

## NECHE Quality Assurance Framework for Non-Credit Programming

### Overview

The New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) Quality Assurance Framework is intended to articulate the dimensions of quality specific to non-credit programming. Its purpose is to both assure the quality of non-credit programming offered by an institution as well as provide aspirational guidance for continuous improvement.

NECHE defines non-credit programming as a course, series of courses, or program that provides knowledge in a subject matter area that may lead to the award of a certificate, badge, or, in some cases, licensure. Non-credit programming has industry and employer relevance and may, in some cases, transfer to credit-bearing programs. For the purposes of this Framework, non-credit programming does not include courses offered exclusively for personal enrichment.

For those institutions that offer non-credit programming, the criteria below provide qualitative markers that can be used both to assess the quality of non-credit offerings as well as to foster a culture of continuous improvement.

### Markers of High-Quality Non-Credit Programming

**Design:** Structured processes exist that ensure the design of quality non-credit courses and programs. Courses and programs are developed and overseen by educators with degrees and/or industry experience appropriate to the subject matter. There is engagement with and across relevant stakeholder groups including employers and relevant state agencies, as appropriate.

**Planning:** There is regular engagement in program, enrollment, and financial planning for the organization's non-credit courses and programs. The institution balances short- and long-term/strategic planning to ensure it is able to effectively respond to market needs and requests. As appropriate, industry/employers are involved in the identification and development of non-credit programming.

**Agility:** The institution recognizes and supports the need to develop innovative, non-credit programming in a timely manner to respond to industry/employer needs.

**Student Learning:** A relevant set of competencies and learning outcomes are identified for each course that leads to outcomes of value (e.g., employment, job advancement, transfer to credit-bearing program) for students. Courses are of an appropriate length and level to achieve the established competencies.

**Student Support:** There are sufficient learner support systems in place to ensure the success of the institution's non-credit students such as advising, tutoring, and library and technology services. The institution offers an array of student services appropriate to the needs and goals of its non-credit student. Non-credit students have access to other campus resources, as appropriate, and are considered a part of the campus community.

**Content Relevance:** The subject matter of non-credit courses and programs is current, relevant, and connects to industry or work force needs.

**Qualified Faculty:** The institution employs staff and faculty sufficient in role, number, and qualifications (with emphasis on ensuring relevant industry experience) to develop and teach the organization's non-credit courses.

**Evaluation/Student Success:** The organization's non-credit courses and programs have identified relevant key performance indicators and student success measures including, but not limited to, retention, pass rates, and, as appropriate, licensure rates. Student success data is gathered and analyzed by the appropriate stakeholders regularly, including the disaggregation of data to ensure the program is meeting its goals for equity among its relevant populations. Systematic feedback from employers and other relevant constituencies is a demonstrable factor in the improvement of the programs.

**Return on Investment:** Non-credit courses and programs have positive outcomes of value, including, but not limited to, employment rates, job promotion rates, and return on investment. The organization collects and analyzes these outcomes, shares them publicly with prospective and current students through its website and other media, and uses this data for development and improvement of its programs.

**Pipelines:** As appropriate, non-credit courses and programs have transfer pathways to credit-bearing programs or pathways to employment. The content and learning outcomes of stackable non-credit courses are appropriately scaffolded.

### **Markers of Institutional/Organizational Commitment to Non-Credit Programming**

**Mission alignment:** The offering of non-credit programming is encompassed in the institution's mission and purposes.

**Governance:** Non-credit programs are integrated into the institution's internal governance structures and provide for the appropriate participation of its staff and faculty.

**Admissions and Records:** There are effective processes and systems in place for communicating with, marketing to, and enrolling non-credit students and for issuing credentials/transcripts to students who successfully complete the program of study. The institution maintains a record of course/program completions of its non-credit students.

**Financial Capacity:** There are sufficient financial resources from tuition, grants, and other sources of funding to carry out its plans to offer quality non-credit programming.

**Institutional Research Capacity:** There is sufficient capacity to systematically collect and use data to assess its non-credit courses and programs. Data governance processes ensure that stakeholders have access to appropriate data as needed.

**Physical and Technological Capacity:** The organization has sufficient physical, information, and technological resources to ensure the quality of its non-credit programming and the success of its students.

**Public Disclosure:** The institution publicly discloses to the public (via its website and other promotional materials) information about program costs, learning outcomes, and measures of student success.