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Short courses helping to keep skills current and support economic recovery

Rapidly evolving technology, the changing nature of work and disruptions caused by the pandemic are sending many professionals back to school.

Fortunately, institutions such as Seneca College are adapting to the reskilling and upskilling needs of professionals at various stages of their careers. Seneca has launched 50 short-course options, also known as microcredentials, designed to help learners acquire the skills they need to take their careers to the next level.

Seneca has long been a leader in providing microcredential options, and flexibility has been key to attracting professionals needing to acquire new competencies.

"Identifying the right type of learning related to in-demand fields and what companies want their employees to gain has created this evolution," says Jeff McCarthy, dean of Seneca's Faculty of Continuing Education and Training. "The interaction between schools and employers is critical."

Unlike traditional credentials, microcredentials don't have uniform numbers of hours or courses involved. One might be eight hours; another could be 40.

Seneca continues to add career-based short courses in business; creative arts; animation and design; education, community and social services; engineering technology; information technology; media and communications; and science.

Newer options include "investor relations – financial communica-

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Jeff McCarthy

Dean of Seneca's Faculty of Continuing Education and Training



At Seneca's Centre for Graduate & Professional Studies (shown here before the coronavirus pandemic), students gain marketable skills for in-demand professions. SUPPLIED

tions," designed for those who have worked in communications or finance and are new to the investor relations role. The Avid Ingest Operations microcredential, in partnership with leading technology and multimedia company Avid Technology, provides the skills to start a career in television or film production as content evaluators.

Mr. McCarthy says the requirement for continuous learning and improving skill sets has grown over the past decade. Along with its roster of mi-

crocredentials, Seneca has launched the Centre for Graduate & Professional Studies in Toronto's Financial District to attract professionals where they work.

The centre offers more than 40 career-focused graduate programs at convenient hours, including mornings, evenings and over lunch. Since the pandemic, these programs have moved online, along with most of Seneca's full- and part-time courses and programs.

The big discussion now concerning

short courses – whether in-person and online – is how to formalize them into recognized credentials. For that to happen, industry needs to be onboard.

"We're seeing the development of 'digital badging,'" Mr. McCarthy says. "But a badge or other recognitions connected to short courses need to mean something to an employer and be connected to a marketable competency. It's a conversation we continue to have with our many industry partners."