21C PROJECT: Stream Two: INNOVATING ALTERNATIVE CREDENTIALS

AIM
The aim of the Innovating Alternative Credentials stream of work in the 21C Project is to develop and deploy new non-award product, for new students, in new markets.

This work creates a hub that coalesces the burgeoning interest across the University in offering short non-award courses and supports that work with a coherent institutional platform and quality assurance process. It leverages our 21C alternative credentials operating platform (Open Learning), new institutional systems (SMS), and our post-COVID digital design capacity, to offer alternative credentials to complement core qualifications.

The disruption of the Job Ready Graduates (JRG) initiative and the pandemic is prompting a rapid acceleration and scale-up of WSU initiatives to support the educational aspirations of those with diverse previous educational journeys and those seeking rapid skill development for resilience in the face of economic and societal disruptions. This stream of work allows us to capitalize on these opportunities by extending into the new markets the JRG short courses and post-COVID disruption will create. It will support the University to develop alternative revenue streams to bolster domestic and international market share and provide new access to quality educational opportunities for those with aspirations but without the means or desire to study a full degree.

SCOPE
A 21C Alternative Credentials Strategy Group will assist teams of staff across the university in designing and developing initiatives, and create methods and processes required for operationalising new products as Alternative Credentials.

These new products will provide accelerated learning experiences to gain highly desired skill sets for the future of work and society. Importantly, they will increase accessibility to Higher Education by providing new pathways into conventional WSU degrees.

21C Alternative Credentials will be agile short courses that are rapidly built/deployed/retired to intersect with industries’ and students’ needs. They will provide opportunities for multiple combinations, to build personalized learning journeys. They may be created by the unbundling and re-bundling of existing degree curriculum, from newly developed 21C curriculum elements or developed from the research and expertise of Western’s academics. They might leverage the Western Growth program of industry-partnered infrastructure development and urbanisation to allow the University to be the leading place-maker for our region. They may also be created by repurposing curriculum developed as JRG Short Courses. They will be developed in partnership with industry leaders to expand opportunities for learning in local, regional and global markets.

The work will support new collaborative initiatives like the Multiversity and existing initiatives such as Western EdX, to increase the benefit and engagement with local communities and extend Western’s reach and reputation.
TEAM: 21C Alternative Credentials Strategy Group
A group of key University leaders and stakeholders was established by the 21C Project in 2019 to support the development of the Alternative Credentials Operating Model. This model provides the institutional platform for the next phase of development of Alternative Credentials. This group will be expanded in 2021 to create the 21C Alternative Credentials Strategy Group.

The membership will provide oversight of the implementation of the Alternative Credential Operating Model to provide direction, support, and evaluation of new and existing Alternative Credentialing initiatives across the University. The group will support and advise teams across the University in developing new product for new markets. A number of strategic priority teams have been identified as working on short courses, 21C Project curriculum elements, Professional/Executive Development who will be invited to work with the Alternative Credentials Strategy Group.

OUTPUTS
This stream of work will launch in March and in 2021 it will deliver resources to support the first phase of building a coherent profile of Alternative Credentials including:

- A recognised hub for teams working on Alternative Credentials.
- The deployment of a robust but streamlined approval and workflow process for Alternative Credentials to ensure strategic alignment, quality assurance and clear value propositions to the University and its partners.
- Templates and access to support, to ensure the quality of business cases for new alternative credentials, including market research requirements and industry collaborations.
- Staff engagement with our partner Open Learning and their credentialing framework, Open Creds.
- Enhanced staff capability and capacity for identifying viable opportunities and developing robust business cases through the creation of resources, processes, support mechanisms, and professional development.
- A marketing strategy for prospective new students.

IMPACT
The success of the Alternative Credentials stream of work will be measured through:

- The number, variety and reach of new Alternative Credentials approved and enabled for delivery.
- The student load assessment in Alternative Credentials.
- An increase in high quality and impactful pedagogical partnerships across the University/industry.
- Internal data and learning analytics of student success and engagement.
- Student Satisfaction and Employability data.

SUPPORT
In addition to the core 21C Team, an Alternative Credentials Program Manager will work with the Strategy Group to drive the implementation of the Operating Model, and support schools and research institutes in identifying market opportunities and guiding curriculum development. 21C will provide project management and relevant processes and resources as well as provide a single point of contact for all proposals in the initial stages of establishing the delivery model. The work will be supported by Learning Futures with resources and support in designing courses in the Open Learning platform. OMC will provide the specialised marketing required for this stream.