Open Badges Theory

Erasmus+ KA2 Adult Education

eSkills4ALL

A Digital Skills Tool kit for low adults focusing on Women re-entering the labour market
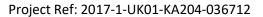
Leader Organisation:

Emphasys Centre

Table of Contents

The Open Badges Theory

The eSkills4ALL project seeks to understand the digital world while it aims to update the digital skills of low digital skilled adults. These adults may face challenges as they deal with increasingly complex and diverse learning situations in a constantly changing work environment with the evolvement of new technologies and a the ever changing labour market with highly technical demands for skills. Basic digital skills are essential for bridging the gap between the education and the work and achieving a better job as well as a higher salary.

Thus, the introduction of new mechanisms

What's an Open Badge?

Open Badges is the name of a group of specifications and open technical standards originally developed by the Mozilla Foundation with funding from the MacArthur Foundation. The Open Badges standard describes a method for packaging information about accomplishments, embedding it into portable image files as a digital badge, and establishing an infrastructure for badge validation.

Open Badges are verifiable, portable digital badges with embedded metadata about skills and achievements. They comply with the Open Badges Specification and are shareable across the web.

Each Open Badge is associated with an image and information about the badge, its recipient, the issuer, and any supporting evidence. All this information may be packaged within a badge image file that can be displayed via online CVs and social networks. Thousands of organizations across the world issue badges in accordance with the Open Badges Specification, from non-profits to major employers to educational institutions at all levels.
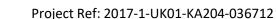
What do Open Badges mean?

Badges may represent many different types of achievements and claims:

- Hard skills such as proficiency in a programming language
- Soft skills like collaboration
- Participation
- Official certification
- Authorization
- Community involvement
- New skills and literacies not recognized by traditional education providers

Because the system is based on an open standard, recipients can combine multiple badges from different Issuers to tell the complete story of their verifiable achievements—both online and off. Open Badges can be displayed wherever recipients want them on the web, including on social

media profiles and through services that store and display badges. Badges can be shared for employment, education, or lifelong learning.

Anyone can Issue a badge, receive one, verify that a badge is real, or inspect the metadata and any associated evidence. Badge issuers can certify that their badges are technically compliant with the specification and therefore, can be readily moved among Backpacks and display sites. Badges can be used to set goals, motivate behaviors, connect learning environments, and communicate achievements across many contexts.

Why Earn Open Badges?

Open Badges are for everyone to recognize skills gained through a variety of experiences, regardless of your age or background. They allow you to follow your interests and passions and unlock opportunities in life and work by standing out from the crowd.

Organizations create and issue Open Badges for you to earn, enabling you to build up your own unique collection and share them across the web. Each badge you earn contains data about your skills and the issuing organization within a portable image file. This data can be viewed when you display and share your badges, helping people find out more about you.

You can share your badges in:

• Blogs, websites, ePortfolios, and professional networks
• Job applications
• Social media sites - Twitter, Google+, Facebook, LinkedIn
• Even in your email signature!

Where can I earn badges?

You can earn Open Badges from over 3,000 organizations across the world who want to recognise learning in new ways.
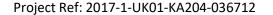
Wherever you see Open Badges offered online or as part of a learning program you can be sure that you are earning a credential that you can keep, manage, and share along with others to tell the full story of your achievements.

Why issue Open Badges?

Open Badges provide a flexible way to recognize learning wherever it happens, in and out of formal education and the workplace. They can represent any achievement from simple participation to evidence-backed competency development.

By adopting the Open Badges Specification you are joining over 3,000 organizations across the world who believe in supporting a global Specification that enables individuals to capture and share the richer picture of who they are.

Benefits of issuing Open Badges:

- They can be used to recognize any kind of achievement in any setting, across the different stages of an individual's life.
- They can be used to build pathways to support individuals to work towards learning goals, provide routes into employment and nurture and progress talent within oraganizations.
- They are based on an Open Specification which enables badges to be issued and transferred across the web and other digital exchanges, across different learning providers and across borders.
- They have already been adopted widely across a range of sectors and are being used to recognize both accredited and non-accredited learning in formal, informal and non-formal settings.
- They provide a new way to identify talent based on competency and attitude, helping employers and educators better match individuals with non-traditional experiences to relevant opportunities.
- Open Badges support individuals for whom the traditional education system hasn't worked. They provide an alternative way for them to get validation for their skills and achievements.

Issuing your own Open Badges

Any individual or organization can create an Issuer profile and begin defining and issuing Open Badges. Any entity that can be described with a name, description, URL, image, and email address is a possible candidate to become an Issuer. To issue Open Badges you need a technology platform that supports the Open Badges Specification.

Cloud based issuing platforms

Many companies have creating badge issuing platforms compliant with the Open Badges Specification. They provide a wide range of services, which allow non-technical users issue Open Badges credentials. Platforms each offer a mix of custom services possibly including: online badge designers, badge discovery, issuing, assessment workflow, display, user profiles, social sharing and tools to integrate with existing learning systems. All Open Badges issuing platforms should allow recipients to export their badges to a Backpack of choice. This allows users to stack and share their badges earned on different platforms and choose their own spaces to establish their identity on the web. A currently list of badge issuing platforms can be found here: Participating services. Many platforms offer integrations with other applications or open APIs for new integrations. Some platforms are also available as open source software for issuers who wish to customize their badging applications further or get involved directly in collaborating to advance the implementation of Open Badges.

Creating a new Open Badges issuer application: The Open Badges Specification provides the information you need to create an Open Badges compliant issuer service. See also our technical guide on how to get started issuing badges to understand the process and requirements.

Designing Open Badges

The process of creating a badge typically involves three tasks:

1. Offering a learning or other experience (often with an associated assessment)
2. Creating a badge to represent that experience within the Open Badges framework
3. Awarding the badge on successful completion of badge criteria

Many issuers provide pathways of related badges that each represent different aspects of the necessary skills or experiences important within a discipline. Whether or not your badge is part of a pathway of badges, you must design the activities, assessment process and staff responsibilities involved in implementing the learning program.

Badge System Design Resources

Badge System Design Worksheet: This Google spreadsheet prompts the system design owner to consider as many areas of a badge system as possible early on.

Digitalme Badge Design Canvas: This document, which features important aspects of badge creation and design, is intended to be printed and written on. The Badge Design Canvas seeks to simplify the process of developing a badge system by bringing it into the analog world.

DPD Project: Design Principles Card Deck The DPD card deck was created by Nate Otto using the design principles from Dr. Daniel T. Hickey's Design Principles Documentation Project, to which he contributed. It turns the building of a badge system into a game.

Who's issuing Open Badges?

A diverse range of organizations and communities, including:

• Schools and universities
• Employers
• Community and nonprofit organizations. Like the YMCA, 4H and Girl Guides
• Government agencies. Including NASA, the New York City Department of Education, the NOAA and more
• Libraries and museums. Like Cooper-Hewitt, the Smithsonian American Art Museum and Dallas Museum of Art
• Event organizers and science fairs. Including Intel
• Companies and groups focused on professional development

Displaying Open Badges

Open Badges are designed to be shared. By sharing, individuals showcase their achievements to consumers turning them into a valuable currency to unlock new opportunities.

While many issuing services provide the ability to display and share badges across the web, Backpacks enable users to store and move their Open Badges between platforms. This ensures that users retain control over their own data and can organize and share collections of Open Badges with the relevant audiences.

Mozilla set up the first Backpack in 2011. Most issuing platforms provide users with the ability to connect and store their badges to this Backpack and now several companies are developing new Backpack services. Open Badges may be exported to the recipients' Backpack service of choice.

A number of applications integrate with Backpack services to display recipients' badges in those users' various spaces on the web. See developer section for information more information on connecting to Backpacks or launching your own service.

Understanding Open Badges

Open Badges provide portable and verifiable information about skills and achievements. Individuals can unlock opportunities by sharing collections of badges representing desired skill sets in a dynamic, evidence-based way.

Open Badges represent legitimate, authenticated achievements, described within badge and linked to the awarding organization.

Individuals and organizations that accept badges and offer opportunities in exchange, play a critical role in the ecosystem. Through this process Open Badges can be turned into new collaborations, jobs, internships, and richer connections between lifelong learners.

Things you can verify and explore in a badge:

• Details about the organization issuing the badge
• What the individual has done to earn the badge
• The criteria that the badge has been assessed against
• That the badge was issued to the expected recipient
• The badge earner's unique evidence (optionally included)
• When the badge was issued and whether it has expired