



# Thriving and surviving with micro-credentials: Rethinking the **value** proposition

Beverley Oliver, Emeritus Professor and Principal Consultant, EduBrief



# The credential ecosystem

## Learning:

Formal ..... ► Macro-credentials

Non-formal ..... ► Micro-credentials

Informal

*Certification of learning achievement  
demonstrated through some sort of  
assessment*

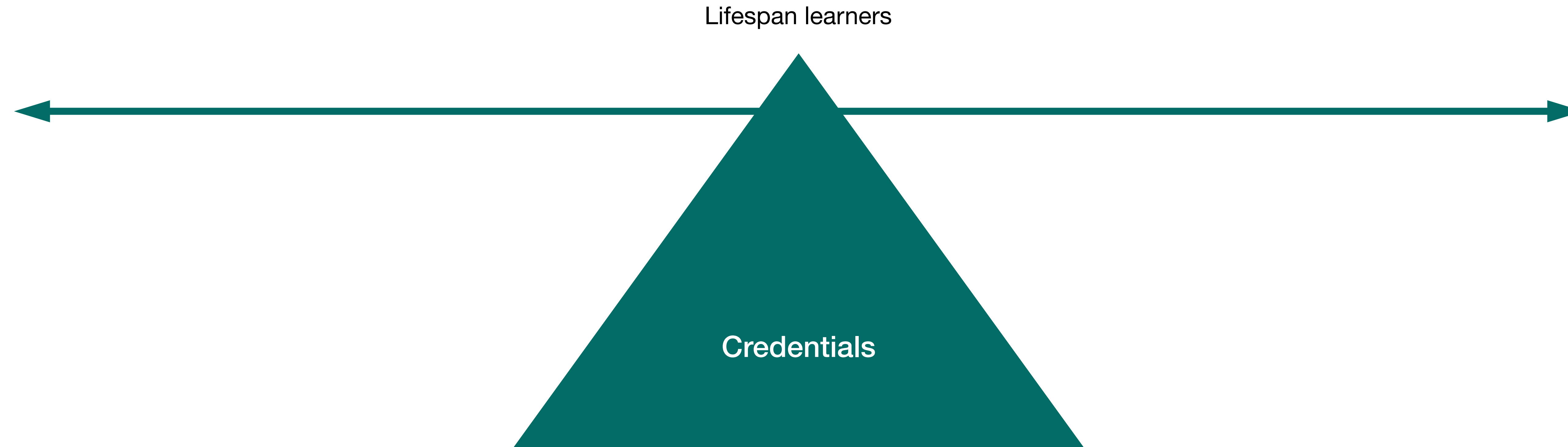
*A certificate or badge*

*Sometimes interact with macros*

**Credentials**

*VALUE of a credential to the learner = Benefit — Cost*

# The credential ecosystem



## Why are **micro-credentials** such a hot topic?

### 1. Many macro-credentials are failing to deliver:

- **Benefit**: dubious career benefits
- **Costs**:
  - **More time** required - including travel, fixed timeslots, time not working
  - **More money** required - fees, designed mostly for first qualification

### 2. Recent short courses and certificates

- **Benefits**:
  - **More** focused on skills and jobs, post-COVID
  - **Increased** visibility and prestige factors, credit recognition (?)
- **Costs**:
  - **Less time** required - online, on demand
  - **Less money** required - including fees, other costs

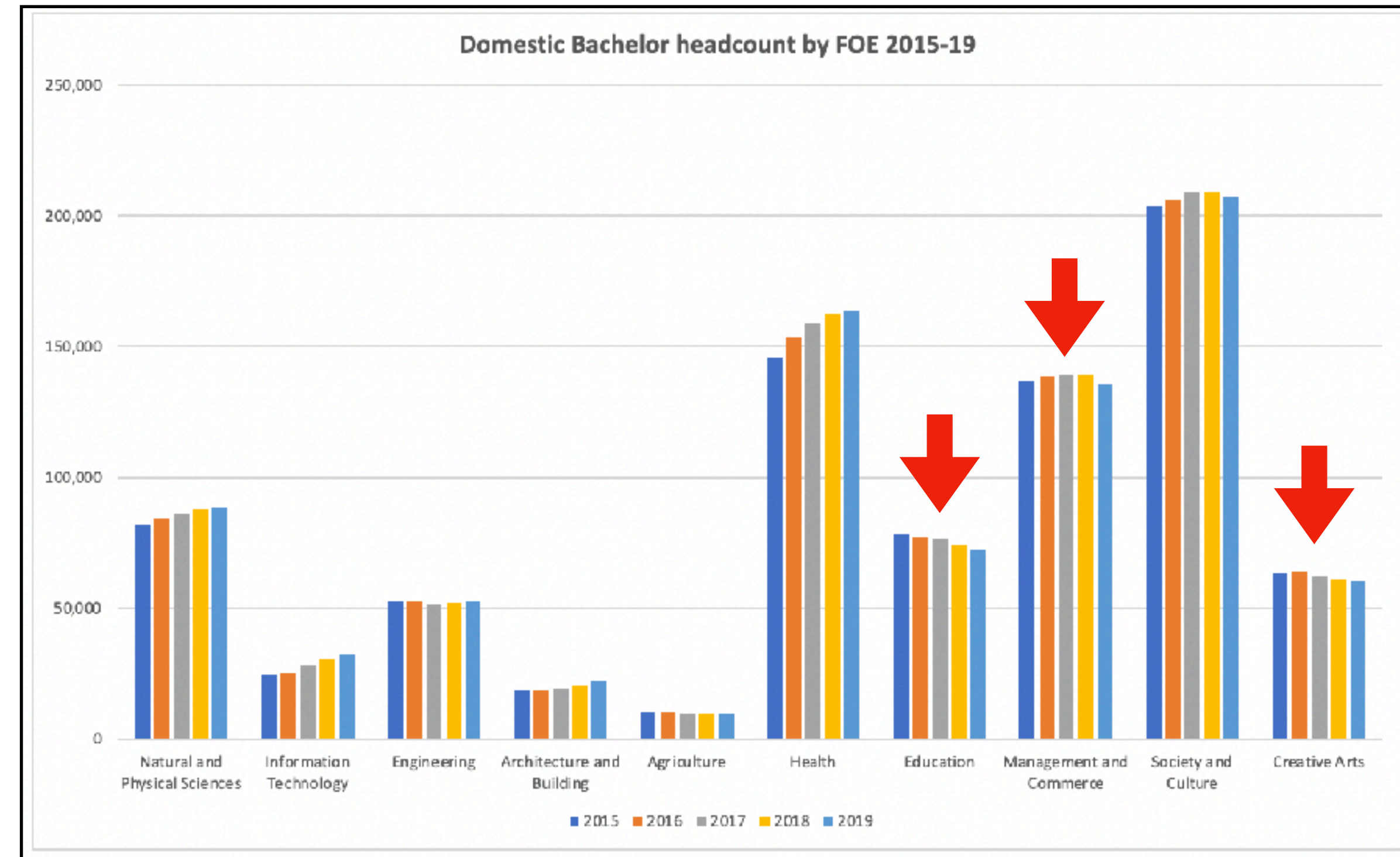
**Successful micro-credentials will avoid the pitfalls of macro-credentials.**



## Bachelor

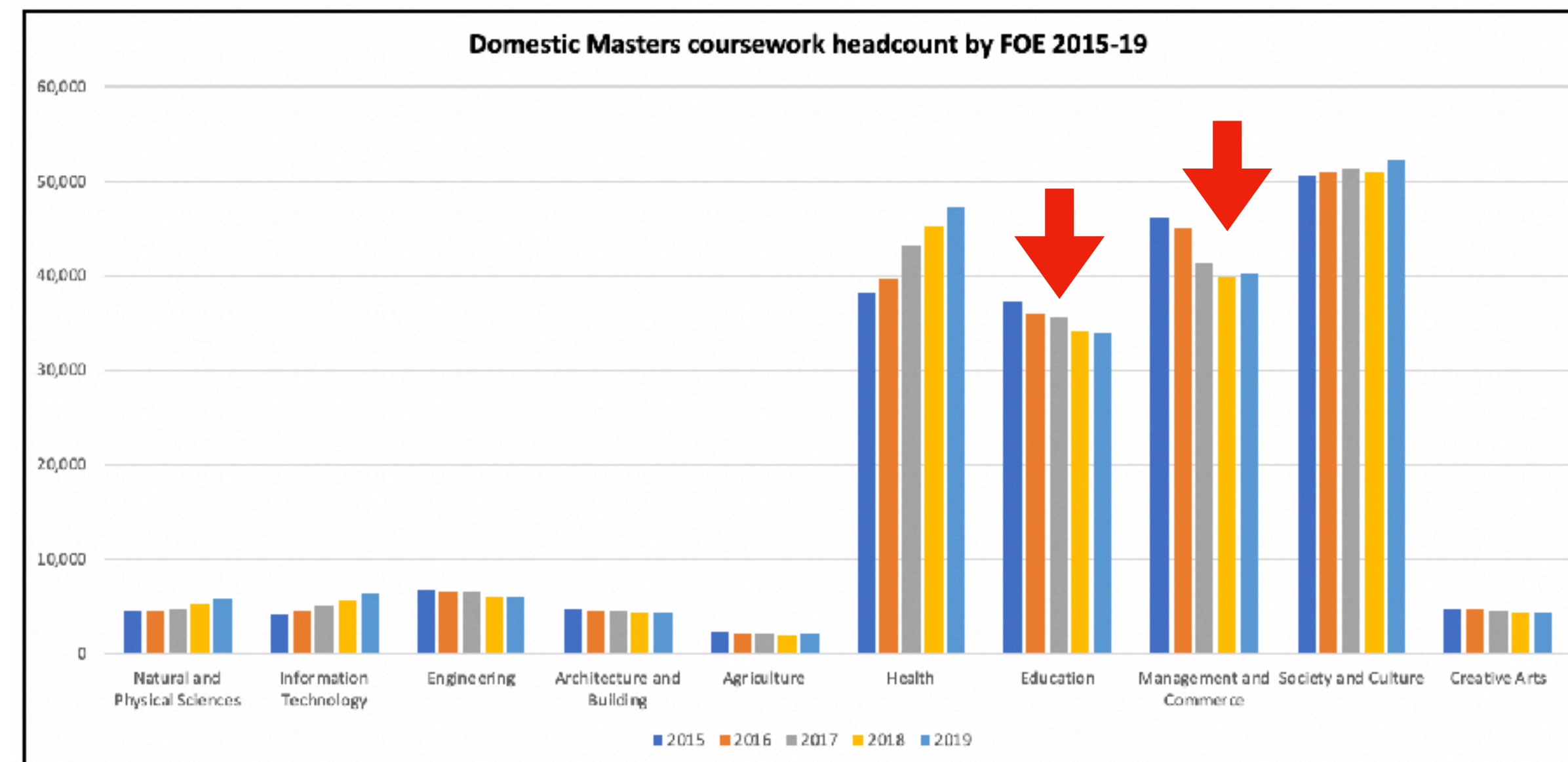
How are  
Australian higher  
education learners  
responding?

## Masters



Sciences  
Health  
Society & Culture  
IT

Education  
Commerce  
Creative Arts



Health  
Society & Culture  
Education  
Commerce



# What do we know about older Australian learners?

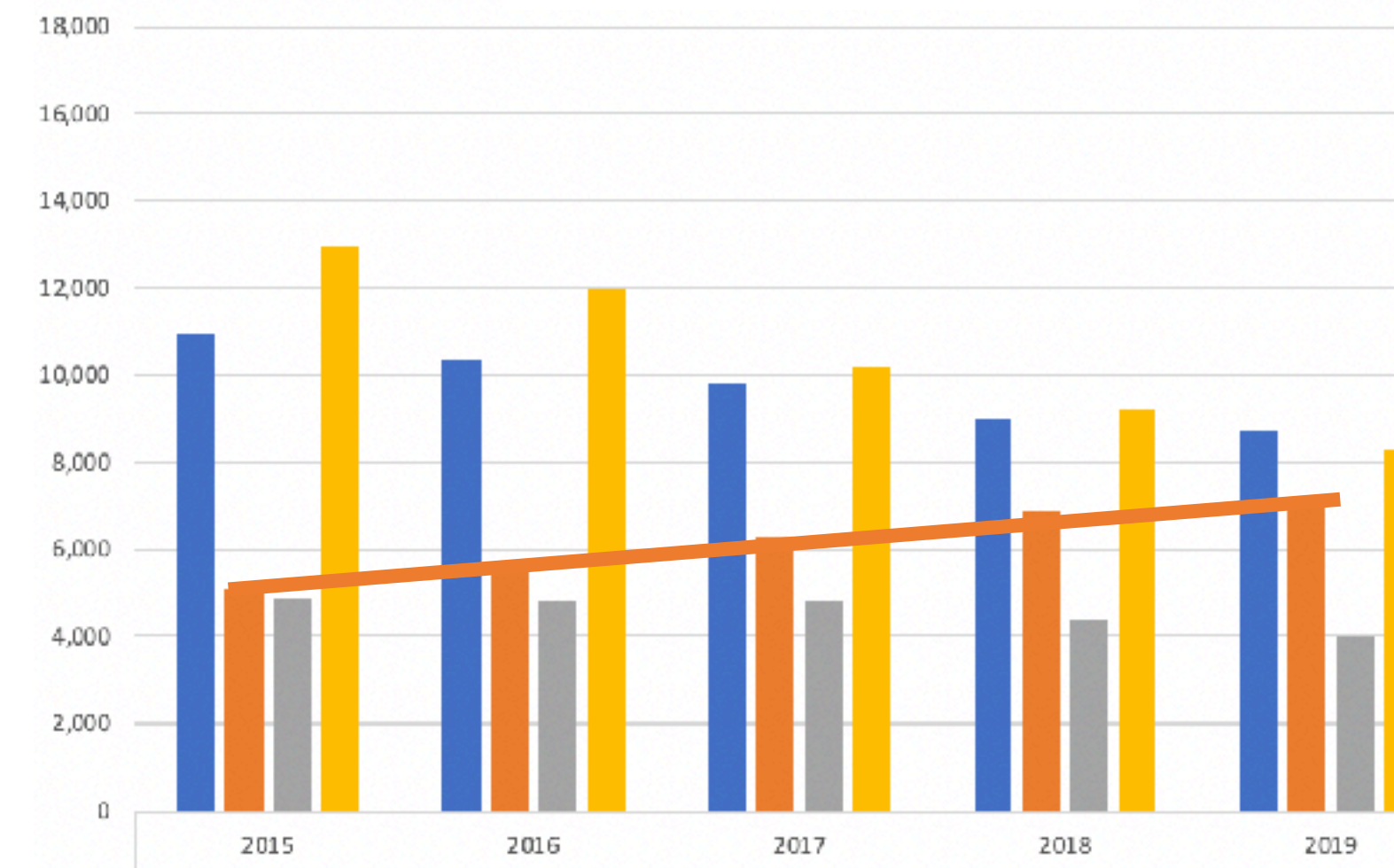
Career benefit - same

Time - accessibility, asynchronicity

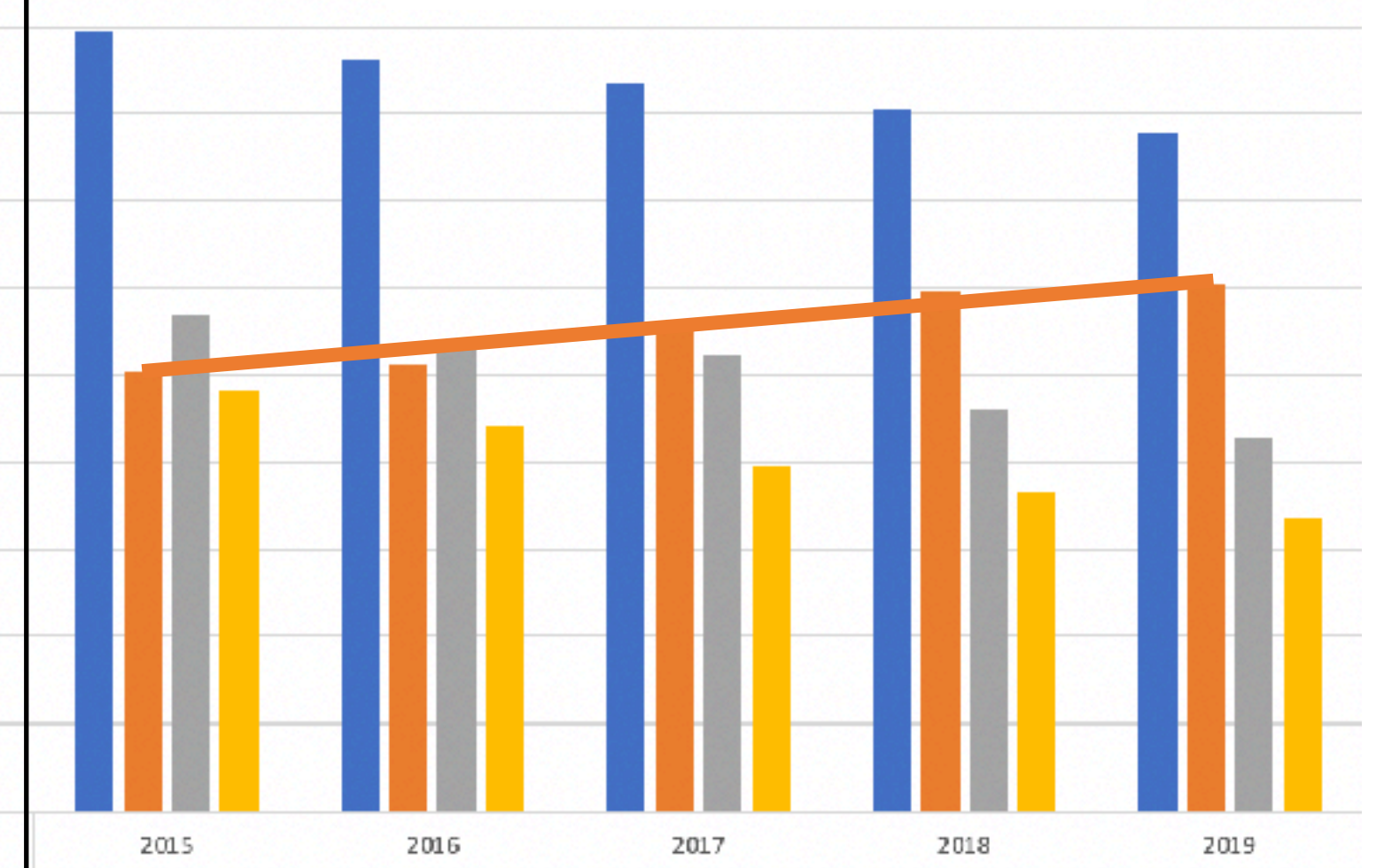
Fees - same

Society & Culture  
Health  
Management  
Education

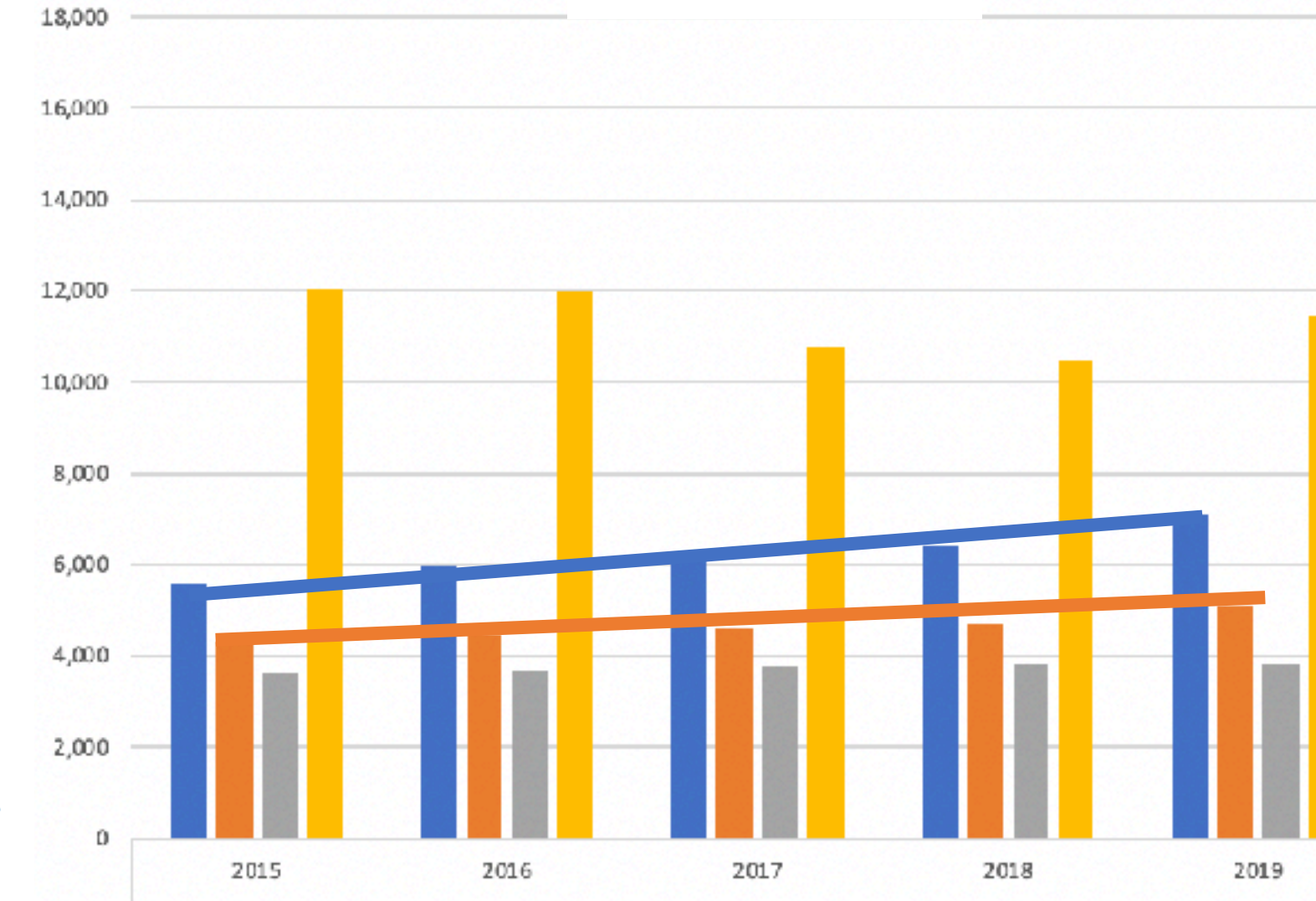
Men on campus



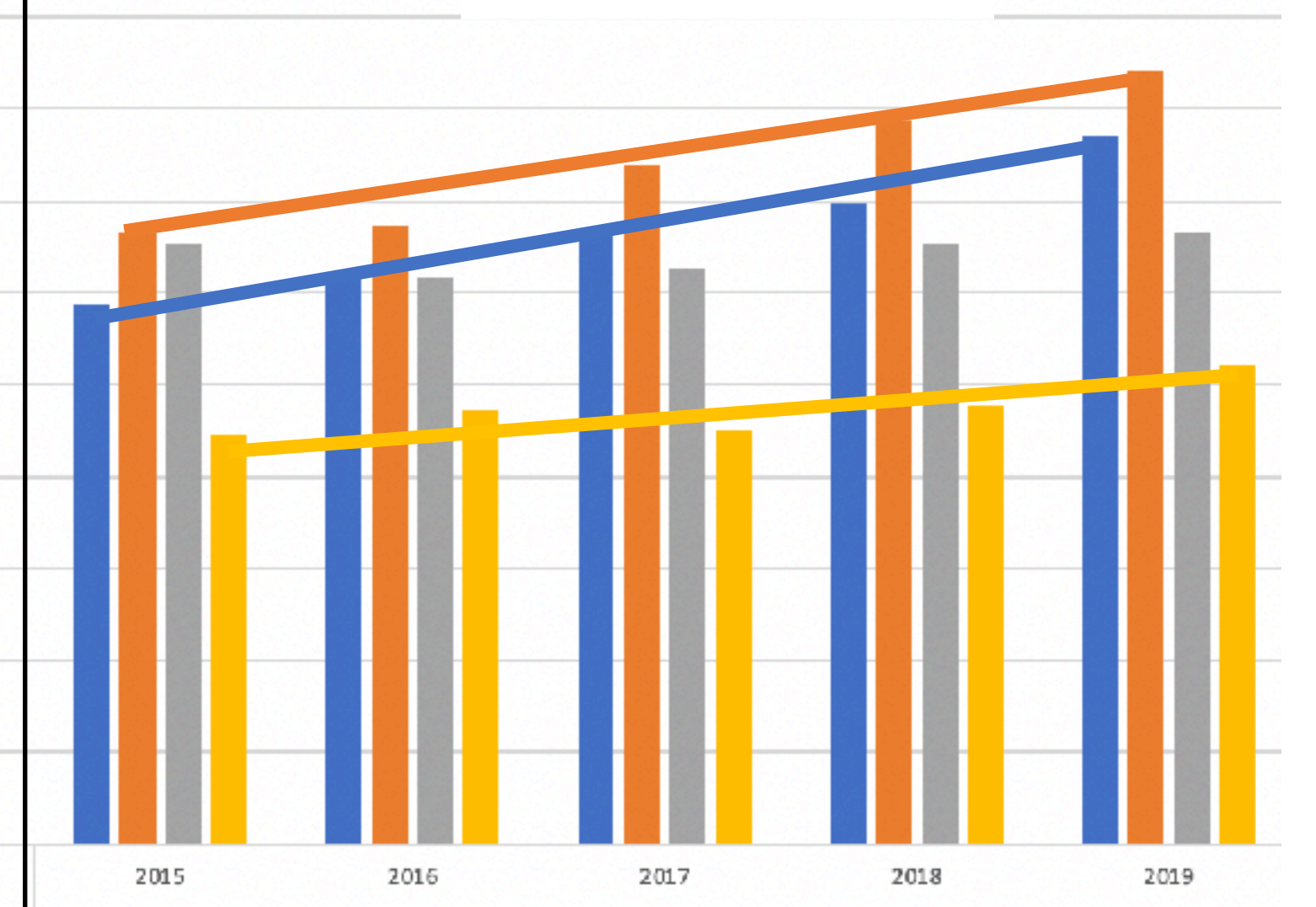
Women on campus



Men online



Women online





# Is an Australian degree “worth it”?\* One way of looking at the value proposition

	Undergraduates 2019		GRAD DEBT	QUALITY	Postgraduates 2019		Difference UG -> PG	
	% Full-time employment	Median salary	Approx debt (2018 figures)	% agree	% Full-time employment	Median salary	% inc. FT employ	Median salary increase
Science and mathematics	63.4	60,000	28,000	77	77.5	80,000	14.1	\$20,000
Computing and Information Systems	75.9	64,000	28,000	72	83.1	91,200	7.2	\$27,200
Engineering	84.8	67,500	37,000	78	85.0	85,000	0.2	\$17,500
Architecture and built environment	74.5	60,300	28,000	71	81.4	68,000	6.9	\$7,700
Agriculture and environmental studies	72.6	60,000	28,000	81	79.6	80,000	7.0	\$20,000
Health services and support	70.5	63,000	27,000	77	83.5	87,700	13.0	\$24,700
Medicine	91.1	73,100	54,000	70	96.7	78,300	5.6	\$5,200
Nursing	76.3	62,600	19,300	74	94.8	86,600	18.5	\$24,000
Pharmacy	95.7	48,000	28,000	73	94.9	75,000	-0.8	\$27,000
Dentistry	86.2	88,200	54,000	56	88.6	100,000	2.4	\$11,800
Teacher education	80.8	68,000	26,000	68	85.6	84,000	4.8	\$16,000
Business and management	76.6	59,500	32,000	79	90.7	112,700	14.1	\$53,200
Humanities, culture, soc sciences	64.3	61,000	19,300	85	79.2	80,600	14.9	\$19,600
Law and paralegal studies	77.3	63,200	43,000	76	88.6	75,000	11.3	\$11,800
Creative arts	52.9	52,000	19,300	74	69.8	73,100	16.9	\$21,100
Communications	60.1	54,300	19,300	79	71.4	67,300	11.3	\$13,000

\*Many caveats in the data

Highest employment	Highest salary	Lowest debt	Highest OS
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Highest PG employment	Highest PG salary
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Highest improved employment	Highest salary increase
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## But wait there's more.... Australian Postgraduate fees

Fees vary widely, but are usually the same on campus or online. These examples show the **per annum** tuition fee - most Masters are ~1.5 years in total.

If you enrol in one unit each semester, the Masters could take up to **twelve years** to complete.

<b>Juris Doctor</b>	<b>Annual est. fee*</b>	<b>Est. overall debt**</b>
University 1	\$59,649	\$89,473.5
University 2	\$41,088	\$61,632
University 3	\$38,400	\$57,600
University 4	\$36,288	\$54,432
University 5	\$32,600	\$48,900
University 6	\$27,900	\$41,850
University 7	\$24,830	\$37,245

<b>MBA or similar</b>	<b>Annual est. fee*</b>	<b>Est. overall debt**</b>
University 1	\$38,400	\$57,600
University 2	\$38,195	\$57,292.5
University 3	\$34,400	\$51,600
University 4	\$29,056	\$43,584
University 5	\$26,760	\$40,140
University 6	\$26,300	\$39,450
University 7	\$24,550	\$36,825

\*This is an estimate of the annual tuition fee - other charges include text books, student amenities fee, travel and so on.

\*\* Estimated overall debt is annual tuition by 1.5 not including indexation



## Will micro-credentials replace macro-credentials?

**Yes**, if similar benefits **can** be delivered through a micro-credential  
MBA and many masters degrees

**No**, if similar benefits **cannot** be delivered through a micro-credential  
Professional accreditation eg B. Nursing  
Unlikely to replace first post-school macro-credential rite of passage

## Will micro-credentials live alongside macro-credentials?

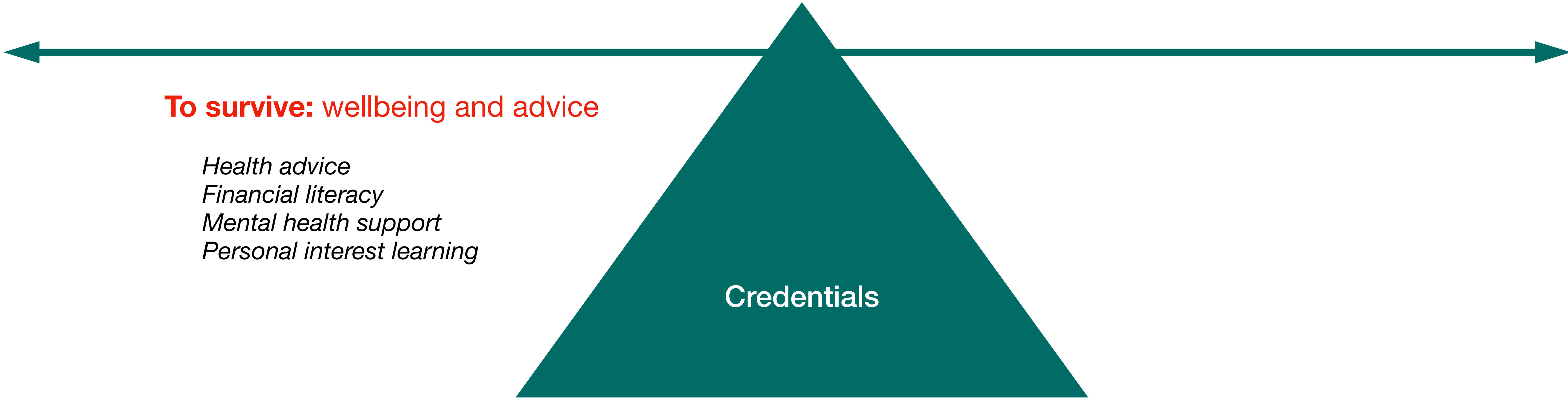
**Yes**, if they maintain standards, deliver benefits promised. Many don't need to.

## Will all today's macro-credentials survive?

**Unlikely**

# The credential ecosystem

Lifespan learners



**To survive:** wellbeing and advice

*Health advice*

*Financial literacy*

*Mental health support*

*Personal interest learning*

**Credentials**

**VALUE to the learner:**

**Benefit** (Life support, peace of mind, reassurance)

**Cost** (low fee/free; short duration, on demand)







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 Learning Services Team

**Land the Job: Showcasing  
your best work on  
OpenLearning Portfolio**

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 Leah Shmerling

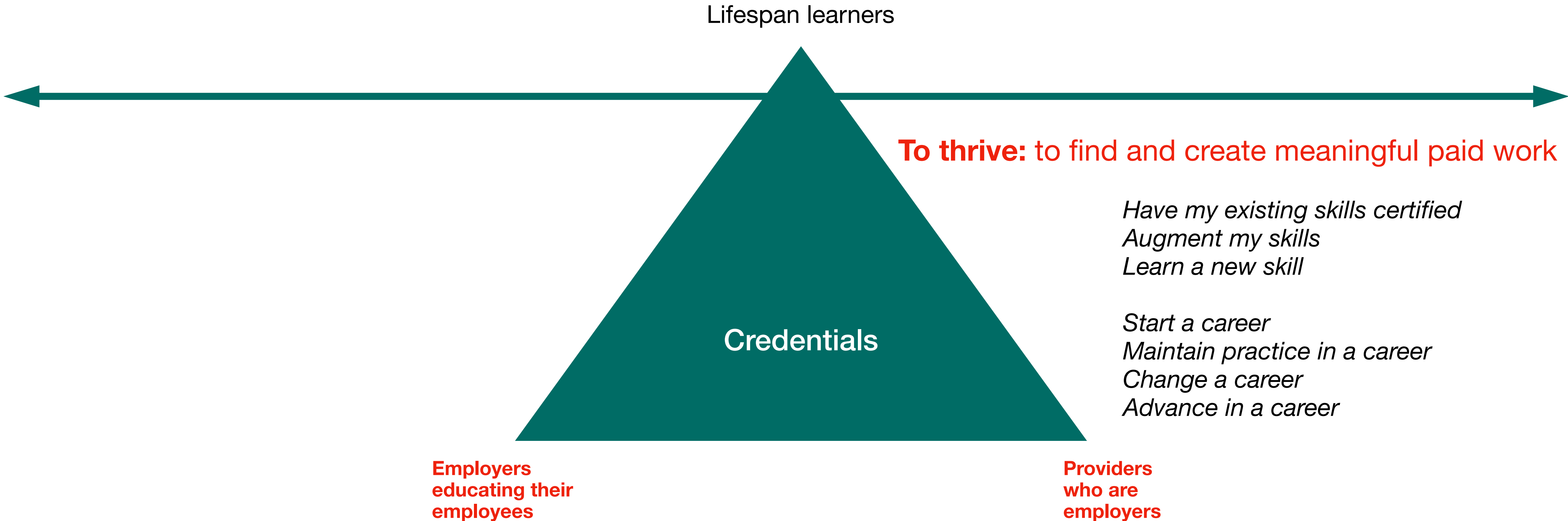
**How to Plan your  
Retirement - Online  
Course**

How to Plan your Retirement - Plan, and transition into a fulfilling retirement with a holistic plan to impact the quality of your retirement.

[On now](#)

Short, low cost, targeted, on demand

# The credential ecosystem



For these micro-credentials, providers must deliver **value** to **learners** and **employers**



# Post 2020: Our new mindset

From “learning ~ employability” to “learning for earning”



Where will **safe, secure paid work** be?



Which **credential** - short or long - is most likely to get **me** there?



What will it **cost** in **time and money**?



Where's the **evidence of others' success**?



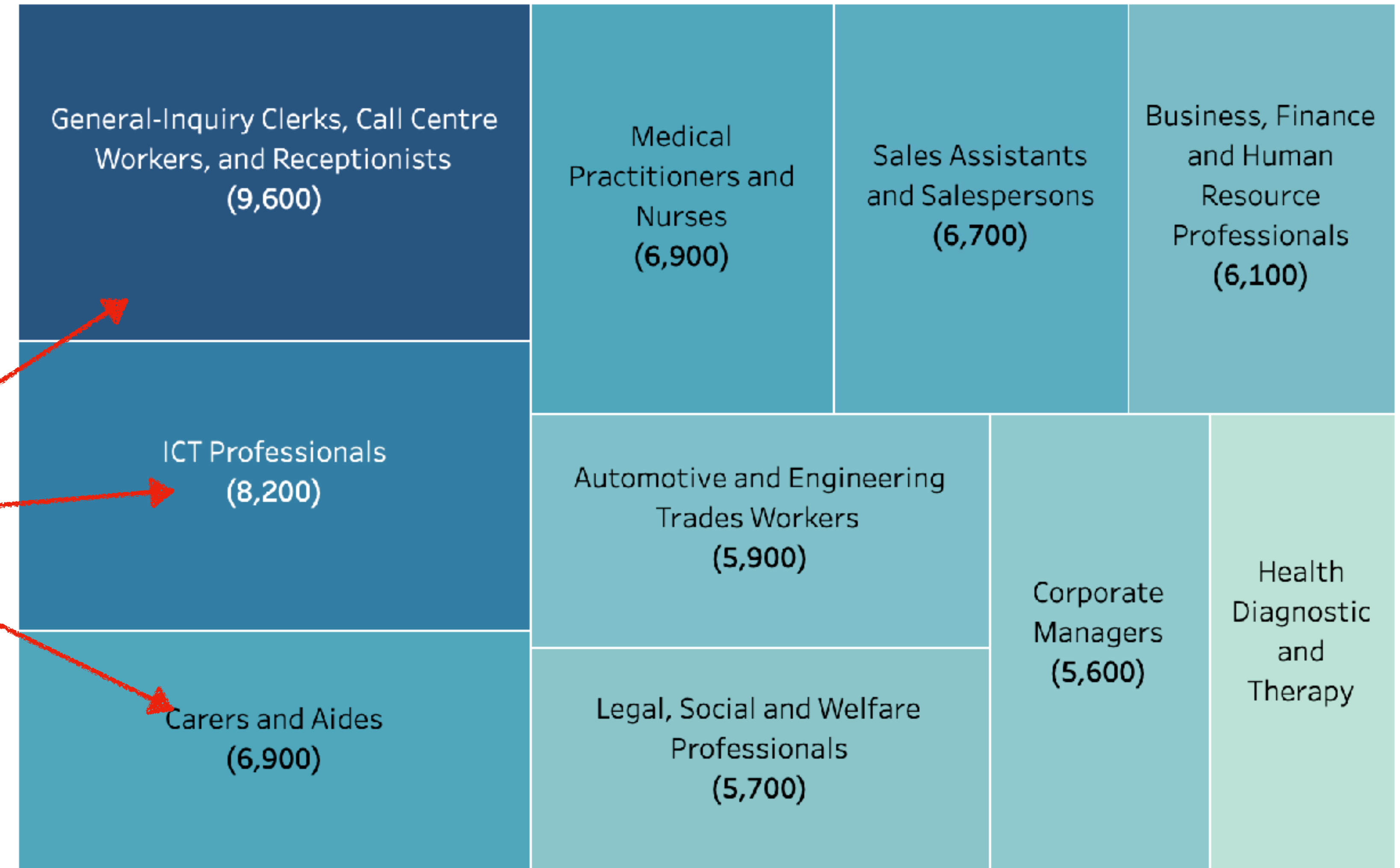
Australia's

# Labour Market Information Portal – Data Visualisations

Department of Education, Skills and Employment. | Australia | Imp.gov.au

## What are the current opportunities in Australia?

The below treemap shows the 10 detailed occupations (ANZSCO 2-digit) in Australia with the most IVI job ads in September 2020. Relative size of treemap segment indicate number of job adds (seasonally adjusted data).



Where will paid work be **plentiful**?

And what is the **fastest route for mature learners?**

And who is the **best provider?**



## Key findings

- 23 certificates
- 21 certificates **by companies**
  - *who seek talent for identified vacancies*
  - *whose core business is not education*
  - *who can afford to charge less*
- named for **jobs** not fields of education
- **data** on enrolments, investment, satisfaction, career benefits

EduBrief.

Monitoring micro-credentials

## Coursera Professional Certificates and Google Career Certificates

### A snapshot analysis

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October 2020





# Coursera Professional Certificates as at 29 Sept 2020

The headlines	Learner investment		Learner experience		Learner benefits	
Professional Certificate	Suggested hours	Likely fee <sup>1</sup>	Overall rating	Learners enrolled	New career	Pay or promotion
1. (ISC) <sup>2</sup> Systems Security Certified Practitioner	112	\$1500	4.7	4,129		
2. Arizona State University TESOL	200	\$680	4.9	12,981	53%	33%
3. Cloud Architecture with Google Cloud	30	\$102		43,998	36%	50%
4. Cloud Engineering with Google Cloud	30	\$102		41,058	36%	50%
5. Data Engineering with Google Cloud	30	\$102		35,053	45%	
6. DeepLearning.AI TensorFlow Developer	80	\$272	4.7	87,723	40%	12%
7. Facebook Social Media Marketing	240	\$408	4.8	7,701		
8. Google IT Automation with Python	150	\$408	4.7	145,045		
9. Google IT Support	120	\$408		398,400	84% <sup>2</sup>	
10. IBM AI Engineering	192	\$272	4.4	23,201	38%	18%
11. IBM Applied AI	144	\$204	4.6	23,533	41%	14%
12. IBM Customer Engagement Specialist	20	\$138	4.8	4,584	35%	30% <sup>3</sup>
13. IBM Cybersecurity Analyst	128	\$544	4.7	17,287		
14. IBM Data Analyst	120	\$162	4.7	1,732	42%	11%
15. IBM Data Science	144	\$162	4.6	212,231	46%	19%
16. IBM Machine Learning	60	\$162	4.9			
17. IBM z/OS Mainframe Practitioner	36	\$330	4.7	3,748		
18. Salesforce Sales Development Rep	100	\$340				
19. SAS Advanced Programmer	60	\$340	5.0			
20. SAS Programmer	112	\$220	4.8	20,015	21%	50%
21. SAS Visual Business Analytics	40	\$220	4.7	8,298		
22. SRE and DevOps Engineer with Google Cloud	30	\$102	4.7	2,147	36%	23%
23. UCI Project Management	240	\$4190				
<b>TOTAL enrolment as at 29 Sep 2020</b>				<b>1,092,864</b>		
<b>Key</b>	<b>&lt;100</b>	<b>&lt;AU\$300</b>	<b>&gt;4.6</b>	<b>&gt;25k</b>	<b>40%+</b>	<b>40%+</b>

Empty cells indicate no data available.

<sup>1</sup> If learner follows recommended time required

<sup>2</sup> As reported separately by Google, see page 20 of this report

<sup>3</sup> In response to whether learner achieved a “tangible career benefit from this course”

See report “Coursera Professional Certificates”: [edubrief.com.au/resources](https://edubrief.com.au/resources)



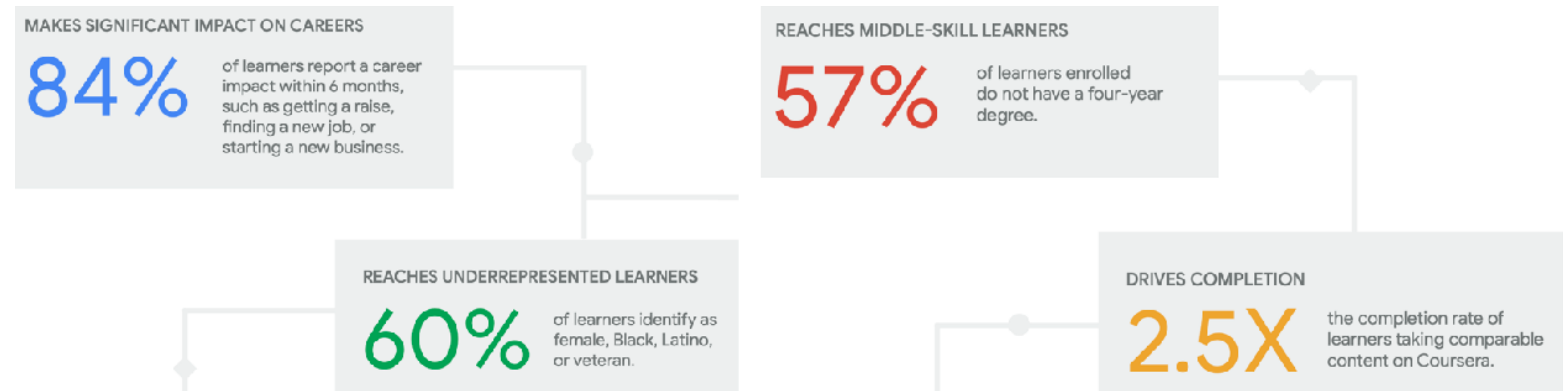
# Coursera Professional Certificates as at 29 Sept 2020



## Creating Pathways to Careers in IT

The Google IT Support  
Professional Certificate  
Impact Report

2019



- Plans for new Certificates in UX Design and Project Management
- Google's SVP of Global Affairs, Kent Walker, commented that Google will **consider these certificates as the equivalent of a four-year degree for related entry-level roles**
- Importantly, these certificates are created and taught by Google employees, bypassing traditional higher education providers.

See report "Coursera Professional Certificates": [edubrief.com.au/resources](https://edubrief.com.au/resources)

A micro-credential cannot transform a **novice** into a computer scientist, an engineer, an educator, a nurse ... but it might provide **work entry for novices** or **advancement or security for professionals**.

Learners will opt for **provider brands** they **trust** to deliver the career opportunity. Are traditional education providers the trusted brands in the micro-credential space?

**It depends....**



**For employment-related credentials, providers must deliver VALUE to learners and employers.**

Learner VALUE = Promised career benefit — Cost (fees + time)

Win **learner trust** by

- Delivering career benefits promised, backed by evidence (employment, satisfaction)
  - Accessibility to well-priced credentials
- 

Employer VALUE = Easy access to qualified talent (people who can do “what do what it says on the tin”)

Win **employer trust** by assessing properly (authentic and authenticated) so graduates can do what you certify.

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**If you wish to have a successful and financially viable micro-credential offer, you will need to**

- manage your investment in **assessment and feedback and support**
- provide **sufficient evidence** to convince the learner to undertake your credential.

Whether you are a traditional education provider or new to education

## Macro-credentials

## Micro-credentials

Benefit:  
Surviving

*A formal qualification for personal interest or to gain a base discipline*

**Money:** as affordable as possible with recognition of prior learning pathways  
**Time:** as brief and on demand as feasible

*A short course or certification for personal interest or for personal health benefits*

**Money:** free or low fee - for credit?  
**Time:** brief and on demand

- Robust evidence that promised benefits are delivered
- Really authentic, identity-verified assessment
- Feedback as constructive advice on how to improve performance
- Proactive support

Benefit:  
Thriving

*A formal qualification to start, switch or advance in a career*

**Money:** as affordable as possible with recognition of prior learning pathways  
**Time:** as brief and on demand as feasible

*A short course or certification to start, switch or advance in a career*

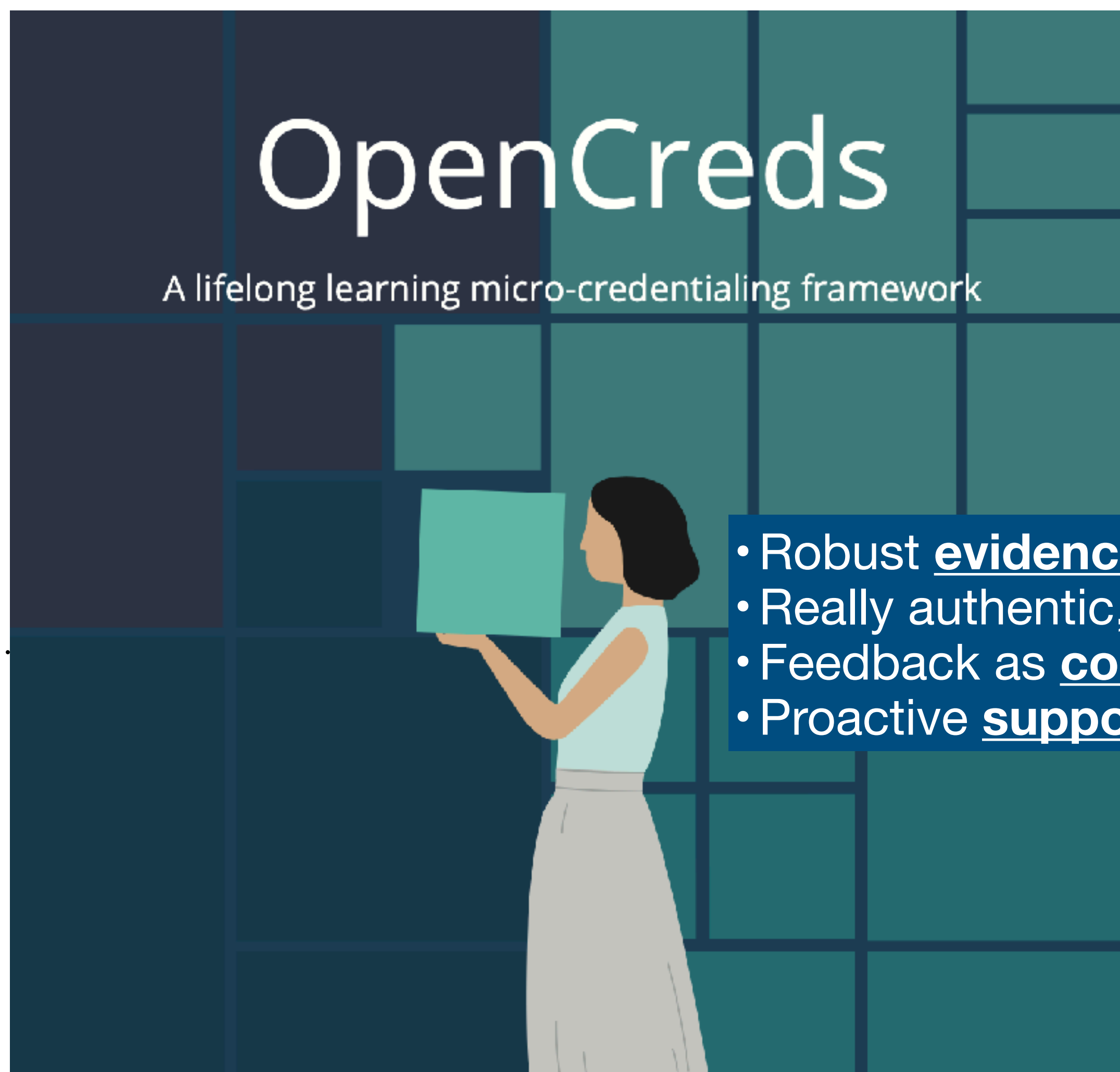
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Whether you are a traditional education provider or new to education

Benefit:  
Surviving

Benefit:  
Thriving



## Micro-credentials

*A short course or certification for personal interest or for personal health benefits*

**Money:** free or low fee - for credit?

**Time:** brief and on demand

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