

Digital Credentials:

Making sense of an emerging field

This document contains quick reference materials to aid in explaining the landscape of digital credentials. Enclosed are definitions used during the presentation and current examples of digital assets. The worksheet enclosed is intended as an aide in assessing programs for their digital credentialing potential – it should not be used as a prescriptive model, only a guide to ones thinking about possibilities. Additional reading material is provided at the end of this document.

Glossary

This glossary was created for the context of this presentation and may differ from definitions found in broader circles.

Badge. Visual representation of specific skills, abilities, competencies, accomplishments, and experiences. Badges are issued by a wide range of organizations, not just universities. (see enclosed for current use examples)

Blockchain. A global, cross industry, and disruptive technology, likely to disrupt the awarding of qualifications, licensing and accreditation, management of student records, intellectual property management, and payments.

Digital. Distributed online via distributed ledger (blockchain) technology.

Certificate. Broadest category. Credentials that are issued to students that have completed significant programs of study that do not result in a degree. However, the term also is used loosely to indicate any document issued by an institution for a wide variety of experiences.

Certification / License. A testament that a professional has met a certain set of criteria for a skill or job and is measured by a third-party assessment (license implies a governmental agency issues that verification).

CEU. A continuing education credit required to maintain professional memberships, certification, or licensing.

Micro-masters / Nano-degree. Denotes a set of classes in a specific track. Stackable towards a larger degree.

Passport. In this context a repository created by an individual containing a description of each digital certificate associated with that individual.

Transcript. The official record of a student's course work, grades, and degree completion issued by a higher education institution.

Badging Preparation Worksheet

Prior to the selecting and designing of digital badges or certificates of completion, there are several questions an institution should answer to ensure success of the initiative.

What are the broad goals of your digital certificate initiative?

- Participant “perk”
- Certifying stated competencies or skills
- Helping participants communicate the value of the program to external constituents
- Proving value of program to corporate partners

Which types of competencies or skills is your institution best suited to certify?

- Overall outcome of program
- Granular component of program
- Achievements relevant to the workforce (determined by skills necessary to obtain specific jobs as indicated by job listings or employer surveys)

What level of assessment is your institution prepared to implement?

- Projects or tangible work samples
- Automated quiz/test results
- Written or verbal assignments

How will the initiative be operationalized? Who will be the internal administrator of the program?

- Best suited to protect the reputation and brand of the institution
- Ability to provide consistency in issuance criteria
- Determine best method for on-going review and process improvement
- Ability to secure support and ongoing buy-in from senior leadership and faculty

What platform will you adopt for certificate/badge issuance?

- Integration with current learning management system
- Creation of institution specific platform
- Ability to integrate with other third party hiring software
- Current list of platforms available in Exhibit 1

Once organizational readiness has been assessed, used the attached prompts to help badge a current program. This is a tool to help guide your thinking and should not be used as a “one size fits all” solution to digital credentialing implementation.



Name of Program:

Skills/Competencies (Stated Outcomes of Program)	Currently Assessed?
	Yes No

No badge should be issued for any skill/competency that is not being assessed. At this point, a certificate of *participation* could be issued that includes the following meta-data (ICDE, 2019):

1. A full description of program represented by the digital certificate.
2. The name of the issuing institution.
3. Verification of the earner's identity.
4. The specific date on which the certificate was earned.

Additional metadata, that are both desirable and useful, include how individuals seeing the certificate might acquire it themselves. This is important for marketing purposes because they can reveal how often (and where) a person shares their certificate and how many other people are interested in obtaining a similar certificate (via data from link tracking).

If any of the skills/competencies listed above *are* assessed, then continue to the next page for badging/certificate of *completion* criteria.

Are these skills “badgeable”? Assess their relevance below:

	Very Important			Not Important at all	
Importance of skills to future Employers?	5	4	3	2	1
Importance of skills to participant’s growth?	5	4	3	2	1

If both are “very important” this program is a good candidate for badging. If neither are important, you should focus your energies elsewhere. If there is a mix, dig deeper into the skills contained in the program to see if there is alignment elsewhere.

Possible badges (taken from single skills or themes above):

Icon Selection (examples included in Exhibit 2):

What words or images should be used to represent the competency?

How should the “brand” of the issuing institution be represented?

What shapes and colors should be used?

Should there be differences between the shapes and colors of the icon to indicate different levels of competency or the duration of time involved in achieving competency?

Should there be standard designs to follow?

All digital credentials should include the minimum level of metadata (ICDE, 2019):

1. A full description of the competency represented by the credential.
2. The specific outcomes needed to earn the credential.
3. The evidence a credential earner provided to demonstrate competency.
4. Verification of the ADC earner's identity, as well as relevant and secure communications about their qualifications, competencies, and skills.
5. The qualifications of the ADC issuer and information about where to obtain information about the standards or practices employed by the issuer to assure quality.
6. The relationship between the ADC and larger or related programs, competencies, or skill sets.
7. The specific date on which the ADC was earned.

Additional metadata, that are both desirable and useful, include how long the competency is valid (i.e. when the ADC expires), explicit reference to future changes in structures, (especially for behavioral skills), and how individuals seeing the ADC might acquire the badge themselves. This last item, plus back-end data usually available from ADC vendors, is important for marketing purposes because they can reveal how often (and where) a person shares an ADC along with other information or trends related to badge usage. In addition, this data can provide researchers with information about how ADC earners are actually disseminating information about their skills and competencies.



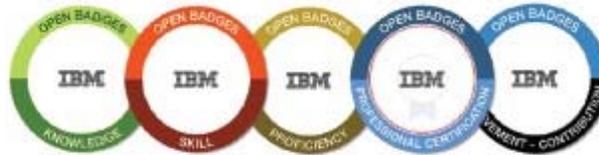
Additional Resources / References:

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- ICDE. (2019). *The Present and Future of Alternative Digital Credentials (ADCs)*(Rep.). Retrieved from <https://icde.memberclicks.net/assets/ICDE-ADC%20report-January%202019%20%28002%29.pdf>
- Gallagher, S. R. (2018). Educational Credentials Come of Age: A Survey on the Use and Value of Educational Credentials in Hiring (Rep.). Northeastern University Center for the Future of Higher Education and Talent Strategy. Retrieved from https://www.northeastern.edu/cfhets/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Educational_Credentials_Come_of_Age_2018.pdf
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- McKenzie, L. (April 24, 2019). Seeking a Shared Global Standard for Digital Credentials. Inside Higher Ed. Retrieved from https://www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2019/04/24/mit-and-8-other-universities-partner-shared-digital-credential?utm_source=Inside+Higher+Ed&utm_campaign=74fbc7898e-InsideDigitalLearning_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1fcbc04421-74fbc7898e-234761193&mc_cid=74fbc7898e&mc_eid=0a6f64eaa2
- Perea, B. (2017). Partnering with employers to create workforce-relevant credentials: A field guide. 2017 Credly, Inc. Retrieved from https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2629051/Credly_Employer_Engagement_Field_Guide.pdf?submissionGuid=488094b5-e1aa-410ba232-d1b2d8aea7c5&t=1527093785232.

Exhibit 1: Current Digital Credential Partner / Platforms

Provider	Website	Notes
Acclaim	https://www.youracclaim.com/	Previously part of Pearson
Accredible	https://www.accreditable.com/	
Badgr	https://badgr.com/	Open Source, Integrated with Canvas
Blackboard	https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Instructor/Performance/Achievements/Create_and_Manage_Achievements	
Canvas	https://about.canva.com/create/	
Credly	https://info.credly.com/	
CVTrust	https://cvtrust.com	
Degreed	https://degreed.com/	Sells “Skills Certification” as a professional credential
Moodle Insignias	https://docs.moodle.org/36/en/Badges	
Mozilla Backpack	https://backpack.openbadges.org/backpack/welcome	
Open Badge Academy	https://www.openbadgeacademy.com/	
Open Badge Passport	https://openbadgepassport.com/	
Open Badges	https://openbadges.org/	
Parchment	https://www.parchment.com/	
Portfolium	https://portfolium.com/	
Salesforce Trailhead	https://trailhead.salesforce.com/en/home	
TrueCred	https://www.truecred.com/	
YouTopia	http://www.youtopia.tech/info/	

Exhibit 2: Badge Examples



Knowledge | Skills | Proficiency | Certified | General

Badging is how we will measure **resume-worthy** IBM skills in the market

