

Common State Definition of a Quality Credential

A quality credential provides individuals with the opportunity to achieve their employment and educational goals. States should require valid and reliable, transparent evidence that the credential satisfies the criteria that constitute quality.

Draft Criteria

- **Required:** There are a substantial number of employment opportunities available for credential holders
- **Required:** Transparent evidence of the competencies mastered by credential holders
- **Required:** Transparent evidence of the actual employment and earnings outcomes of individuals after obtaining the credential
- **Desired:** Stackability to additional education or training

Other considerations: The scope of competencies signified by the credential should be sufficient to obtain employment in the related occupation(s). For example, mastery of a single skill would not count unless, by itself, that mastery is associated with substantial employment opportunities. Mastery of general workplace skills by itself would not count.

Note: there is no minimum number of contact hours, or weeks.

Evidence of Required Criteria:

- Evidence of substantial job opportunities associated with the credential includes quantitative data and confirmation by employers. Sources of data include, but are not limited to, "Occupational Outlook" and job postings. Sources of employer information include, but are not limited to, trade associations, sector partnerships, other business associations, and regional or state CTE advisory councils.
- Evidence of the competencies mastered by credential holders includes an exam or other demonstration of mastery, that may be verified by a third-party. Examples include, but are not limited to, skill standards and assessments recognized by state or national industry associations.
- Evidence of the actual employment and earnings outcomes of individuals after obtaining the credential must meet standards of validity and reliability and be provided through administrative data (such as unemployment insurance wage records and tax records), third-party surveys, or employer-provided documentation.

Evidence of Desired Criteria:

- Evidence that the credential articulates with or may otherwise provide credit towards another postsecondary credential. Examples of such evidence include, but are not limited to, articulation agreements, direct transfer agreements, credit for prior learning, and data demonstrating continued education.

Quality Assurance Based on Labor Market Outcomes

- Evidence that the specific employment and earnings outcomes of individuals after obtaining the credential meet performance standards established by the state. Evidence must meet standards of validity and reliability and be provided through administrative data (such as unemployment insurance wage records and tax records), third-party surveys, or employer-provided documentation.
- The state must consider local economic conditions and student demographic characteristics in determining if performance standards are satisfied.
- States may also consider the earnings associated with other occupations if the credential articulates with or otherwise provides credit towards credentials associated with the other occupations.

