

Making sense of Microcredentials

September 9, 2021

Higher Education
Quality Council
of Ontario



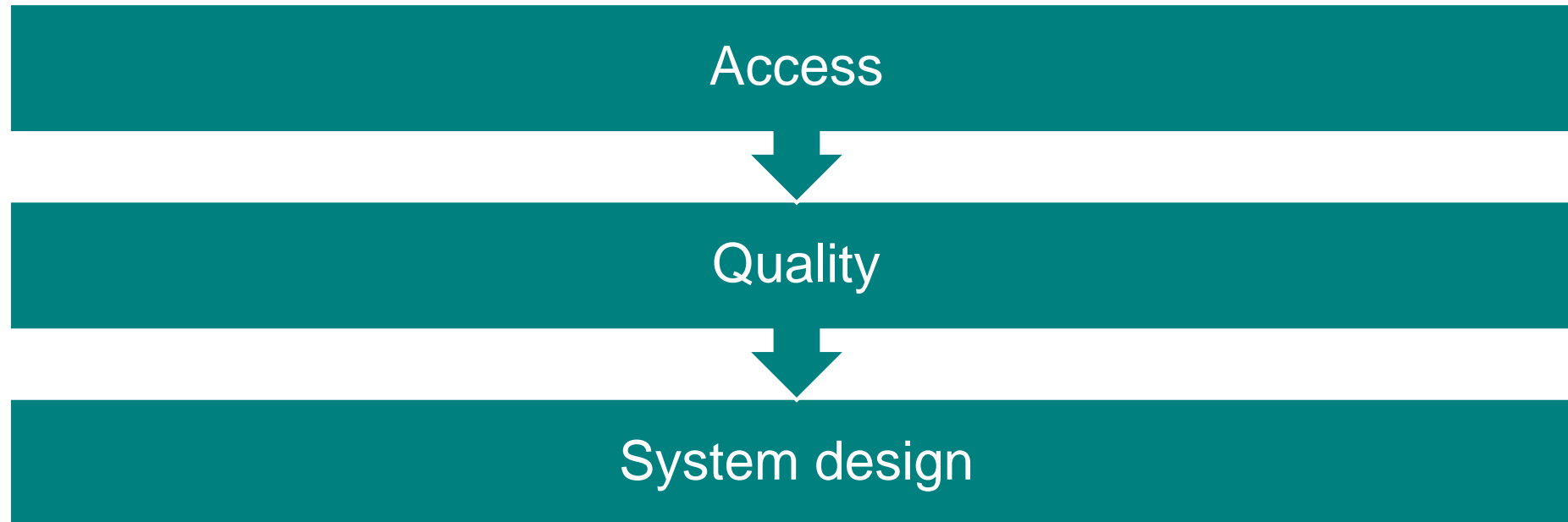
An agency of the Government of Ontario

Conseil ontarien
de la qualité de
l'enseignement supérieur

Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario



Bringing evidence-based research to the continued improvement of the postsecondary education system in Ontario. Focused on:



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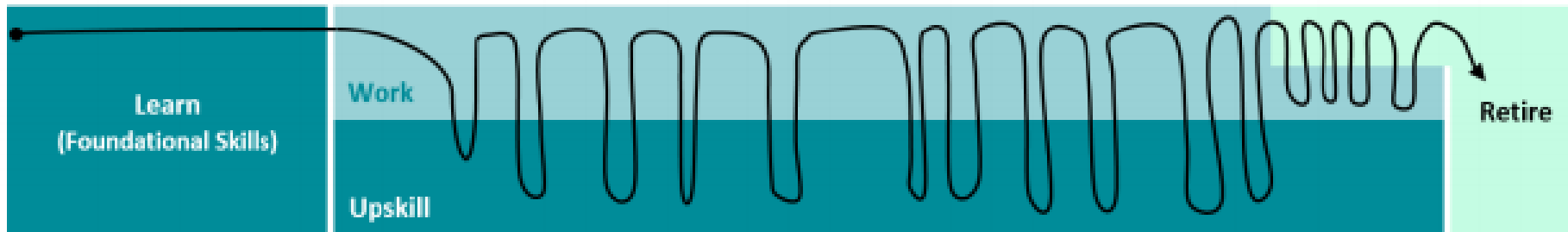
Interest in microcredentials



Traditional Model:



Lifelong Learning Model:



Source: Adapted from McGowan & Shipley (2017)

Project Goals



1. Facilitate a common understanding



2. Provide evidence, i.e., insight into end-user perceptions



	Interviews	Prospective student survey	Canadian employer survey	Canadian PSI survey
n	n(organizations)=44; n(individuals)=60	n=2000	n=139	n=131
Administrator	Conducted by HEQCO	Conducted by Abacus Data.	Conducted by HEQCO.	Conducted by HEQCO.
Recruitment	Voluntary sample recruited through employer and PSI surveys, BHER, CAUCE and snowball sampling.	Random sample drawn from survey panels.	Voluntary sample recruited by BHER.	Voluntary sample recruited by BHER, CIGan and CAUCE.
Target population	Representatives of businesses/employers, postsecondary institutions and NGOs/not-for-profits; experts and consultants.	Canadian residents aged 18-64 not currently enrolled in PSE.	Representatives of Canadian employers.	Representatives of Canadian colleges, universities, institutes, polytechnics and CEGEPs.
Sampling	Non-random and not representative.	Weighted according to census data to ensure that the sample matched Canada's working age population according to age, gender, educational attainment, and region.	Non-random and not representative.	Non-random and not representative.
Margin of error	N/A	The margin of error for a comparable probability-based random sample of the same size is +/- 2.1%, 19 times out of 20.	N/A	N/A



Results

HEQCO's definition



“A microcredential 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.”

Purpose

Pathway to a formal qualification



e.g., a bridging program

Update previous qualifications



i.e., incorporating emerging research/best practice

Gain technical skills



e.g., learn a software program

Develop transferable skills



e.g., critical thinking

Mode of Delivery

In-person



Hybrid

A microcredential could be a hybrid of online and in-person delivery.

Online



Flexibility

Fixed pace



Hybrid

A microcredential could be a hybrid of fixed pace and self-paced learning.

Self-paced



Student/Instructor Interaction

Cohort learning



Both

A microcredential could include both cohort learning and independent learning.

Independent learning



Credential Form

Paper credential



Both

A microcredential could be issued as both paper and digital credentials

Digital credential



Indicator of Achievement

Participation



Demonstrated competence



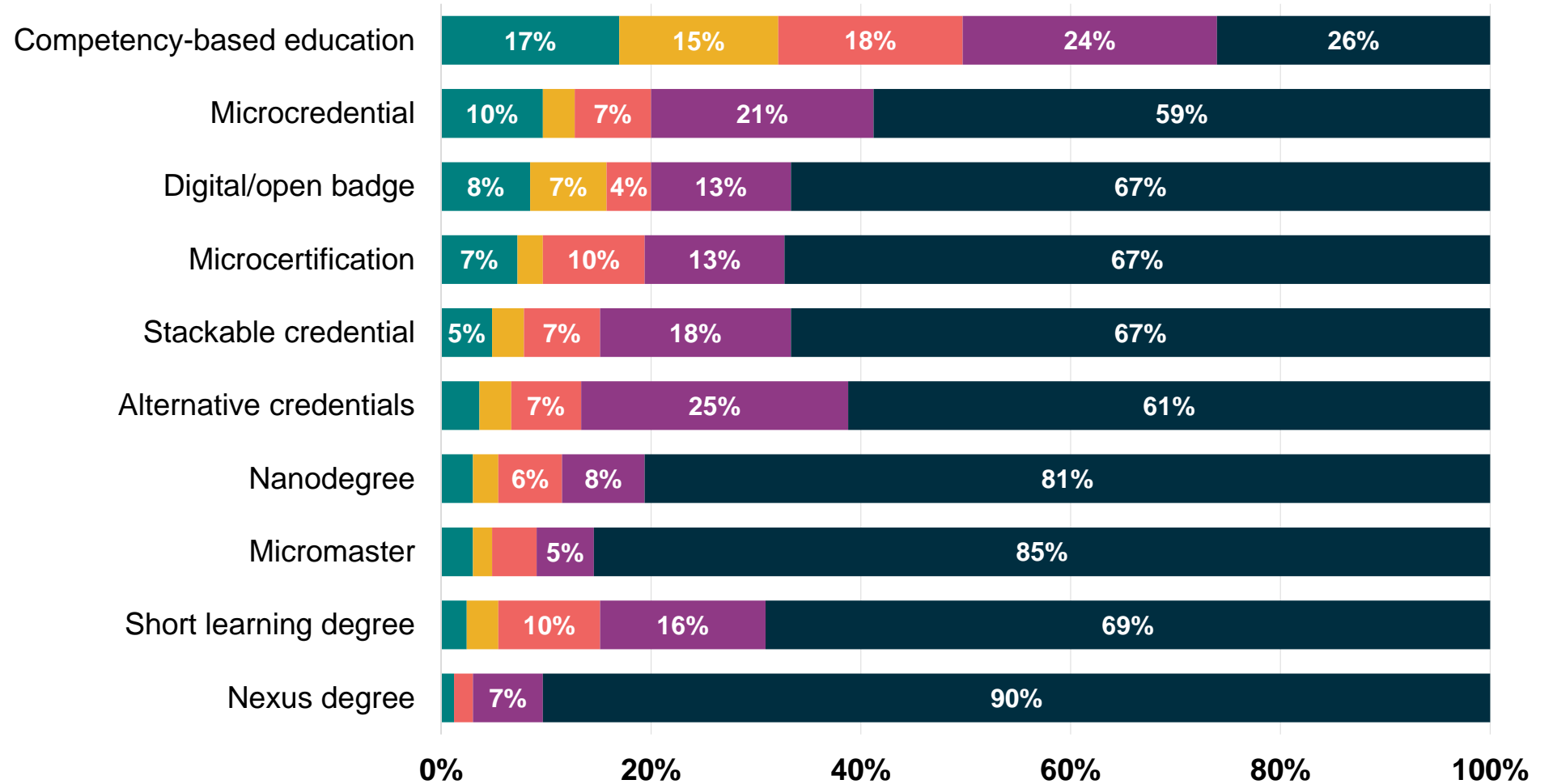
Demonstrated mastery



Employer Perceptions



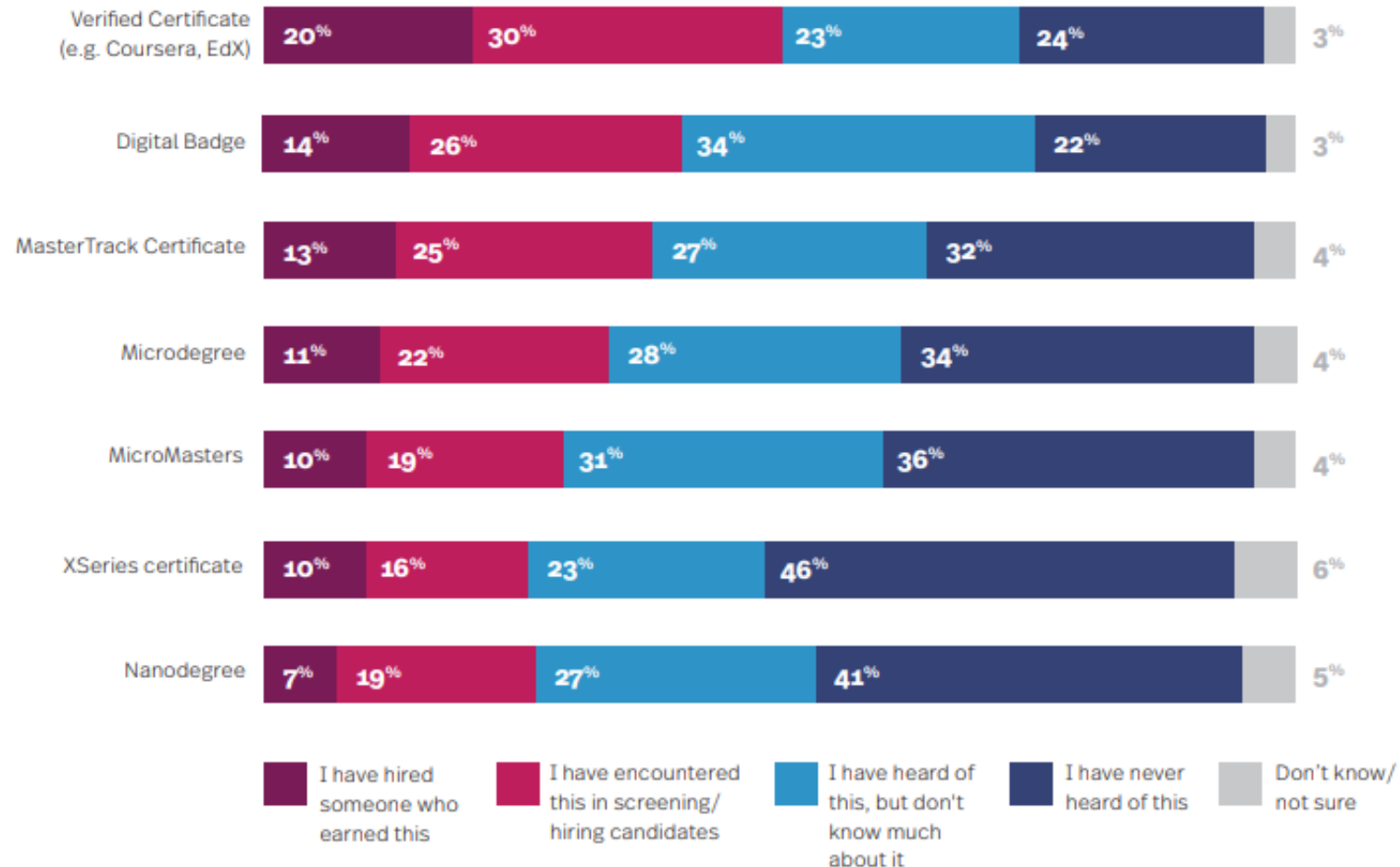
How familiar are you with the following terms for short, flexible credentials?



Employer Perceptions



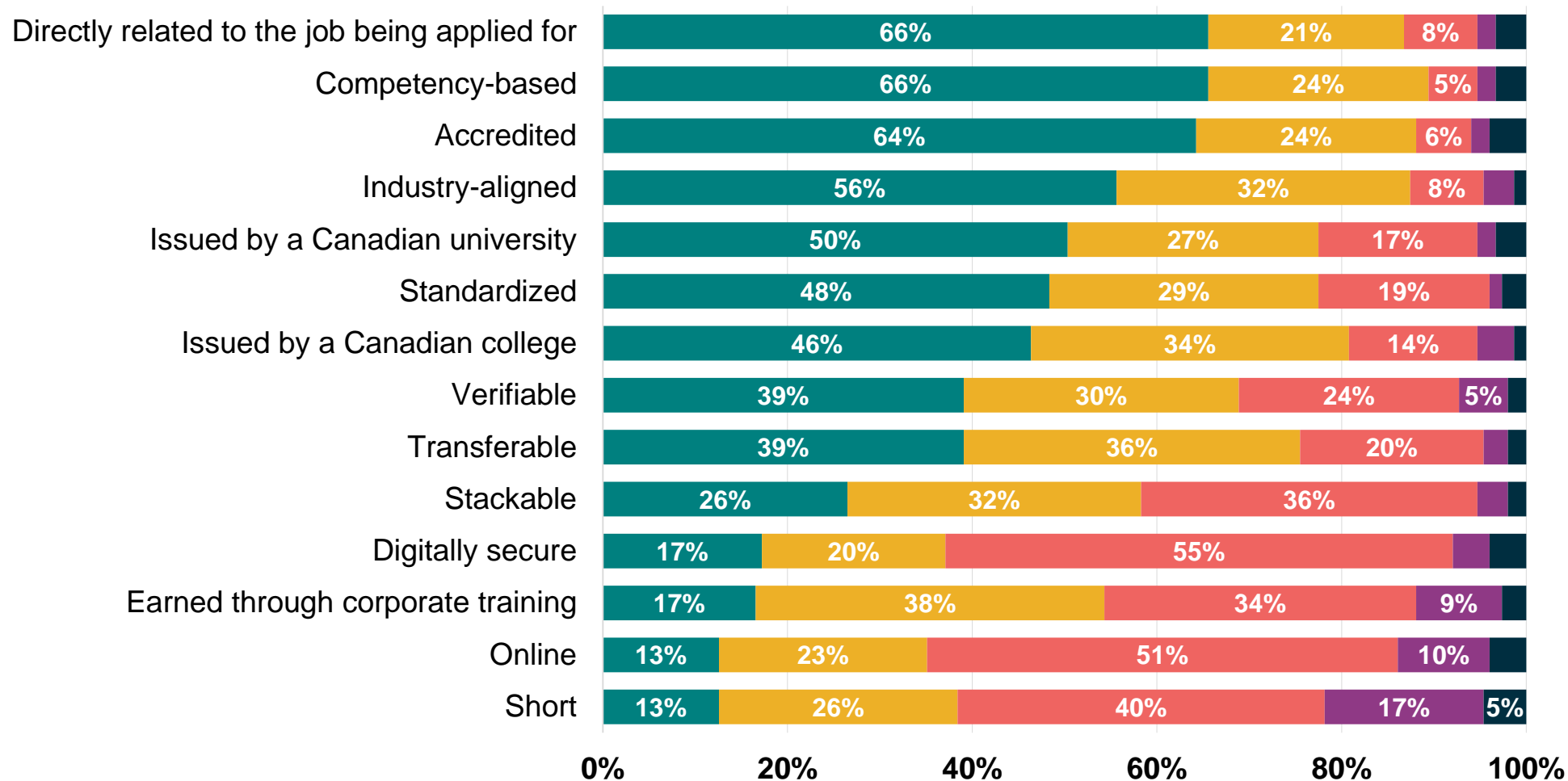
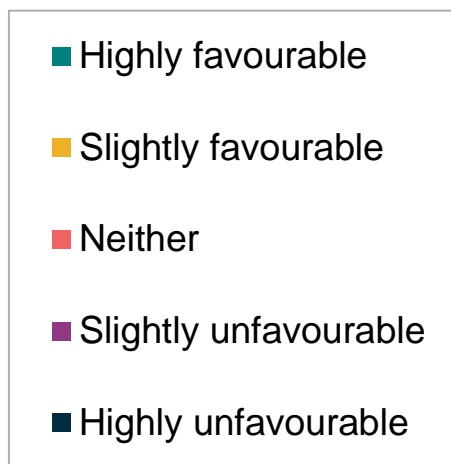
Figure 8. Level of Awareness or Experience with the Various Types of “Microcredentials” that May Appear on a Candidates’ Resume



Employer Perceptions



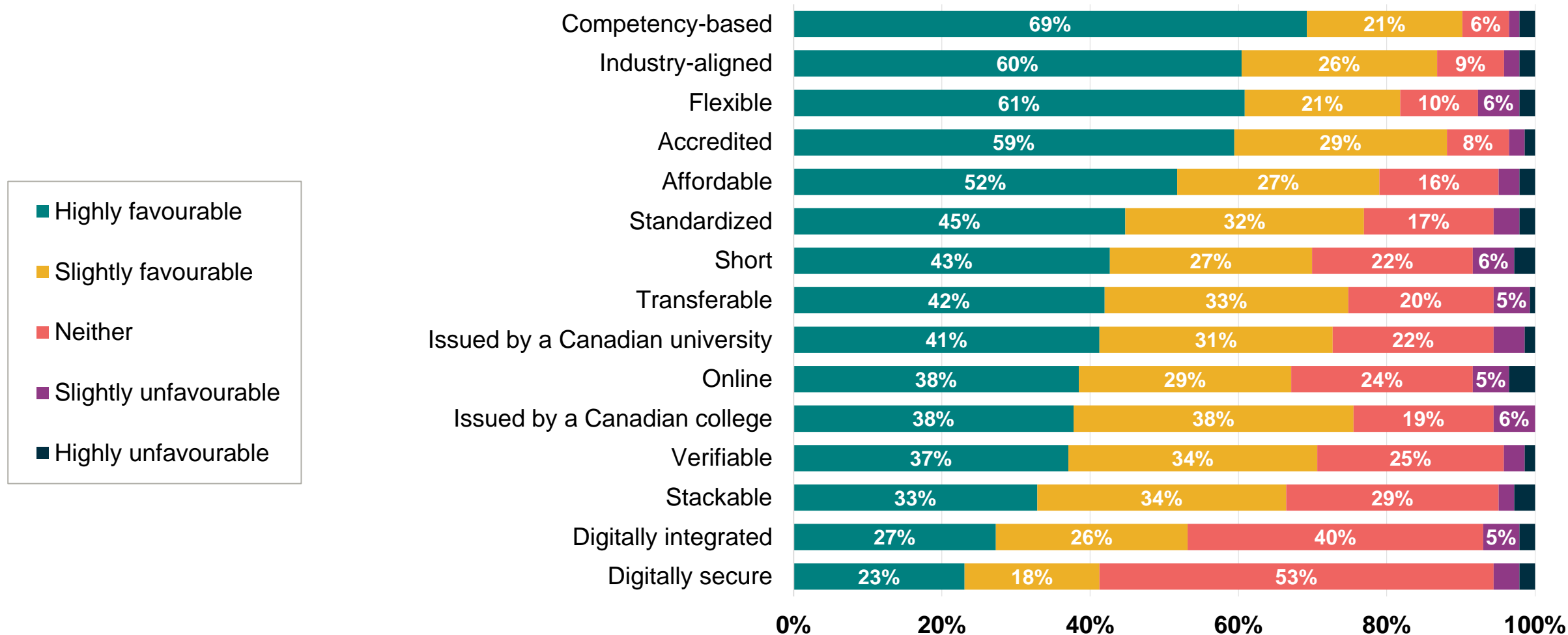
Imagine you came across a microcredential on the application of a job candidate. How favourably would you consider the following features of that microcredential?



Employer Perceptions



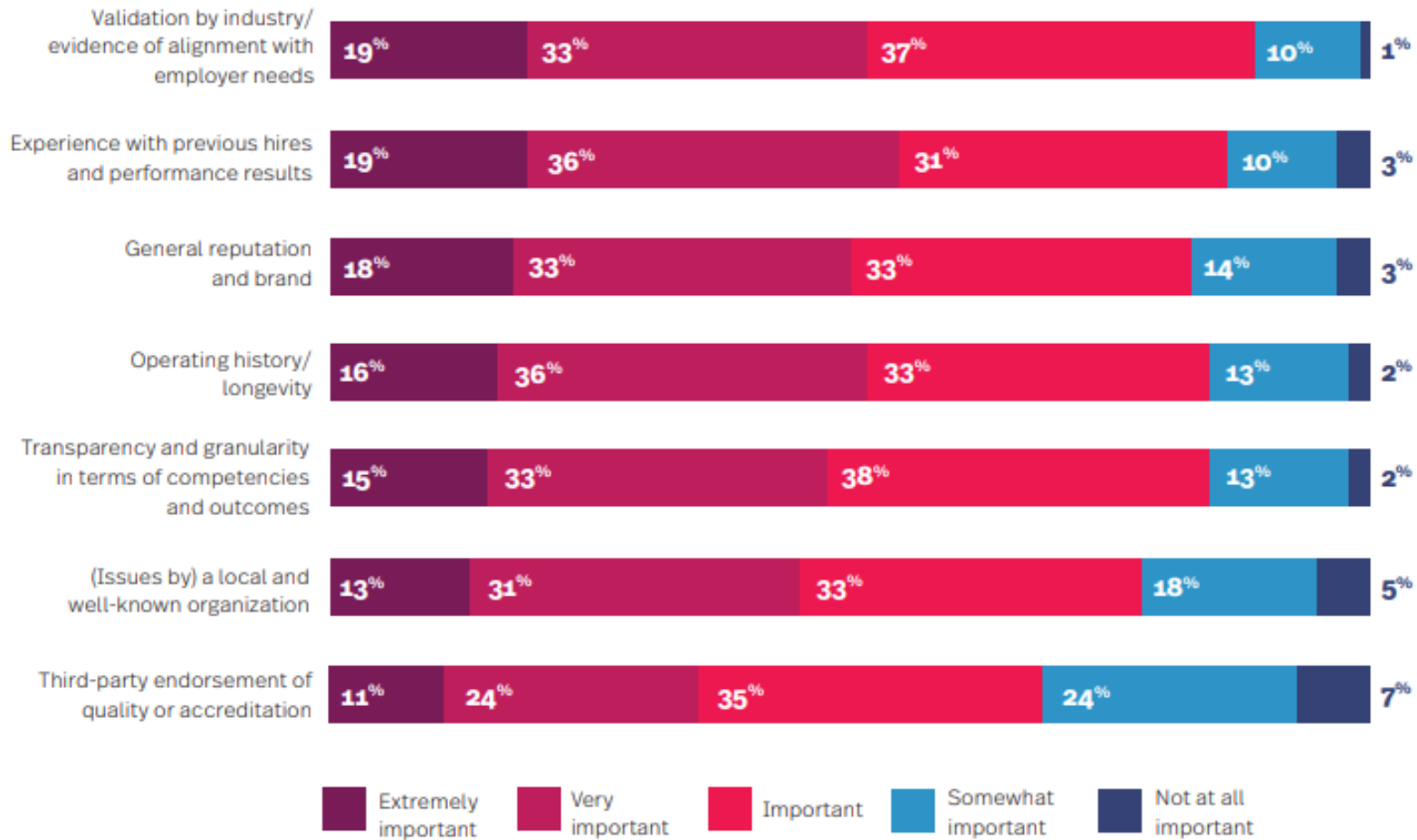
Imagine that your organization is considering offering microcredentials for internal staff training/ development. How favourably would you consider the following possible features of a microcredential?



Employer Perceptions



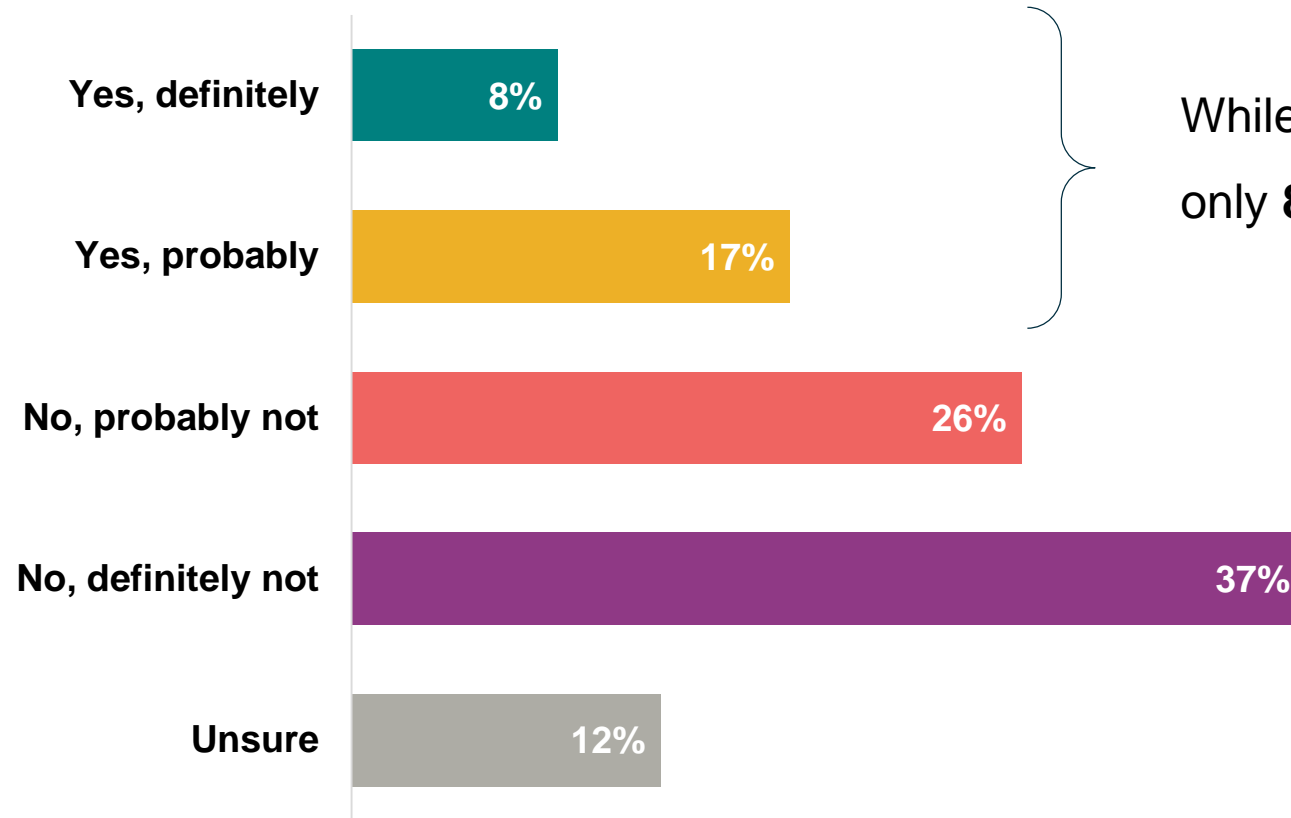
Figure 10. Importance of Credential Issuer Attributes in Signaling Quality



Prospective Student Perceptions



Have you heard of the term microcredentials?



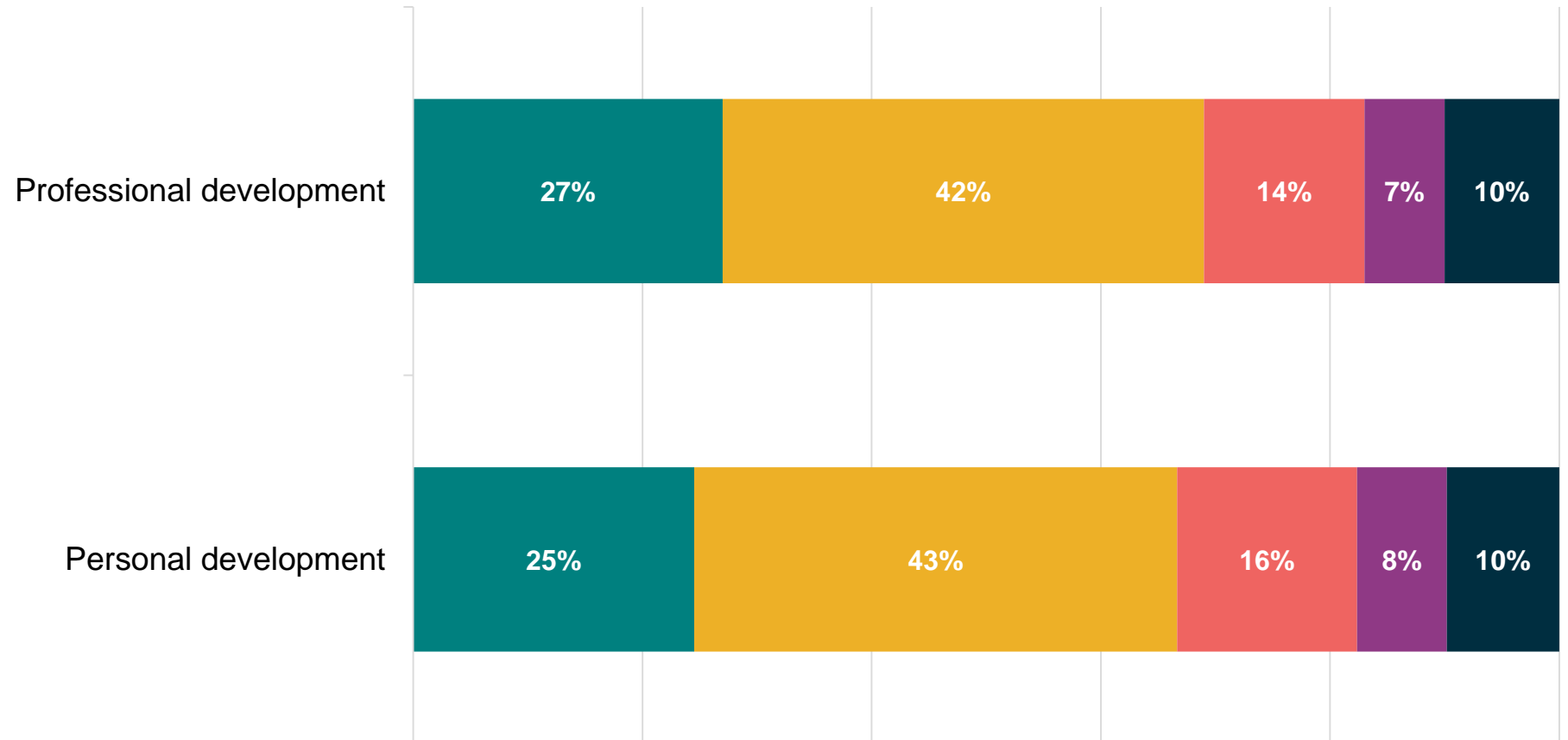
While **25%** have heard of microcredentials, only **8%** say they know the term well.



Prospective Student Perceptions



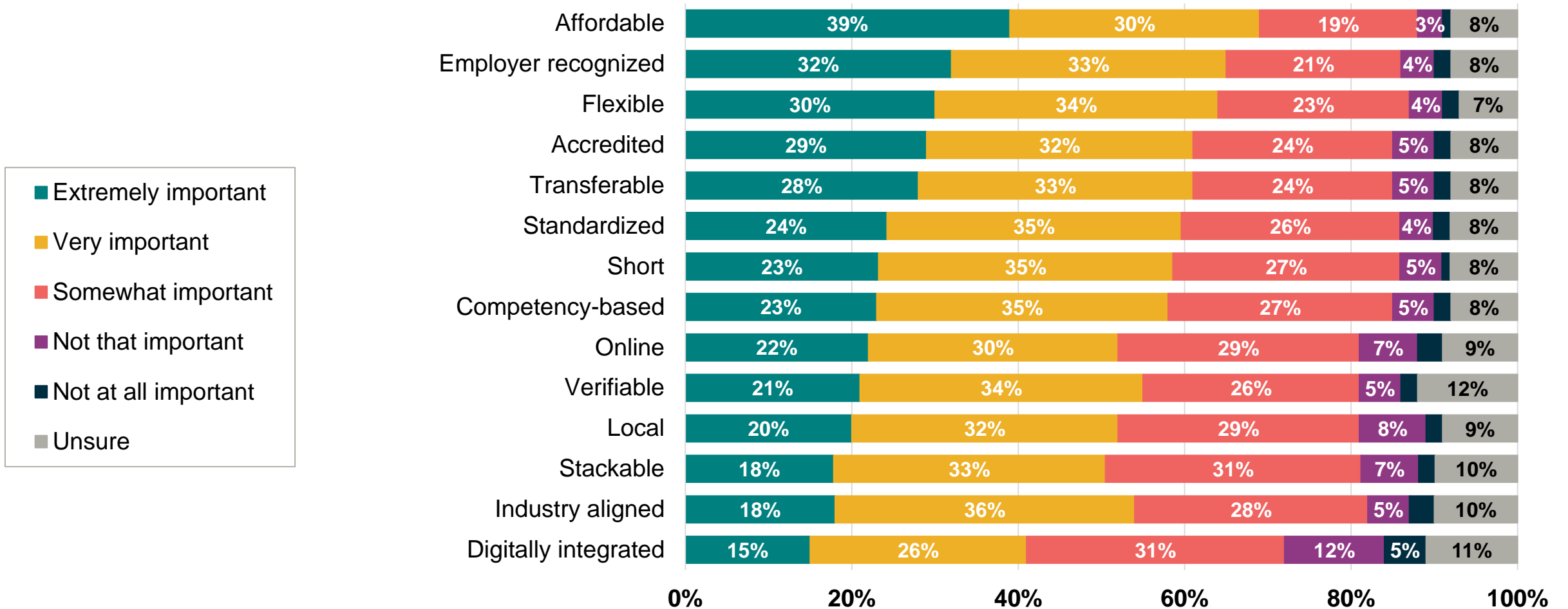
Would you be interested in microcredentials for...



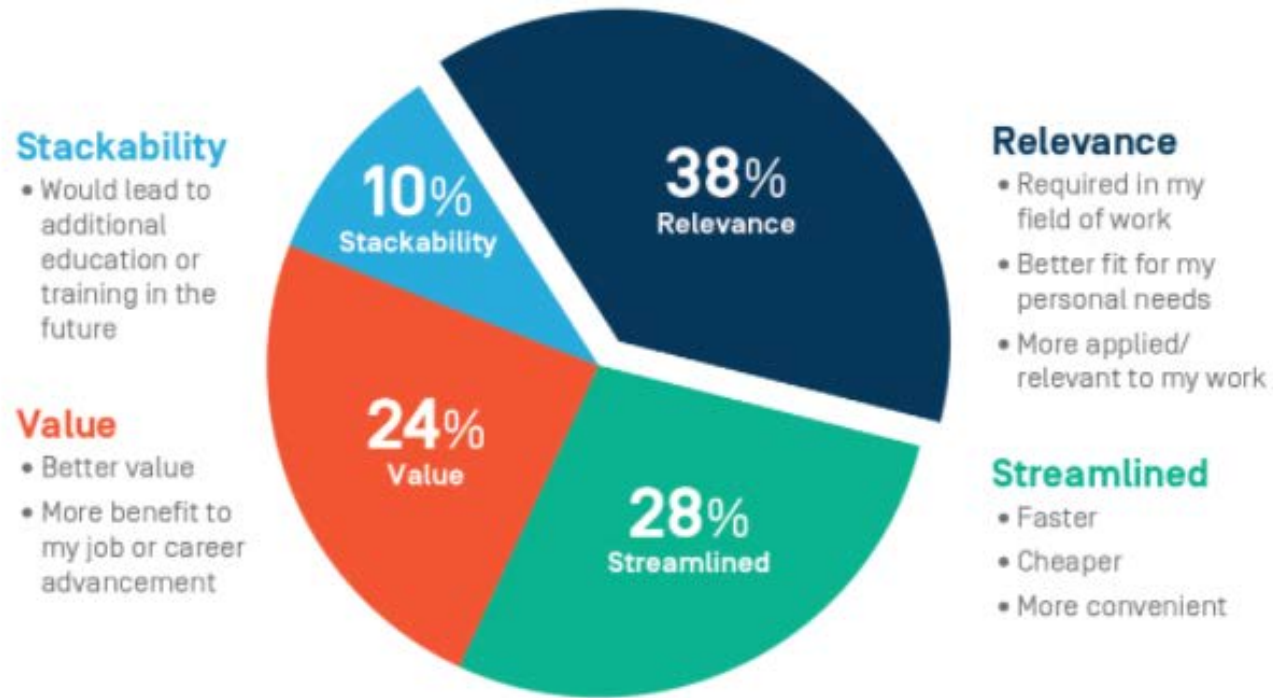
Prospective Student Perceptions



Microcredentials can have a variety of different characteristics.
How important are the following potential characteristics of a microcredential?



Prospective Student Perceptions

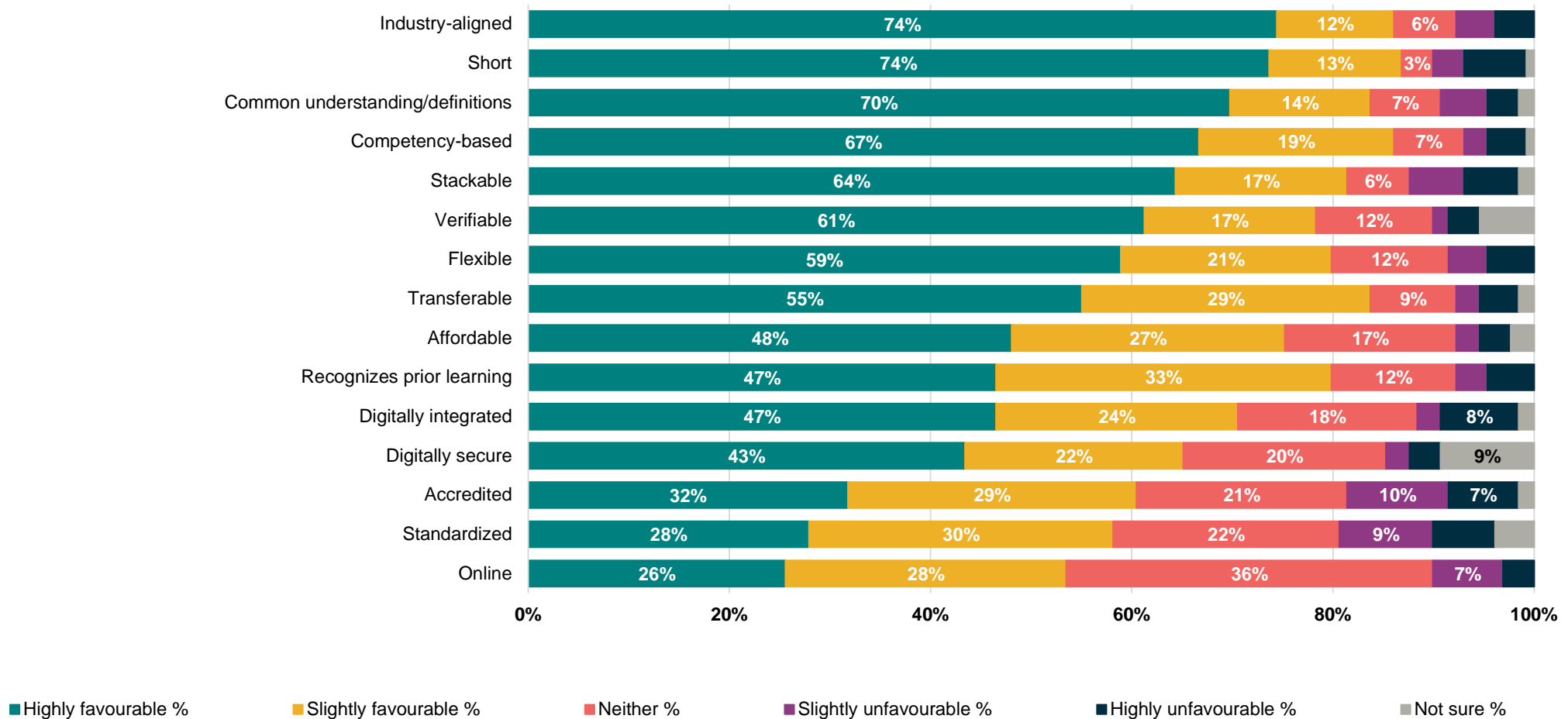


2 in 5 Americans [38%] say the most important factors in choosing an education program are whether it is **related to their work** and **suited to their personal needs**.

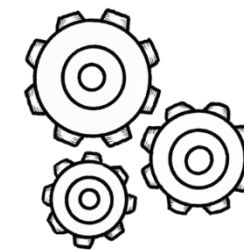
PSE Perceptions



How favourably would you consider the following possible features of a microcredential?



Quality Markers



Relevant



Consulted or involved industry/community

Accredited



Recognized or issued by a professional accrediting body

Standardized



Meets a government-set quality standard

Assessed



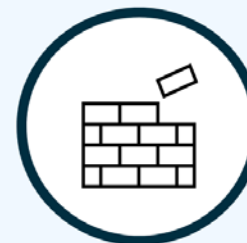
The learner must demonstrate skills/knowledge to earn the credential

Flexible



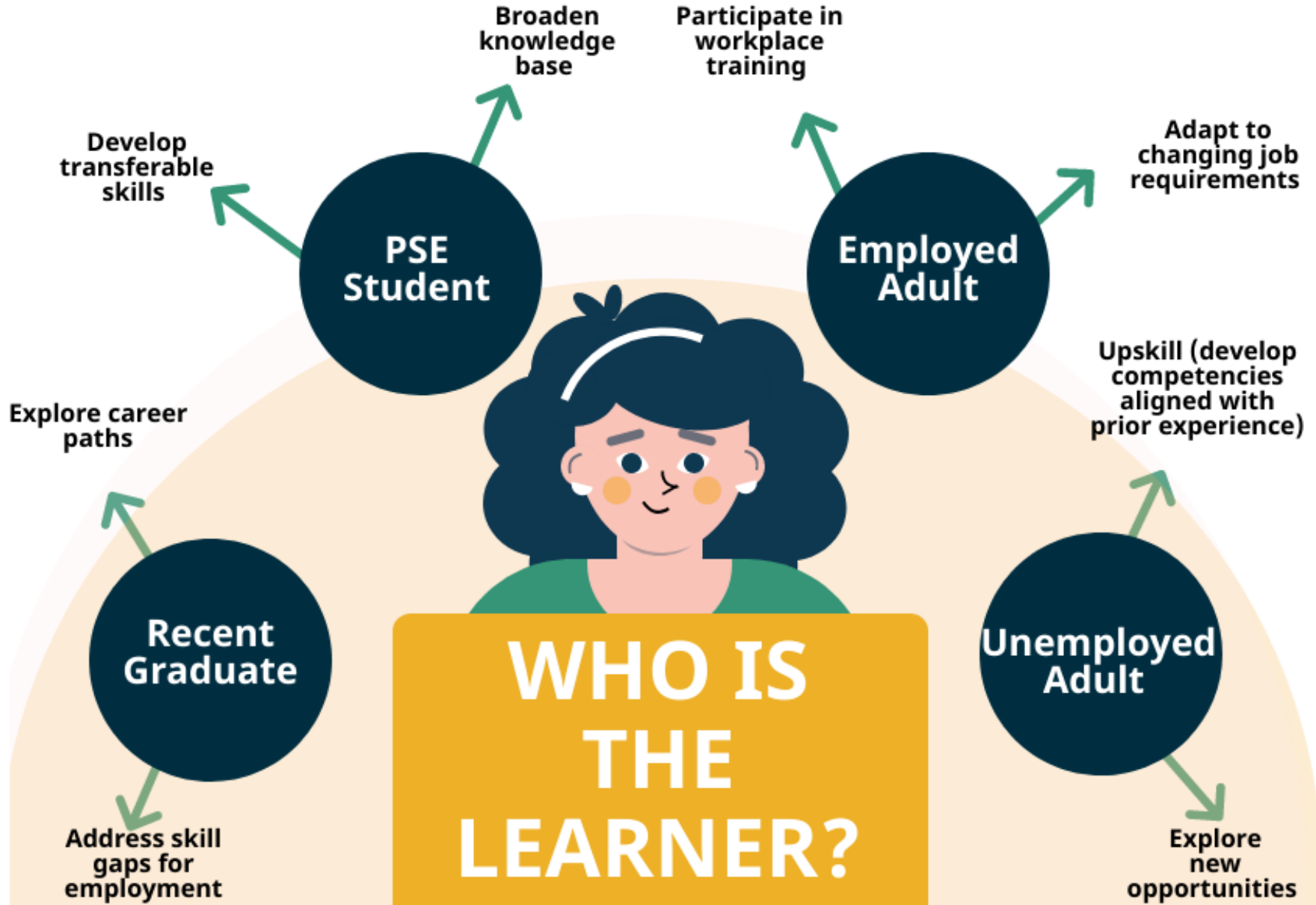
The pace and/or structure of learning can be personalized

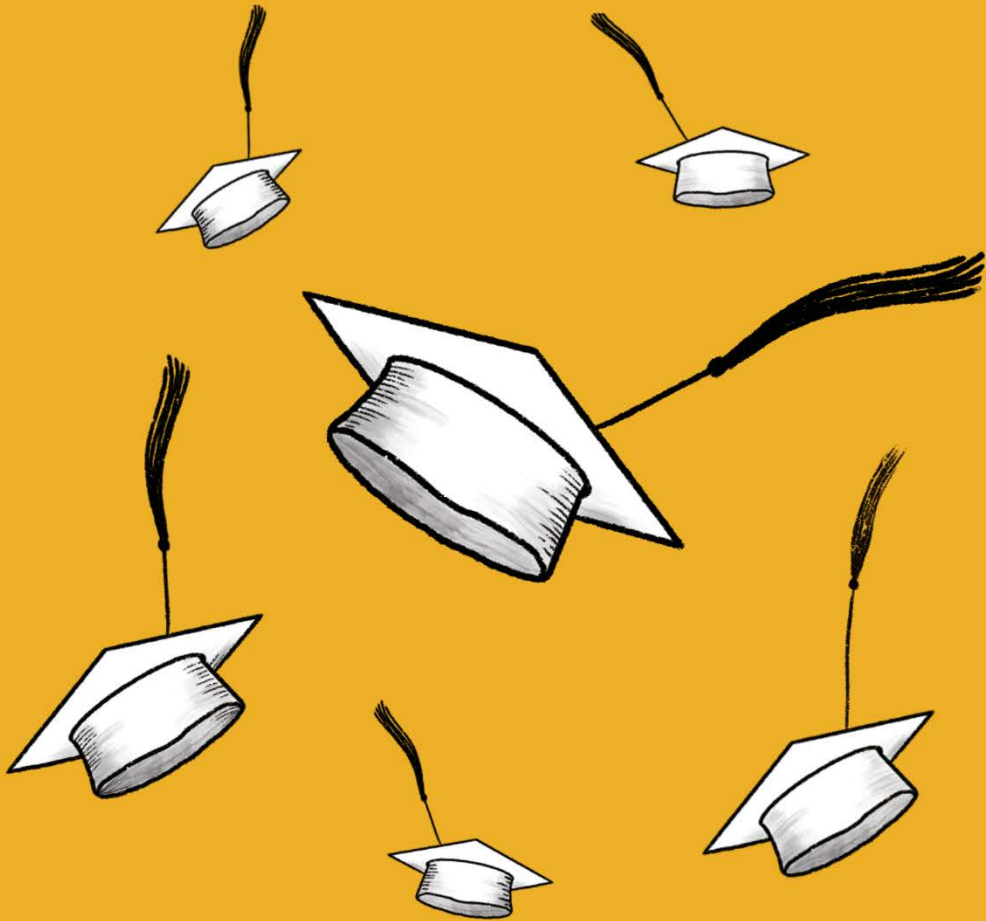
Stackable



Can be "stacked" or combined toward a larger credential, e.g. a diploma or degree







Thank you!

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