

# **SKILLS, COMPETENCIES AND EMPLOYABILITY: THE MISSING LINK(S) IN QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

**(SADC-CDE SEMINAR SERIES, “THE CONVERSATION”)**

**Kirk Perris, PhD  
July 14, 2:30pm CAT/SAST**

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# AGENDA

- Introduction
- Context of Higher Education
- Quality Assurance: Definitions
- Quality Assurance: Instruments
- Quality Assurance: Theoretical Considerations
- Micro-credentials and New Dimensions to Quality Assurance
- Discussion

# INTRODUCTION



香港公開大學  
THE OPEN UNIVERSITY  
OF HONG KONG

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国家开放大学  
THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF CHINA

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COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

# INTRODUCTION



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THE OPEN UNIVERSITY  
OF HONG KONG



Botswana Open  
University



ignou  
THE PEOPLE'S  
UNIVERSITY



COMMONWEALTH of LEARNING

# WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

- **Higher Education Institutions were wholly unprepared for remote classroom teaching LET ALONE online learning**
- **Learners were thrust into unconventional learning environments (i.e., online learning, proctoring software), and expected to continue learning with minimal guidance**
- **Educators were stressed, de-motivated, and frustrated at the lack of understanding, needs and support to adequately teach online**
- **New ‘players’ emerged in education delivery. They are agile, tech savvy, and well resourced (e.g., LinkedIn, Google, Coursera)**

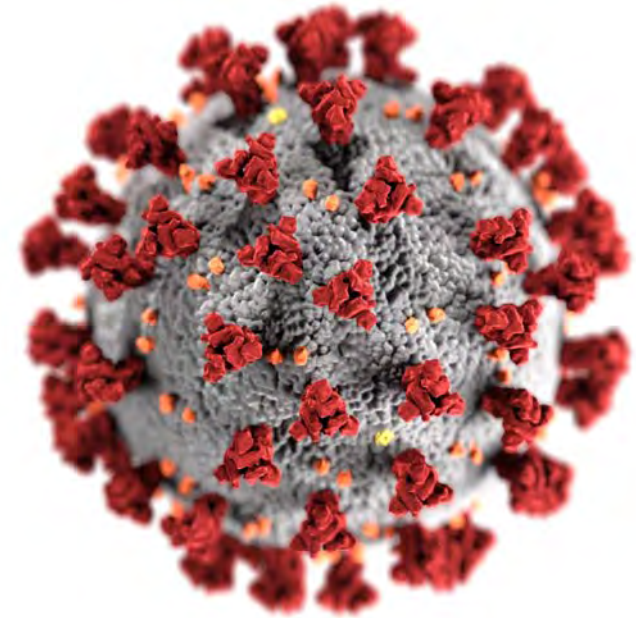
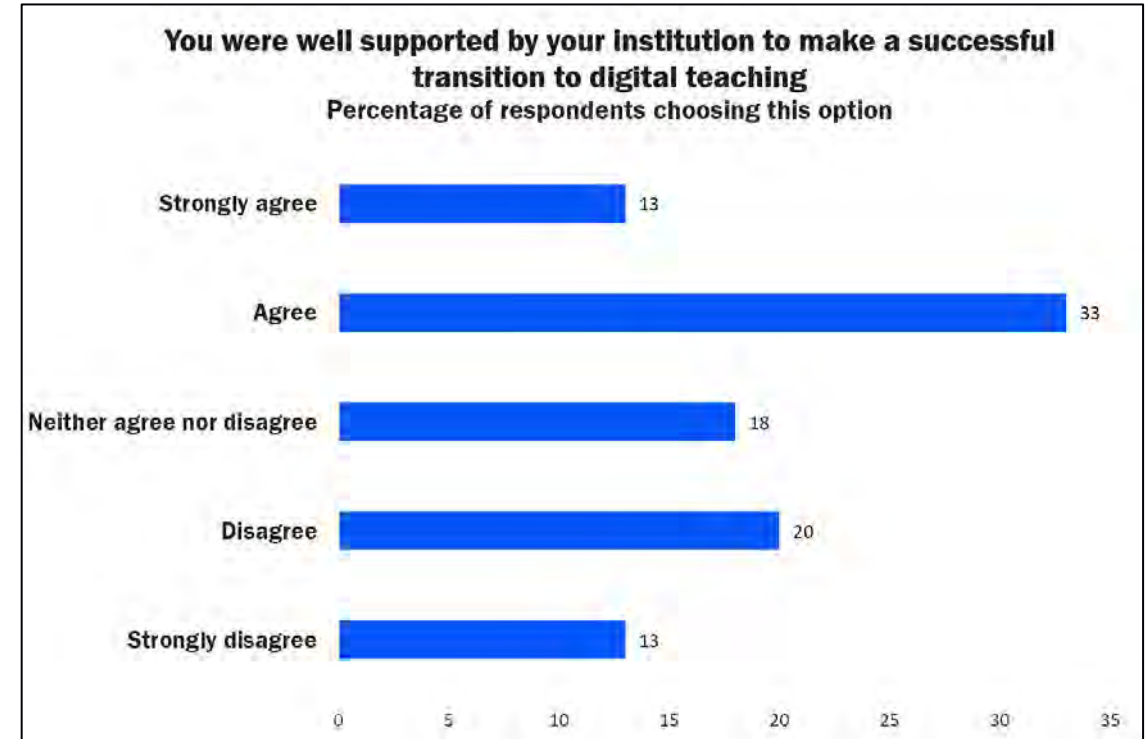


Photo by [CDC](#) on [Unsplash](#)



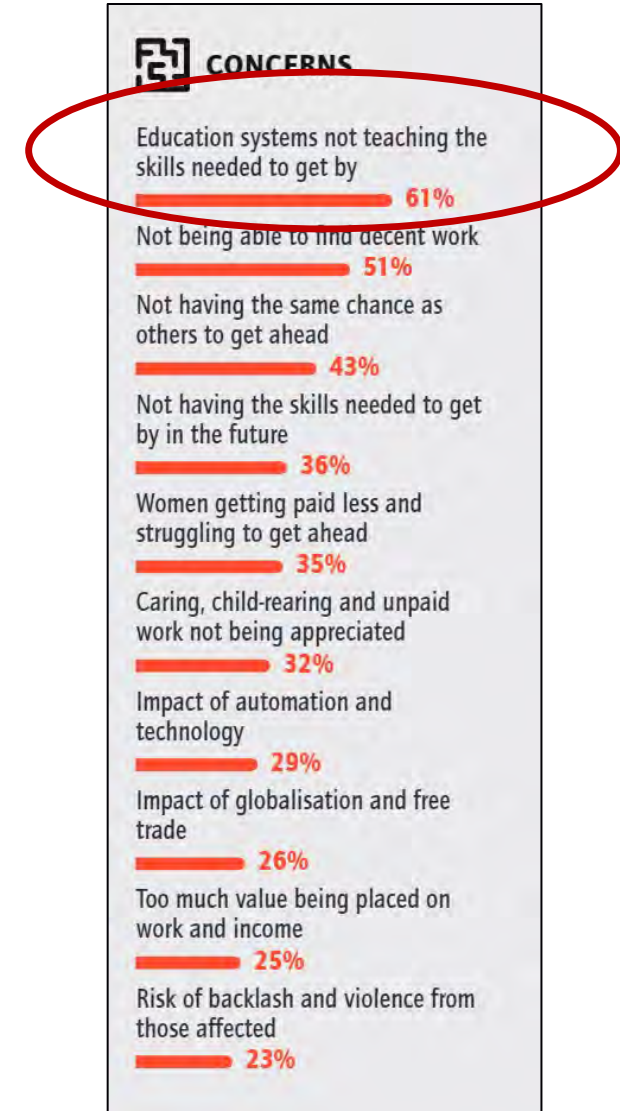
# WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- **Times Higher Education (2021) conducted a survey of 520 faculty from 46 countries**
- **Less than half “agreed”; one-third “disagreed” on the question of being ‘supported by your institution’**

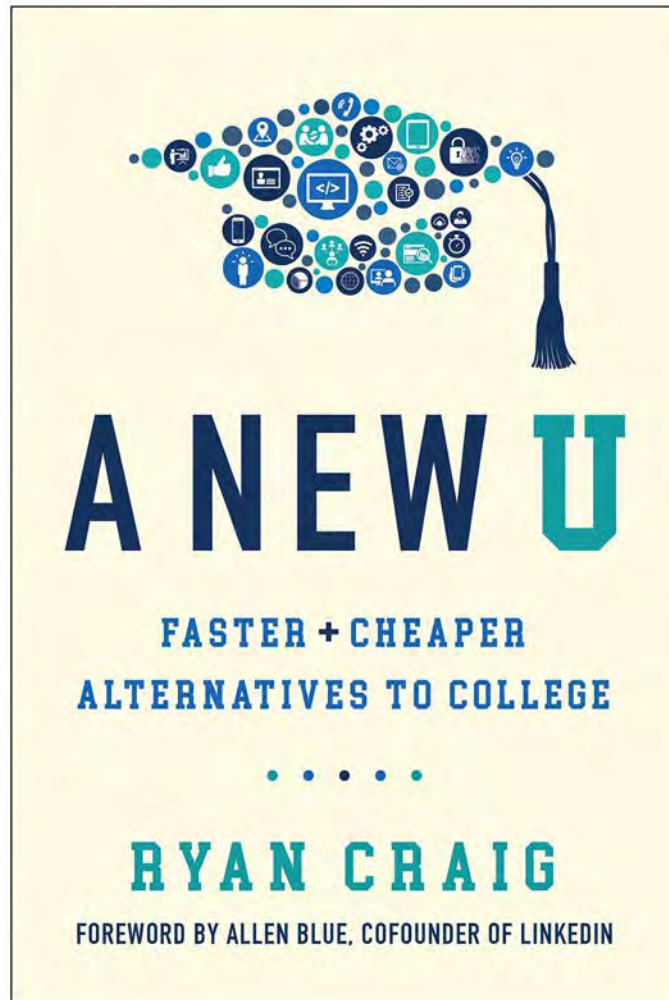


# WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- UNESCO survey (2021) of 15,000 respondents from around the world
- Of 4,000 respondents 61% selected, “Education systems are not teaching the skills needed to get by.”



# WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



“The employment imperative — students’ overwhelming focus on employment, and a good first job is the single-most important change in higher education in the past decade.”  
(2018; p.34)



# **WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**Now what?**

# QUALITY ASSURANCE – DEFINITIONS AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS



Photo by [Lorenzo Herrera](#) on [Unsplash](#)

# QUALITY ASSURANCE – DEFINITIONS (CONVENTIONAL)

- “the level of academic achievement attained by higher education graduates, are maintained and improved” (Dill, 2007)
- Knowledge, skills, abilities that learners achieve / demonstrate from a course of study (Brennan & Shah, 2000)
- “an ongoing, continuous process of evaluating (assessing, monitoring, guaranteeing, maintaining, and improving) the quality of a higher education system, institutions, or programmes.” (UNESCO, 2007)



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# QUALITY ASSURANCE – DEFINITIONS (ODL)

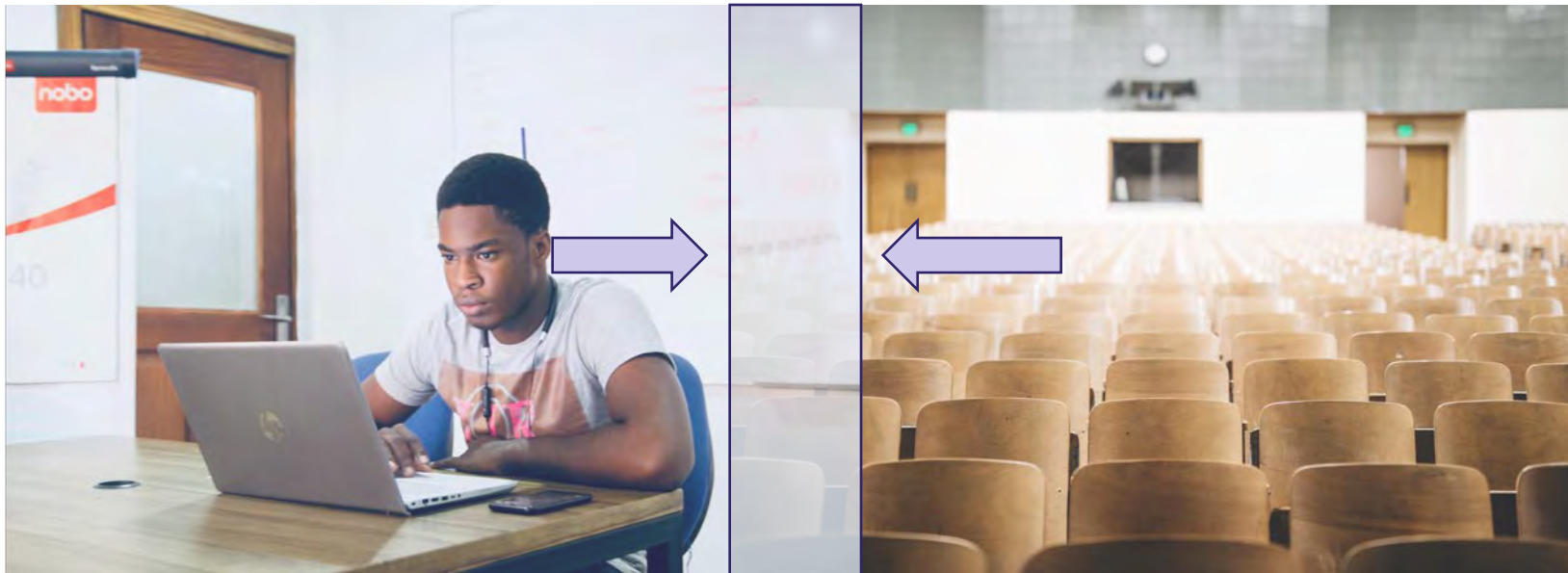
**In the ODL context it would add specificity relative to:**

- **Learning materials (didactic conversation)**
- **Relationship between learner and content; learner and learner; learner and instructor (transactional distance)**
- **Scale and diversity**
- **Digital delivery**



Photo by [Mars Sector-6](#) on [Unsplash](#)

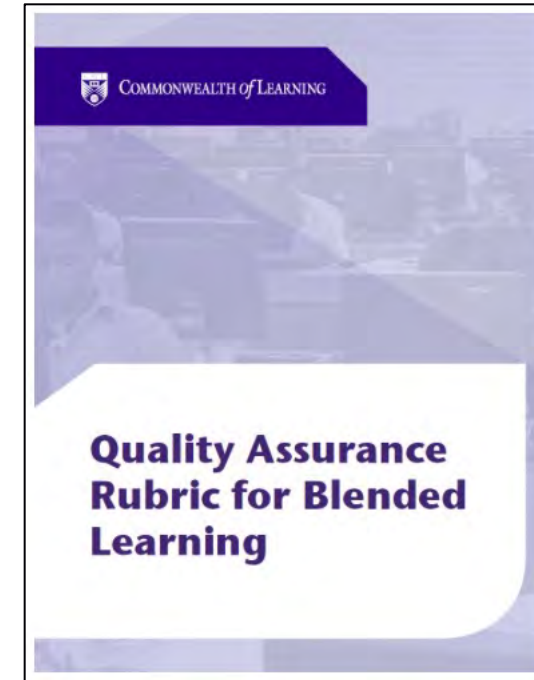
# QUALITY ASSURANCE – THE CONVERGENCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION





# QUALITY ASSURANCE – COURSE TOOLS

- 7 Categories
- 47 Sub-categories
- OER
- [LINK TO TOOL](#)



- 8 Categories
- 42 Sub-categories
- Fee-based



## Course Design Rubric Standards

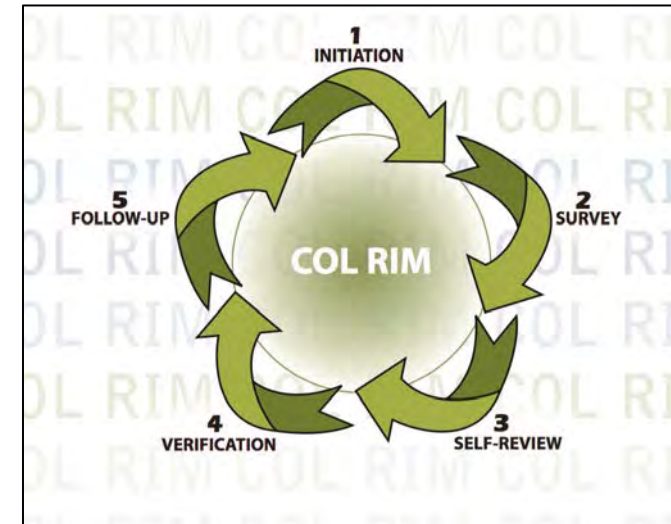
**Current Edition:** Sixth Edition

**Description:** A set of eight General Standards and 42 Specific Review Standards used to evaluate the design of online and blended courses. Annotations explain the applications of the Standards and their inter-relationships. The Rubric has a scoring system used by the Review Team to determine whether a course meets Standards. Essential Standards (3-point Specific Review Standards) must be met during the review and an overall score of 85% of the points possible are required for a course to attain QM certification.

**Membership Requirements:** Higher Ed Basic, Full, Consortium or System. Individual HE members or those with a Supplemental option that includes the Higher Ed Rubric can also access this Rubric.

# QUALITY ASSURANCE – INSTITUTIONAL TOOLS

- Combines internal and external quality assurance in a low-cost ‘do-it-yourself’ approach which does not require a panel of external experts
- Develops systemic thinking and organizational learning
- Offers credibility without high-stakes consequences for poor performance
- Focuses on improvement and includes capacity building and developmental support
- [LINK TO TOOL](#)



- Derivative of COL RIM – focused on Blended Learning
- A comprehensive review: Three stages
- Utilized by 20 HEIs in East Africa
- Self-administered
- [LINK TO TOOL](#)

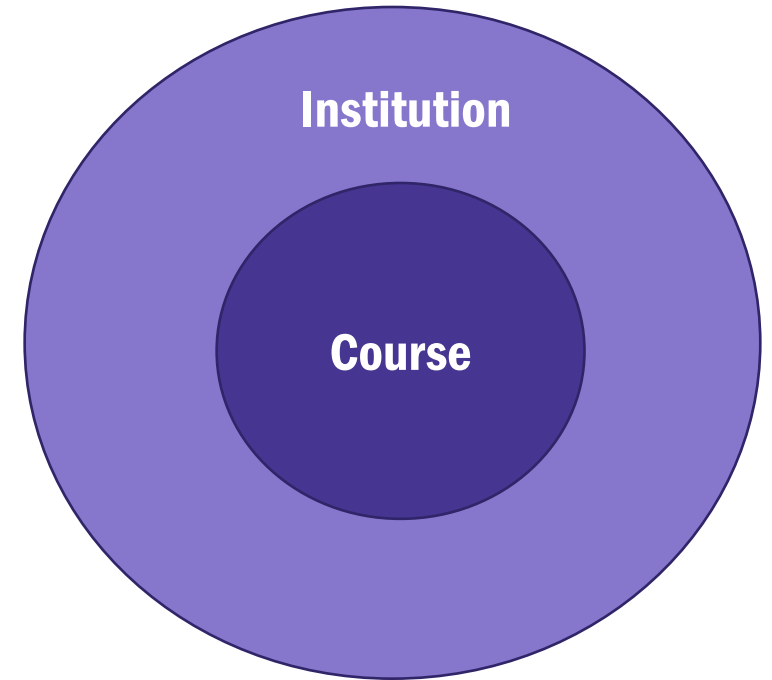
**A Guide for Implementing a Quality Assurance**

## **Institutional Review Tool for Blended Learning**

Professor Romeela Mohee, University of Mauritius  
Dr Kirk Perris, Commonwealth of Learning

# QUALITY ASSURANCE – THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Quality should be driven by a commitment to improvement informed by experience, research, socio-cultural inputs – reconcile the idiosyncracies of an institution to national/regional/international standards**
- **Quality of access**



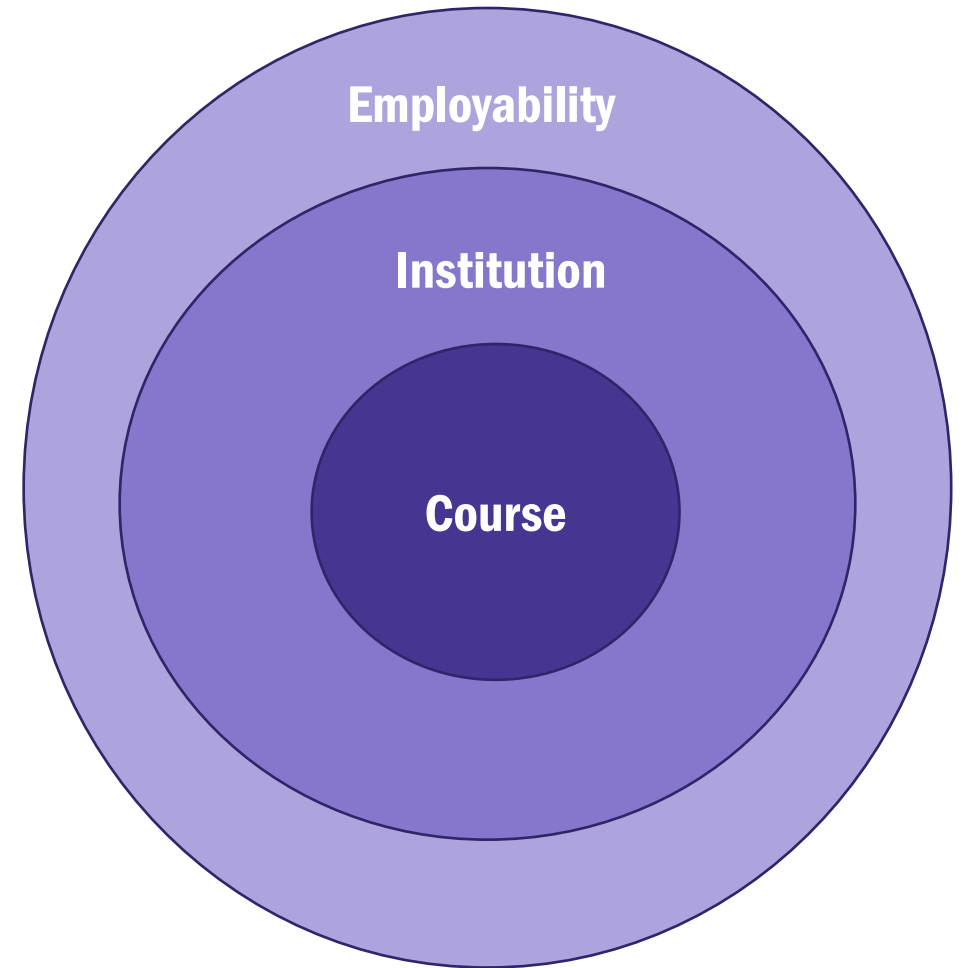
# QUALITY ASSURANCE – THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS *ON ACCESS*

- **First, open admission need not impair quality and over time any deficiencies will be ameliorated.**
- **Second, the relationship between enrolments and an economy's capacity to absorb knowledge workers need not be closely aligned. The product of massification is a highly skilled workforce that will provide stimulus to the system.**
- **Third, individuals are inherently educable; any obstructions are environmental and can thus be minimized, if not overcome, within or between generations.**

**(Bereday, 1973)**

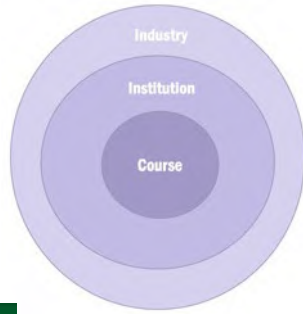
# QUALITY ASSURANCE – THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Quality should be driven by a commitment to improvement informed by experience, research, socio-cultural inputs – reconcile the idiosyncracies of an institution to NUC or regional/international standards
- Quality of access
- **Quality of opportunity**
- **Quality should be about enhancing opportunity**
  - **Mobility**
  - **Transferability**
  - **Prior Learning**
  - **Employability (e.g., soft/power skills)**

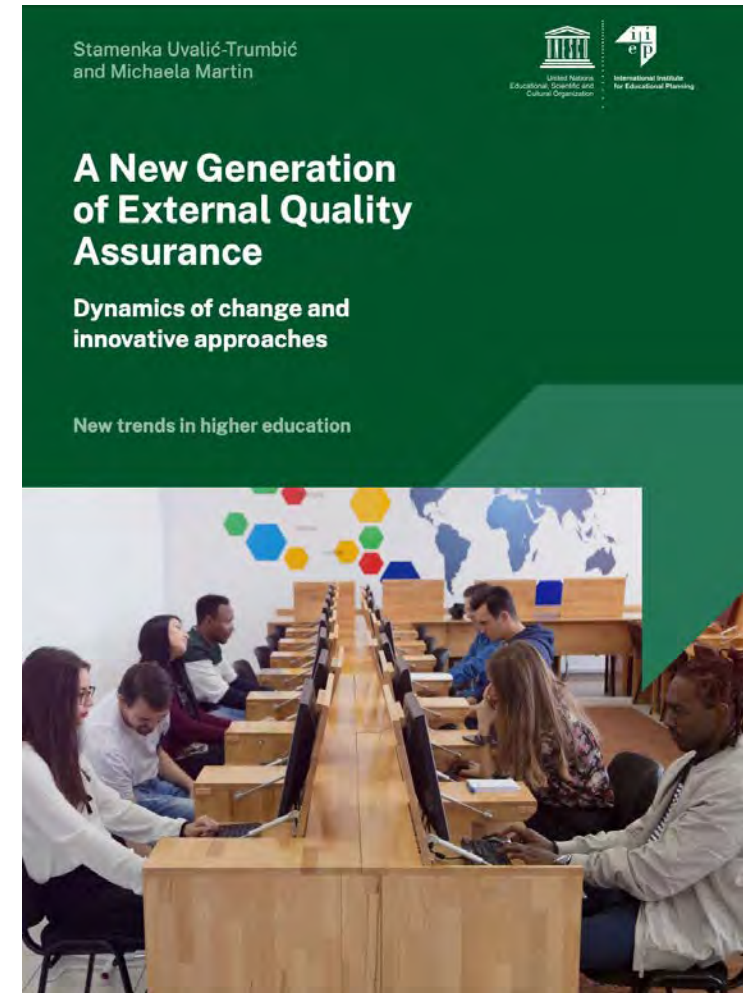




# QUALITY ASSURANCE – THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS



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[Link to document](#)

# Upskilling needs Reskilling needs



Source: Future of Jobs Report 2020, World Economic Forum.

As the World Economic Forum Jobs 2020 report (2020) noted, there is an increasing need to provide short-timeframe opportunities for upskilling and reskilling that will not diminish as we move forward.

Micro-credentials and micro-learning have been proposed as strategies to enable the ongoing development of knowledge and skills across the workforce.

# MICRO-CREDENTIALS AND NEW DIMENSIONS TO QUALITY ASSURANCE



Photo by [Hammer & Tusk](#) on [Unsplash](#)

# A MICRO-CREDENTIAL IS:

- a representation of learning, awarded for completion of a short program that is focused on a discrete set of **competencies** (i.e., skills, knowledge, attributes), and is sometimes related to other credentials.

PICHETTE, J., BRUMWELL, S., RIZK, J., HAN, S.(2021)

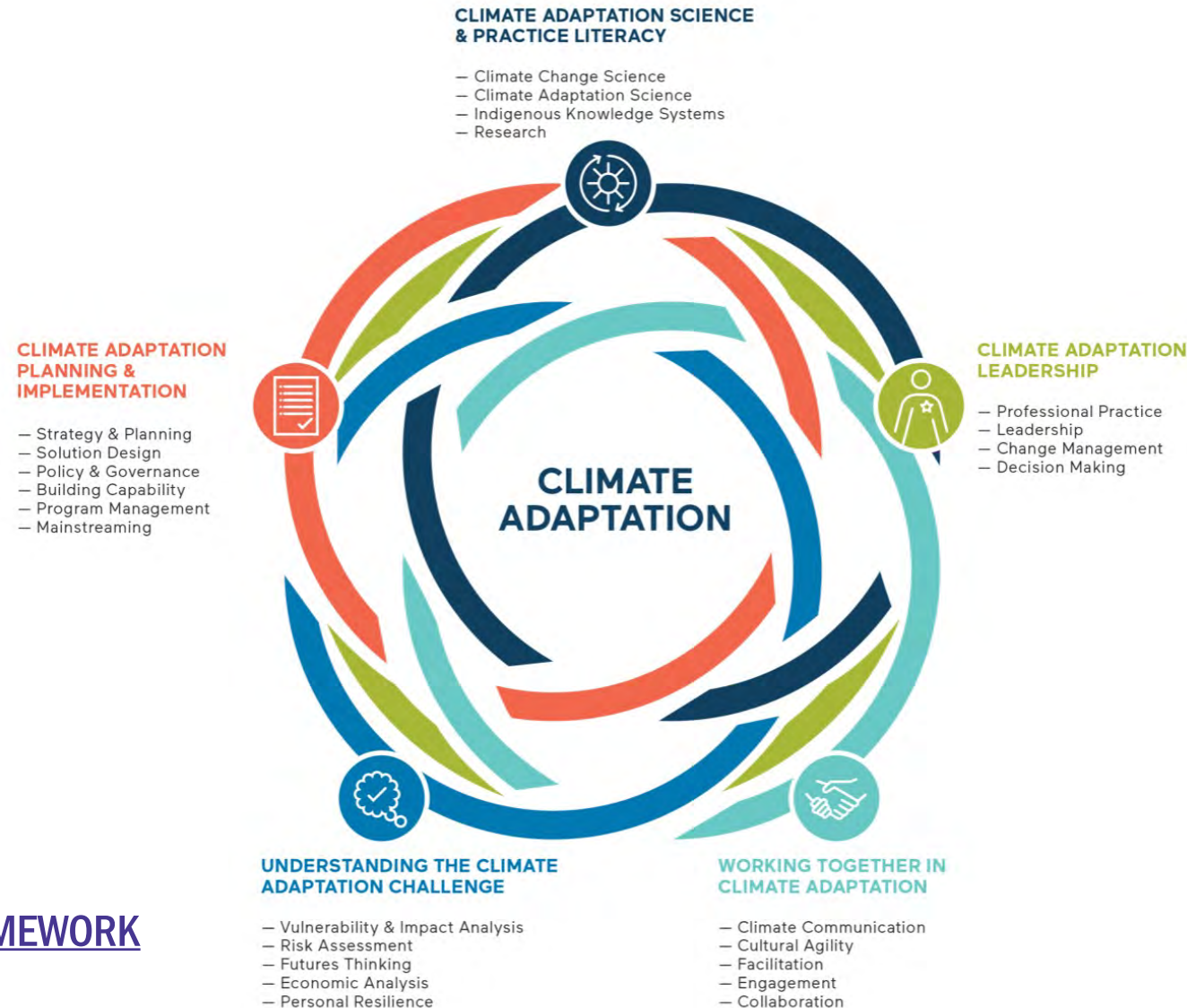
- a record of focused learning achievement verifying what the learner knows, understands or can do
- includes assessment based on clearly defined standards and is awarded by a trusted provider
- has stand-alone value and may also contribute to or complement other micro-credentials or macro-credentials, including through recognition of prior learning
- meets the standards required by relevant quality assurance

Oliver (2021)





# Climate Adaptation Competency Framework (CACF)



- ✓ Iteratively test and refine the CACF with employers and the climate adaptation community
- ✓ Expand and enhance the CACF through the specification of technical competencies
- ✓ Seek endorsement of CACF and RRU courses from an external accreditation body - American Society of Adaptation Professionals, or a Canadian professional body

[LINK TO FRAMEWORK](#)





# CLIMATE ACTION PRACTITIONER MICRO-CREDENTIAL (CAP M-C)

The Climate Adaptation Practitioner Prototype is currently being offered (March to July).

Comprised of four courses:

- Climate Change Action Fundamentals
- Introduction to Transition Leadership
- Indigenous Knowledge and Perspectives on Climate Action
- Introduction to Climate Policy

Courses are mapped to the CACF augmenting the quality assurance

[LINK TO MICRO-CREDENTIALS](#)

**Introduction to Transition Leadership - May 2, 2022**

DASHBOARD / MY COURSES / INTRODUCTION TO TRANSITION LEADERSHIP - MAY 2, 2022

Module 2 - Cultivating Inclusive Mindsets and Pathways | Module 4 - Fostering Resilience

### Module 3 - Convening Dialogue: From Possibility to Action

In the face of growing uncertainties, talking about complex change like addressing our climate future can often lead to fear, powerlessness and inaction. In this third module, we will experiment with futures thinking and a simple framework called the Three Horizons. Not only does the framework consider what's possible in the future, it provides a structure for considering what actions are needed (and changes needed) in order for the new future to emerge.

The CACF competencies mapped to this content in Module 3 include:

- CLIMATE ADAPTATION LEADERSHIP
- FACILITATING ADAPTATION CONVERSATIONS
- FUTURES THINKING

Module 3 Course Content

Module 3 Learning Goals

Module 3 Readings and Resources



# RRU CLIMATE ACTION MICRO-CREDENTIAL PROGRAMS

## Micro-Credential Pathways

The Climate Action Practitioner micro-credentials (CAP M-C) can be obtained through thematic pathways – currently being run as a Prototype.

The Fundamentals micro-credential pathway consists of two required short courses + two elective course.

The Future (Specialist) pathways are based on two required specialist courses

All courses are 25 notional learning hours and have equivalency of 3 credits at RRU

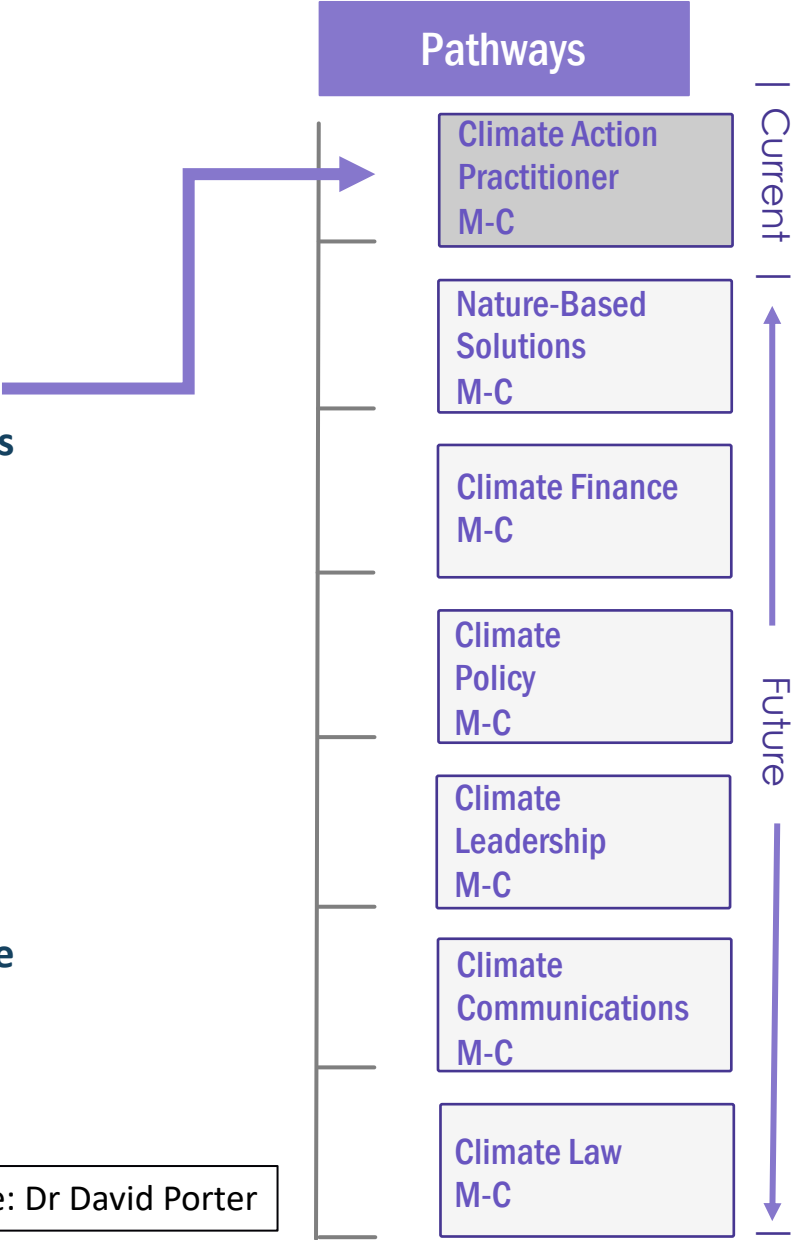
## Credentialing and Laddering

Current courses and the CAP M-C will receive a digital badge through myCreds

The RRU Masters of Arts in Climate Action Leadership (MACAL) has a “Choose your path” option in Year 2, allowing up to 9 credits to be sourced from varying subject areas.

The CAP M-C, having equivalency of 3 credits, may ladder into the MACAL program. Future pathways could also be eligible.

Source Slide: Dr David Porter





**H**UMAN  
**R**ESOURCE  
**D**EVELOPMENT  
**C**OUNCIL  
*Of* BOTSWANA

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## Sector Committees

- ▶ [Tourism Sector](#)
- ▶ [Agriculture Sector](#)
- ▶ [Mining, Minerals, Energy and Water Resource \(MMEWR\) Sector](#)
- ▶ [Information and Communication Technology Sector](#)
- ▶ [Finance and Business Services Sector](#)
- ▶ [Creative Industries Sector](#)
- ▶ [Health Sector](#)
- ▶ [Education and Training Sector](#)
- ▶ [Public Sector](#)
- ▶ [Transport & Logistics Sector](#)
- ▶ [Research, Innovation, Science and Technology Sector](#)
- ▶ [Manufacturing Sector](#)



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- ▶ Education and Training Sector
- ▶ Public Sector
- ▶ Transport & Logistics Sector
- ▶ Research, Innovation, Science and Technology Sector
- ▶ Manufacturing Sector

# SUMMARY

- Context of Higher Education
- Quality Assurance: Definitions
- Quality Assurance: Instruments
- Quality Assurance: Theoretical Considerations
- Micro-credentials and New Dimensions to Quality Assurance



# DISCUSSION / Q&A



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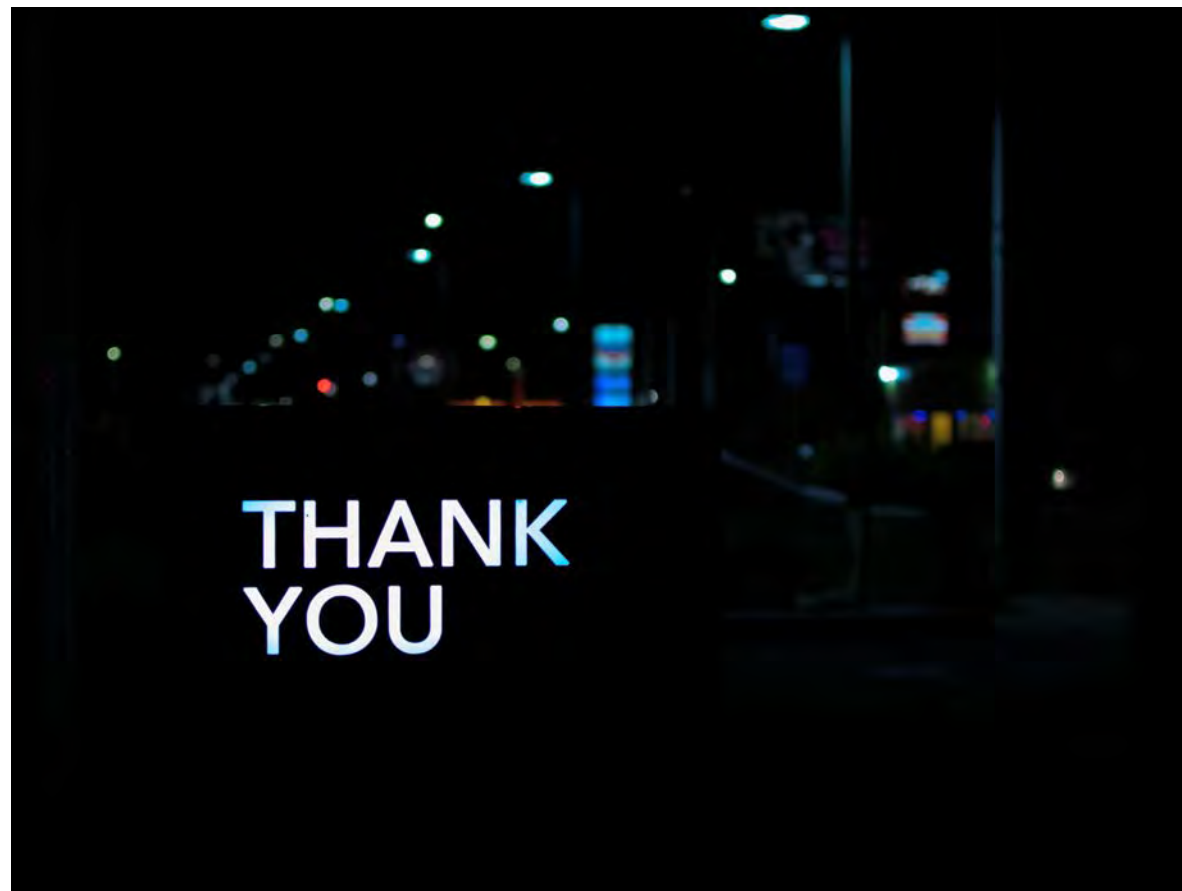


PHOTO BY [JON TYSON](#) ON [UNSPLASH](#)

# MAIN REFERENCES

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- **Craig, R. (2018). A new U: Faster+ cheaper alternatives to college. BenBella Books.**
- **Oliver, B. (2021) A conversation starter: towards a common definition of micro-credentials. Draft preliminary report. Paris: UNESCO. September 2021.**
- **Pichette, J., Brumwell, S., Rizk, J., Han, S.(2021) Making Sense of Microcredentials. Toronto: Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.**
- **Times Higher Education (2021). World Reputation Rankings. Accessed from: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/world-reputation-rankings-2021-results-announced>**