Let's Explore Microcredentials!
The view from Ireland

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A TRADITION OF INDEPENDENT THINKING
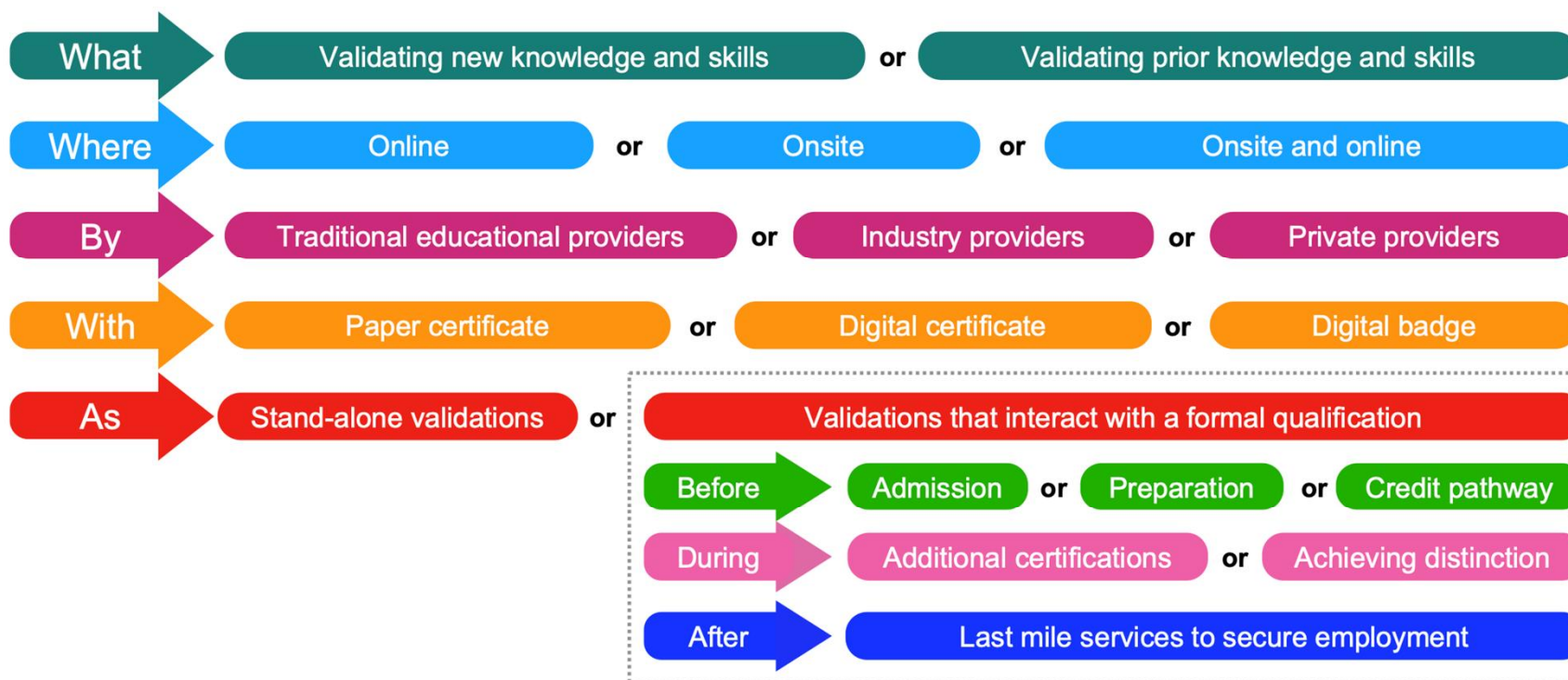
1.
Microcredentials: An Overview

Micro-credentials

Also known as alternative credentials, MOOCs, certifications, short courses, bootcamps, intensives, MicroMasters, masterclasses, nano degrees , Specializations…

What → Validating new knowledge and skills **or** Validating prior knowledge and skills

Where → Online **or** Onsite **or** Onsite and online

By → Traditional educational providers **or** Industry providers **or** Private providers

With → Paper certificate **or** Digital certificate **or** Digital badge

As → Stand-alone validations **or** Validations that interact with a formal qualification

Before → Admission **or** Preparation **or** Credit pathway

During → Additional certifications **or** Achieving distinction

After → Last mile services to secure employment

Microcredentials in a European Context

Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market.

European Pillar of Social Rights, 2017

Microcredential means the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined standards. Courses leading to micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs. Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, can be shared and are portable. They may be standalone or combined into larger credentials. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity.

European Commission, 2021

Why we need Microcredentials

Benefits of Microcredentials

Learners

- Enhance knowledge & skills
- Enhance employability
- Less time to complete
- Less costly than full degrees
- Increases learner autonomy
- Opportunity to "test the waters"
- Fosters culture of lifelong learning

Employers

- Meets upskilling needs
- Increased flexibility of delivery
- Quicker return on investment
- Fosters culture of lifelong learning

Universities

- Increased enrolments
- Income generating
- Alumni engagement
- Enhances access
- Increased collaboration with external stakeholders
- Fosters culture of lifelong learning

Source: Ralston (2020;2021); Woods & Woods (2021)

Criticisms of Microcredentials

MCs are "an outgrowth of the neoliberal economy" & represent "a betrayal of higher education's higher purpose" (Ralston, 2021)

MCs contribute to the decline of the traditional degree

MCs do not meet the needs of lifelong learners or "liberate learners' potentialities" (Ralston, 2021)

MCs can exacerbate class divisions

MCs "weaken relations of classification of knowledge and framing (the pacing, sequencing and evaluation) of knowledge(Wheelahan & Moodie, 2021)

MCs do not educate the whole person

Source: Ralston (2021); Wheelahan & Moodie (2021)

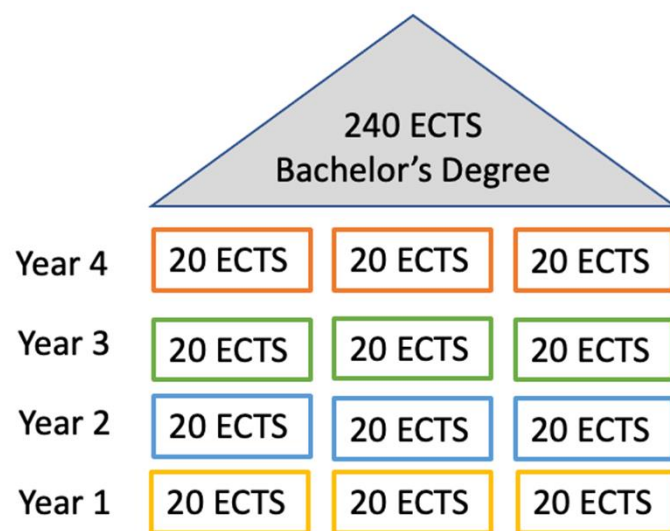# 2. Irish Approach to Microcredentials
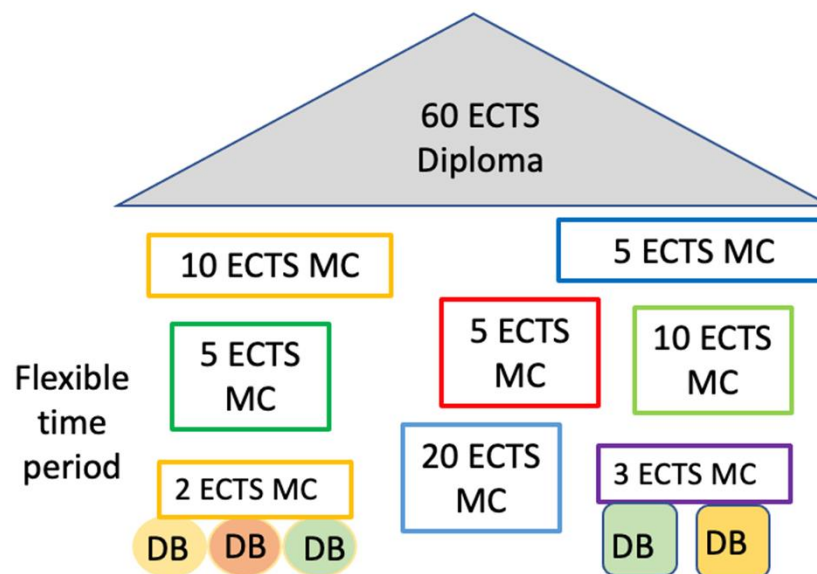
Microcredential Ecosystem in Irish Context

Non-credit Bearing

Digital Badges
Some demonstration of competency

Stack into

Major Awards
Diplomas, Bachelors, Masters

Short Courses
No assessment

Certificate of attendance/completion

Stack into

Microcredential
1-30 ECTS

Assessment of formal learning outcomes

Credit-Bearing
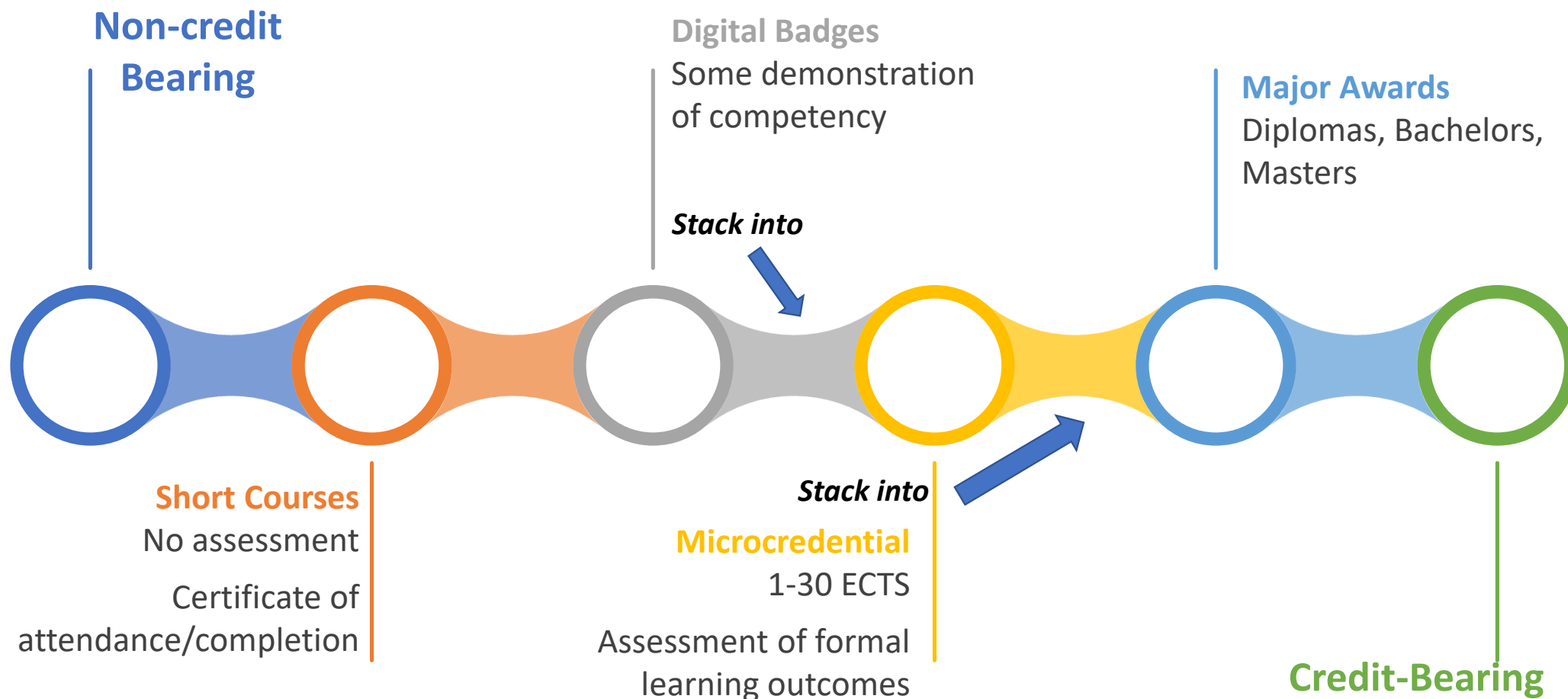
Learner Pathways

Traditional Learner Pathway

Flexible Learner Pathway

WHAT IS THE MICROCREDS PROJECT?

- Ireland will be the first country to establish a coherent National Framework for quality assured and accredited micro-credentials in Europe.

- IUA partner universities are collaborating to develop, pilot and evaluate the building blocks required for micro-credentials.

- We are developing an agile suite of flexibly delivered micro-credentials aligned to the National Framework of Qualifications.

- This ambitious project furthers IUA universities' commitment to work in partnership with enterprise to transform lifelong learning in Ireland.

OUR CORE VALUES

MICRO CREDS

Microcredentials Overview: Irish Context

Proof of learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a short learning experience

Credit-bearing with range of 1-30 ECTS at Levels 6-10 on National Framework of Qualifications

Micro-credentials may be but are not normally awards

For anyone looking to learn in bite sized pieces

3. Microcredentials in Action: A Case Study from ACE, University College Cork, Ireland

ACE Microcredentials Pilot 2020-2022

600+ students

completed 15 part-time microcredentials

Students from 13 countries

Levels 7-9 on Irish National Framework of Qualifications

10-20 ECTS

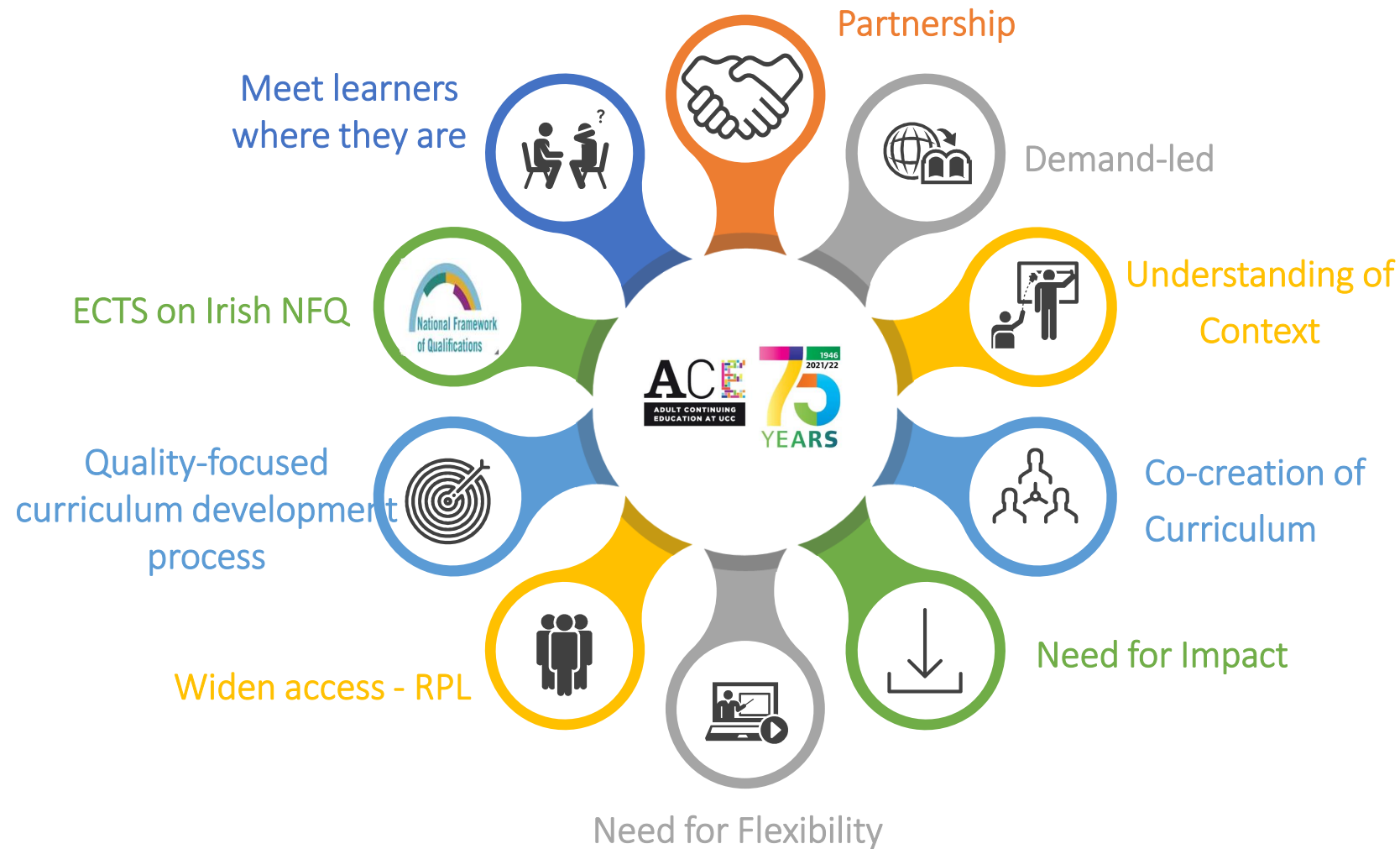**Classroom, online & blended delivery**
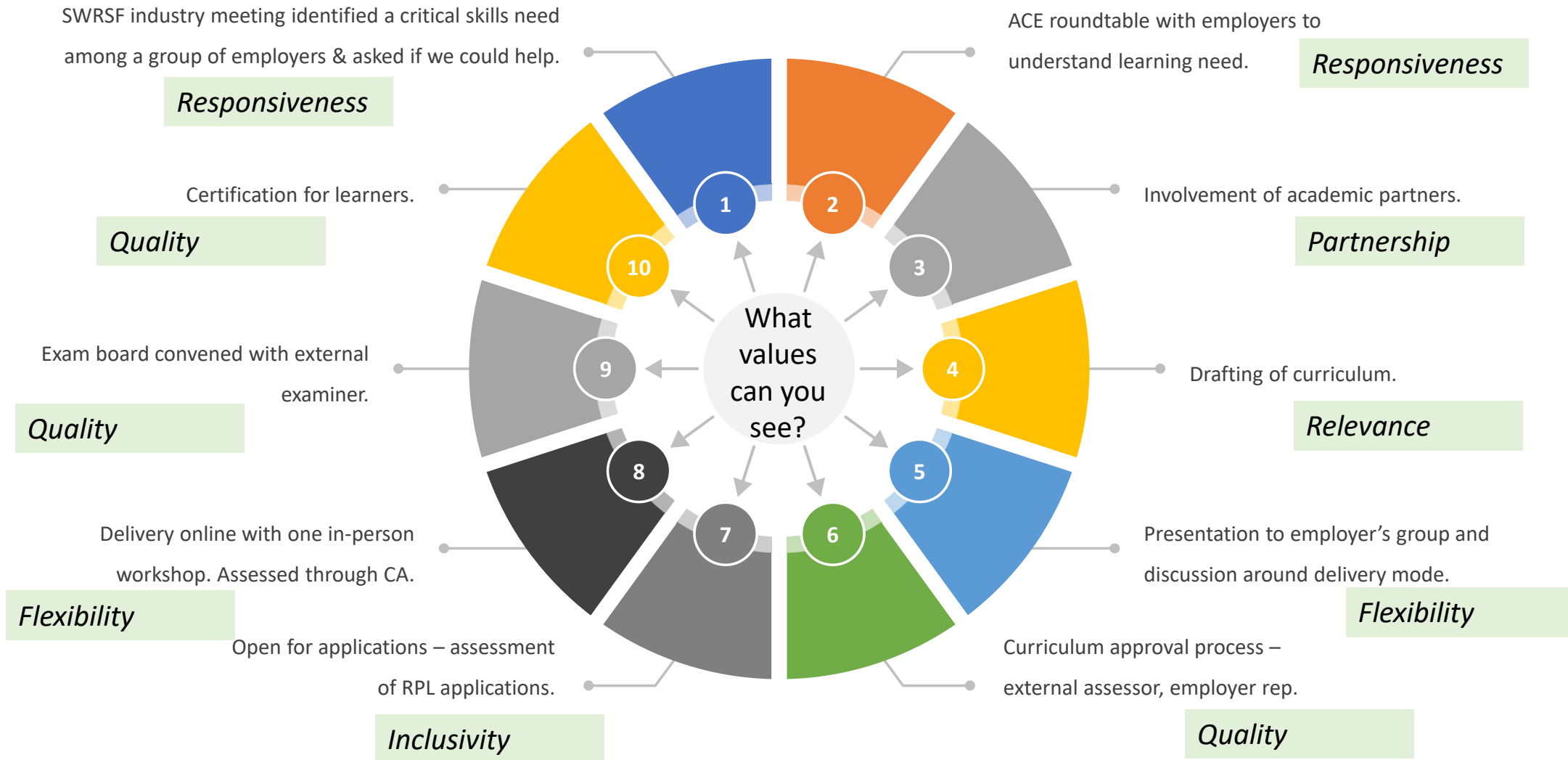
8-16 weeks

ACE Microcredentials Pilot 2020-2022

Key Principles of ACE Approach

ACE Approach to Design of Microcredentials

Microcredential – Building Workplace Resilience

SWRSF industry meeting identified a critical skills need among a group of employers & asked if we could help.

Responsiveness

ACE roundtable with employers to understand learning need.

Responsiveness

Certification for learners.

Quality

Involvement of academic partners.

Partnership

Exam board convened with external examiner.

Quality

Drafting of curriculum.

Relevance

What values can you see?

Presentation to employer's group and discussion around delivery mode.

Flexibility

Delivery online with one in-person workshop. Assessed through CA.

Flexibility

Open for applications – assessment of RPL applications.

Inclusivity

Curriculum approval process – external assessor, employer rep.

Quality

Thank You!

Contact me at l.elamoud@ucc.ie