



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

Beverley Oliver, Emeritus Professor and Principal Consultant, EduBrief



The credential ecosystem

Learning:

Formal

Non-formal

Informal

Macro-credentials

Micro-credentials

Certification of learning achievement demonstrated through some sort of assessment

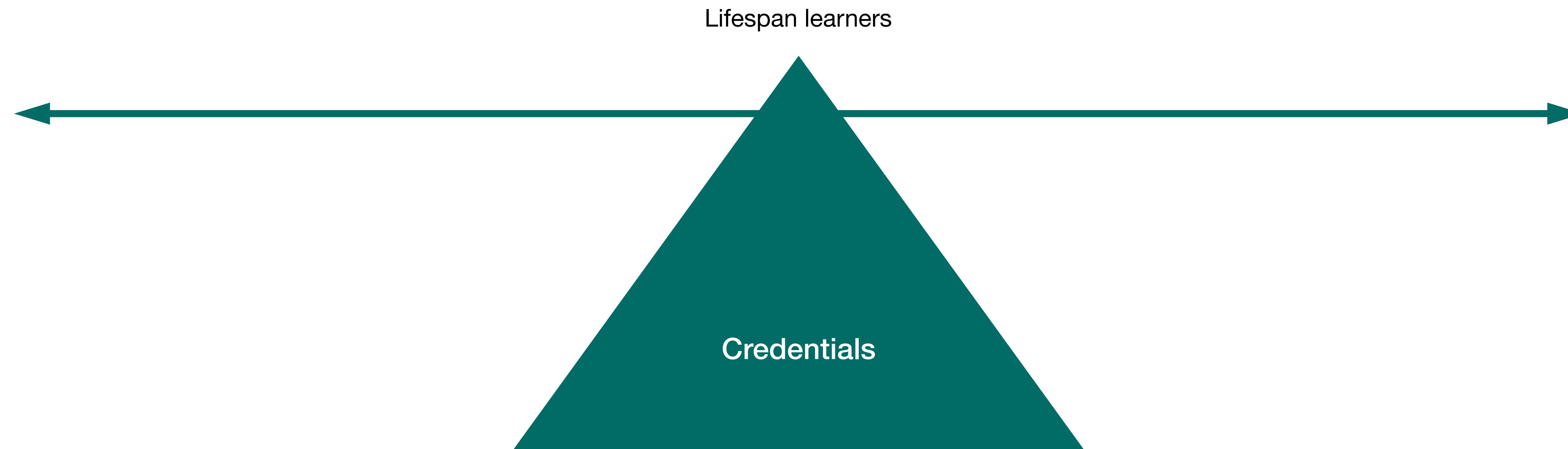
A certificate or badge

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

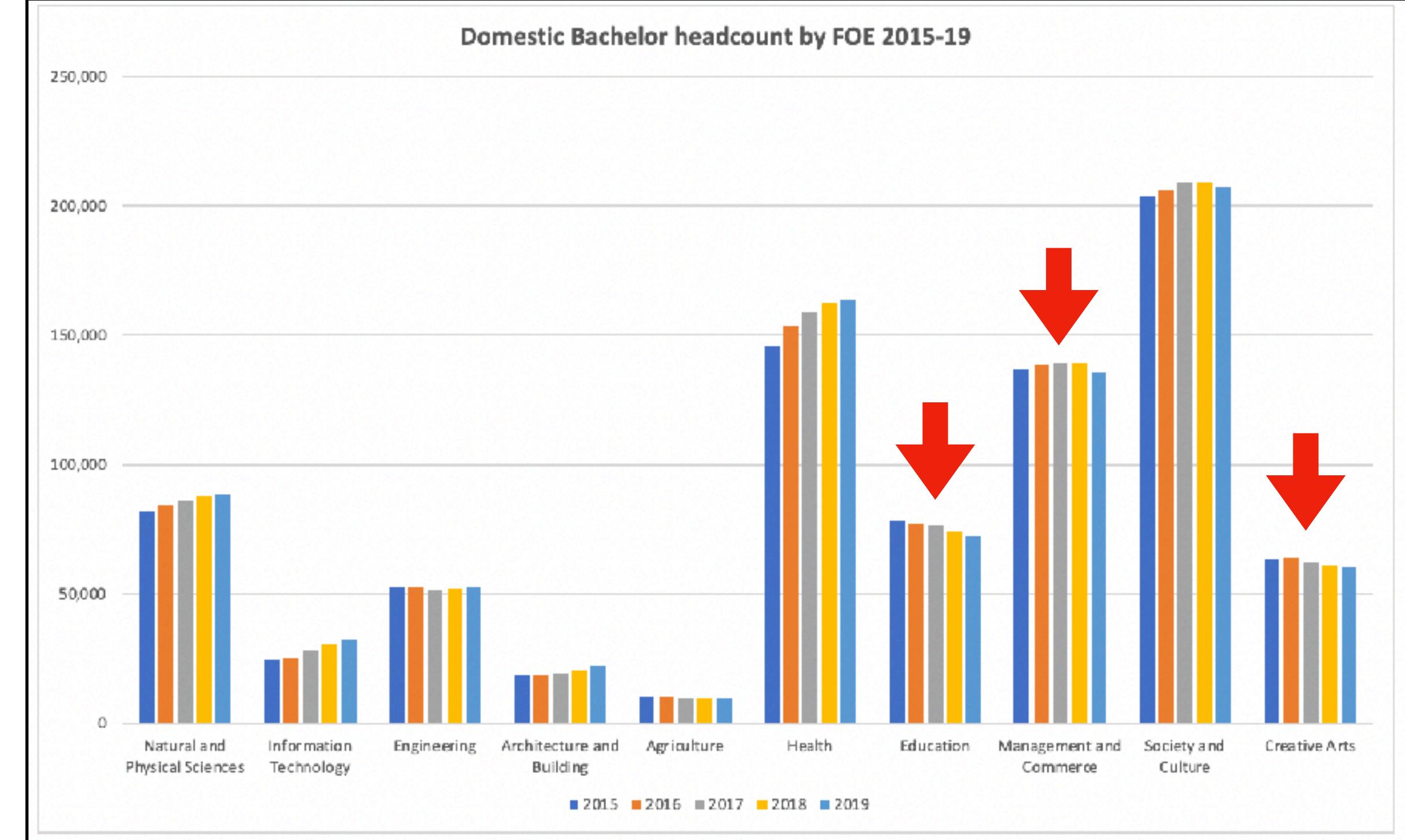
- **Benefits:**
 - **More** focused on skills and jobs, post-COVID
 - **Increased** visibility and prestige factors, credit recognition (?)
- **Costs:**
 - **Less time** required - online, on demand
 - **Less money** required - including fees, other costs

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

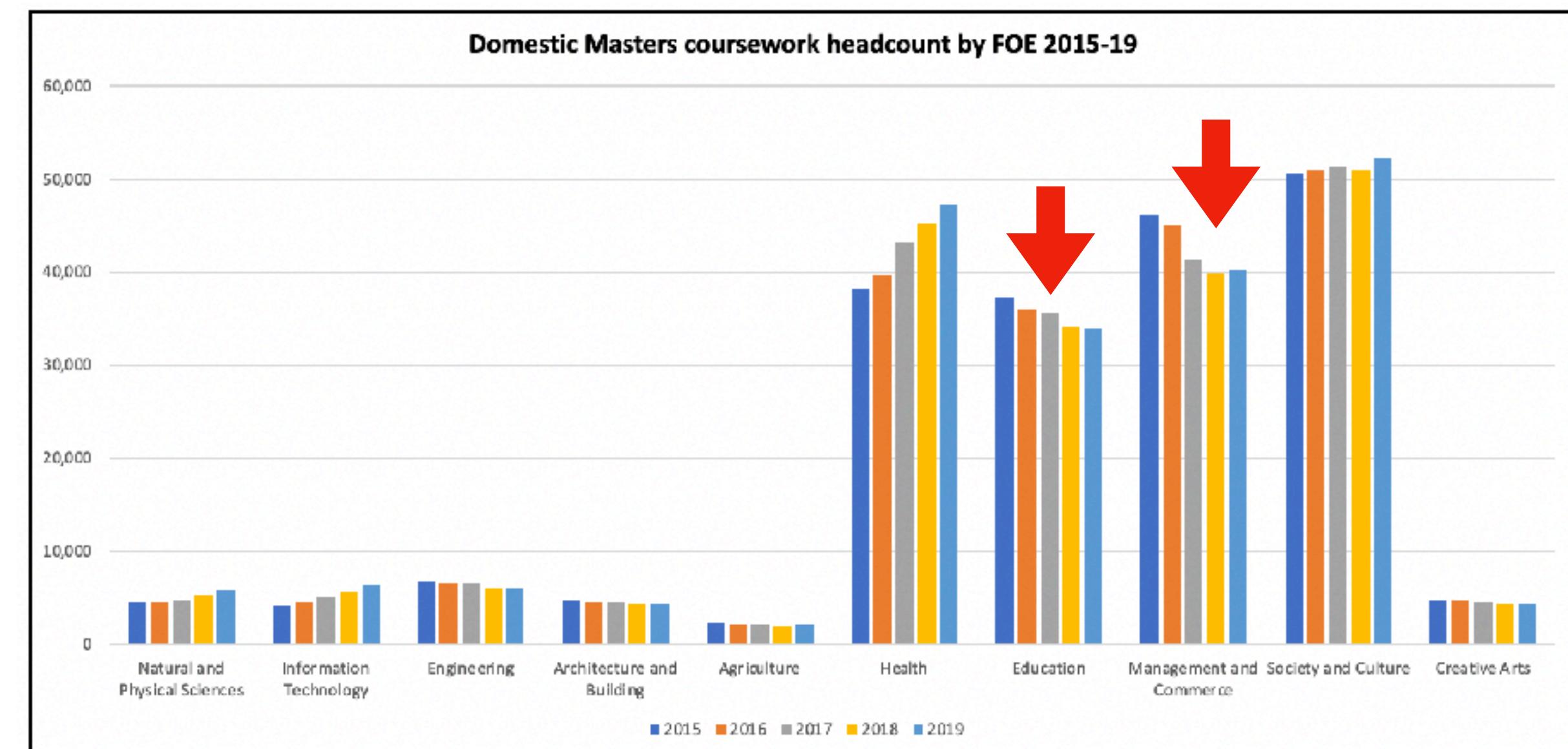
Bachelor

How are
Australian higher
education learners
responding?

Masters



Sciences
Health
Society & Culture
IT



Health
Society & Culture
Education
Commerce

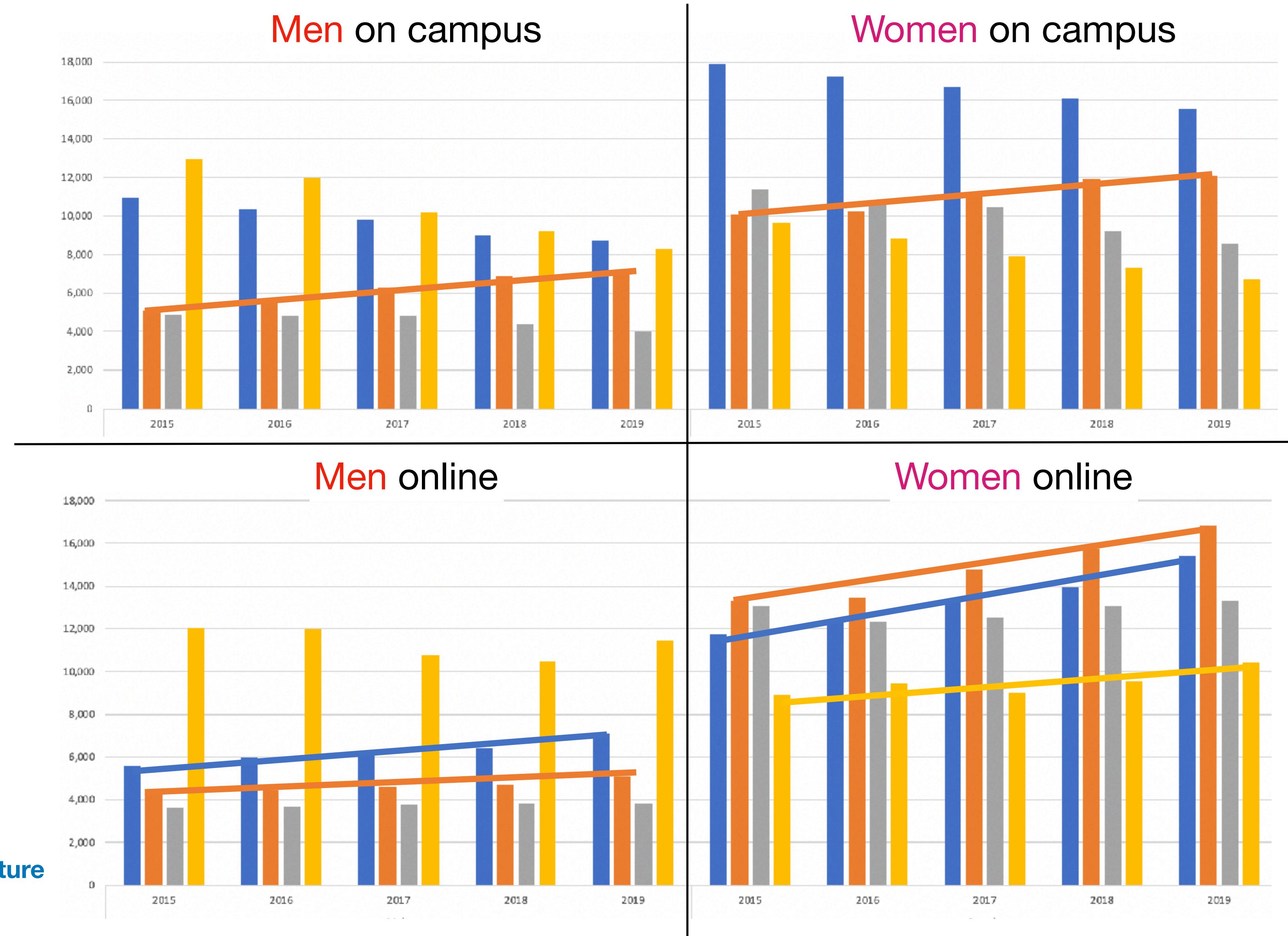
What do we know
about older Australian
learners?

Career benefit - same

Time - accessibility, asynchronicity

Fees - same

Society & Culture
Health
Management
Education



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 |
|--------------------|----------------|-------------|------------|
|--------------------|----------------|-------------|------------|

| Highest PG employment | Highest PG salary |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
|-----------------------|-------------------|

| Highest improved employment | Highest salary increase |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|

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.

| Juris Doctor | Annual est. fee* | Est. overall debt** |
|--------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 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 |

| MBA or similar | Annual est. fee* | Est. overall debt** |
|----------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 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

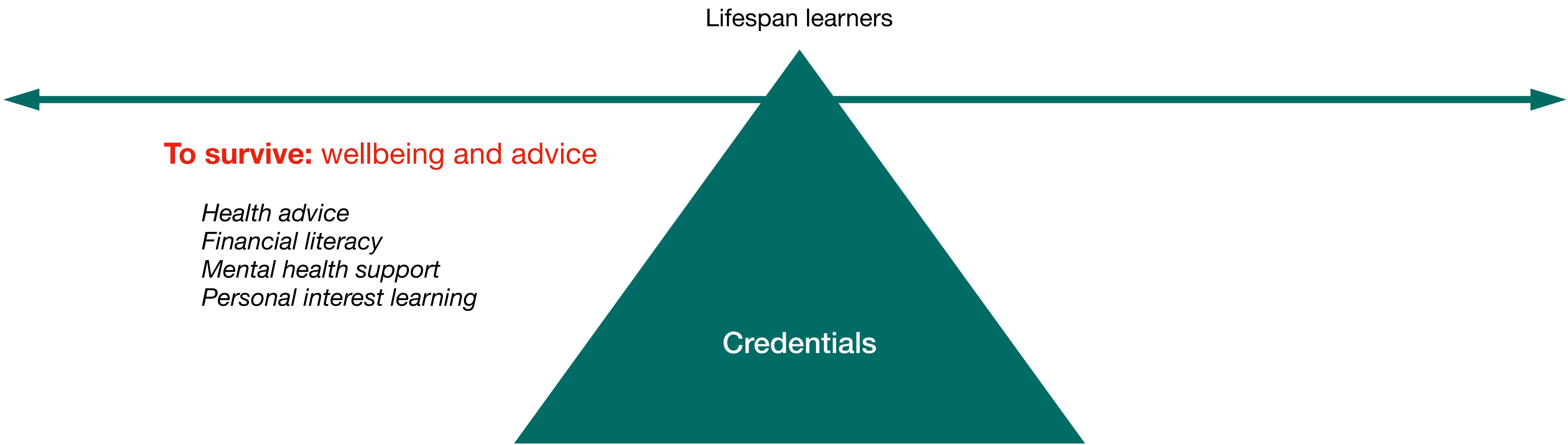
Will micro-credentials live alongside macro-credentials?

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

Will all today's macro-credentials survive?

Unlikely

The credential ecosystem



VALUE to the learner:

Benefit (Life support, peace of mind, reassurance)

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



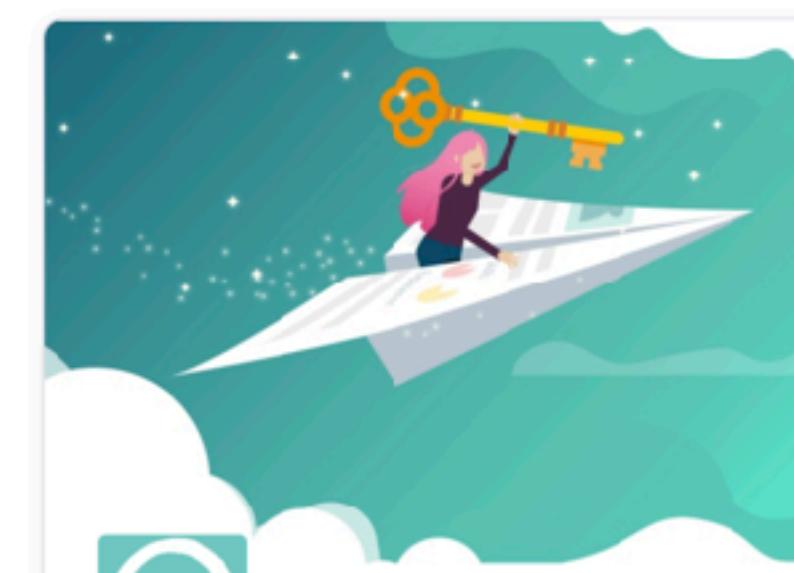
Learning Services Team

**Time Management:
Declutter, Plan, Prioritize**

Increase productivity in your daily routine with this course.

1,156 learners

On now



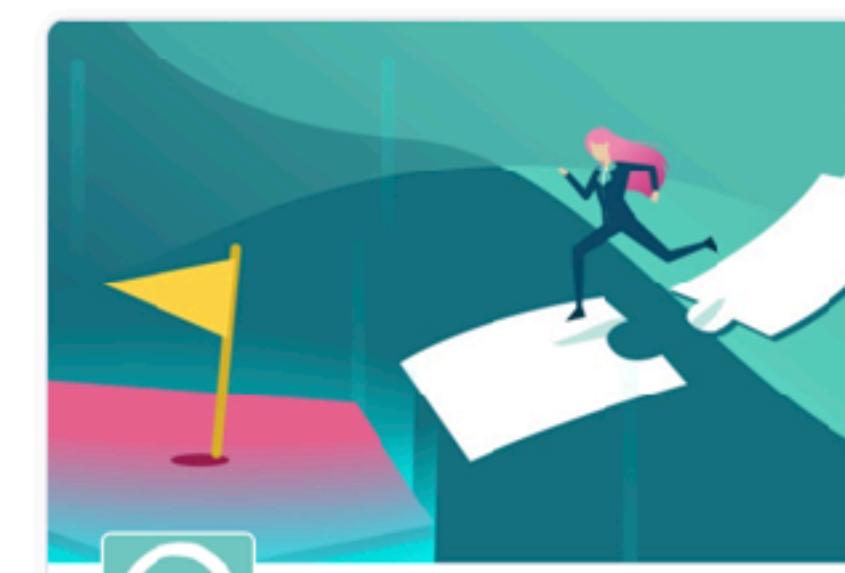
Learning Services Team

Resume Writing Guide: Go beyond templates & secure interviews

Use this resume guide to stand out and get noticed by recruiters.

406 learners

On now



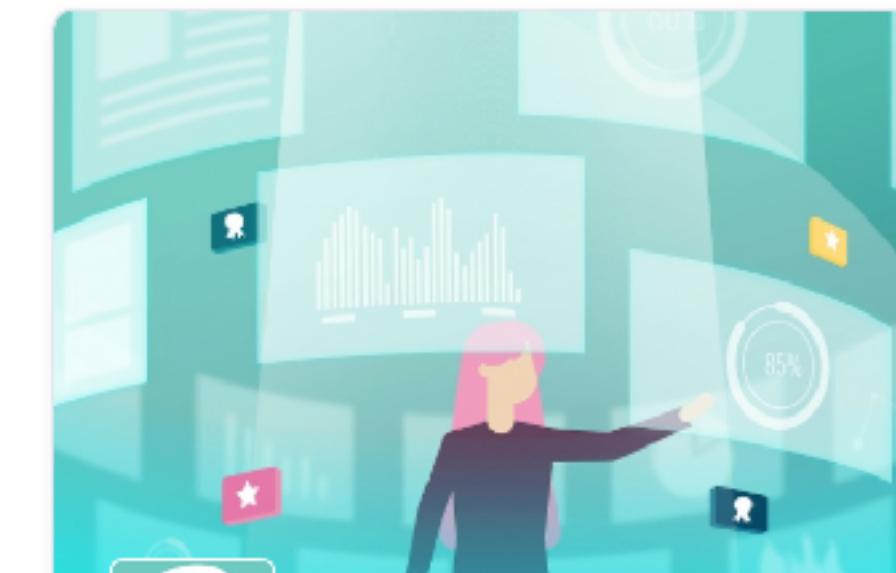
OpenLearning

**Job Interview Preparation:
A Complete Guide to Pass the Job Interview (in THREE Steps)**

Sharpen your interview skills and target your dream job.

398 learners

On now



Learning Services Team

Land the Job: Showcasing your best work on OpenLearning Portfolio

Do you want to showcase your skills and experience to employers?

365 learners

On now



Leah Shmerling

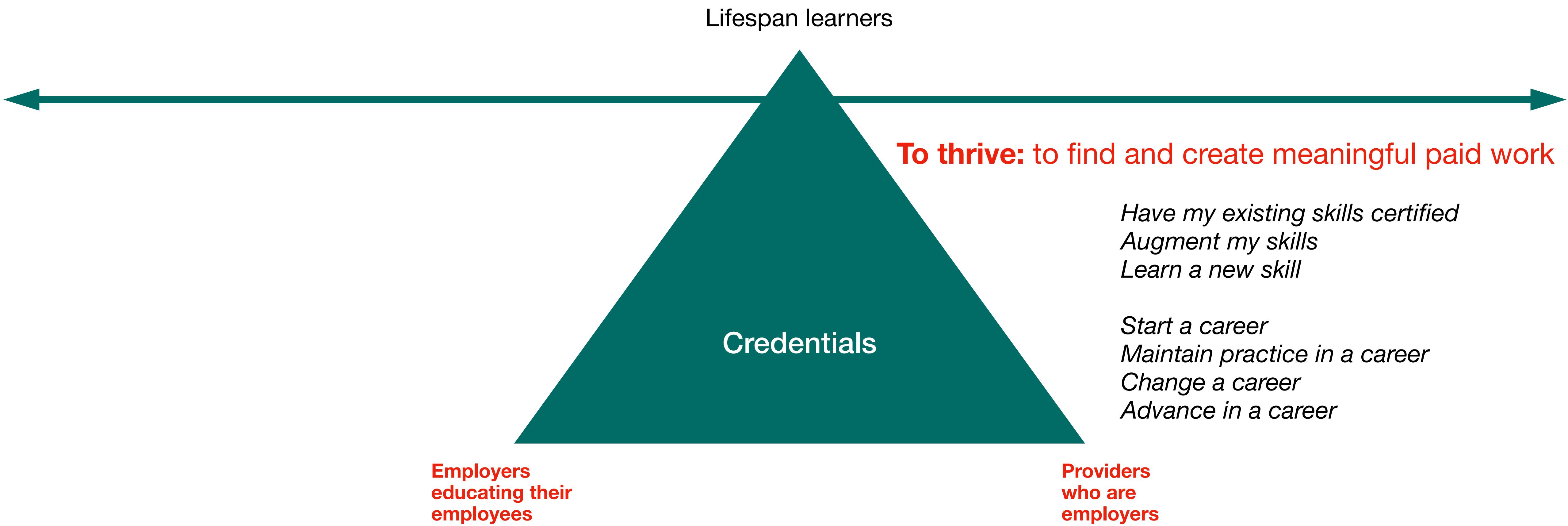
How to Plan your Retirement - Online Course

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

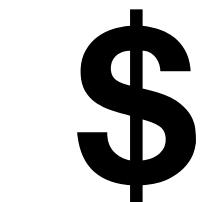
From “learning ~ employability” to “learning for **earning**”



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



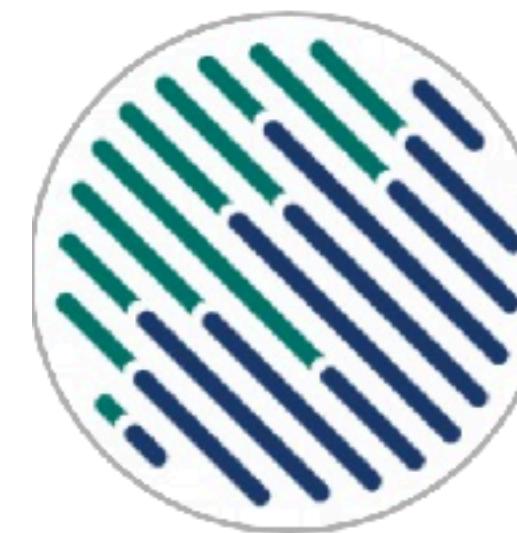
Which **credential** - short or long - is most likely to get **me** there?



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 | lmip.gov.au

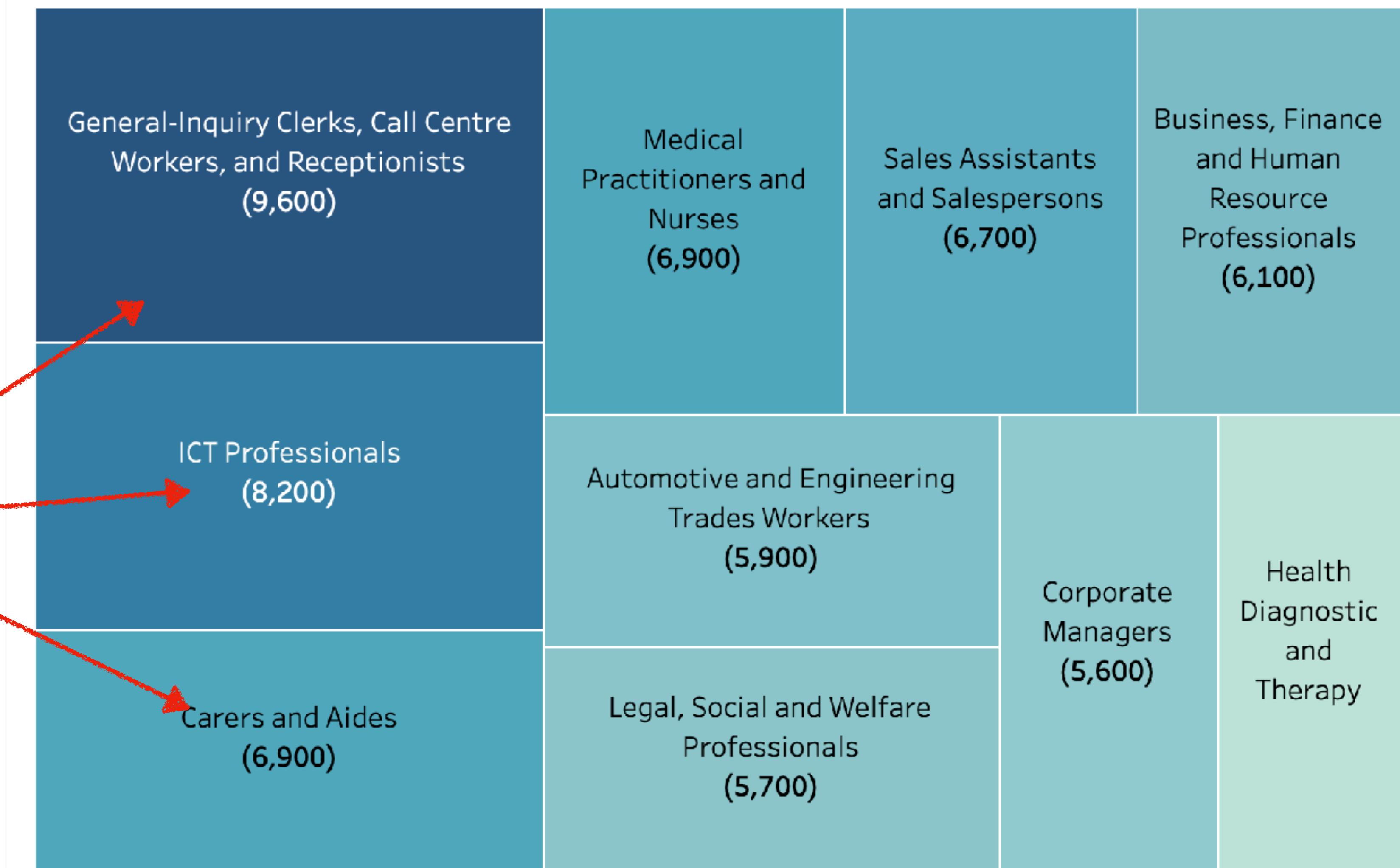
What are the current opportunities in Australia?

The below treemap shows the 10 detailed occupations (ANZSCO 2-digit) in Australia with the most IWI 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

Beverley Oliver
Emeritus Professor and Principal Consultant, EduBrief

October 2020



Coursera Professional Certificates as at 29 Sept 2020

| The headlines | Professional Certificate | Learner investment | | Learner experience | | Learner benefits | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | Suggested hours | Likely fee ¹ | Overall rating | Learners enrolled | New career | Pay or promotion |
| 1. (ISC) ² 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% ² | |
| 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% ³ |
| 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 | | | | |
| TOTAL enrolment as at 29 Sep 2020 | | | | | 1,092,864 | | |
| Key | | <100 | <AU\$300 | >4.6 | >25k | 40%+ | 40%+ |

Empty cells indicate no data available.

¹ If learner follows recommended time required

² As reported separately by Google, see page 20 of this report

³ In response to whether learner achieved a "tangible career benefit from this course"

See report "Coursera Professional Certificates": edubrief.com.au/resources

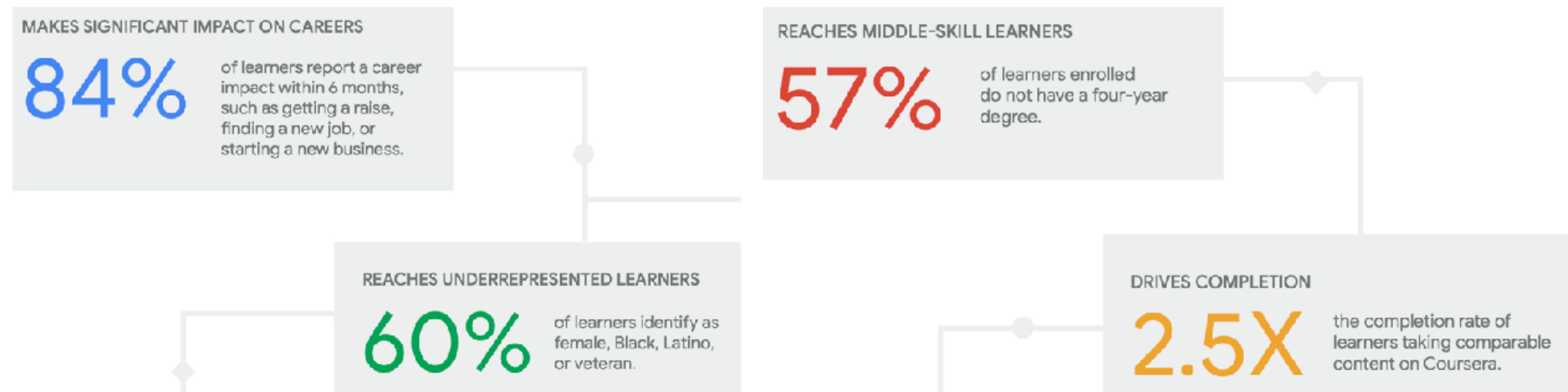
Coursera Professional Certificates as at 29 Sept 2020



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

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.

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**

Benefit:
Surviving

Macro-credentials

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

- 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

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

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

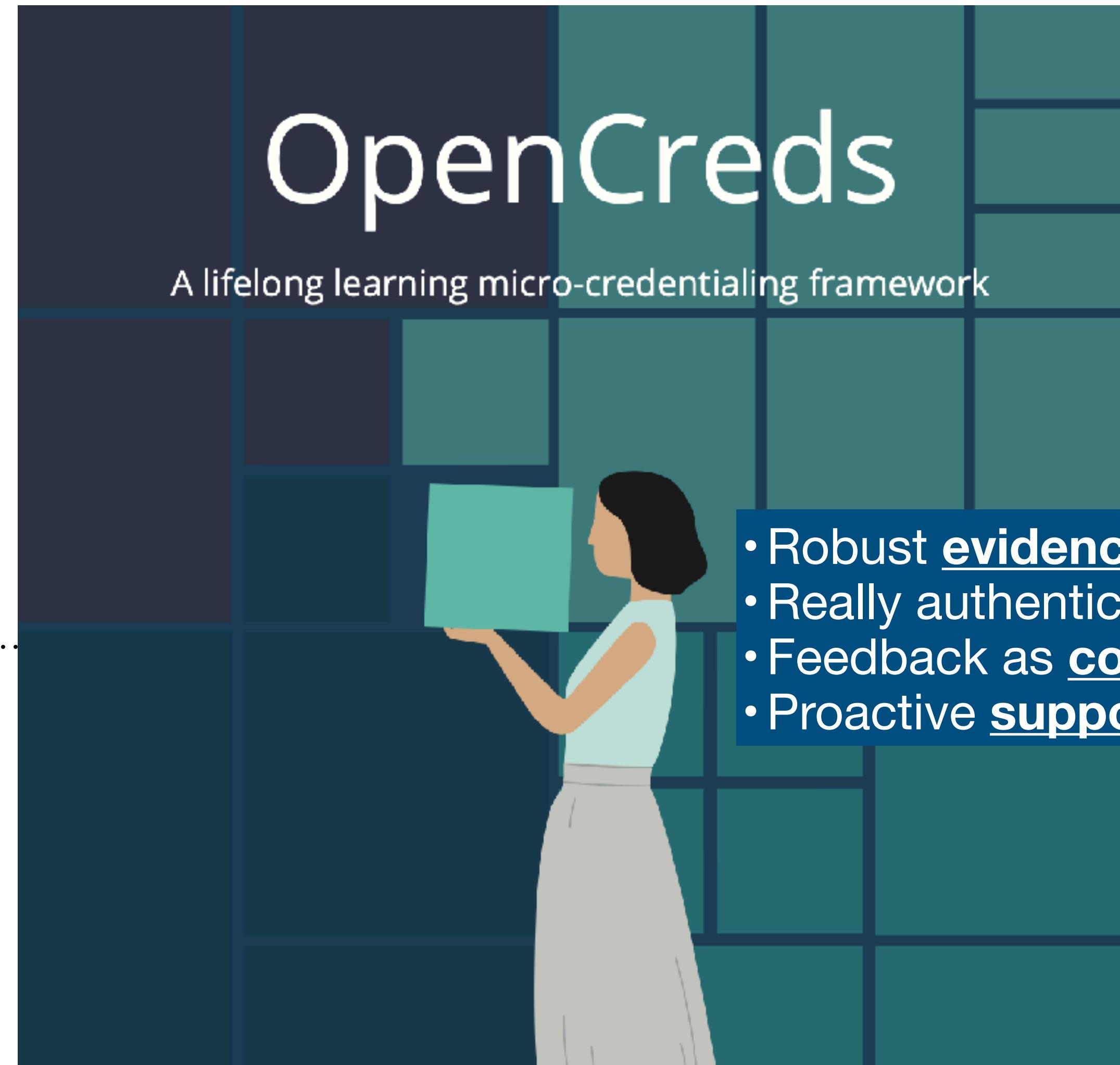
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Benefit:

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

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