already involved in planning or implementing activities related to micro-credentials, while others were familiar with the topic due to their job responsibilities (Wiktorko *et al.,* 2024).

In 2025, Polish universities still do not have a uniform and binding micro-credential system, and their status is varied and still developing. However, work has begun on the implementation of digital micro-credentials as a way to confirm qualifications and increase the competitiveness of universities and graduates.

The first Polish university to issue its micro-credentials in the Odznaka+ application is the Opole University of Technology (Politechnika…, 2025). Other universities are also introducing micro-credentials to supplement the knowledge acquired during studies.

Various universities and colleges are issuing regulations aimed at issuing micro-credentials as certificates of completed training. The topics of specialist courses are broad and related to the educational offer of a given university.

4. Higher Education in Tourism and Hospitality in Poland

The tourism and hospitality sector is an important branch of the Polish economy. It is based on natural and cultural assets, the material base of tourism, and the marketing activities of tourism entities. Poland offers attractive conditions for travel and recreation. It has access to the Baltic Sea and a coastline 770 km long (Kałduński and Wasilewski, 2021, p. 132).

The country has numerous lake districts and artificial reservoirs, which enable tourists to engage in various forms of water tourism, including sailing, canoeing, swimming, diving, windsurfing, and others. In the southern parts of Poland, there are mountainous regions, such as the Sudetes, the Polish Carpathians, including the Tatra Mountains, Gorce, Pieniny, Bieszczady, and Świętokrzyskie Mountains. Hiking, cycling, and skiing are popular in these areas.

Sightseeing tourism is also developing, based on visiting old towns with architectural monuments, museums, and learning about the folklore and customs of the regions.

In 2024, the Polish tourism sector recorded record growth compared to the previous year. 38.8 million tourists used accommodation facilities, and Poles made over 52 million domestic trips (GUS. Wykorzystanie…, 2025). The industry is growing rapidly and generating an increasing demand for qualified specialists in tourism, hospitality, catering, and recreation. You can work in various companies, e.g., in a hotel at the reception desk, in housekeeping, catering, as a manager, or hotel director. In the catering sector, you can be a waiter, cook, bartender, or manager.

Other types of work in tourism include tourist guiding: mountain, field, city, and museum guiding. They can also be related to the sale of tourist souvenirs or work as a sports and recreation instructor.

There is considerable interest among young people in studying at faculties and departments offering courses in tourism, recreation, and hospitality. They study at private and public universities, both full-time and part-time. Since the 2005/2006 academic year, tourism and related fields have been studied at the bachelor's (first-cycle) level for six semesters.

Completion of studies is associated with writing a bachelor's thesis and passing an exam. After obtaining a bachelor's degree, students can undertake a 4-semester master's degree (second cycle). In order to obtain a master's degree, it is necessary to write a master's thesis and, as in the case of a bachelor's degree, pass an exam. The higher education program in tourism usually covers knowledge in the field of organization and management in tourism, propaedeutics of tourism, marketing, psychology, sociology, tourism geography, and local history.

It also covers knowledge related to practical skills, including leisure time animation, tourist traffic service, and the creation of tourist offers.

Most provincial capitals in Poland offer a wide range of higher education programs in tourism and recreation. For example, in Krakow, the capital of the Małopolska Province, you can study Tourism and Recreation full-time or part-time at six public and three private universities.

The former include: Jagiellonian University, University of Economics, University of the National Education Commission, AGH University of Science and Technology, Academy of Physical Culture, and Pontifical University of John Paul II. Non-public universities offering Tourism and Recreation studies include: Ignatianum University, Bogdan Jański University, and Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski University.

4.1 Micro-Credentials at Polish Universities Offering Tourism-Related Courses – Proposed Thematic Blocks for Micro-Credentials

Micro-credentials in tourism, recreation, and hospitality at Polish universities can be obtained through full-time or part-time study. Classes will be conducted both in traditional form, i.e., in classrooms with audio-visual equipment, and online. Micro-credentials in the form of training courses may include, for example:

1. Certificate of completion of a first aid course for tourist guides.
2. Certificate confirming knowledge of hotel reservation systems.
3. Certificate of completion of a course in cultural or culinary tourism.
4. Certificate confirming skills in organizing leisure activities for children.

Courses for students within the framework of micro-credentials may cover selected areas of tourism, e.g., tour guiding, the travel agency sector, hospitality, catering, transport and others. The author of this article has attempted to present what he considers to be very important thematic blocks of training in various segments of the tourism economy:

- tour guiding,
- hospitality,
- culinary tourism,
- cultural tourism.

Micro-credentials may be related to tourist guiding. Polish tourism law distinguishes between three types of guides: mountain, field, and city guides. Following the deregulation of professions in the industry, since the beginning of 2014, the obligation to participate in specialized courses for city and field guides and to pass an exam for candidates for these professions has been abolished. Despite this, training courses are organized for people intending to work as city or field guides,

but they are completely voluntary. People already working as city or field guides can also participate in specialized courses to improve their qualifications.

A tourist guide is a person who professionally guides tourists or visitors around selected areas, towns, and facilities, provides them with expert information, and looks after tourists or visitors within the scope of the contract (Announcement of the Marshal..., 2016, p. 2).

A person who meets the following criteria may become a tourist guide in Poland (Kawęcki, 2013, p. 124):

- is at least 18 years of age,
- has completed secondary school,
- is in good health, enabling them to perform the duties of a tourist guide,
- has not been convicted of any intentional crimes or other crimes committed in connection with the performance of the duties of a tourist guide,
- has completed theoretical and practical training and passed the tourist guide exam.

Working as a tour guide does not necessarily require a university degree. You can guide tourists in mountain regions, cities, and areas of natural beauty without having a university degree. Nevertheless, the knowledge gained during your studies may prove very useful for your future career as a guide. In tourism-related fields of study, in addition to compulsory and optional subjects, young people can deepen their theoretical knowledge of tour guiding through specialized courses that lead to micro-credentials.

In Table 4, the author of the article proposes thematic blocks of micro-certifications related to tourist guiding in Poland.

Table 4. *Proposed modules for courses leading to micro-credentials certification in the field of tourist guiding in Poland*

Course name	Proponowane moduły szkoleń
General issues concerning tourist guiding in Poland	The history of tourist guiding in Poland
	Types of tourist guides – mountain, field, and city guides
	Legal aspects of tourist guiding in Poland
	Organizational and institutional support for tourist guiding
	Providing first aid to people in need
Mountain guiding	Mountain tourism in Poland in the 19th century and during the interwar period
	The development of mountain tourism during the Polish People's Republic (1945-1989)
	Hiking in the Third Republic of Poland – mountain regions in the country
	Activities of GOPR (Mountain Volunteer Rescue Service) and TOPR (Tatra Volunteer Rescue Service)

	Legal requirements for becoming a mountain guide
	Dangers in the work of mountain guides
Field guidance	Examples of tourist regions in Poland as places where field guides lead tours
	Basics of sightseeing and tourist geography
	Field guiding in national parks
	Examples of specialized trails in Poland
	Communication within a tourist group
	Legal aspects of field guiding
City leadership	Forms of guiding individual tourists and tourist groups in cities
	Communication within a tourist group
	History of architectural monuments in a given city
	Regular cultural events in a selected city
	Museums as places of work for city guides

Source: *Own study.*

Training courses on tourism guiding should be conducted by academic teachers and experienced guides. The first group may include academic and teaching staff from the university issuing micro-certificates and lecturers representing other higher education institutions. In the case of the second group of speakers, it is advisable that they be long-time practitioners, guides familiar with leading tourist groups. Only such people are able to skilfully and effectively convey knowledge to students based on their rich experience and practice.

Another important topic in tourism that should be covered in training courses as part of micro-certifications is related to the hotel industry. This is a fundamental sector of tourism, involving the organization of tourist stays in various types of accommodation facilities. Polish tourism law distinguishes between eight types of hotel facilities (Tylec and Zalejska, 2025, p. 140):

1. Hotels are establishments with at least 10 rooms for tourists, most of which are single and double rooms. They offer a wide range of basic and additional services related to their guests' stay.
2. Motels are facilities located along roads and equipped with parking. Like hotels, motels have at least 10 rooms, most of which are single and double rooms.
3. Guesthouses are facilities with a minimum of 7 rooms for guests and providing them with full board.
4. Tourist hostels are facilities with at least 30 beds. They are adapted for self-catering tourists and provide a minimum range of services related to their stay.
5. Hostels are hotel facilities located outside built-up areas along tourist trails. They offer tourists a minimum range of services, always providing accommodation and, in most cases, catering services.
6. Youth hostels are facilities designed for individual and group youth tourism, adapted for self-service by customers.

7. Campsites are guarded facilities that allow tourists to stay in tents, caravans, motorhomes (campbuses), tourist cabins, and other permanent structures. Campsites offer meal preparation and car parking.
8. Camping grounds are unguarded facilities that allow tourists to stay in tents.

In the hotel industry, which is a fundamental branch of the tourism economy, micro-credentials appear to be an important supplement to knowledge and qualifications in this sector. The training courses organized within their framework are described as short, practical skills-focused educational programs that confirm specific competencies for current and future hoteliers.

The advantages of micro-credentials in the hospitality industry include:

1. Additional and quick confirmation of qualifications. Micro-credentials can be an additional and important asset in a Curriculum Vitae and confirm the specific skills of a candidate for a vacant position in a hotel, which at the same time increases their chances of being hired.
2. Supplementing qualifications and the possibility of continuous development. Micro-credentials allow for the systematic and rapid supplementation of knowledge and improvement of qualifications, which is crucial in the hotel sector. They can supplement formal education, e.g., a university degree in tourism and hospitality.
3. Flexibility and customization. Micro-credentials are often offered online, allowing interested individuals to learn at a time and place that suits their individual needs and schedule.
4. Specialization. Micro-credentials allow you to gain knowledge and skills in specific areas of hospitality. This can be crucial for career development in a given specialization.

Hotel course modules within micro-certifications should refer to hotel guest service and management and marketing issues. Training topics may include:

1. Guest service at the reception desk.
2. Reception services for tour guides leading organized tourist groups.
3. Online reservation management.
4. Hotel management systems.
5. Sales (distribution) techniques in the hotel industry.
6. Using various forms of communication with the market (promotion).
7. Professional waiter service.
8. Hotel staff management.
9. Organization of conferences and corporate and family events at the hotel.

The result of completed training courses may be, for example, confirmation of knowledge of hotel reservation systems. Hotel reservation systems enable guests to book rooms on the hotel's website. This makes it easy for tourists to make

reservations. Providers of this type of software often also offer website design services tailored to work with their reservation system. It should be remembered that hotel service reservations can be made not only online, but also:

- directly – in person, by telephone, by letter, by fax,
- indirectly – through travel agencies, tourist agencies, airlines.

It is recommended that courses on reservation systems in the hotel industry, completed with a micro-certificate, be organized by both public and private universities. In addition, they should be aimed at full-time and part-time students. In the latter case, even people with several years of experience, e.g., as hotel receptionists, could benefit from this type of training and improve their qualifications.

Specialized hotel courses leading to micro-enterprise certificates may be taught by:

- academic staff at universities offering micro-enterprise courses in hospitality who teach students subjects related to hospitality,
- academic staff at other universities with similar qualifications as above,
- practitioners, i.e., hoteliers involved in reservation systems in chain hotels and other hotel facilities: hotel owners, managers, directors, reception staff.

Other topics for micro-certificates could be related to various forms of tourism. The author of this study has chosen to discuss two of them: culinary tourism and cultural tourism. A certificate of completion of the courses would certainly confirm that the participants have acquired extensive knowledge about both types of tourism. This could translate into more effective work by the training participants, e.g., as tour guides or vineyard owners.

Culinary tourism is closely linked to the gastronomic base, which is why it is also called, albeit less frequently, gastronomic tourism. It refers to a form of travel whose main purpose is to discover and experience local flavors and culinary traditions of tourist destinations.

In tourist travel, the food and culinary heritage of the regions visited have become a key aspect of the tourist experience. This is related to the need for tourists to understand the culture when visiting different places and tourist attractions (Putra, 2021, p. 519).

In terms of culinary tourism, the following can be distinguished:

- tourist trips to wine regions, i.e., wine tourism,
- culinary eco-tourism, focused on the consumption of organic products,
- tourists' participation in festivals and other events related to the promotion of regional food and its tasting,

- tourists taking advantage of tourist attractions such as fishing on fishing boats,
- visiting culinary museums,
- hiking on culinary trails, e.g., the Małopolska Oscypek Trail.

In Table 5, the author proposes thematic blocks for training courses as part of micro-projects in the field of culinary tourism.

Table 5. *Proposed modules for courses leading to micro-certification in the field of culinary tourism in Poland*

Form of culinary tourism	Proposed training modules
Culinary tourism on culinary trails	The history of the development of culinary trails around the world and in Poland
	Infrastructue of culinary trails in Poland
	Legal and economic aspects of marking culinary trails
	Traditional products as a factor in the development of culinary tourism
Wine tourism (enotourism)	The history of vineyard development in Poland and worldwide
	Legal and organizational aspects of running a vineyard
	Marketing in wine tourism
	Organization of a wine tourism farm – legal and marketing aspects
Ecological tourism	The essence of ecology and its basic principles
	The development of organic farms in Poland
	Organic products in the catering sector in tourism
	Eco-agritourism as a form of agritourism in rural areas

Source: *Own study.*

The second form of tourism that can be linked to micro-certificates is cultural tourism. It is a multifaceted phenomenon and concerns a variety of issues related to culture and cultural values in the broad sense, otherwise known as anthropogenic values. These basic tourist assets, both material, such as castles, palaces, churches, and fortifications, and spiritual, including customs, traditions, and folklore, are the product of human activity.

Cultural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination (Richards, 2018, p. 15).

From the tourism supply side, cultural tourism offers many job opportunities in various professions. These include tour guiding, primarily in rural and urban areas. They also include work in museums, open-air museums, and tourist information centers in the broad sense. Therefore, choosing cultural tourism as a broad topic within micro-certificates seems to be an appropriate move for universities in Poland.

Table 5. *Proposed modules for courses leading to micro-certification in the field of cultural tourism in Poland*

Form of cultural tourism	Proposed training modules
Museum tourism	The most important museums in Poland and a selected city
	Rules for museum guides
	Communication between guides and tourist groups
	English in museum guiding
Pilgrimage and religious tourism	The history of pilgrimage tourism in Poland
	Forms of pilgrimage tourism
	Well-known pilgrimage centers in Europe and Poland
	Types of religious services as an element of pilgrimage tourism
	Religious tourism and its characteristics
Tourism to historic sites	Castles in Poland – routes and spatial distribution of castles
	Architectural development of towns and villages – basic information
	History of architecture in Poland
	Other architectural monuments in Poland

Source: *Own study.*

5. Conclusions

Micro-credentials will certainly prove to be a very effective way of supplementing the knowledge acquired during studies in Poland. They offer an opportunity to improve competences in a given field of science in a relatively short time and can be a strong asset in a competitive labor market.

Currently, Polish universities are issuing regulations concerning the introduction of micro-credentials. They are also developing specialized training programs and methods of transferring additional knowledge to students.

This article discusses the issue of micro-credentials at universities offering studies in tourism and hospitality. Tourism-related fields of study and specializations have been very popular for years, especially among young people. In Poland, it is possible to study at numerous faculties and departments with a tourism profile at both public and private universities. It is possible to study tourism in full-time and part-time programs, as well as in postgraduate studies. In the near future, it will also be possible to expand one's knowledge and qualifications through micro-credentials.

Given that tourism is one of the most important sectors of the Polish economy, it is important to emphasize the significance of studying subjects related to tourism, recreation, and hospitality. The quality of education and the use of various tools in this process are important.

Practical classes are also important, in which practitioners, including tour guides, hoteliers, restaurateurs, and foreign tour guides, should play a key role. The quality

of education will also be important when organizing specialized courses in micro-credentials.

The most important conclusions from this study include:

- Tourism is an important sector of the Polish economy, due to the country's natural and cultural attractions and its well-developed hotel industry.
- There is a demand for qualified workers in the tourism industry, covering various jobs, including tour guiding and hospitality.
- Micro-credentials will be an additional form of acquiring supplementary knowledge in the field of tourism and hospitality services.
- 4Disseminating information among university staff is crucial for popularizing micro-credentials in the field of tourism and hospitality.
- Universities and other higher education institutions, both public and private, should develop interesting and necessary specialized tourism training programs within the framework of micro-credentials.
- Practitioners from the tourism and hospitality industry should be invited to conduct training courses, both to assist in the preparation of educational offerings in terms of adapting them to the changing realities of tourism and the demanding labor market, and to conduct courses in the field of micro-credentials.

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