

# **ESTABLISHING INTERNAL GUIDELINES FOR DIGITAL BADGES**

**FINAL REPORT**

February 2023



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submitted by





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background

The credentialing system of the ITCILO (the Centre) has undergone fundamental changes against a background of global digitalisation in which the Centre and its partners are playing their part.

Before September 2020, ITCILO staff members were still printing, archiving, and mailing course certificates to participants. Then in the span of four months, the Centre made the permanent switch to digital credentials as part of its digital transformation.

Digital certificates and diplomas are currently issued by the Centre using the third-party credentialing cloud service that was selected in 2020. In addition to the already established 'Certificates of Participation', 'Certificates of Achievement', and 'Diplomas', digital badges are increasingly being used and awarded to learners at ITCILO, mostly coupled with certificates recognizing the same learning achievements, such as course completion.

The Centre is conscious that the lack of explicit guidance on the issuance of digital badges represents a gap in contrast with the clarity of its Three-Tier Certification Framework, which has led to lack of awareness, varying interpretations and inconsistencies in the deployment of digital badges by programme teams. The Centre therefore requested the services of common sense and Learning Agents (the research team) in providing evidence-based recommendations to redress this credentialing policy imbalance and to uncover new opportunities for digital badges to encourage and recognise capacity development beyond training.

Digital badges have developed rapidly since the introduction of Mozilla Open Badges in 2011. More and more organizations and institutions are implementing digital badges in their training and development programmes. However, a quick scan of international examples shows that individual badging concepts have often developed in very different directions, ranging from quite informal interventions such as event participation to highly structured and formal settings, such as courses and longer programmes that require rigorous summative assessment. A key objective for this report is to make strategic sense of this variety of global practice in the context of the Centre's culture, mission, goals and activities.

## Research and analysis process

There were several phases of research conducted for this report. These have been outlined below:

- Examination of documentation provided by the Centre:
- **Strategic Plan** for 2022-25 and **Programme and Budget Proposals** of the ITCILO for 2022-23 to clarify goals and objectives

- The **Terms of Reference** for this project, which provided detailed analysis of the current state of credentialing and provided some options to investigate. The Centre's **Three-Tier Training Certification Framework** was provided in an annex to this document
- A 12-question **survey** of the ITCILO staff population, followed by two **focus group interviews**, to benchmark current activities and opinions among the programme teams regarding digital badges
- Detailed study of guidance provided by the digital credentialing service (**Comprehensive Guide to Digital Badges, Help, blog**) on the affordances of its platform, how it is used by other organisations and how the service fits into the context of general credentialing practice
- An external **scan of global good practice** regarding digital badges in the rapidly evolving digital credential ecosystem

Findings were categorised and analysed by the research team and provisionally validated with feedback from a representative from the ITCILO's Director of Training's office with a view to the ITCILO context, including current credentialing practices, the digital credentialing platform and the organisational culture of the Centre, the ILO and its partner network.

## Recommendations

The analysis of the findings from the research led to the formulation of the following recommendations for the Centre:

- **Recommendation 1: Define terms clearly**  
The rapid development in the field of digital badges has resulted in a very extensive and sometimes ambiguous terminology. In order to avoid misunderstandings and confusion, the Centre should establish a coherent terminology that aligns with global usage as a first step in the development of a badging system.
- **Recommendation 2: Create a complementary digital badge framework to the Three-Tier Certification Framework**  
This should explain the purpose of digital badges and explain how they are different from (and complementary to) certificates. A well-designed framework and clearly articulated taxonomy for badges will help avoid confusion among educators and in the target audience.
- **Recommendation 3: Publish the certification and the badging framework as an integrated approach**  
The badging framework should be published publicly with the 2019 Three-Tier Training Certification Framework as a dual framework, with a permanent URL that can act as an ongoing reference, for internal use and for external use in the broader ecosystem as a resource to support global efforts to align credentialing practices.
- **Recommendation 4: Create a supporting visual language for badges**  
As badges are visual symbols of achievement, the centre should provide a clear visual language for the taxonomy to ensure high recognition value for its badges. A consistent and coherent visual design will differentiate badges linked to certificates and diplomas as "formal" or "high

stakes” certifications in the training context, in contrast to “low-stakes” or “light touch” badges linked to non-training interventions such as events.

- **Recommendation 5a: Explore digital badges for Events**

The use of badges for events makes a good early use case for piloting and implementation because it matches well with the Centre’s goal of exploring more digitalised and scalable solutions for development and because it can start simply, with a single event, and grow over time.

- **Recommendation 5b: Explore digital badges for Membership**

The intersection of Membership with communities of practice and “softer” concepts of membership (e.g. self-declared, unpaid, etc.) resonated in both of the focus group interviews and aligns well with the Centre’s strategic goals of “Individual and institutional capacity development” and “Organisational collaboration and co-creation.”

- **Recommendation 5c: Explore digital badges for skills embedded in training courses**

Digital badges can recognize specific competencies/skills developed within longer training courses and programmes that may be immediately relevant to workplace needs and otherwise buried from view in the certificate.

- **Recommendation 5d: Explore digital badges for personalised learning journeys**

This option definitely meets the goal of co-creation with more autonomous learners and personalisation of their learning experiences that can map to outcomes that can map to capacity development goals of the Centre and its partners.

- **Recommendation 5e: Explore digital badges for “learning organisations”**

The concept of learning organisations as holistic entities that are more than the aggregate sum of their “parts” (ie people) is one that can help the Centre’s training and non-training services to work together to recognise workplace and organisational development as an integrated whole.

- **Recommendation 6: Co-create a community of recognition**

Learners should be encouraged to accept, show and publicly present their badges based on a badging system that includes all of the Centre’s development activities. This will not only improve learners’ autonomy and social recognition but will would also allow reports and Big Data tools to be used to better track and assess learning activities and knowledge transfer within ITCILO, providing evidence of impact beyond inputs to outputs and outcomes: knowledge gain, application of learning, behaviour change and performance improvement.

The spectrum of these recommendations is deliberately wide, ranging from incremental improvements to transformational ways to rationalise and enhance digital credentials to further ITCILO goals. Although several recommendations can work better together, there is no strong recommendation to implement all the recommendations at once - the Centre is encouraged to explore, analyse and pilot as best suits its needs.

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# INTRODUCTION

ITCILO (the Centre) has been issuing digital certificates based on its three-tier certification framework since September 2020. During this period, some teams in the Training Department at the Centre have been leveraging the affordances of the digital certification platform to also issue digital badges. The digital badges have been issued in the absence of explicit central guidance. Lack of background and conflicting perspectives on digital badges for training, along with a growing awareness of non-training opportunities for recognition with digital badges prompted the Centre to reach out for expert advice.<sup>1</sup>

This report:

- examines the ITCILO context and experience with digital credentials, based on primary and secondary research
- describes global good practice in the use of digital badges individually or to complement digital certificates in training and non-training activities, based on secondary research and direct professional experience with badges
- proposes a standard approach for the use of digital badges within the scope of both training and non-training services, tailored to the context of work performed by the Centre.

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<sup>1</sup> See Annexes / About ITCILO / TOR for this assignment

# PART I: CURRENT USE OF DIGITAL CREDENTIALS IN THE ITCILO

This section provides a baseline assessment of current practices regarding the deployment of certificates and digital badges in the Centre.

## ITCILO's Training and Non-training Services

### Strategic goals: ITC within the ILO

These goals and objectives of the Centre were found by the research team in two key documents supplied by ITCILO: [The Centre's Strategic Plan for 2022-25](#) and [Programme and Budget Proposals of the ITCILO for 2022-23](#). They have been summarised below for their potential relevance to the affordances and benefits of digital badges.

#### Mission

The research team took note that the mission of the Centre focuses on providing digitally enhanced access to capacity development services for people across the world of work to successfully manage Future Work transitions. In doing so, the Centre's commitment is to enable effective lifelong learning and quality education for all with a human-centred approach.<sup>2</sup>

#### Learner centred, learner autonomy

The Strategic Plan explains that human-centred learning means accommodating the learners' desire to take part in creating their own learning experiences.<sup>3</sup>

As a result, the Programme and Budget Proposals point out that the Centre should consider more student-centred evaluation methods such as a self-rating scale of knowledge application, participant panels, or self-reflective learning journals<sup>4</sup>

Accessibility is an important theme for the participant-centred approach of the Centre as it integrates inclusive digital learning, communication and collaboration services. This will mean more accessible services for agile capacity building, such as mobile learning, bite-size learning, video and coaching via social media applications.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The Centre's Strategic Plan for 2022-25 (SP) p2-4

<sup>3</sup> SP p1

<sup>4</sup> Programme and Budget Proposals of the ITCILO for 2022-23 (P&B) p30

<sup>5</sup> SP p6

Further, the research team notes that the Centre’s increasingly integrated approach to marketing and learning via social media will mean connecting with the learner in ways that will tend to blur the lines between awareness, engagement, learning, assessment and promotion.<sup>6</sup>

→ ITCILO: Consider strategies to use digital badges to encourage self-directed co-created learning experiences for individuals, seeking opportunities outside of standard course delivery, such as work-integrated learning and events.

## Individual and institutional capacity development

The digital transformation pathway outlined in the Centre’s Strategic Plan takes the focus for capacity building beyond individuals to organizations and institutions. This means not only expanding its current development services for other organizations, but also developing the Centre’s own internal capacity for digital transformation, including organisational structure, job profiling and the required skills set of the Centre’s workforce.<sup>7</sup> The concept of learning organisations<sup>8</sup> is becoming more and more a part of the vision of the Centre, seeing organisations as holistic entities that are more than the aggregate sum of the individuals in those organisations.

Further, the profile of the Centre’s non-training services is increasing, creating opportunities to integrate these outcomes with those of training programs to create rich learning journeys that can bundle individual level, institutional-level and systems-level interventions.

→ ITCILO: Explore opportunities for recognizing workplace and organisational development with digital badges that leverage the concepts of learning organisations which can combine interventions at the individual, institutional and systems levels.

## Innovation

The Centre plans to extend its reputation as a learning innovation champion by diversifying and cross-fertilizing its blended portfolio of training and collaboration with technologies such as virtual conferencing and meeting applications, AVR, future foresight techniques, big data mining, and artificial intelligence. The goal is to harness digital technology to achieve pedagogical and service capacity development, while managing costs and learning lessons about virtual and blended approaches from the pandemic.<sup>9</sup> The Centre’s culture of innovation will be designed to extend beyond the boundaries of ITCILO and to connect it with other educators and trainers in the global learning innovation ecosystem.

<sup>6</sup> P&B p39

<sup>7</sup> SP p7,9

<sup>8</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learning\\_organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learning_organization)

<sup>9</sup> P&B p4,10,24 & SP p2,5,6,7

## Organisational collaboration and co-creation

The Strategic Plan states that ITCILO will increasingly extend its reach and capacity through collaboration with partners. This will involve less on-site training in Turin, shifting more to F2F training delivered in partnership with local organisations and diverse online platforms for learning, communication and collaboration that may be managed by partners. One example of this is online conferences and fairs.<sup>10</sup> The Program and Budget Proposals extend this integrated strategy to include knowledge management solutions that may be associated with learning platforms and connected to online communities of practice, leading to the blending of knowledge management activities with training and training product development support.<sup>11</sup>

## Scaling up

The research team noted the theme of scaling up and out, through a combination of larger events, leveraging the capacity of its partners and more transformative use of digital technology for training and non-training services and related support.<sup>12</sup>

→ ITCILO: Seek opportunities to integrate the issuing of digital badges with strategies (and platforms) for communication, collaboration and knowledge exchange as well as standard course delivery.

## Big data analysis

The tracking of inputs, activities and outcomes is growing in importance and sophistication at the Centre as it works to more effectively demonstrate its impact to the ITCILO Board and its partners, leading to better insights and stronger decision-making.

Whether for communication and advocacy, meetings and events, or learning and knowledge management, the Centre will increasingly be seeking evidence of knowledge gain, application of learning, behaviour change and performance improvement in preference to more reactive measurements of contact and engagement.

In support of this increased focus on behavioural data, the digital credentials platform currently used by Centre includes a detailed [analytics dashboard](#) that provides a significant amount of useful statistics that enrich the organization's data warehouse with information about issued credentials and how the recipients engage with them. It helps the Centre analyse the exponential promotional power of the issued digital credentials and make sound decisions on how to effectively make use of the potential features digital credentials can provide.

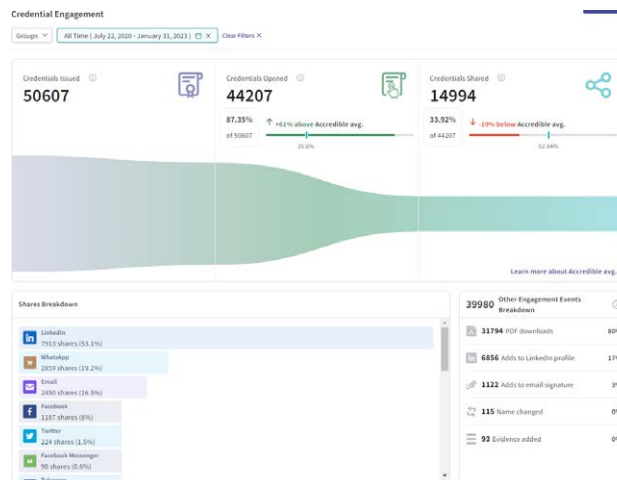
(See snapshots from the analytics dashboard below.)

<sup>10</sup> SP p5,6,9

<sup>11</sup> P&B p24

<sup>12</sup> SP p8 & P&B p17

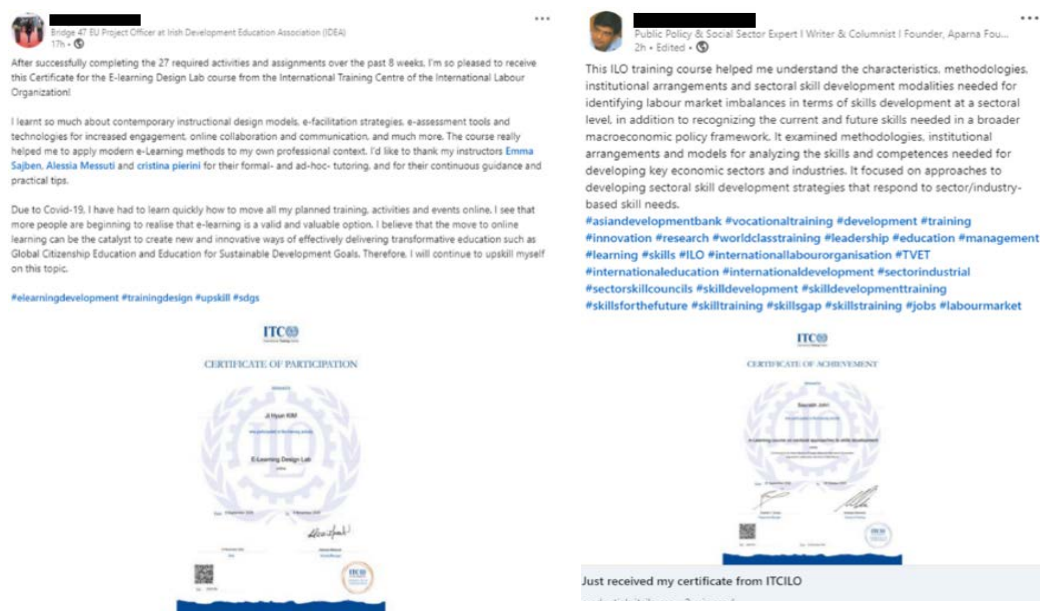
FIGURE 1: ANALYTICS DASHBOARD OF THE CREDENTIAL PLATFORM



The clear promotional role that digital credentials plays in the Centre's outreach efforts has not gone unnoticed by the Centre. The chart below shows the exponential and effortless promotional potential of digital credentials. Since its official shift to digital credentials in September 2020 and till the end of 2022, the Centre issued 48,766 digital credentials.

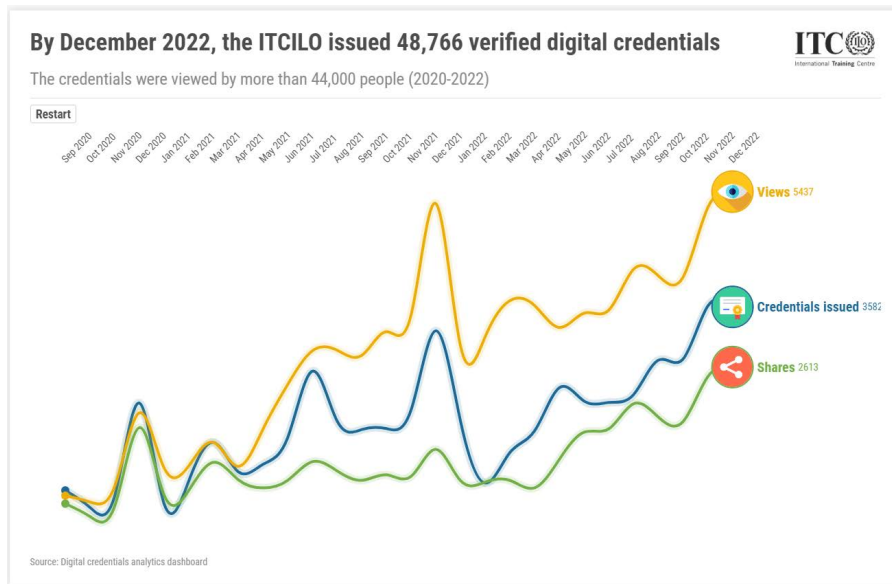
It has been noticed that recipients of digital credentials proudly share their digital certificates and badges on various social media platforms, while doing this, they usually share information about the course, mention the course team, add hashtags, and perform other actions on social media. These actions taken by the Centre's digital credentials recipients play a noticeable promotional role on the Centre's activities and training offers.

FIGURE 2: SCREENSHOTS OF CERTIFICATES SHARED ON SOCIAL MEDIA



It's worthwhile to note in the figure below that, while the number of views moves higher and lower with the number of issued credentials and how many times they are being shared, the overall trend is a consistently rising one.

**FIGURE 3: DEVELOPMENT OVER TIME OF THE AWARDED BADGES, VIEWS, AND SHARES**



→ ITCILO: Consider thoroughly exploring the current data analysis opportunities of the digital credentialing platform and seek opportunities to analyse behaviour change that may result from non-training services.

## Training and Activity Teams

The research team learned that there are nine training Programmes in the ITCILO representing different aspects of ILO's mission, each with its own dedicated team that delivers both training services and non-training capacity development services.

These two types of services are broken out below:

- Training:
  - Standard courses
  - Tailored training activities (“contract training”)
- “Non-training” capacity development services:
  - Product development
  - Innovation solutions
  - Project management support
  - Management consultancies



- Data-driven services
- Event facilitation
- Communication and advocacy

## Three-Tier Training Certification Framework

The Centre's certificate framework was implemented and published as an internal Circular in August, 2019 and is still being followed for all training activities of the Centre as the standard reference framework for certification of training participants:

- **Certificate of Participation**  
1+ learning hours
- **Certificate of Achievement**  
60 - 299 learning hours
- **Diploma**  
300+ learning hours

Evidence from the interviews and other consultations with ITCILO staff indicate that this Framework has been very effective in supporting a clear quality system for the issuing of certificates at the Centre.

## Evaluations of the Centre's online training activities

The research team examined the following documents related to online training activities of the Centre:

- Report brief: 2021 evaluation of the online training activities of the ITCILO<sup>13</sup> (Evaluation 2021)
  - Management response to the 2021 evaluation<sup>14</sup>
- Report brief: 2022 evaluation of the online training activities of the ITCILO<sup>15</sup> (Evaluation 2022)

Useful elements from these documents include:

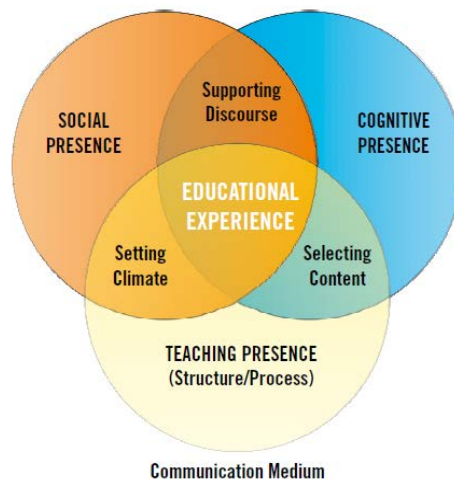
- The **Community of Inquiry Model** used for the evaluations (see below), particularly the following elements:
  - **Social presence** is the ability of participants to identify with the community, communicate purposefully in a trusting environment, and develop inter-personal relationships by way of projecting their individual personalities.
  - **Cognitive Presence** is the extent to which learners are able to construct and confirm meaning through sustained reflection and discourse.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.itcilo.org/external-evaluation-2021-report-brief>

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.itcilo.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/CC%2085\\_3%20EN%20FINAL.pdf](https://www.itcilo.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/CC%2085_3%20EN%20FINAL.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.itcilo.org/external-evaluation-2022-report-brief>

FIGURE 4: EXCERPT FROM EVALUATION 2021



This report features discussion of another type of community, **Community of Practice**, whose perspective on lifelong and lifewide learning can speak to the goal of sustained reflection and discourse beyond structured courses and in developing autonomous learners with authentic professional identities in productive interpersonal relationships.

- Management response to Recommendation 7 in the 2021 evaluation suggesting that the Centre “develop a **dual online training provision model** — i) specialised long-term training courses and ii) general short-term training activities”:
- ...the Centre will more explicitly differentiate between short, stand-alone certificate-level training courses and longer term diploma programmes that stack certificate-level training courses along multi-step learning journeys and conclude with a capstone project.
- We suggest that this type of multi-step stacking may be extended to digital badges that stack into certificates.

→ ITCILO: Consider exploring elements of Community of Practice to build more persistent Social and Cognitive Presence among ITCILO learners.

→ ITCILO: Explore how certain types of digital badges may stack into certificates.

## ITCILO's digital credentials

(See more details in Annex)

### The Centre's shift to digital credentials

Before September 2020, ITCILO staff members were still printing, archiving, and mailing course certificates to participants. Then in the span of four months, the Centre made the permanent switch to digital credentials as part of its digital transformation.

To be able to achieve this transformation, the Centre carried out a thorough market research to decide on a third-party provider which provides services and features that meet the Centre's technical and financial needs and priorities. Some of the priorities were a secure infrastructure supported by blockchain, SSL encryption, and Open Badges, complete control over design and branding as well as immediate integration possibility with the Centre's online learning platform eCampus, as well as the availability of a limitless digital archive and an easy verification process.

The digitalization immediately and directly affected the way work is done at the Centre. After this shift, it became possible to take a course at the ITCILO without ever printing a single piece of paper. ITCILO staff members can now skip time-consuming administrative work and focus on big picture ideas.

The Centre implemented digital credentials in September 2020. The service has proved very popular with learners. By the end of 2022, 48,766 digital credentials were issued to more than 36,000 recipients and shared more than 30,000 times.

Benefits include:

- Elimination of printing and mailing costs, reduced paper use, and streamlined logistical processes
- Lifelong digital archive of all participants' digital credentials
- Easy and reliable verification of credential authenticity
- Stackable multi-step learning journeys that may cut across several tiers supporting life-long learning
- Reduced quality assurance costs for ITCILO, reduced time on administrative work and more opportunity to focus on process improvement and innovation
- Increased visibility of the Centre and promotion of its offerings in social media
- Helps create a networking space in which potential participants can communicate with the Centre's training teams and a direct channel for immediate feedback from participants on their learning and training experiences with the Centre
- Reports of learning outcomes to support the Centre's quality management system for learning services.

## Certificates and/or digital badges?

The availability of digital badges as a feature of the newly introduced digital credentials has been communicated from the very beginning. However, in contrast to the clear framework for training certificates, there is no complementary framework for digital badges. The decision on whether to issue a digital badge in addition to a certificate is left to the judgement of the team in charge of the training activity. The only clear guidance in place is to use a short phrase for the title on the badge image (max. 3 short words) and to write the content in a way that describes an achievement that resulted from the training activity.

Different teams and different activity managers have different levels of awareness and different perspectives about digital badges, which has led to inconsistencies and disagreement in their use. In addition, the Centre has begun to explore use cases for learner engagement and skills development beyond training, such as in events and conferences, which may be more appropriately recognized with digital badges alone.

For these reasons, the ITCILO plans to establish a standard approach for the use of digital badges within the scope of both its training and non-training services. This report will inform that approach.

## ITCILO credentialing terminology in a global context

ITCILO has developed its own internally consistent credentialing terminology, but the Centre operates in a global credentialing ecosystem which is constantly evolving and undergoing periodic disruption. This creates discontinuities, overlap and confusion in the language used across professional and regional contexts in the global ecosystem, which can have an impact on communication clarity within the ITCILO system.

For example, the Centre's categorisation of Training (certified) vs. "Non-training" capacity development services (typically not certified) overlaps with external concepts for different categories of learning, adapted below from the UNESCO TVETipedia Glossary<sup>16</sup>:

- Formal (structured, assessed, often accredited)
- Non-formal (structured, not assessed)
- Informal/incidental/random (unstructured, not assessed).

→ ITCILO: Consider establishing an explicit alignment between internal ITCILO learning and recognition terminology and global usage with Glossary of terms.  
(See Annex - Glossary suggestions)

<sup>16</sup> <https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/TVETipedia+Glossary/lang=en/filt=all/id=282>

## The ITCILO's current digital credential solution

The Centre's current operator of the digital credential platform<sup>17</sup> provides a full-service digital badge and certificate platform. It is designed for creating, issuing, and managing secure digital certificates and badges.

According to the platform provider, the following benefits are provided, among others:

- Certificates, diplomas, badges, blockchain credentials, and digital wallet cards - all in one place.
- No user accounts, no logins, and no "claiming" is necessary for recipients and members to receive and engage with badges and certificates, making engagement more seamless
- A highly capable online credential design tool, with pre-made templates and a drag and drop editor for custom options
- Native social sharing tools and templates to share credentials in a single click, increasing referrals for the issuer
- Advanced data and analytics tools for monitoring performance and ROI, including social views, clickthroughs, and more.
- Integration with leading LMS software and publishing tools to streamline creating and sending certificates.
- Brand promotion options beyond a logo on certificates and badges: include vanity URLs, custom emails, branded landing pages and full white labeling.

## Technology

The digital credential platform currently used by the Centre enables the issuing of digital credentials that can be published as:

- Certificates only, using an industry-leading online publishing toolset
- Certificates accompanied by digital badges
- Digital badges only.

The digital badges comply with the Open Badge standard including metadata, and both Certificates and digital badges appear to share the same underlying metadata:

**FIGURE 5: METADATA ACCORDING TO OPEN BADGE STANDARDS**



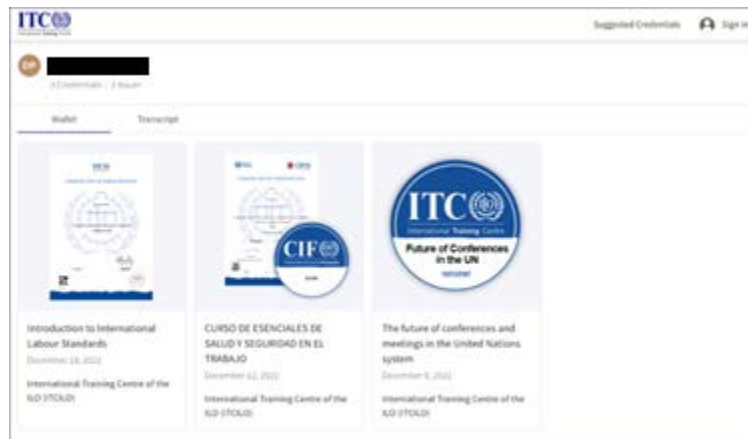
Source: [accreditable.com](https://www.accreditable.com)

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.accreditable.com/>

Issued Credentials are easily stackable along multi-step learning journeys that may cut across several tiers hence supporting life-long learning. Basic Stacking functionality will be upgraded into a more flexible Credential Collections<sup>18</sup> (Learning Pathways) tool in Q2 of 2023. This optional feature will be accessible to subscribers at designated premium levels.

Recipients store their credentials in personal web wallets, and can further share some or all badges to mobile app wallets:

FIGURE 6: WEB WALLET



The default web wallet display can be switched to transcript display, a list of credentials that is comprehensive but does not distinguish badges from certificates and does not seem to support editing, selection or reordering of the credentials:

FIGURE 7: WEB TRANSCRIPT

The screenshot shows the ITCILO Web Transcript interface. At the top, there is a header with the ITCILO logo, a user profile picture, and the text '3 Credentials | 1 Hour'. Below the header, there are two tabs: 'Wallet' and 'Transcript' (selected). The main content area displays a table with three rows of credential information.

Name	Website	Issued On
Introduction to International Labour Standards	<a href="http://www.itcilo.org">www.itcilo.org</a>	Dec 18, 2022
CURSO DE ESENCIALES DE SALUD Y SEGURIDAD EN EL TRABAJO	<a href="http://www.itcilo.org">www.itcilo.org</a>	Dec 12, 2022
The future of conferences and meetings in the United Nations system	<a href="http://www.itcilo.org">www.itcilo.org</a>	Dec 9, 2022

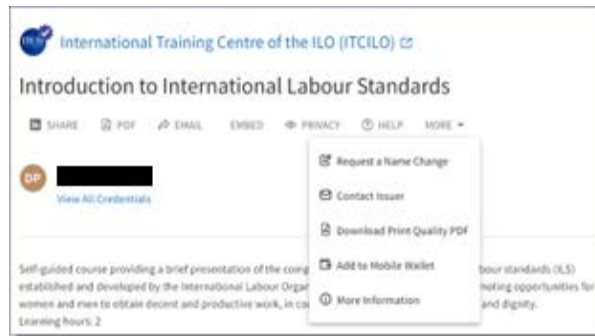
There does not appear to be any portfolio or backpack functionality, such as collecting selected badges in categories or folders or the ability to publish in displays with other content.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.accreditable.com/blog/what-are-credential-collections-learning-pathways-and-how-can-you-use-them>

## End user tools and options

The availability of tools varies, according to the type of credential. For example, the badge by itself has no PDF print option, in contrast to other credentialing platforms. Figures 8 - 10 show the different tools and options for certificates, certificates and badges, and badges only.

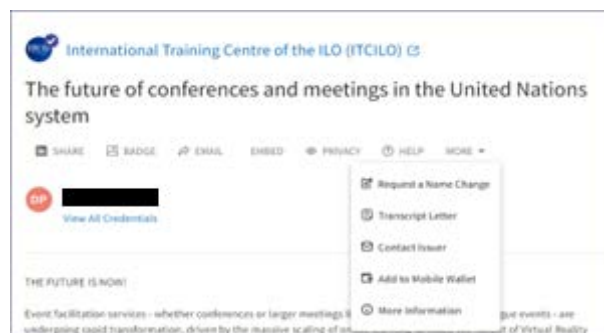
**FIGURE 8: TOOLS AND OPTIONS - CERTIFICATE ONLY**



**FIGURE 9: TOOLS AND OPTIONS - CERTIFICATE AND BADGE**



**FIGURE 10: TOOLS AND OPTIONS - BADGE ONLY**



While certificates and badges awarded in combination with certificates can be printed as PDFs, this option does not exist for stand-alone badges. Badges (in combination with certificates or stand-alone) can be exported as an image file and there is the possibility to create a transcript letter.

There is a wide variety of options available for sharing to social media. The “share” normally includes a link back to the hosted credential:

**FIGURE 11: SOCIAL MEDIA SHARING OPTIONS**

## Learning goals

The digital credential platform used by the Centre also offers a specific section in the profiles for learners where they can indicate their learning preferences. It is not clear if this is just for learners, or if it also contributes to data available to the Centre for analysis and planning.

In Profile settings for end users, the “I Want to Earn” Goals section mentions Certificates and Micro-credentials. However, it does not mention digital badges. This suggests that the Centre should find a way to bridge these concepts for its learners who will be exposed to this terminology:

**FIGURE 12: ACCREDIBLE USER PROFILE: “I WANT TO EARN”**

→ Consider strategies to generally align terminologies between ITCILO and third party service providers, to reduce confusion for learners and evaluators of ITCILO credentials.

It would also be useful to see how Collections and Groups work for the end/user learners, for example to help them track progress along learning pathways.



## The service provider's guidance for users

The documentation provided by the digital certification provider includes the following:

- A comprehensive guide to digital badges<sup>19</sup>
- Webinars and video tutorials
- the Accredible Blog<sup>20</sup>
- Accredible Help Centre<sup>21</sup>

Findings from these sources are collected below.

### Findings from the Guide

#### Categories of Digital Credentials

Page 5 of the Guide lists three categories of digital credentials. The first two appear to share characteristics with ITCILO certificates:

- 1) Test-based Digital Credentials (ie from decoupled, proctored exams)
- 2) Digital Certificates (course, seminar, membership) look like their paper equivalents
- 3) Digital Badges (more ambiguous - high/low stakes) have a more unique look.

#### Functions of digital badges

Pages 10 and 11 of the Guide describe how badges are commonly used:

- 1) **Motivate Participation:** The use of badges to motivate participants can be considered one of the “core functions” of badges and is often associated with gamification. Badges used in this way are often directly integrated into eLearning courses and are awarded or “earned” by learners upon successful completion of individual learning activities.
- 2) **Motivate (recognize) Collaboration:** Especially in online communities, badges can be used to show commitment and motivate collaboration. An example of such a community is OER Commons<sup>22</sup>: an online platform for open educational resources that uses badges to signal knowledge and encourage connections between users, but also to track the progress of very active and engaged users. In OER Commons, badges are awarded for:
  - a) writing reviews,
  - b) remixing and publishing, and
  - c) creating and publishing new open educational resources.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.accreditable.com/downloadable-assets/download-accredibles-comprehensive-guide-to-digital-badges>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.accreditable.com/blog>

<sup>21</sup> <https://help.accreditable.com/>

<sup>22</sup> ed: See this exam[ple here: <https://www.oercommons.org/products/badges/> See also Particularly Helpful Moodle badge on moodle.org: <https://moodle.org/badges/badge.php?hash=606dcf70d1b96e74ca18da4d74deffc88a1aedc0>

- 3) **For Recognition and Assessment:** Badges can also be used to “recognize quality, indicate trust, or represent awards.” In such scenarios they are often linked to assessment, including evaluation of prior learning<sup>23</sup>. Assessment can be summative, formative or transformative (reshapes the learning process). “Digital badges are most commonly associated with formative assessment where an individual is provided feedback and his or her progress is tracked.<sup>24</sup> Badges can also be strung together to show various “levels” of mastery obtained over time.<sup>25</sup>
- 4) **Act as Alternative Credentials:** The platform’s user guide further discusses the use of badges as an alternative to certificates: “Some consider badges a potential threat or challenger to diplomas given the fact that more and more online education programs are adopting badges to mark achievement. However, this notion is hotly contested. It’s more common for individuals and organizations to recognize the modular nature of badges versus the comprehensive nature of a diploma or degree.”
- 5) **Represent Competencies:** Against the background of increasing competency-based assessments, badges offer an interesting alternative to traditional grading scales: In most educational programs, traditional time-based assessments provide a single quantitative grade, more often than not on some kind of “pass - fail” scale.<sup>26</sup> Badges on the other hand can provide a more modular and flexible way of showing various levels and combinations of competency or mastery.<sup>27</sup>

### Criticism of Digital Badges

Page 14 lists some common criticisms. According to the provider, badges may:

- encourage hierarchical relationships when implemented online.<sup>28</sup>
- encourage behaviour that is beneficial for the issuer but not the individual<sup>29</sup>
- reduce people’s (intrinsic) motivation to complete tasks when the (extrinsic) reward is removed.<sup>30</sup>
- in “gamified” education, students may obsess about earning as many badges as possible instead of achieving appropriate learning outcomes. Badges offered may not represent anything of (standalone or portable) value.
- encourage a flood of “low stakes” meaningless (gamified) badges<sup>31</sup> for example watching a video or signing up for a course.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>23</sup> ed: RPL, APEL, etc.

<sup>24</sup> ed: Gamification, badges are often not portable beyond learning context.

<sup>25</sup> ed: These badges could be portable if recognizing levels has standalone value. This is sometimes called laddering. But doing this with badges could cross over into the certificate framework.

<sup>26</sup> ed: This is the central thesis of the 2019 ICDE report [The Present and Future of Alternative Digital Credentials \(ADCs\)](#).

<sup>27</sup> ed: The granularity or “size” of a competency is difficult/impossible to indicate in the absence of time or credits, which tends to undermine the claim that competencies are not about “seat time.”

<sup>28</sup> ed: Especially when displayed as Gold, Silver and Bronze.

<sup>29</sup> ed: Not “learner-centred”

<sup>30</sup> ed: see “Punished By Rewards” and other work by Alfie Kohn

<sup>31</sup> ed: Often called badge inflation or carpet badging

<sup>32</sup> ed: However, see also badges as learning contracts or initial declarations for more autonomous learning journeys, or “parcours” in French - e.g. Les SDGs - je m’engage!

Responses to these criticisms point to the important role played by **clear metadata** in ensuring credential transparency, “requiring that embedded records of who issued the badge are supported by links to pages explaining in detail how and why the recipient earned it, and providing further details regarding their program.”<sup>33</sup>

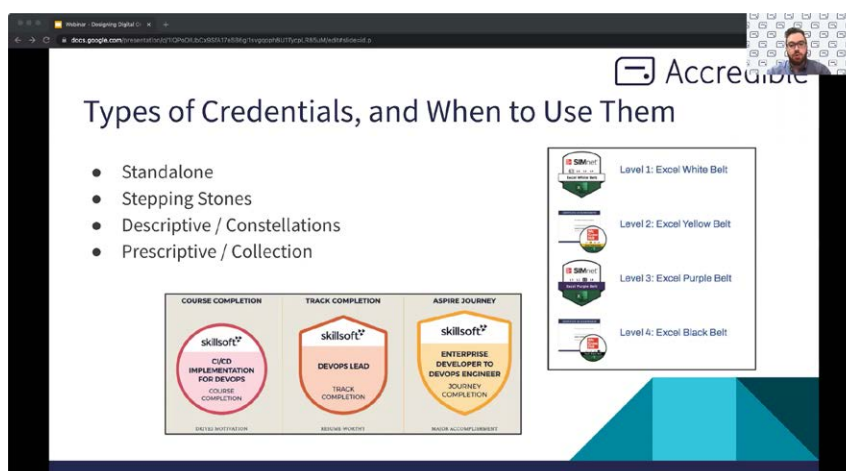
## Certificates and badges

The Guide does not provide clear guidance on choosing between certificates and badges. However, the closing section of the Guide “Future of Digital Badges” implies that badges will become more formal, verifiable and summative as they are applied to workplace evaluation.

## Webinars and tutorials

There is a variety of webinars officially offered by the platform’s provider on effective practice using their platform. The example below provides guidance on designing credential collections and learning pathways.

FIGURE 13: ACCREDIBLE APRIL 2022 WEBINAR: [Designing Digital Credentials](#)



## Findings from the blog

### Certificates and badges - embracing the convergence

The convergence of badge and certificate is actively embraced as a benefit in one of the platform’s blog post from 2022: The Benefits of a Format Agnostic Digital Credentialing Solution.

*“Accredible is one of the only true format agnostic digital credentialing solutions that provides issuers the freedom to deliver both feature-rich digital certificates and open-badge compliant digital badges. Combined with our pricing model of per unique recipient, rather than per credential, this enables issuers to offer their candidates both an embed-friendly digital badge and a print-ready digital certificate at the cost of one issuer credit.”*

<sup>33</sup> ed: See discussion below about taxonomies that are visually flagged for meaning

According to the blog post, digital badges can be used for rewarding achievements that deserve recognition, but require less effort or time, such as recognizing module completion, issuing a certificate (and a badge!) for course or programme completion: “The employee can embed their digital badge to their email signature to showcase their knowledge, while sharing the more formal digital certificate to their social networks or online profiles.”

Gamification is explicitly encouraged: “Digital credentials support gamification through the regular issuance of digital awards throughout a learner’s journey.” Unlike empty pictorial awards such as on Audible, using digital credentials “provides more contextual information for what the award represents through detailed information, learner evidence, and skill tags on the credential page.”

The Centre’s digital credential platform offers a unique-recipient pricing model, which “enables issuers to provide a greater number of valuable credentials to their recipients at no additional cost.” increasing the share rate and marketing potential of the credentials and what they represent.

→ EDITOR’S NOTE: There is no discussion in the Guide about the potential conflict between their suggestions for gamification in the blog and the Guide’s cited criticism of a flood of “low stakes” meaningless (gamified) badges.

## Badges for Events

The Centre wishes to explore the use of digital badges for events, based in part on the 2021 blog post [Should I Issue Digital Badges to Event Attendees?](#). Potential benefits may accrue from both in-person and virtual events. These benefits include:

- Reduction of physical waste, compared to lanyards
- Use of badges in “badge wallet card” (mobile app) to unlock access to the conference or sessions, streamlining the administrative workload and reducing error
- Encouragement of longer engagements (session series, conference days, booth visits, longer learning journeys that go beyond the event etc.)
- (ed: *Tracking of onsite and online events for optional and required Continuing Professional Development*)
- Tracking how knowledge has been applied, such as reflective statements and evidence on how learning has had an impact on thinking and behaviour in the workplace<sup>34</sup>
- Encouragement and tracking of (crowd sourced) organic marketing of the event by participants. For example, organizers can use engagement analytics to track the most popular social platforms where badges are shared and estimate the marketing value of views and clicks.

<sup>34</sup> ed: This use case can also require participants to submit for a Reflector badge on the day, using prompts such as “what I learned today” and “how I will apply this”, which can be embedded as evidence in the badge

## Badges for Membership

In the 2019 blog post, [A Model for Membership Organizations to use Both Digital Badges and Certificates](#), the Centre's current provider for digital badges, Accredible, began making a case for Membership which has been explored as a major theme in several posts since that time. If ITCILO has development use cases that leverage Membership concepts, this provides a useful thread. **Community of Practice** comes to mind in this context, or there may be benefits for learners to identify themselves as members of one or more of the nine Programmes of the Centre.

The blog post spends some time differentiating badges and certificates in useful ways:

- Digital Badges
  - Inspired by (and often resembling) physical badges
  - Based on the Open Badges standard, so contains verifiable structure metadata and portable between platforms<sup>35</sup>
- Digital Certificates
  - Similar to paper certificates and usually look visually the same.
  - Available online, downloadable, printable, enjoy the digital benefits described above for badges<sup>36</sup>

According to the blog post, certificates make sense to recognize member achievement because:

- Achieving the certification requires considerable effort over a period of time, and for the majority of users, a certificate with their name on it is perceived as more appropriate recognition than a badge
- Traditionally this kind of achievement would have been recognized with a paper certificate and so there is better continuity when switching to this format
- Many members wish to download and print their certificate for display, or to show to clients as evidence of their qualifications
- Additional evidence such as work samples, transcripts, references etc can be attached<sup>37</sup>
- Details of the recipient, the course, the dates, etc can be displayed on the certificate

But membership-based organisations engage with a variety of people in various contexts and roles that extend far beyond basic membership interactions, such as volunteers, employees, presidents, people who develop exam material, or volunteer board members.<sup>38</sup> Badges can make more sense for these purposes because:

- They are a great way to recognize the contribution of these individuals
- There is unlikely to have been anything in place beforehand, so there are no expectations to be maintained
- They are less formal than a certificate

<sup>35</sup> ed: Certificates appear to share the same underlying metadata, but are not as portable between platforms

<sup>36</sup> ed: The Certificate image displays more information than the badge image, useful for instant evaluation of single credentials that are "higher stakes"

<sup>37</sup> ed: But evidence can also be attached to badges

<sup>38</sup> ed: Also speakers, SME experts, members of long standing, alumni, newbies, prospective members, etc.

A later blog post includes advice on when to use badges and certificates:

- “Badges lend themselves toward the illustration of growth through a series of courses. This applies to smaller wins that add up to a cumulative achievement. A good reference for this structure is the different color belts you obtain before reaching the black belt in karate.”
- “While certificates also demonstrate achievement, they tend to highlight one great accomplishment as opposed to a singular class within a larger curriculum. This might apply to a digital college diploma or the completion of a license renewal.” ([Blog 2022-12-08](#))

At least eight recent blog posts have suggested other ways that badges can synergize with membership, such as these three most recent ones:

- Using Spotlight (added cost option) as a member directory to verify, showcase and connect members (Blog 2022-12-15)
- Digital wallet card for streamlining membership verification and access to member services (*ed: similar to events as discussed in Interviews, good also to track usage*) (Blog 2022-12-13)
- Digital membership cards for benefits reduced production cost, ease of delivery, simplification of credential updates(see chart).(Blog 2022-12-08)

→ ITCILO: Consider exploring how Accredible’s growing Membership feature set and guidance might be adapted to analogous use cases in the Centre’s context, such as communities of practice, which incorporate softer concepts of membership and professional identity.

## Findings from Help

These affordances of the currently used credential platform can help recipients share and “socialize” their badges after receiving them:

- **Certified Professional Directory**  
<https://help.accreditable.com/how-do-i-setup-my-directory-profile>  
 A searchable hub or “mini LinkedIn” of certified professionals dedicated to credential recipients. The Professional Profile can display:
  - Current and historical employment information
  - If employment is being sought
  - Certifications and credential wallet
  - Location and contact information
- **Mobile Digital Wallet**  
<https://help.accreditable.com/how-do-i-add-credentials-to-my-mobile-digital-wallet>  
 Verify professional credentials from a mobile device on a job site or to prove association membership.

- **Embed a Credential in an Email Signature**  
<https://help.accreditable.com/embedding-your-credential-email-signature>

Embed a Digital Open Badge into an email signature so others can view the live credential.

FIGURE 14: EXAMPLE OF AN EMAIL SIGNATURE FILE



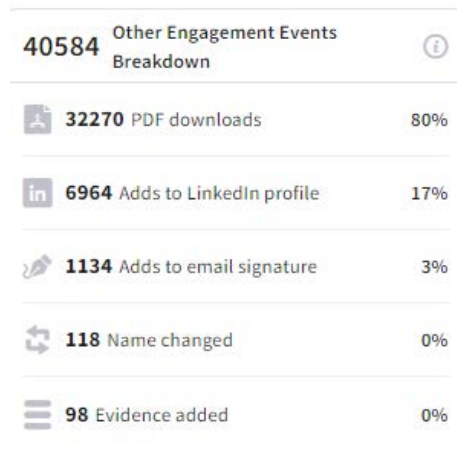
- **Add Evidence to a Credential**  
<https://help.accreditable.com/how-do-i-add-evidence-to-my-credential>

Support the credential by adding evidence items that show why it was awarded, such as:

- Assignments and work completed
- Video demonstrations
- References from colleagues

This feature is currently used by less than 1 percent of recipients, in comparison to other features such as PDF downloads:

FIGURE 15: ADDING EVIDENCE TO A CREDENTIAL



## Current ITCILO perspectives on Certificates and Badges

The Office of the Director of Training (the Office) has perceived that there is a wide variety of awareness of (and engagement with) the potential of digital badges across the nine programmes of the Centre. A survey and two group interviews were conducted to probe these perspectives further.

### Survey

#### Summary statistics<sup>39</sup>

The Centre representative developed a 12-question survey in early December 2022 for Activity Managers and Assistants across the nine ITCILO Training programmes. There were 41 responses from a potential pool of about 150. 39% of these were Managers, 61% were Assistants.

<sup>39</sup> See also Annexes / Survey - Details

Overall, awareness of the ability to issue digital badges was high (90%) but engagement with issuing badges was low (34%).

No respondents had issued badges for non-training activities; 22% had issued certificates for this purpose. (*ed: possible interpretation: badges are generally viewed as a display/sharing option for certificates, not as distinct credentials in their own right.*)<sup>40</sup>

55% had never received a digital credential as a learner, 45% had received certificates; of these 16% had also received badges.

A high proportion of respondents supported a standardized approach to the issuance of digital badges to a great or moderate extent (53 + 34 = 87%)

The next pages classify and aggregate free text opinions provided by the respondents. For further detail, please see **Annexes / Facilitator Survey - Details** or view the separate spreadsheet report.

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<sup>40</sup> There is only one pilot case by the Office of the Director of Training for the “Future of Conferences and Meetings in the United Nations System” symposium in Dec 2022: <https://www.itcilo.org/events/future-conferences-and-meetings-united-nations-system>



## Aggregated opinions

## Colour coding, bolding and highlighting added

TABLE 1: AGGREGATED OPINIONS FROM THE INTERVIEWS

Questions	Positive	Neutral, Nuanced	Negative
<p>Have you ever requested the issuance of digital badges in addition to the digital certificates for your activities?</p> <p>(If yes.) what do you think was the value-added of providing your training activities' participants with <b>digital badges</b> to accompany their digital certificates?</p> <p>+</p> <p>Do <b>digital badges</b> add value or confuse participants when issued with digital certificates? Please explain.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>add value (x9)</li> <li>...participants love to attach their credentials</li> <li>... encourage participants in their journey to receiving a full certificate.</li> <li>... <b>a way to further showcase new skills</b></li> <li>...for a course we had forgotten to request it, participants asked for it right away.</li> <li><b>not really, it is very clear</b></li> <li>(do) not confuse the participants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>don't know</li> <li>we have not used them</li> <li>No feedback from participants</li> <li><b>it depends on how it is managed</b></li> <li>Some understand and other(s) not</li> <li>I have been made aware of the fact that digital badges, in a way, assign a "title" to the participant, such as: "[subject] expert" or "[subject] professional". For the time being, my impression has been that the <b>digital badges are better suited for lengthier courses, or for those at the end of which participants obtain a fully-fledged diploma, rather than a certificate of participation or achievement.</b> I am, however, open to the idea of incorporating them into my courses in the near future.</li> <li>it depends on the target audience(s) and on the type of activity.</li> <li><b>Some skill-based activities may be more suitable to the awarding of colored "belts" (Digital/learning design? Project management? Negotiation skills? OSH?) whereas other topics are more formal/political: in this case a more formal recognition such as a certificate is still the best option and the addition of badges may be confusing.</b></li> <li>Badges are probably good tool to <b>recognize specific competencies/ skills</b> acquired throughout the learning process within a training activity. <b>For simply completing the course is more appropriate delivering a certificate.</b></li> <li>I think they add value but they also might confuse participants. If well explained at the very beginning of courses I think it is a good idea.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I don't know whether they add value</li> <li>No</li> </ul>
<p>What added value (if any) would there be in issuing <b>ONLY</b> digital badges for event participation or other less formal types of engagement and recognition?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There would definitely be a value to this, as it would motivate attendants to be fully present and actively participate in the event. It would certainly be beneficial to those who need to take time off of work or their studies, and need to have with them "proof" of having attended the event (be it for their academic supervisors, or line managers).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>don't know (x3)</li> <li>We should conduct a survey among the participants as the potential recipients of the badges</li> <li>"it would be good. It would be useful also to have badges for motivation and completion of sections of activities - gamification. However, <b>it would be useful to have some guidelines on the different tools/ badges and credentials that we could use, both for internal use (motivation and gamification) and outside use (badge for participants to share along the credentials).</b>"</li> </ul>	

<p>Do you have any personal insights, experiences, or an opinion that you would like to add with respect to digital credentials in general, and digital badges specifically?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Might be a good idea so that people have a kind of “certification” of attendance</li> <li>• “it would mean recognition of participation. Further, it would mean pax participation in non-training events is valued by the ITCILO.”</li> <li>• I think digital badges would be a perfect fit for events, but could also work for shorter trainings offered within a larger training.</li> <li>• I think it would be a good solution to certify participants’ attendance at a conference, or event.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would (be) in favour of a form of after-event recognition because this stimulates participation (vs registration to the event only) and it represents an opportunity to open a communication channel with stakeholders. However, I would not opt for a “badge” as it seems to me too similar to private sector loyalty campaigns.</li> <li>• Activity manager should decide if digital badges should be issued, not activity assistant</li> <li>• I believe that digital badges should be a “plus” to the certificate, not the other way around.</li> <li>• clearer learning path compare to the participation in non-training activity</li> <li>• environmental impact</li> <li>• I don’t think a digital badge alone adds value. It should always be accompanied by a digital certificate.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I welcome digital certificates and look forward to learning more about digital badges</li> <li>• Participants value ITCILO credentials greatly. They feel proud. They feel they have accomplished something. This, in turn, makes us feel proud.</li> <li>• Make them more visible on social media</li> <li>• I suggest that we can issue different badges for the same certificates, i.e. that all participants do not receive the same badge but that it is tailored according to their training path,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would be interested in exploring the possibility for the ITCILO courses I manage (and, later on, for all ITCILO courses) to obtain “Continuing Professional Development (CPD)” accreditation. I’ve been made aware that, across the UK and Europe, tertiary education institutions tend to be more prone to spread the word about CPD-Accredited courses.</li> <li>• The ITC is not ready for Digital Badges + Some of our Activity Managers even request to go on with Paper Certificates after several years the ITC has introduced the Digital credentials...+ there is not an institutional use of the Social Media, even at higher level some of the Senior Management are not even on LinkedIn + I am not sure that Digital Badges are really taken into account by HR departments but surely can be nice to share on LinkedIn or other SM</li> <li>• It would perhaps be useful to have an archive of course requests to be able to quickly copy-paste standard information from certain courses. It happens that I may be in charge of a course, but the year before, a colleague was in charge of it and did not save the request sent to credentials, and therefore one has to start from scratch to fill in the various fields. Personally, for all the courses I have attended, I have saved the managers’ e-mails under the course folder, so that anyone who comes back the following year can already find a sort of draft e-mail to send to credentials for the creation of the certificate.</li> <li>• I think the process to request digital credentials and seek approval from the manager should be automated and centralized in a digital system/workflow, such as OSS (ed: Open Source Software) with fewer email exchanges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think we should simplify the system to request digital certificates to ICTS.</li> <li>• Digital credentials, in general, are an excellent tool because they allow participants to share their awards in a digital format as well as potential employers to validate the source of the award itself. I am not so keen on badges because, as indicated in a previous answer, they sound “cheap”, business-oriented and not in line with the “academic” image of the Centre (although some training institutions might be using them). Moreover, the limited space available on the badges may lead to the creation of “strange” titles (I saw as few of them who were, in my modest opinion, not in line with the Centre’s image). In a nutshell, I would definitely maintain the current certification standards (putting a special emphasis on the Diplomas), consider an ad-hoc recognition for large events (both online and in person) and give more time for reflection about the badges option.</li> <li>• Clearer recognition of the learner’s path compared to participation in non-training activity</li> </ul>

## Qualitative analysis of opinions from the survey

Most respondents saw value in providing digital badges, particularly if there were guidelines provided for their use with or without certificates. A significant minority saw potential for damaging the value of ITCILO certificates or perhaps even the reputation of the Centre. These negative concerns were followed up in the Interviews phase of research (see next section below).

The spectrum of opinion from the survey, presented in raw form above, has been summarised below.

### Positive opinions:

- Badges for attendance and participation can act as a positive signal of lifelong learning
- Badges can showcase and socialise skills and achievements more easily than certificates
- Badges are often popular with learners; if not offered, they may be requested
- Badges could possibly be personalised to individual training paths, beyond generic attestations of learning
- Badges could be useful in promoting Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the ILO community

### Neutral or nuanced opinions:

- Badges are potentially useful in making more visible (signalling or “surfacing”) levelled skills that were embedded in courses and programs or evaluated in other ways
- Care should be taken to make badges not seem too much like commercial “loyalty” marketing tools
- There is potential for confusion of badges with certificate. Guidelines on the respective deployment of certificates and badges is advisable and would be welcomed, for example to explain appropriate use within a course (such as for motivation and gamification) or for the purpose of ongoing portable recognition (sharing certificates and/or badges)
- Badges are probably a good (supplementary) tool to recognize specific competencies/skills acquired within a longer training activity that would be certified.

### Negative opinions:

- Badges can seem “cheap”, business-oriented and not in line with the “academic” image of the Centre
- Limitations of badge image display can lead to strange credential titles that can detract from the Centre’s reputation for quality
- Certificates provide clearer recognition of learning status than badges

→ ITCILO: Consider using digital badges to recognize specific competencies/skills developed within training courses and programmes that may be immediately relevant to workplace needs.

## Interviews

As a follow-up to the Survey, the Office of the Director of Training convened two interviews for the research team in December 2022, with small groups of Activity Managers and Assistants:

- Interview 1 recruited four participants whose views toward digital badges were perceived as positive by the Office. This group included representatives of teams who usually make use of digital badges in their courses/activities.
- Interview 2 recruited two participants whose views toward digital badges were perceived as negative or neutral by the Office. This group included interviewees who never used digital badges in their courses/activities.

Please see detailed findings in **Annexes: Interviews - Details**. Summary findings are aggregated below.

### Benefits of digital badges according to the interviewees

Digital badges were widely viewed by interviewees as being easy to share casually, such as in email signatures - less formal than certificates, an attractive detail in one's digital profile ("like a plus", "badges are more social"). Because of their highly visual, iconic nature ("like a stamp... a pin"), badges are displayable as visual collections. Also, badges can support gamification of learning and development, such as tracking progress in self-paced learning.

### Potential issues of digital badges according to the interviewees

That same perception of casualness was seen by some interviewees as leading people to see badges as lightweight in comparison to certificates, which are "institutionally validated."

In addition, there are limitations of visual display in comparison to certificates: **much more detail can be displayed in a certificate image.**

Several interviewees agreed that the lack of guidelines for awarding badges has led to some confusion and inconsistency. Some teams do award badges, some teams don't. The ones that do have not yet developed protocols for doing so.

One interviewee who was very wary of digital badges mentioned the **danger of devaluation of ITCILO credentials** as a whole due to the indiscriminate use of badges and worried about badges as **superficial signals**; specifically that introductory badges might be used to support inappropriate claims of deeper expertise. Further, the same respondent worried about fragmentation of the "backbone" or learning arc in longer learning programmes. This person did not reject digital badges outright, but insisted that adequate safeguards should be put in place to **preserve the value of certificates**

Several interviewees liked the ability to share digital badges in some contexts, such as email signatures. However, if digital badges are also issued for non-training types of recognition such

as event participation, then there is **potential for confusion and devaluation of the recognition value of the certificates**. If digital badges are used for both purposes **they need to be clearly distinguished**. Any digital badge framework should provide a visualized taxonomy through the use of **colour, size**, etc.

One interviewee mentioned their perception of a **recognition gap in the credentialing of training below 60 hours**. There was discussion of whether there might be smaller programs/certifications such as “mini-certificates” to fill the gap.

The potential for stacking credentials into larger credentials was also mentioned in the interview, potentially combining internal course gamification and external recognition (“5 micro badges into one super badge...that will signal as a credential”). However, it should be noted that this opinion contradicts the one above about program fragmentation<sup>41</sup>.

### Recommendations from the interviewees

- Create a clear digital badge framework, similar to the certificate framework.
- Publish both certificate and digital badge frameworks publicly.
- Create a recognition space for assessed learning 1-60 hours that can support stacking, to fill the gap in recognition.
- Use badges to recognize learning and development beyond courses (endorsed from a list displayed by the researchers):
  - Event participation
  - Workshop activities: makerspaces, VR, etc.
  - Learning application (documents, etc.)
  - Mentoring, coaching
  - Interests, goals
  - Community of practice
  - Organizational transformation
- Develop a design language for digital badges to make the framework and taxonomy visible and transparent.
- Clearly separate (or at least distinguish) badges from certificates (clear boundaries).
- Explore ways to socialize badges and badge collections within the ITCILO<sup>42</sup> community, for example eCampus Learner Profiles.
- Use badges to develop big data evidence of the Centre’s L&D and transformational impact that goes beyond standard course delivery.

<sup>41</sup> Although a re-examination of the Tri-level framework itself is beyond the scope of this report, it is possible that a class of assessed digital badges, identifiable as “micro-credentials” 1-59 hours in size could be introduced, either as standalone credentials, or stackable into aggregates of less than 59 hours, or even stackable into Certificates of Achievement. However, this would mean establishing the concept of micro-credentials, which is in common use outside ITCILO, but which was deliberately not introduced previously at the Centre, according to one interviewee (“too small”, “not a term that’s heard much at the Centre or its partners”).

<sup>42</sup> Ed: Are there other social options on other social platforms controlled by ITCILO where digital badges could add value?

# PART II: GLOBAL GOOD PRACTICE IN THE USE OF DIGITAL BADGES

ITCILO began its digital credentials journey in 2020 with a focus on issuing certificates of participation, certificates of achievement and diplomas to its participants of training activities. The Centre is now exploring ways to more efficiently make use of digital badges in non-training contexts.

Digital credentials platforms can vary in terms of the spectrum of recognition that they support. As evidenced by its blog, the credential platform used by the Centre leans to training certificates, but is increasingly adding learner empowerment and community socialization features and creating guidance for non-training use cases (e.g. Events and Membership), to build out its recognition offering and increase its market.

Throughout this chapter, we will take a closer look at the evolution of digital badges from their informal origins to more education and training-related developments, and examine various state of the art implementation approaches. Some guidance is then provided to help ITCILO design and develop its badging strategy.

## Community origins of digital badges

**Open Badges** were invented by Mozilla Foundation in 2011 as a portable digital credential to recognize “lifewide learning.” The vision, as explored by initiatives such as the 2012 MacArthur Foundation-funded Badges for Lifelong Learning<sup>43</sup>, the 2013 Chicago Summer of Learning<sup>44</sup> and the 2014 Chicago City of Learning<sup>45</sup>, was to “make it easy for anyone to issue, earn and display badges across the web through a shared infrastructure that’s *free and open to all*.”<sup>46</sup>

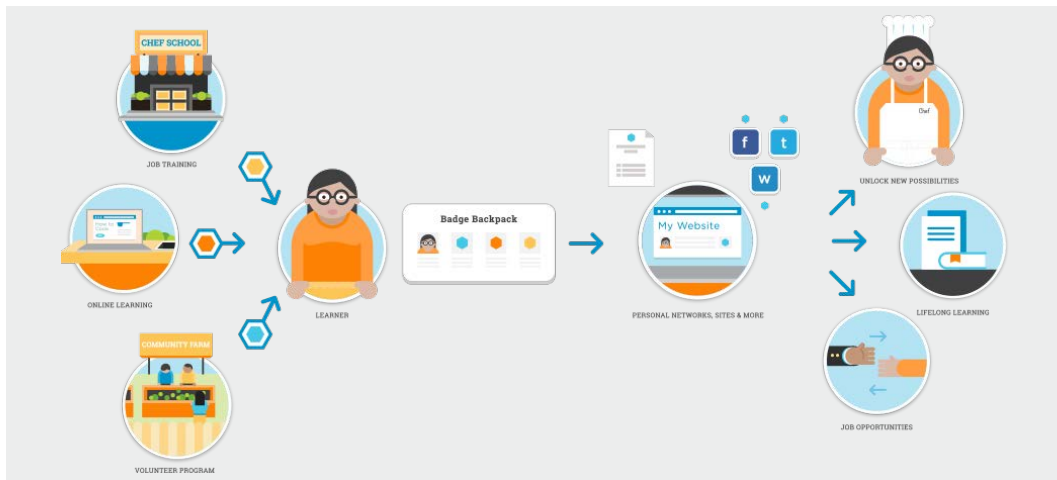
<sup>43</sup> <https://www.macfound.org/press/press-releases/badges-lifelong-learning-competition-winners-announced>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXjHdZUTwMQ>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCK3lhPDfexvG10DUROwVVhw>

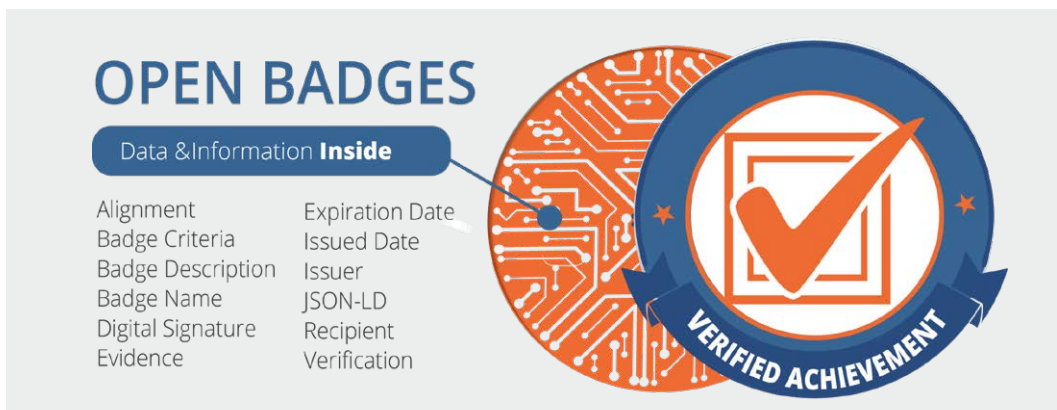
<sup>46</sup> <https://wiki.mozilla.org/Badges>

FIGURE 16: “MOZILLA NAPKIN SKETCH”



Mozilla’s new credentialing standard enabled diverse organisations to design, manage and issue badges to their users for a wide variety of recognition purposes, as long as they met the technological requirements of the badge image and embedded content (metadata).

FIGURE 17: OPEN BADGES BY OPENBADGES.ORG



Badges could be awarded for completion of training and education courses which could be used to support job applications, but also for more ad hoc recognition and socialization of achievements of any kind, including event participation, experiential learning, volunteer service, etc. As explored in projects such as Chicago City of Learning<sup>47</sup>, badges were seen less as certificates and more as a way of engaging often underserved audiences in “connected learning.”

<sup>47</sup> See short video playlist for Chicago City of Learning at [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLA8YJwL3BDxfEO--pRBf-MJrcJ\\_CofHLz](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLA8YJwL3BDxfEO--pRBf-MJrcJ_CofHLz)

## The rise of micro-credentials

Mozilla's 2011 vision did not discount the contribution of the education sector to lifelong and lifewide learning, but it did make it clear that **traditional education left many gaps** in the fabric of recognition and inclusion, gaps that community organizations, industry bodies, NGOs and other actors could begin to fill with less academic, more agile and flexible approaches.

However, starting around 2015, significant numbers of post-secondary institutions began exploring "micro-credentials", which generally took the shape of a more academic version of digital badges, or a more modular or deconstructed version of larger institutional credentials, incorporating desired or required characteristics such as **industry relevance, institutional backing, alignment to competencies (or at least outcomes), summative assessment and quality assurance**.

Although not all micro-credentials were designed for academic credit, the notion of **modular credential stacking** was seen as a way to break down longer programmes into bite-sized pieces, or at least a way to **entice learners** into longer programmes. Essentially, micro-credentials were viewed as **modular certificates and diplomas**, which could provide more specific information on micro-skills to potential employers when compared to diplomas and certificates for longer education programs.

In contrast to ITCILO's Tri-level framework for certificates, most published digital credential frameworks focus on micro-credentials that are **certificates that can stack into larger certificates**. Very few frameworks have use cases for less formal digital badges.

Most frameworks for micro-credentials follow similar principles such as transparency of achievements, official recognition bodies, use of official accreditation systems (credits) as a prerequisite for awarding, etc. Prominent examples of micro-credential frameworks include the following five:

### **Council of the European Union (EU)'s [Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability](#)**

This example provides for the creation of an EU-wide standard for academic achievement, with micro-credentials linked to the European **Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)**. This ensures **recognition and comparability**. Close cooperation between education and training organisations, employers, social partners, other providers and users of micro-credentials is encouraged to increase the relevance of micro-credentials to the **labour market**.

Here, micro-credentials are to be designed and issued to support **flexible learning pathways**, including the ability to validate, recognise and **'stack'** micro-credentials. In other words, they should be modular so that other micro-credentials can be **added to create larger credentials**.



### Australia's [National Microcredentials Framework](#)

Not necessarily as focused on Academic achievement as the European Approach but more on accreditation of short courses for rapid upskilling of Australia's workforce, the framework defines a common understanding of what a micro-credential is and supports this definition by four unifying principles:

- Outcome-based.
- Responsive to **industry-need**.
- Tailored to support lifelong learning.
- Transparent and accessible

Furthermore, it establishes that micro-credentials shall **not be used for unassessed activities** (learning without assessment, participation only, etc.) and defines critical information that needs to be available via the metadata of the credential.

### New Zealand's [Guidelines for applying for approval of a training scheme or a micro-credential](#)

Since education organisations can apply their trainings for official approval by the government of New Zealand, these guidelines provide information for the prerequisites that are required for such approval of a micro-credential system. The guidelines also rely on the **national credit system** and clearly outline how many credits a micro-credential can encompass. As in Australia, the **assessment** of learning outcomes is **essential** for micro-credentials according to the guidelines.

Furthermore, the following requirements must be met:

- Evidence the micro-credential is required or supported by relevant industries, employers or communities
- Evidence of the unmet skills needs the micro-credential is addressing
- Evidence the micro-credential is adding to current learning, typically it does not duplicate current quality-assured learning approved by NZQA.

### eCampusOntario's [Micro-credential Principles and Framework](#)

This is a very clear and concise framework, summarising its ideas on a single page.

The principles are again very similar to the previous examples, binding micro-credentials to an official issuing body, an official and harmonized way of expressing acquired competencies (such as ESCO), the necessity for **assessment** and **endorsement** by partners, etc.

It also puts an emphasis on the aspect of relevance to the **labour market** of a micro-credential.

### Malaysia's [Guidelines to Good Practices: Micro-credentials \(2020\)](#)

This scientific paper seeks to find a definition for micro-credentials, separating them from diplomas and university degrees by being more demand-driven and in touch with needs from the **labour market**. Similar to the EU's recommendation it also mentions the **stackability** aspect of micro-credentials leading to "an award or **credit transfer**".

It then goes on to define principles of good micro-credentials like the other examples above and establishes policies for the implementation - like naming conventions, modes of delivery, etc. As good practice orientation, it suggests separating micro-credentials into three different types:

- Component of an accredited programme
- Component of multiple accredited programmes
- Standalone award

The origins, possible credit transfer and institutional requirements are explained in great detail for each of the three types.

### ICDEs [Report of the Working Group on the Present and Future Alternative Digital Credentials](#)

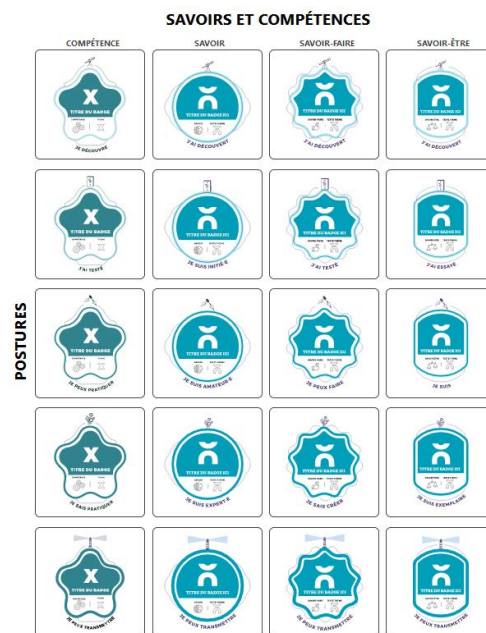
Worthy of mention is further this 2019 ICDE document, although its proposal for a class of “Alternative Digital Credentials” (ADCs), which is focused solely on competencies (i.e. decoupled from courses) appears to have lost traction

## More “open” approaches

The drive to transform digital badges into micro-credentials, led by tertiary education, has not been universal. Many organizations outside the education sector see value in employing less formal approaches that can **focus more on appreciation** than verification. Many of these organizations are in the non-profit and charity sectors, but even IBM, a corporate “poster child” for business and technology certification with digital credentials has expressed the concern that *‘the value of Open Badges may be lost if we prescribe a fixed set of expectations and present assumptions to constrain their enormous potential.’*<sup>48</sup>

Several lifelong and adult learning focused organizations in France have been exploring badges more for engagement in learning journeys (“parcours”) than in verification of assessed skills.

FIGURE 18: TAXONOMY MATRIX “LE DÔME”



<sup>48</sup> 2019 blog post from a key IBM influencer: Badges Need Rigor! (Or do they really?). See <https://www.ibm.com/blogs/ibm-training/badges-need-rigor-or-do-they-really/>

In Normandy, [Le Dôme](#), an influential “Third Place”<sup>49</sup> for community-based interactive and experiential learning, develops programs based on a **taxonomy matrix** for conceptualizing Open Badges to facilitate and encourage open recognition using digital credentials. It combines traditional approaches with new ones and values **engagement and participation as well as knowledge and skills**.

FIGURE 19: BADGE EXAMPLES «LE DÔME»



As you can see in the graphic on the right, **knowledge and skills** (savoirs et compétences) are illustrated from right (low) to left (high) through 4 visually distinct badge designs, differing in shape and color. **Engagement and participation** (postures) are then differentiated from top to bottom through **five levels** that are not so much about growing expertise as they are about growing awareness and commitment.

Looking closer at the images on the right, you can see that visually, these five levels are differentiated by an additional **visual cue at the top** of the badge, the **thickness** of the badge’s border and a **short text** information on the level of participation (here: je peux transmettre: I can pass it on; j’ai testé: I have tested.)

This matrix is used by many organizations in Normandy and other parts of France in [regional collectives](#) using names such as “Badgeons la Normandie” and “Badgeons les Hauts de France”. Learn more about the [Matrix here](#) (in French).

## Recent developments with Open Badges

In 2014, Mozilla launched the **Badge Alliance**, which provided transitional leadership to an inclusive Open Badges community. When IMS Global (now 1Edtech) took over the Open Badges standard in 2017, it moved to a more exclusive paid membership model rather than the more open community-based approach followed by the Mozilla Foundation’s Badge Alliance.

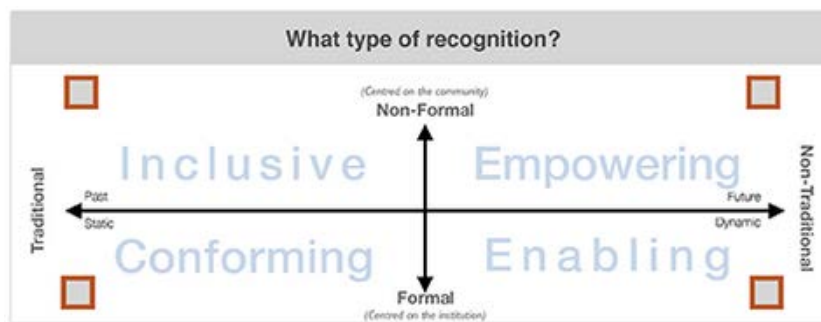
Today, the [Open Recognition Alliance](#) (in France: Reconnaître) has to some extent filled the community vacuum left behind by the extinction of the Badge Alliance. It is an international grassroots organization based in France, with links to other organizations and initiatives, such as Badge Summit and the Open Skills Network in the US. The Open Recognition Alliance is dedicated to providing thought leadership in a **community of practice** to support more open approaches to recognition, in contrast to and in parallel with more formal approaches associated with micro-credentials. Elements of the open recognition community include:

- The annual ePortfolio and Identity Conference (ePIC) conference in Europe, which has featured Open Badges as a more flexible approach to ePortfolios since 2012.

<sup>49</sup> Social spaces that are distinct from the traditional categories of ‘home’ and ‘workplace’. See [The revolution of the ‘third place’: working, sharing and collaborating](#)

- The Bologna Open Recognition Declaration (BORD), “a call for a universal open architecture for the recognition of learning outcomes throughout life and in all fields”, proclaimed at ePIC 2016 in Bologna.
- Open recognition practices that include self-declaration and peer-issuing of badges and badged recognition of community participants through the following levels of engagement:
  - BORD Signatory
  - Member
  - Advocate
  - Ambassador
- A community portal which includes support resources such as:
  - The Plane of Recognition, a matrix for mapping different types of credentials across two axes: Formal/Non-Formal and Traditional/Non-Traditional
  - Badge Canvas, a worksheet for generating more open digital credentials that leverages the Plane of Recognition:

FIGURE 20: EXCERPT: BADGE CANVAS – PLANE OF RECOGNITION



→ ITCILO: Consider exploring further the [openrecognition.org](https://openrecognition.org) community, including the ePIC conference

## Full spectrum approaches

While the “full on” open approach of the [Open Recognition Alliance](#) may seem somewhat extreme to pragmatic organizations which may be more focused on skills-based workforce development, the open recognition community has had an impact in terms of opening up recognition practices beyond summative assessment toward more “full spectrum” approaches which can **include more open types** of recognition, which hark back to the original “lifewide” Mozilla vision.

Some of these more full spectrum guides, taxonomies and frameworks include:

- WeAreOpen (2019). [Guide: Getting started with Using Open Badges](#) developed for [OpenBadges.me](https://OpenBadges.me) in the UK. Excerpts include:
  - A Badge taxonomy:

- i. Membership - belonging to a group or organization
- ii. Participation - involvement in one or more activities
- iii. Capability - reaching a defined standard
- iv. Mastery - demonstrating excellence

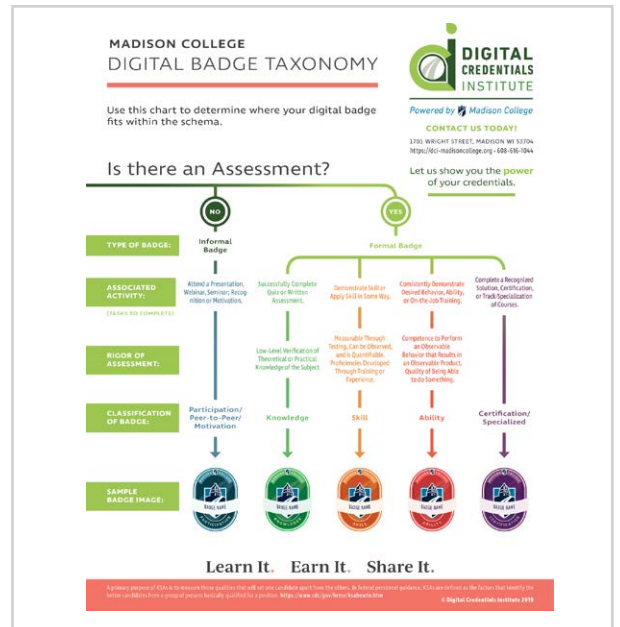
- A guideline for determining the quality of a badge: "... the 'value' of a badge doesn't come through how difficult it is to issue it. Instead, the **value** of a badge comes through whether **the action taken to earn the badge was meaningful.**"

FIGURE 21: BADGE TAXONOMY - OPENBADGES.ME



- Voigt, L. (2020). [Digital Credentials Institute | Higher Education Digital Badge Taxonomy](#): Digital Credentials Institute at Madison College, provides a classification of formal vs informal badges based on the presence or absence of assessment. Within formal badges, it distinguishes types of assessment: quiz, skills demonstration, consistent performance and full certification.

FIGURE 22: FORMAL AND INFORMAL BADGES - MADISON COLLEGE



- Braxton, T. (2022). [Creating a Digital Badge Taxonomy to Foster Shared Meaning](#): This Educause article from a thought leader in the US community proposes an integration of the Dreyfus levels of Awareness, Proficiency, and Mastery with Bloom's taxonomy of Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Creating and Evaluating

FIGURE 23: DIFFERENT ASSESSMENT LEVELS FOR BADGES



- AACRAO. (2022). [Alternative Credentials: Considerations, Guidance, and Best Practices](#): As the name “American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers” suggests, many of the best practices relate to the concerns of post-secondary institutions, but this document does contain some useful information, such as a good Glossary, including the concept of an “alternative credential” that is more pragmatic than the ICDE definition described above.

The AACRAO document also contains these best practices, which seem relevant to the ITCILO context:

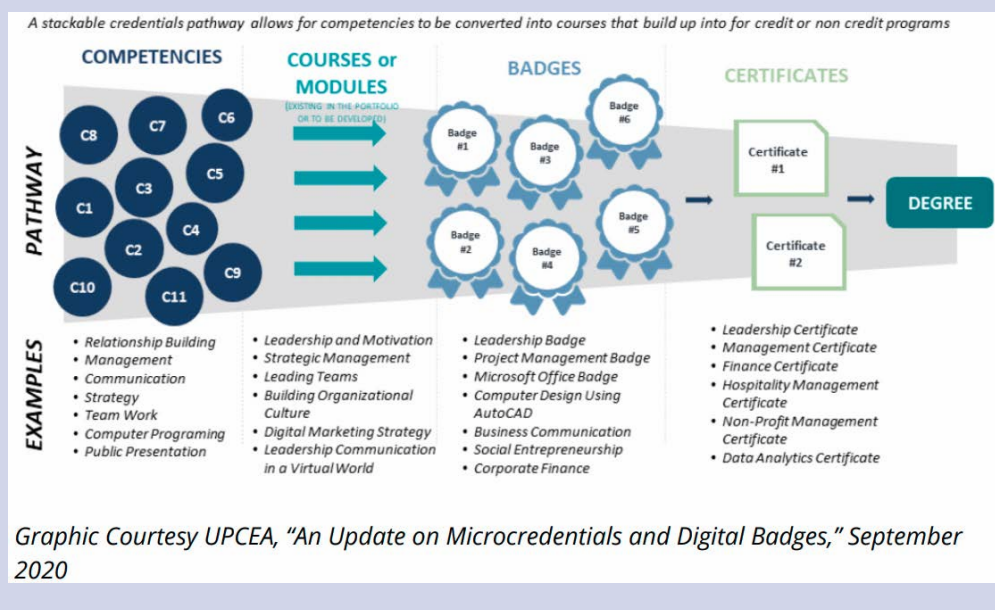
**BEST PRACTICE:** The **types of credentials** and programs an institution awards should be **clearly identified and defined**, including how they might fit together.

**BEST PRACTICE:** To increase the visibility of the offering program and also recognize the learners’ accomplishments, develop mechanisms that **encourage micro-credential earners to “claim”** their credentials upon completion, and to display and share them. These mechanisms may include creating messaging and support resources to **guide learners’ understanding about their alternative credentials**.

**BEST PRACTICE:** Develop a **standardized institutional approach to the design and visual representation of micro-credentials**. Determine who will create and design the micro-credential, the taxonomy for the micro-credential, and the institutional approach to the similarities or differences in the micro-credential design based upon the credential issuer or credential type.

**BEST PRACTICE:** Determine if levels of **credentials may be stacked** to lead toward larger credentials as illustrated here:

**FIGURE 24: EXAMPLE OF A STACKABLE CREDENTIALS PATHWAY - UPCEA**





## Global guidance for the implementation of micro-credentials

Issuing organizations wishing to award high-rigour badges such as micro-credentials with robustly portable recognition value will need to take some key considerations into account when developing a solid concept. Not only should a clear framework and taxonomy be developed, but also a standard content structure that outlines required and optional metadata to optimise portability. The following paragraphs will shed some light on these aspects.

### Structure and content requirements of metadata

As described above, the Open Badges standard allows for considerable flexibility when developing the metadata or content for a badge. In practice, this flexibility has led to a wide variation in the transparent quality of formal micro-credential content, making it difficult to evaluate the portable value of micro-credentials beyond their original context. In particular, approaches to completing **the Criteria field** of the credential, which should reliably describe how it was earned, are **often opaque and inconsistent**, even between different credentials from a single issuing organisation, not to mention from different organizations.

Beginning with Oliver in 2019<sup>50</sup>, there has been a **growing demand for more structured approaches** to micro-credential content, sometimes described as a checklist “manifest” or “Critical Information Summary,” as first proposed by Oliver, or sometimes simply as “Requirements”, as in Australia’s National Microcredentials Framework cited above.

McGreal and Olcott’s list of “Micro-Credential Information and Validation Elements”<sup>51</sup>, based on an extensive literature scan is also useful in this regard, as is the AACRAO document cited above, but this **excerpt from the EU Council Recommendation** on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability, officially adopted in May 2022, may be most immediately useful to the Centre:

<sup>50</sup> <https://dteach.deakin.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/103/2019/08/Making-micro-credentials-work-Oliver-Deakin-2019-full-report.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-022-00190-1>

FIGURE 25: EXCERPTED (PAGE 27) FROM PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON A EUROPEAN APPROACH TO MICRO-CREDENTIALS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND EMPLOYABILITY - ADOPTION<sup>52</sup>

**ANNEX I TO THE ANNEX**

**ANNEX I**

**European standard elements to describe a micro-credential**

This annex includes a list of common European standard elements to describe micro-credentials recommended as a resource to support implementation<sup>27</sup>.

Mandatory elements:	Identification of the learner
	Title of the micro-credential
	Country(ies)/Region(s) of the issuer
	Awarding body(ies)
	Date of issuing
	Learning outcomes
	Notional workload needed to achieve the learning outcomes (in ECTS credits, where possible)
	Level (and cycle, if applicable) of the learning experience leading to the micro-credential (EQF, QF-EHEA), if applicable
	Type of assessment
	Form of participation in the learning activity
	Type of quality assurance used to underpin the micro-credential
Optional elements, where relevant (non-exhaustive list)	Prerequisites needed to enrol in the learning activity
	Supervision and identity verification during assessment (unsupervised with no identity verification, supervised with no identity verification, supervised online, or onsite with identity verification)
	Grade achieved
	Integration/stackability options (stand-alone, independent micro-credential/integrated, stackable towards another credential)
	Further information

<sup>27</sup> The use of the European standard elements to describe micro-credentials does not, in itself, imply official validation or recognition, but is a key enabler for it.

9237/22

ANNEX I TO THE ANNEX

TREE.1.B

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**LIMITE**

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→ ITCILO: Consider providing content requirements and templates for digital badges based on a pragmatic taxonomy similar to what is currently provided for digital certificates.

<sup>52</sup> <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf>



## Volume of learning

Aside from the presence or absence of quality-assured summative assessment, one important element that helps describe a microcredential is its granularity or “size” and relative importance in a credential system, typically expressed in hours or credits. Opinions regarding the minimum size or “volume of learning” (also known as estimated learner effort) of a formally recognized micro-credential have evolved over the years, and these vary by global region. For example:

- The definition by the [European MOOC Consortium \(EMC\) 2019](#) stipulates:
- “total study time of no less than 100 hours and no more than 150 hours”
- According to MICROBOL (2022): The possible credit range for a micro-credential is between 1 and 59. In practice, however, it is expected that most micro-credentials will have a volume of 1 to 15 credits. (1 ECTS = 25-30 hours) - (ed: adopted by EU council; see below)
- The [Australian National Microcredentials Framework](#) specifies that: Microcredentials are required to stipulate volume of learning and to have a minimum of one hour of volume of learning and less than that of an AQF award qualification<sup>53</sup>.

## Framework and Taxonomy case study – Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

Working with Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in 2022, Learning Agents developed the concept of the Critical Information Summary beyond formal micro-credentials to less formal types of digital badges, within an overall framework for digital badges that included a badge taxonomy complete with content templates to meet information requirements for the individual badges in the taxonomy.

IDB’s Digital Credential Framework was presented at ePIC 2022 in Lille in draft form<sup>54</sup>, was implemented internally in Q4 of 2022 and will be publicly published in Q1 of 2023. The IDB Taxonomy was shared in the ITCILO Interviews.

An interesting emerging feature of the IDB framework is the provision for awarding badges to organisations. The Community Organisation badge will be introduced in 2023, initially to recognise commitment to and engagement with a community of practice for regional watershed management (HydroBID<sup>55</sup>), along with a placeholder (“Other Organisation Badges”) for subsequent badges that could be used to recognise “learning organisations”, a concept that emerged in the early 1990s<sup>56</sup> and is now part of the UNESCO lexicon<sup>57</sup>. Analogous examples might include organisational

<sup>53</sup> 600 – 1200 hours for a “Certificate 1” <https://www.asqa.gov.au/course-accreditation/users-guide-standards-vet-accredited-courses/standards/standard-105-australian-qualifications-framework-levels#volume-of-learning>

<sup>54</sup> <https://youtu.be/E4LHCon80Dc>

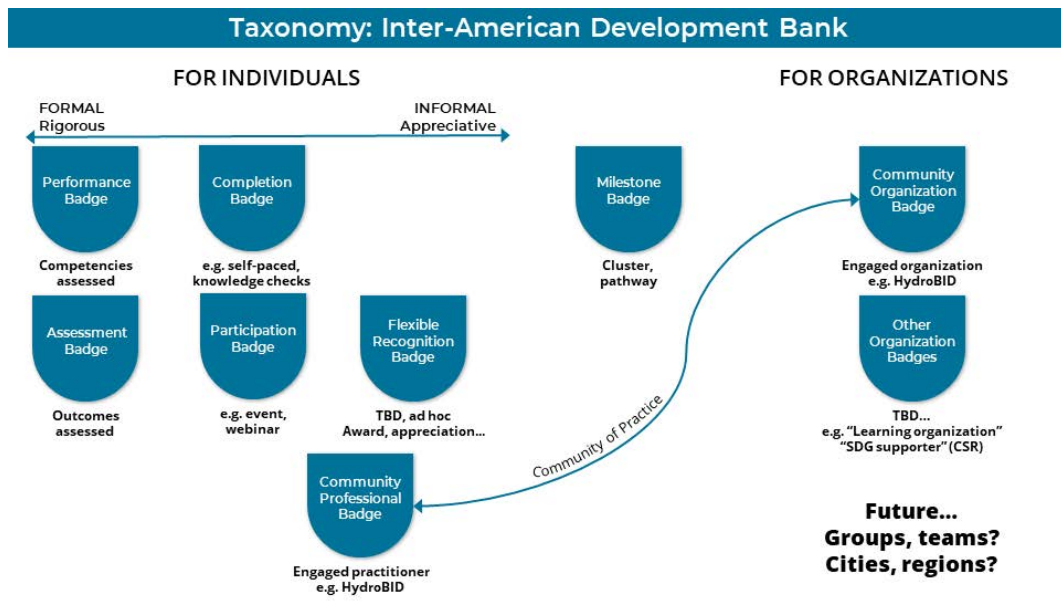
<sup>55</sup> IDB also presented this Community of Practice case study on regional water management at ePIC 2022 as an example of Community Professional and Community Organization badges from the taxonomy deployed in a professional community in action: <https://youtu.be/DwOYyetC4A8>

<sup>56</sup> <https://hbr.org/1993/07/building-a-learning-organization>

<sup>57</sup> <https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/TVETipedia+Glossary/lang=en/filt=all/id=293>

recognition of societal goals and corporate social responsibility such as Principles for Digital Development<sup>58</sup>, UN SDGs<sup>59</sup>, B Corporation<sup>60</sup> and even Health and Safety accreditation<sup>61</sup>.

FIGURE 26: EXAMPLE OF A BADGING TAXONOMY - LEARNING AGENTS FOR IDB (see larger version in annexes / interviews / supporting visuals)



One motivation for IDB is to put some meaning into Memoranda of Understanding that can take a long time to negotiate and then are almost forgotten as static archived documents. In contrast, a badge can be a publicly shared statement that can be endorsed by others and supported by ongoing evidence.<sup>62</sup>

→ ITCILO: Consider exploration of awarding badges to “learning organisations”

<sup>58</sup> <https://digitalprinciples.org/endorse/>

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.en.aenor.com/certificacion/responsabilidad-social/certificacion-de-la-contribucion-empresarial-a-los-ods>

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us/>

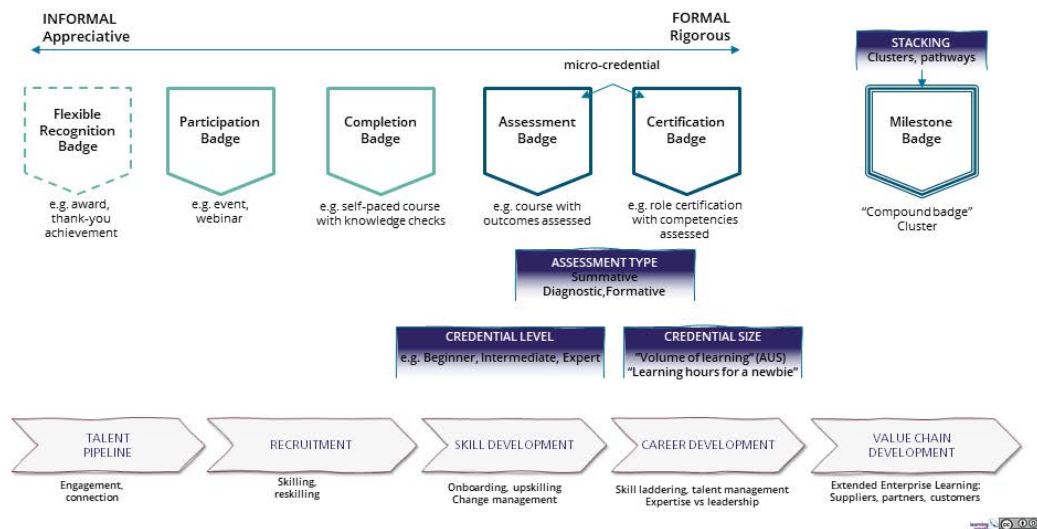
<sup>61</sup> <https://energysafetycanada.com/COR>

<sup>62</sup> Editor’s note: When implementing badges for organisations, care should be taken to ensure that such recognition authentically supports the principles of learning organisations, as opposed to being empty “virtue signaling” (e.g. “green washing”) or static labels.

## Generic Frameworks

Learning Agents has also developed a more generic version of the **full spectrum credential taxonomy** which was also shared in the interviews conducted in the course of this project:

*FIGURE 27: SPECTRUM OF RECOGNITION - LEARNING AGENTS (see larger version in Annexes / Interviews / Supporting Visuals)*



This framework has been developed over time with several organisations, including [hpass.org](https://hpass.org) and [atingi.org](https://atingi.org). Learning Agents publishes this Taxonomy with **supporting framework guides** for the CanCred Open Badge platform in Canada:

- [Badge Design Canvas](#) - adaptation and extension of a longtime useful brainstorming tool in the Open Badges community as a Powerpoint workbook. Use this tool to plan your overall credentialing system and sketch in badge content. It includes a Taxonomy that you can adapt for your context. This can be used solo, or as a group collaboration tool.  
Licenced Creative Commons with Attribution (CC BY)
- [Badge Creation Worksheet](#) - use this Word tool to develop detailed metadata for your badges and micro-credentials. This tool leverages to the Taxonomy above to provide content prompts for different kinds of badges and micro-credentials.  
Licenced Creative Commons with Attribution (CC BY)

The above resources have recently been shared to the British Columbia (BC) Micro-credential Toolkit, currently in production, due to be published for the post-secondary sector in that Canadian province by 31 March 2023.

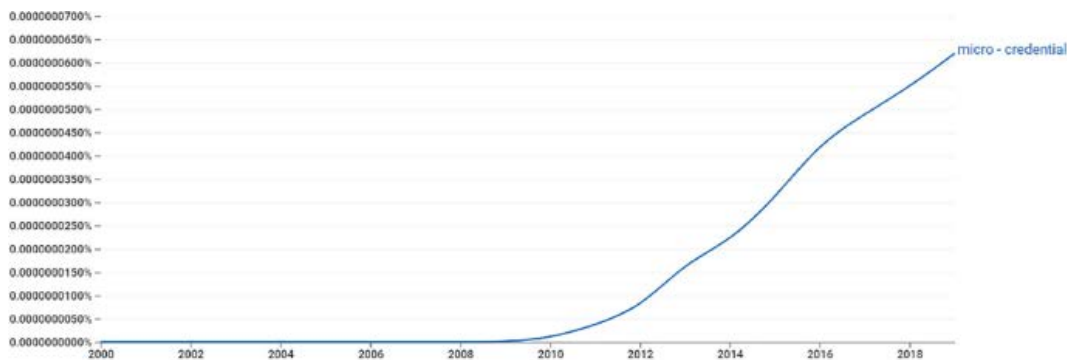
→ ITCILO: Consider adapting these Creative Commons brainstorming tools and content templates for ITCILO use.

## Global Terminology

As described above in the Introduction, ITCILO has its own internally consistent terminology that sometimes conflicts with global usage. For example, the term **“certificate”** can be used to represent a **document format** (e.g. PDF certificate versus a badge) **or** it can mean a **credential standard** (e.g. [ASTM ES-2659](#)). “Certification” can be used as a generic term for being recognized with credentials, or it can describe a specific credential standard (e.g. [ISO/IEC 17024-2012](#)).

Unlike the Center’s digital credential provider, ITCILO itself does not use the term “micro-credential”, and the term is growing in global popularity as indicated here:

*FIGURE 28: Conceptualising Micro-credentials in the Higher Education Research Landscape. A Literature Review*



The challenge is there are many overlapping definitions of a micro-credential. In addition, and the term “digital badge”, which is used by ITCILO, can also mean many different things:

- an Open Badge as an alternative publishing format for credentials (Accredible and ITCILO)
- NOT an Open Badge (e.g. site-specific gamification stickers)
- NOT a micro-credential (i.e. not assessed)
- Sometimes, an elemental assessed micro-credential that can be stacked into a larger micro-credential

One recurring theme in digital credentialing terminology is the frequent conflation or confusion of “Container” (credential format or standard) vs. Payload (credential content). The potential for confusion has led to the inclusion of Glossaries in many guides and frameworks for digital credentials. Some guides will cite other guides, even Wikipedia for clarity.

→ ITCILO: Consider providing a Glossary of terms aligned with international usage as part of a public framework that would explicitly frame the Centre’s approach to Certificates and Digital Badges. Example terms might include micro-credential, Open Badge, formal, non-formal and informal. See Annex - Glossary suggestions for a more detailed list that may provide a starting point.

## Visual “language” for badges

Global guidance for effective practice in digital badges indicates that clear definitions and consistent content for badges should be supported by effective graphical design that communicates their meaning and helps recipients and consumers navigate the overall badge system. Visual communication of meaning is especially important in the current context of these recommendations for the Centre: distinguishing between badges that are issued as alternative documentation of ITCILO training certificates from badges issued independently as non-training “alternative credentials.”

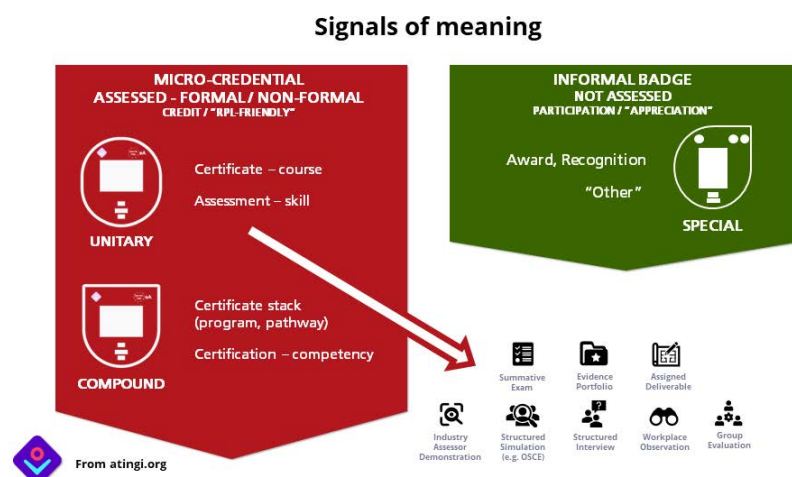
Commonwealth of Learning’s 2019 [Designing & Implementing Micro-Credentials: A Guide for Practitioners](#) provides a useful introduction to badge image design:

*While the design should be distinctive, it needs to be identifiable with the issuer of the micro-credential, in the same way that a testamur is associated with the institution awarding a long-form credential such as a degree. The design of the badge should reflect the brand of the issuing organisation. The shape, colour, font and use of iconography to represent a skill are influential factors but should be chosen in the context of institutional brand guidelines and with a critical eye to determining whether these elements will contribute positively to the impact of the badge. Badge design can also reflect the taxonomy or structure of the micro-credential portfolio. For example, the badge design may represent — through colour, shape, the use of icons or logos, etc. — the skills, the weighting or the levels of competency indicated by a micro-credential, or the relationship with industry partners.*

Learning Agents provides this resource for CanCred clients, also recently shared with BC for their Micro-credential Toolkit: [Open Badges Visual Design Guidelines](#)

It features many examples and case studies, including a detailed look at the graphical design developed in 2017 for the [HPass.org](#) ecosystem for humanitarian action.

FIGURE 29: FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL BADGES CREATED FOR [ATINGI.ORG](#) - PRESENTED AT EPIC 2021



In 2021, Common Sense and Learning Agents collaborated on a badge framework for [atingi.org](https://www.atingi.org), the GIZ learning system for international development. The design for that framework provided graphical communication of formality, level and topic using shape, colour and iconography. For example, the **shape** immediately illustrates the individual badge's **rigour** and **weight**. See below a brief excerpt from the delivered design:

→ ITCILO: Consider developing a visual language to illustrate an ITCILO digital badge taxonomy and framework.

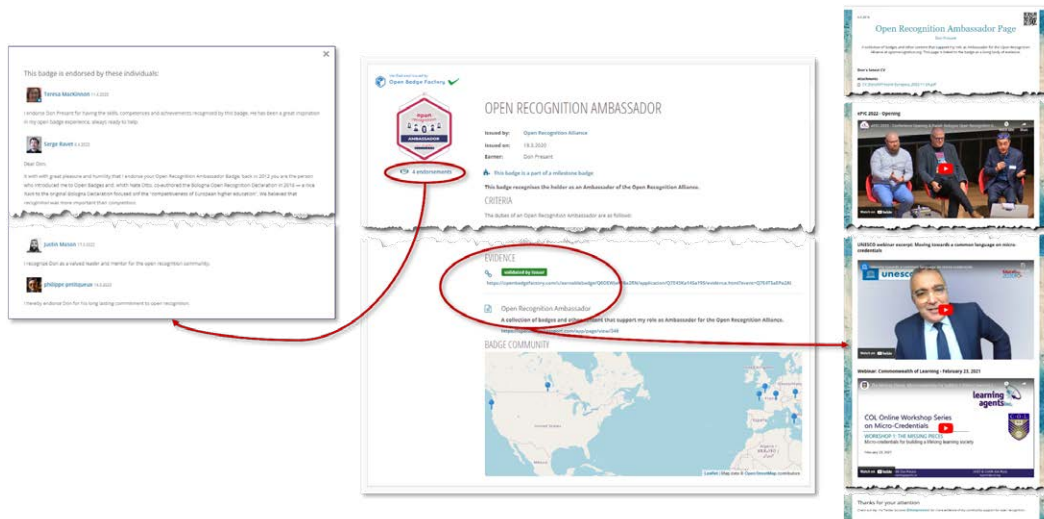
## “Social life” of badges

In contrast to the transcript-focused authentication-centric approaches micro-credentials, flexible approaches to digital badges can open up new opportunities for sharing, connecting and building community.

Certainly **badges can be shared to social media** such as LinkedIn, and **badge collections can be part of a learner's platform profile** or shared as an engaging **email sig** file.

Badges can also be shared in wallets and curated with other content in portfolios, such as on Open Badge Passport. Even further, badges can be enhanced after being received, with the addition of recipient-supplied **evidence** after reception and **endorsement** of the recipient by third-parties:

FIGURE 30: ADDING ENDORSEMENT AND EVIDENCE TO DIGITAL BADGES ON OPEN BADGE PASSPORT



NOTE: The credential platform enables recipients to add evidence to their credentials after receiving them.

→ ITCILO: Consider encouraging ITCILO learners to add evidence to their badges and to explore other ways for them to “socialize” their badges to benefit individual careers and learning communities.

# PART III: THE WAY FORWARD

After examining current practice and ITCILO's needs and aspirations and looking at several global examples of good and best practices, the main findings are summarized here and recommendations are made that in our view would meet ITCILO's needs and ensure the adoption of a state-of-the-art digital credential system.

## Summary findings

Generally accepted practice indicates and most ITCILO participants agreed that digital badges can add value in the following ways:

- Socialization, easy/casual sharing of accomplishments, marketing courses
- Low stakes, more agile recognition for shorter interventions, self-paced training, non-training development
- Progress tracking, gamification
- Highly visual: solo or as part of a collection
- Potential for mass customization of learning (tailored to learner)
- Learner demand

Many ITCILO participants agreed that protocols for when to issue badges (with or without certificates) were unclear and idiosyncratic. There was strong support for a digital badge framework to complement the certificate framework and to **publish both publicly**. Furthermore, some interviewees suggested that badges could **fill a recognition gap** for assessment-based and or completion-based learning between 1-60 hours that could support **stacking into certificates**. This might require some retrofitting of the certificate framework, which is beyond the scope of this project.

When it comes to combining badges with certificates, there were some disagreements among interviewees. Some ITCILO respondents strongly urged a clear **separation of use cases** for certificates and badges, but others pointed out that **badges displayed better** than certificates in some contexts such as small badge showcases in email sig files. In our view, the combination of badges with certificates holds great potential for ITCILO but would require thorough conceptualization.

In terms of further use cases, global practice and guidance of the Centre's digital badge provider also suggested new applications for digital badges such as:

- Events (conferences and workshops)
- Membership
- Learning application (workplace observation, learning deliverables - documents, etc.)
- Mentoring, coaching
- Interests, goals,
- Community of practice connections and recognition
- Organisational transformation



All of these suggestions received positive feedback in the interviews, with the exception of Membership, for which there was no comment.

Global literature and guidance of the credential platform suggests that **ITCILO terminology** could benefit from being more explicitly aligned to international usage, including having an ITCILO-friendly **definition of the term micro-credential**. There was also support from global practice and ITCILO staff in developing a clear **badge image design language** that could support the meaning of the badges.

In short, global practice suggests that ITCILO continue to explore new ways for learners to share and **socialise their credentials** within the ITCILO community, such as in eCampus profiles and **exploring social affordances** of the Accredible platform, such as the ability to add evidence to an issued credential. This should help **encourage more self-determined learning** (heutagogy<sup>63</sup>) in the ITCILO community, a suggested component for the Centre's learning strategy.<sup>64</sup>

## Recommendations

### Recommendation 1: Define terms clearly

As outlined in the previous sections, the rapid development in the field of digital badges has also resulted in a very extensive and sometimes ambiguous terminology. In order to avoid misunderstandings and confusion, the Centre should establish a coherent terminology that aligns with global usage as a first step in the development of a badging system. Clear definitions of key terms that will be used by the Centre in its digital credentialing policies should be provided, such as **certificate**, **digital badge**, and **micro-certificate**, as well as a differentiation of the learning context into **formal/non-formal/informal**.

The distinction between the level of formality can be made in relation to the types of certificates: **Diplomas and Certificates of Achievement** are awarded on the basis of formal learning, which is characterised by the fact that they are awarded only after positive summative assessments, successfully completed capstone projects, etc. **Certificates of Participation**, on the other hand, are awarded according to structured criteria, but unlike Certificates of Achievement, they are awarded without meeting a minimum score in a summative assessment.

<sup>63</sup> <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ979639.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> Ossiannilsson, E. (2018). [INTERVENTION POINTS FOR THE INCREMENTAL IMPROVEMENT OF THE EXISTING SYSTEM TO ALIGN IT WITH INTERNATIONAL GOOD PRACTICE](#) Toward a consolidated ITCILO monitoring and evaluation system for distance learning. Report 3.



The table below shows those terms as they are used by the Centre and gives a suggestion on how to bring them in line with globally used terminology:

*TABLE 2: TERMINOLOGY USED BY THE ITCILO AND GLOBAL USAGE*

ITCILO usage	Global usage
Diploma Training - assessed	Formal
Certificate of Achievement Training - assessed	
Certificate of Participation Training - no assessment	Non-formal
Non-training	Informal

These definitions should be aligned with new international practices and should be transparently communicated and publicly available. The terms listed in **Annexes - Glossary suggestions** could provide a starting point for this.

## Recommendation 2: Create a digital badge framework complementary to the Three-Tier Certification Framework

As mentioned in the ITCILO Programme and Budget Proposals 2022-2023<sup>65</sup>, the Centre's training framework has changed rapidly in recent years and is characterised by a shift in emphasis from face-to-face training to online learning. The **development of a badge framework** that complements and is consistent with the existing certificate framework would meet the objectives stated in the programme report and also accommodate the shift of training provision to digital learning environments.

A digital badge framework would be also **in line with the guiding principles** set out by the Centre<sup>66</sup>. These state, among other things, that the Centre should harness digital technology to achieve pedagogical aims that will increase outreach and reduce the financial burden on contributors and participants (principle: IT-enabled) and to continuously adapt learning applications and technologies (principle: innovative).

In addition to the objectives in the Programme Report, **87% of the respondents in the survey also support the introduction of a badging concept**<sup>67</sup>. Survey and interview comments expanded on this concept to urge that such a framework include clear guidelines on the different tools/badges and credentials that are used, both for internal use (motivation and gamification) and outside use (badge for participants to share along the credentials). The digital Badging Framework

<sup>65</sup> P&B p3

<sup>66</sup> P&B p7

<sup>67</sup> ITCILO Survey Q8

should therefore include a **statement of purpose** that explains what badges are for and what **differentiates** them from (and makes them **complementary** to) certificates. A yet-to-be-developed badging framework - analogous to the certificate framework - should also provide a transparent explanation of the content, quality, and value of the badge.

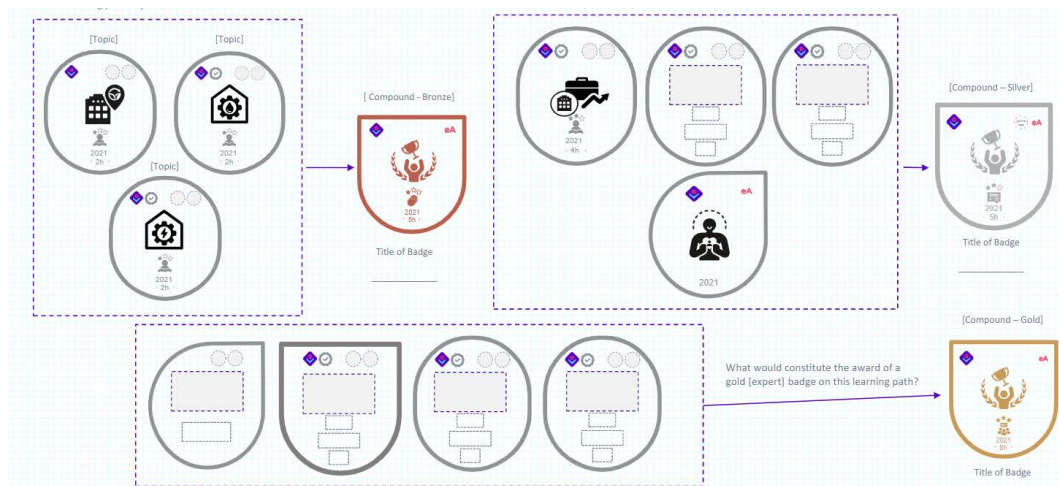
### Implementation options

Based on the existing certificate framework and feedback from the interviews, the Centre should also **consider developing stackable badges** in the badging taxonomy that can be combined into larger certificates. To this end, badges could be developed that have **stand-alone value** and are awarded on their own (e.g., “assessment badges”), but can **also stack into certificates of achievement**. A well-designed framework and **clearly articulated taxonomy** for badges could help avoid confusion among the target audience, which was a legitimate concern of interview participants.

The Centre can also discuss whether **existing participation badges** can/should **stack into participation certificates** and what impact this would have on the current 1-hour minimum participation certificates. In this context the Centre could also explore options for developing badges assigned to **engagement, event activities, course completion, or course assessments** with stackability into certificates.

The graphic below shows an example of **how individual badges can stack into larger badges** and was developed by common sense and Learning Agents for the atingi learning platform.

**FIGURE 31: EXCERPTED EXAMPLES FROM THE ATINGI.ORG BADGE TAXONOMY**



In the context of digital transformation, a well-designed **badging system** can primarily be seen as **an opportunity to make the Centre’s existing certificate system more visible** and transparent to the outside world. Furthermore, the development of a comprehensive and flexible badging concept would also contribute to ITCILO’s reputation as a Learning Innovation Champion.

In order for a digital credential system to work, a badging system needs to complement the certification framework to form a cohesive whole. The badging system should therefore be integrated into the existing training context and **merged with the existing certificate framework**. The research team advises that this will have an impact on Three-Tier Certification Framework itself, such as the potential for stacking badges into certificates outlined in the table below.

Based on the information from the previous sections, we suggest exploring the usage of both **formal and non-formal badges**. Although critical remarks have been made by some interviewees regarding the usage of badges in formal accreditation contexts there are clear benefits to being able to share even formal credentials as badges, and concerns regarding the danger of ambiguities and confusion as a result of mixing the usage of the two can be put to rest: the implementation of a well-designed taxonomy and visual design language that clearly distinguishes formal and non-formal badges (see chapter below), will enable such full spectrum approaches to work well, in alignment with global best practices.

As a first step, a dual framework should be developed to link the badging framework with the existing certificate framework. In such a dual framework, badges are first and foremost **a visual representation alternative to the already existing certificates** and can help learners to make certificates and diplomas more visible (both internally in the organization and externally to the public). Below you find an example of a suggested dual framework.

Table 3 shows a suggestion for badges awarded to participants of ITCILO’s “training activities” in alignment with certificates:

**TABLE 3: SUGGESTION FOR BADGES AWARDED TO PARTICIPANTS OF ITCILO'S "TRAINING ACTIVITIES" IN ALIGNMENT WITH CERTIFICATES**

PDF Certificate	Digital badge
Diploma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment badge as display alternative</li> <li>• No fractional (stackable) badges<sup>68</sup></li> </ul> <p>Diplomas represent the highest form of certification. In addition to certain prerequisites for admission, the completion criteria for issuing a diploma are clearly regulated in the individual courses. With a learning duration of at least 300 learning hours, diplomas also differ greatly from certificate trainings in regard to the learning effort. Badges, which are awarded together with a diploma, should take this fact into account.</p>
Certificate of Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achievement badge as display alternative</li> <li>• Assessment badges as fractional (stackable) micro-credentials toward a certificate</li> </ul> <p>Like diplomas, Certificates of Achievement are awarded after the completion of a summative assessment. The award of this badge should be <b>linked to the same criteria as the award of a Certificate of Achievement</b>. To emphasise the importance of the badge, it should contain a distinctive "Certificate" marking and specify the number of <b>learning hours</b> and include the assessed <b>learning applications</b> (workplace observation, learning deliverables, documents, etc.). The achievement badge may consist of different <b>assessment badges as fractional micro-credential</b> toward a certificate, which would contain information on the type of assessment. Fractional micro-credentials should include a distinctive "fractional" marking.</p>
Certificate of Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation badge as display alternative to a Participation Certificate</li> <li>• Participation badges as fractional (stackable) micro-credentials toward a larger Participation badge or certificate<sup>69</sup></li> </ul> <p>Similar to the above, the award for this badge should be linked to the same criteria as the award of a Certificate of Participation. Different types of participating activities may serve to qualify for fractional badges.</p>
CONSIDER: Certificate of Completion for self-paced course completion (SUGGESTED)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion badge as display alternative for Certificate of Completion (<i>Unitary, or stacked from micro-credentials as below</i>)</li> </ul>
Completion badge (distinguished from Participation) (SUGGESTED)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-paced short courses with knowledge checks, no summative assessment</li> <li>• Fractional (ie stackable) micro-credentials toward a larger Completion certificate/badge (visually distinguished from a stacked completion badge/certificate)</li> </ul>

In addition to integrating the existing training programs, the master courses planned according to the ITCILO Programme and Budget Proposals 2022-2023 should also be taken into account and considered when developing a badging taxonomy.

Table 4 shows a suggestions for badges awarded to participants of the Centre's "non-training" activities:

<sup>68</sup> The Three-Tier Training Certification Framework does permit stacking of Certificates of Achievement into a Diploma.

<sup>69</sup> The Three-Tier Training Certification Framework is silent on stacking Participation credentials

**TABLE 4: SUGGESTIONS FOR BADGES AWARDED TO PARTICIPANTS OF THE CENTRE'S "NON-TRAINING" ACTIVITIES**

Use case	Digital badge examples
<b>Events</b> <b>Can include virtual events and short webinars</b> <i>(see also Recommendation 5a)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaker badge</li> <li>• Participant badge</li> <li>• Entry ID badge</li> <li>• Reflective participant feedback badge</li> <li>• Objectives/pathways badges at event</li> <li>• Fractional (stackable) badges?</li> </ul>
<b>Membership</b> <i>(see also Recommendation 5b)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal (unpaid) member</li> <li>• Centre programmes (1 or more of 9... self-identify)</li> <li>• Volunteer member</li> <li>• Committee, board member</li> <li>• Distinguished (expert) member</li> <li>• Paid member</li> <li>• "Fellow" - long term member</li> <li>• Certified professional member</li> </ul>
Community of practice connections and recognition <sup>70</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginner</li> <li>• "Old Guard"</li> <li>• Welcoming, Inclusive Practitioner</li> <li>• "Guru" (SME)</li> <li>• Special topic interest</li> <li>• Learning goal</li> <li>• Value declaration (e.g. SDG, Inclusion)</li> <li>• Peer issued badge ("Good to work with", "I Learned From You")</li> <li>• Self-declared badge (TIL- "Today I Learned")</li> </ul>
<b>Organisational transformation recognition</b> <i>(see also Recommendation 5e)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On the journey (awareness, engagement)</li> <li>• Know the Fundamentals (e.g. IBM Design Thinking Fundamentals)</li> <li>• Advocate (e.g. on social media)</li> <li>• Change agent (applied achievements.. again IBM)</li> <li>• Coach, mentor (see below)</li> <li>• Organization badge (stages of journey, maturity rubric, including demonstrated staff buy-in)</li> <li>• CSR badges</li> </ul>
Flexible achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makerspace achievements</li> <li>• ISR ("Individual Social Responsibility")</li> <li>• Self-declared (scaffolded/prebuilt and self-created), e.g. "I Have a Hidden Talent"</li> </ul>
Mentoring, coaching	<p>"Ask me for help on..."</p> <p>Qualified (course, certification)</p> <p>Mentee-endorsed ("Helped me..")</p> <p>Long term service as a mentor</p> <p>Subject Matter Expert (e.g. gender equality)</p> <p>Special recognition(award)</p>
Interests, goals, values	<p>(see also Community of Practice above)</p> <p>Topics, e.g. project mgmt, geomapping, AI, etc.</p> <p>SDGs (1 or more)</p> <p>Gender equality, other particular priorities</p> <p>Lifelong learning as a human right</p>
Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competitive, rubric-based</li> <li>• Ad hoc, "easter egg", testimonial</li> <li>• Turnkey: opening new opportunities (e.g. learning or experience program.. scholarship)</li> </ul>

<sup>70</sup> Editor's note: ITCILO programmes might be considered as communities of practice

### Recommendation 3: Publish the certification and the badging framework as an integrated approach

To ensure that the badging framework is noticed and respected, the research team recommends that it should be published publicly with the 2019 Three-Tier Training Certification Framework as a dual framework, with a permanent URL that can act as an ongoing reference, for internal use and for external use in the broader ecosystem as a resource to support global efforts to align credentialing practices. The unification of the two frameworks will highlight their articulation or duality within an inclusive concept of recognition. This can help increase acceptance of badging and avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations. As with other frameworks such as the IDB Digital Credentials Framework, this should be a “living” framework that can evolve as the ecosystem evolves.

The implementation of an integrated badging system for all of the Centre’s training and development activities would also allow for more global reports on awareness, engagement, learning and development and for Big Data to be leveraged to better track and assess learning activities, capacity development and knowledge transfer within ITCILO.

### Recommendation 4: Create a supporting visual language for badges

As badges are visual symbols of achievement, the centre should provide a clear visual language for the taxonomy to ensure high recognition value for its badges. A consistent and coherent visual design will differentiate badges linked to certificates and diplomas as formal or “high stakes” certifications in the training context, in contrast to “low-stakes” or “light touch” badges linked to non-training interventions such as events. This type of differentiation was specifically requested by interviewees in the focus groups.

In addition to the metadata stored in the badge, information relevant to the awarding of a badge should also be **directly visible on the badge**. A comprehensive visual design framework was developed by common sense and Learning Agents for atingi eAcademy and could serve as a useful example for ITCILO (see Annexes / Badge design case study: atingi eAcademy).

#### Implementation options

It is strongly recommended that the Centre develops a standardised institutional approach to the design and visual presentation of badges. Determine who will create and design the badges and determine the institutional approach to the similarities or differences in the design of the badge depending on type of credit.

*FIGURE 32: CURRENTLY USED BADGE DESIGN BY THE ITCILO*



Based on the blue badges used so far, a quick visual concept could be framed as follows:

FIGURE 33: EXAMPLE FOR A VISUAL BADGING CONCEPT

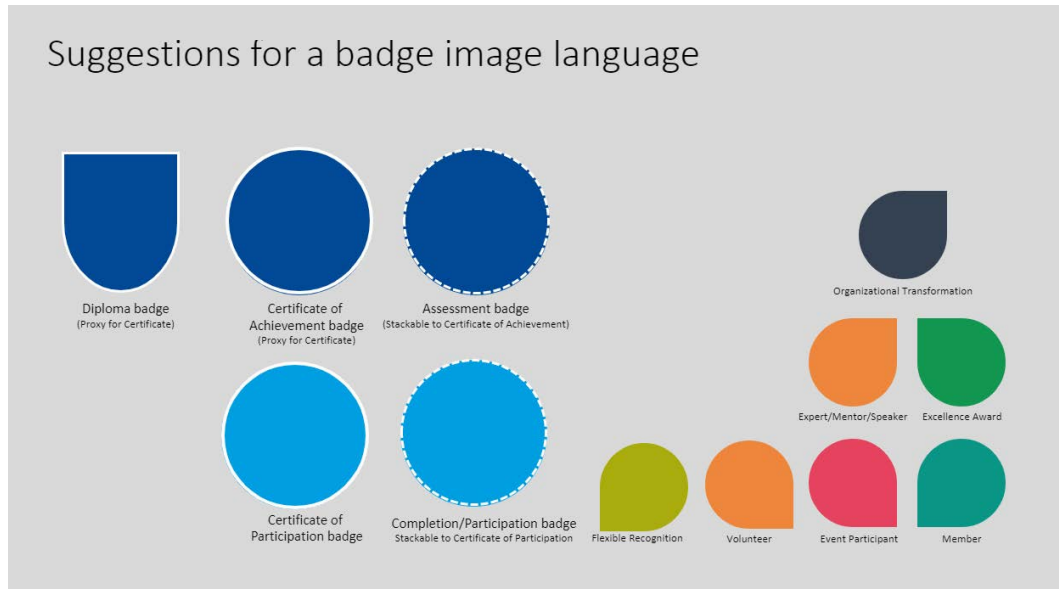



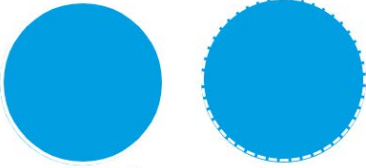



Table 5 on the following pages provides a more detailed explanation of the proposed concept:

TABLE 5: SUGGESTION FOR A VISUAL BADGING CONCEPT ACCORDING TO THE EXISTING CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

PDF Certificate	Digital badge
Diploma	 <p>Diploma badge (Proxy for Certificate)</p> <p>Visually, badges for diplomas could be highlighted by a different shape but they should also contain a distinctive “diploma” marking. Digital badges for diplomas should only be awarded as a whole and should not be able to be merged from partial badges.</p>
Certificate of Achievement	  <p>Certificate of Achievement badge (Proxy for Certificate)</p> <p>Assessment badge (Stackable to Certificate of Achievement)</p> <p>The achievement badge should contain some “Certificate” marking and the assessment badge should look somewhat similar but with a “fractional” indication. The visual language should contain learning hours, learning applications, type of assessment, etc. like recommended in the framework.</p>

PDF Certificate	Digital badge
Certificate of Participation	<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Certificate of Participation badge      Completion/Participation badge Stackable to Certificate of Participation</p> </div> <p>Certificates of Participation differ from Certificates of Achievement and Diplomas in several ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They require a <b>lower number of learning hours</b> as they are issued for learning activities with at least one learning hour, which also means that participants do not have to achieve a certain number of ITC credits. Both face-to-face and distance learning activities are eligible.</li> <li>• Certificates of Participation can be classified more on the non-formal spectrum of formality, as participants are <b>not required to complete a summative assessment</b>.</li> <li>• As it is possible to receive a certificate of participation if learners do not meet the requirements for a certificate of achievement (i.e., receives a “no pass” grade), it would be recommended that this context be marked as well.</li> </ul> <p>With that in mind, the badge could have the same shape as the achievement badge (round shape) and include a “certificate” marking, but be clearly different in colour from the achievement badge.</p>
No certificate <i>(non-formal badges)</i>	<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Expert/Mentor/Speaker      Excellence Award Event Participant      Member</p> </div> <p>Following the results of the survey and the focus group discussions as well as international best practices, badges could be developed for less formal settings, such as events, mentoring programs and coaching, interest, etc. These badges should of course be <b>clearly distinguishable</b> from the other badges, which can be achieved by using a different shape but also a different colour scheme.</p>

As an option for the visual language, shape/colour/iconography of the badges could also indicate the 9 programme areas.

## Recommendation 5a: Explore digital badges for Events

The use of badges for events makes a good early use case for piloting and implementation because it matches well with the Centre’s goal of exploring more digitalised and scalable solutions for development and because it can start simply, with a single event, and grow over time, based on the Centre’s experience and lessons learned elsewhere.

The notion of using badges to recognise non-training forms of capacity development such as events has been described in several blog posts by the Centre’s digital credential platform provider



and was a trigger for this report. In addition, digital badges for events in the broader ecosystem started very soon after the introduction of Mozilla Open Badges.

For learners, digital badges help to motivate engagement, participation, personal reflection and social connection. Benefits for issuers include enhanced promotion and participant engagement and better tracking of these, along with less cost and waste compared to paper certificates and reduction costs and waste on the one hand, and offers advantages in badge management and easier tracking of engagement event tracking on the other. These benefits were also confirmed in the survey. Examples of event badges include:

- Speakers
- Participants
- Entry ID
- Reflective participant feedback
- Objectives/pathway completions at event (e.g. 5 of 10 session options or a sequence of 5)

### Recommendation 5b: Explore digital badges for Membership

The notion of using digital badges to recognise different forms of Membership has been explored at length on the platform vendor's blog and is being pursued by Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) as communities of practice in their digital credential framework. The intersection of Membership with communities of practice and “softer” concepts of membership (e.g. self-declared, unpaid, etc.) resonated in both of the focus group interviews and aligns well with the Centre's strategic goals of “Individual and institutional capacity development” and “Organisational collaboration and co-creation.” This suggestion is further supported by the Community of Inquiry model used in the recent external evaluations of Centre online training activities.

Examples to explore might include alumni networks linked to Centre programmes or more domain-specific communities, similar to IDB's HydroBID.

### Recommendation 5c: Explore digital badges for skills embedded in training courses

As suggested by a respondent in the Survey, the Centre may wish to consider using digital badges to recognize specific competencies/skills developed within longer training courses and programmes that may be immediately relevant to workplace needs and otherwise buried from view in the certificate.

To improve the visibility of smaller skill development instances, the Centre could explore badges as skills embedded in longer courses that may be immediately relevant to workplace needs and otherwise buried from view in the certificate. This option was proposed by a participant of our survey (“*Badges are probably good tool to recognize specific competencies/skills acquired throughout the learning process within a training activity.*”).

There are examples of these types of badges in the post-secondary sector in the US, such as for laboratory skills (e.g. pipetting procedures or certification on specific equipment.)

### Recommendation 5d: Explore digital badges for personalised learning journeys

The following option for mass-customised badges was proposed by a participant in the Survey:

“I suggest that we can issue different badges for the same certificates, i.e that all participants do not receive the same badge but that it is tailored according to their training path”.

This option definitely meets the goal of co-creation with more autonomous learners and personalisation of their learning experiences.

To further customise individual learning journeys, stacking of badges need not necessarily be restricted to pre-defined pathways within a single course or learning programme. Stacking of badges could also be implemented among badges from different courses or standalone badges whose outcomes make sense to aggregate with others, or even badges that learners may design themselves to meet personal learning needs, provided they meet minimum requirements of rigour, granularity and relevance to outcomes that map to capacity development goals of the Centre and its partners.

### Recommendation 5e: Explore digital badges for “learning organisations”

As discussed above in the discussion of the Strategic Plan<sup>71</sup>, the Centre’s vision for capacity building is increasingly going beyond individuals to include organisations and networks. The concept of learning organisations as holistic entities that are more than the aggregate sum of their “parts” (ie people) is one that can help the Centre’s training and non-training services to work together to recognise workplace and organisational development as an integrated whole. This can help synergise interventions at the individual, institutional and systems levels and can be recognised with meaningful digital badges.

The concept of learning organisations was further explored in the discussion of the section above, entitled “Framework and Taxonomy case study – Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).”

This is another use case that can begin with a simple pilot and develop iteratively over time.

### Recommendation 6: Co-create a community of recognition

In order for digital badges to gain interest and traction among learners, they need to be guided in order to understand the great value the badges offer and to get to know the different ways they can be shared with peers and potential employers.

<sup>71</sup> See section above: “Individual and institutional capacity development”

Learners should be encouraged to accept, show and publicly present their badges based on a badging system that includes all of the Centre's development activities. This will not only improve learners' autonomy and online recognition but will also enable reports and Big Data tools to be used to better track and assess learning activities and knowledge transfer within ITCILO, supporting the Centre's goal, expressed in the 2022-2023 Programme and Budget Proposals, of seeking evidence of impact beyond inputs to outputs and outcomes: knowledge gain, application of learning, behaviour change and performance improvement.

Further research on learner preferences using more than one method (survey, custom reports of activity and learner profile preferences) is recommended to find ways to build learner awareness and self-direction, to further align with the mission and goals of the Centre, including human-centred learning and co-creation of learning experiences.

### Implementation options

The current credentialing platform used by the Centre offers several options to socialise badges, including e-mail signatures and sharing on social media such as LinkedIn. At a more advanced level, it can also support features and options such as adding evidence, the Spotlight certified professional directory option and the mobile digital wallet.

According to the programme and budget proposals for 2022-23 (P&B p19f), the eCampus is to take on an increasingly central role in the future – even for tailored face-to-face trainings. To support this increasing significance, approaches should be sought to motivate learners to share their badges within the organisation! This would strengthen the ITCILO's own ecosystem instead of just sending people out to social media. An example would be to incentivize them to create online learning profiles on eCampus and share their badges there.

Exploring options for authentic non-formal assessment and recognition is not only a global best practice, but could also be a good way to engage learners in the idea. This informal engagement could be a first step for the centre towards formal recognition.

Furthermore, in accordance with the Centre's goals, learners should be encouraged to self-direct, self-reflect, self-assess, and maintain lifelong learning portfolios. One option would be to leverage the currently available option of adding evidence to their credential, not only to further support the initial awards, but also to potentially demonstrate that the acquired outcomes are being maintained and even extended over time.

# FINAL WORD

This report has researched and explored several ways in which the use of digital badges at the Centre may be rationalised and enhanced to further ITCILO goals based on current internal practice and opinion, effective global practices and the affordances of the credential platform used.

The spectrum of recommendations in this report is deliberately wide, ranging from incremental improvement to transformational. Although several recommendations can work better together, there is no strong recommendation to implement all the recommendations at once - the Centre is encouraged to explore, analyse and pilot as best suits its needs.

# ANNEXES

## References

### ITCILO

Digital credentials <https://www.itcilo.org/digital-credentials>

Introducing the ITCILO's new digital credentials

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<https://virtualreality.itcilo.org/>

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<https://www.itcilo.org/stories/design-better-online-events-digital-facilitation-toolkit>

<https://www.itcilo.org/teams/learning-innovation-programme>

## Accredible

Accredible. Comprehensive Guide to Digital Badges.

Accredible Help Center <https://help.accreditable.com>

Getting Started - Issue Digital Credentials with Accredible (video tutorial)

<https://youtu.be/lc-j89T5f6c>

Digital Badges with Accredible (video tutorial) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkTOZDPMarA>

How to Use Your Credential from Accredible (video tutorial) <https://youtu.be/iad7NMGvGDE>

## Accredible blog

Should I Issue Digital Badges to Event Attendees?

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What Are Stacked Credentials?

<https://www.accreditable.com/blog/what-are-stacked-credentials#:~:text=Stacked%20credentials%20are%20individual%20achievements,a%20framework%20for%20accumulating%20knowledge>

What are Credential Collections (Learning Pathways) and How Can You Use Them?

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## Glossary suggestions

Using a glossary as part of a transparent and cohesive digital credential strategy is explicitly recommended and we suggest using the examples below for orientation:

### **Alternative Credentials:**

Non-traditional (non-degree) credentials offered by institutions of higher education may include a myriad of credit alternatives including Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), micro-credentials (badges), credit- or non-credit bearing certificate programs and various other opportunities. Typically issued in a digital format. (Source: [AACRAO](#))

### **Badges (Digital):**

Online representations that recognize skills, achievements, membership affiliation, and participation. Open Badges are a type of digital badge. (Source: [AACRAO](#))

### **Digital credentials:**

The digital equivalent of paper-based credentials. Open Badges are a form of digital credential that indicate an accomplishment, skill, quality or interest.

Adapted from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital\\_credential](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_credential)

### **Learning**

The acquisition and mastery of knowledge, skills and competences through non-formal or formal, public or private, provided online, or in communities and life situations such as intergenerational, peer-based and self-directed learning. (Comment: this understanding of learning is directly influenced by the notion of lifelong learning)

Source: UNESCO 2015, Global

Meta-source: [UNESCO TVETipedia Glossary](#)

### **Learning – Formal:**

#### OPTION 1:

Learning that takes place through a structured program of instruction which is generally recognised by the attainment of a formal qualification or award (for example, a certificate, diploma or degree).

Source: NCVET 2013, Australia

#### OPTION 2:

Learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment (e.g. in an education or training institution or on the job) and is explicitly designated as learning (in terms of objectives, time or resources). Formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view. It typically leads to validation and certification.

Source: CEDEFOP 2008, Europe

Meta-source: [UNESCO TVETipedia Glossary](#)

**Learning - Incidental (random):**

Various forms of learning that are not organized or that involve communication not designed to bring about learning. Incidental or random learning may occur as a by-product of day-to-day activities, events or communication that are not designed as deliberate educational or learning activities. Examples may include learning that takes place during the course of a meeting, whilst listening to a radio programme, or watching a television broadcast that is not designed as an education programme.

Meta-source: [UNESCO TVETipedia Glossary](#)

**Learning – Informal:**

OPTION 1:

Forms of learning that are intentional or deliberate but are not institutionalized. They are less organized and structured than either formal or non-formal education. Informal learning may include learning activities that occur in the family, in the work place, in the local community, and in daily life, on a self-directed, family-directed or socially-directed basis.

Source: UNESCO UIS 2011, Global

OPTION 2:

Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Informal learning in most cases is unintentional from the learner's perspective. It typically does not lead to certification.

Source: CEDEFOP 2008, Europe

Meta-source: [UNESCO TVETipedia Glossary](#)

**Learning – Lifewide**

Learning, either formal, non-formal or informal, that takes place across the full range of life activities (personal, social or professional) and at any stage.

Source: CEDEFOP 2008, Europe

Meta-source: [UNESCO TVETipedia Glossary](#)

**Learning - Non-formal**

OPTION 1:

Learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view.

Source: CEDEFOP 2008, Europe

OPTION 2:

Formal learning usually takes place in schools, universities or training institutions and leads to a diploma or certificate. **Non-formal learning** includes free adult education within study circles, projects or discussion groups advancing at their own place, with no examination at the end. Informal learning can be found everywhere, e.g. in families, in the workplace, in NGOs, in theatre

groups, or can also refer to individual activities at home, like reading a book.

Source: EU Commission LLP 2007-2013, Europe

Meta-source: [UNESCO TVETipedia Glossary](#)

### **Learning organisation:**

#### OPTION 1:

An organisation which promotes learning, and where individuals learn and develop through the work context, for the benefit of themselves, each other and the whole organisation, with such efforts being publicised and recognised.

Source: CEDEFOP 2008, Europe

#### OPTION 2:

An organisation where everyone learns and develops through the work context, for the benefit of themselves, each other and the whole organisation, with such efforts being publicised and recognised.

Source: NCVET 2013, Australia

Meta-source: [UNESCO TVETipedia Glossary](#)

### **Learning - Self-directed**

#### OPTION 1:

Learning by oneself without the aid of an instructor

Source: EU commission (NRDC) 2011, Europe

#### OPTION 2:

Self-directed learning is learning in which the conceptualization, design, conduct and evaluation of a learning project are directed by the learner.

Source: UNESCO (UNEVOC) 2009, Global

Meta-source: [UNESCO TVETipedia Glossary](#)

### **Micro-credentials:**

Typically, a subset of Open Badges, defined by the educational sector as a record of focused learning achievement verifying what the learner knows, understands or can do. Micro-credentials include assessment based on clearly defined standards, are awarded by trusted providers and meet appropriate quality assurance requirements. Micro-credentials should have stand-alone value that is focused on workplace relevance and may also contribute to or complement other micro-credentials or other credentials such as certificates and diplomas, including through Recognition of Prior Learning processes.

(Adapted from [UNESCO - Towards a common definition of micro-credentials](#))

**Open Badge:**

A portable digital badge that conforms to the Open Badges standard. Open Badges are verifiable and contain structured information about the achievement and what the recipient did to earn the badge.

Adapted from: <https://openbadges.org/about/faq>

**Recognition of learning (formal)**

OPTION 1:

The principles and processes through which the knowledge, skills and competences of a person are made visible, mediated and assessed for the purposes of certification, progression and professional standing (Comment: Recognition can take place by making learning explicit through the codification of knowledge, skills and competences in qualifications, but it is not limited to this form).

Source: UNESCO 2015, Global

OPTION 2:

Recognition of learning is a process of granting official status to learning outcomes and/or competences, which can lead to the acknowledgement of their value in society.

Source: EU Commission (OpenCred study) 2016, Europe

[Meta-source: UNESCO TVETipedia Glossary](#)

**Open Recognition – Open:**

Open Recognition is an approach born from the practice of Open Badges that explores and promotes practices, tools and policies that enhance and broaden opportunities for everyone, individuals and communities, to be recognized and contribute to the recognition of others. The focus of Open Recognition may be for lifelong learning and development, or it may be for other goals that benefit society. It may include informal recognition of informal learning and achievement, for personal, developmental, community or societal reasons. Its principles are described in detail in the [Bologna Open Recognition Declaration](#).

Adapted from: <https://mirva.openrecognition.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/08/01-Open-Recognition-Framework-2.pdf>

## About ITCILO

### ITC Training and Activity Teams

<https://www.itcilo.org/about/teams>

#### **Social Protection, Governance and Tripartism (SPGT)**

Training to promote tripartite social dialogue for safer and healthier workplaces.

Topics: Social protection, Labour migration, Labour inspection, Occupational safety and health, Social dialogue

#### **Workers' Activities (ACTRAV)**

Training to promote labour education for workers and workers' organizations.

Topics: Future of work, International labour law, Labour migration, Fundamental rights at work, Skills development, Social dialogue

#### **Employers' Activities (ACTEMP)**

Training to strengthen employers' representatives for economic growth, development, and poverty alleviation.

Topics: Corporate social responsibility, Employers' organizations, Skills development, Social dialogue, Sustainable development, Vocational training

#### **Development Investment Programme (DEVINVEST)**

Training to promote employment generation for countries experiencing conflict and disaster.

Topics: Fragile states, Employment promotion, Skills development, Sustainable development, Youth employment, Procurement

#### **Employment Policy and Analysis Programme (EPAP)**

Training to promote the design, implementation, and analysis of policies and programmes for full and productive employment.

Topics: Employers' organizations, Vocational training, Youth employment, Skills development, Future of work, Green jobs

#### **Sustainable Enterprises and Economies (SEE)**

Training to promote business creation and growth for increased employment and decent work.

Topics: Corporate social responsibility, Social economy, Green jobs, Rural development, Social finance, Enterprises

**International Labour Standards, Rights at Work and Gender Equality (ILSGEN)**

Training to promote international labour standards and strengthen the application of rights at work for equality, dignity, and security.

Topics: International labour standards, International labour law, Gender equality and diversity, Sustainable development, Disability inclusion, Fair recruitment

**Learning Innovation Programme (LIP)**

Training to promote innovative technologies and methodologies for the future of work.

Topics: Artificial intelligence, Digital media, E-learning, Future of work, Gamification, Innovation

**Organizational Development and Project Services Programme (ODPS)**

Training to promote concrete action for economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

Topics: Procurement, Project management, Sustainable development, Monitoring and evaluation, Public private partnership, Capacity building

## Three-Tier Certificate Framework

The official circular on Three-Tier Training Certification Framework was issued by the ITCILO's Director of Training in August 2019 and is still being followed for all training activities of the Centre as the standard framework for certification of training participants.

Learning hours: an estimate of the total hours typically required to achieve the defined learning outcomes, including hours of synchronous and asynchronous instruction and related contact, onsite or online, in addition to self-learning activities.

Credits: One ITC credit corresponds to 30 learning hours, validated by appropriate assessment. (Aligned to, not yet recognized by ECTS.)

### Certificate of Participation

- No selection/eligibility requirements (for participation-only training)
- Minimum learning hours = 1; must have participated at least 80% of the total time.
- Not assessed, or “No Pass” ( graded < 60% for assessed training)
- No ITC credits.

### Certificate of Achievement

- Selection/eligibility requirements as appropriate
- Learning hours = 60 - 299, with at least 90% attendance
- Summative assessment, with a passing grade of 60%.
- (“No Pass” participants may receive a Certificate of Participation.)
- 2 - 10 ITC credits

### Diploma

- Selection/eligibility requirements as appropriate.
- Learning hours = 300+, with at least 90% attendance
- Capstone project to demonstrate the consolidated learning
- Summative assessment, with a passing grade of 60%.
- (“No Pass” participants may receive a Certificate of Participation.)
- 10+ ITC credits



## TOR for this assignment<sup>72</sup>

### Terms of Reference for external technical advice on establishing internal guidelines for digital badges

#### Introduction

The International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization is the training arm of the ILO, the Specialized Agency of the United Nations that promotes social justice and human rights in the world of work.

The ITCILO delivers both training services and non-training services to governments, employers' and workers' organizations and other national and international partners in support of decent work and sustainable development. ITCILO's service portfolio is illustrated below.

TRAINING	RELATED CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
STANDARD COURSES (including Master Programmes)	PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT
	INNOVATION SOLUTIONS
	PROJECT MANAGEMENT SUPPORT
TAILORED TRAINING ACTIVITIES	MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCIES
	DATA DRIVEN SERVICES
	EVENT FACILITATION
	COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY

The digital transformation of the Centre during the last biennium not only resulted in initiatives to provide new digital services to its beneficiaries, It also translated in several initiatives to optimise and digitalize various business processes through continued streamlining of internal processes.

In January 2020, the Centre was still printing, archiving and mailing course certificates to participants, but in the span of just four months, a switch was made to digital credentials. Discussions concerning the pilot started in May and the first digital credential was issued in September. Digitalization immediately and directly improved the way work is done at the Centre. Now participants can add their digital certificates and badges to their LinkedIn profiles and personal webpages, share their achievements with posts on social media, and improve their professional reputation with secure and verifiable credentials. The credentials can be linked to digital CVs and may easily be shared with third parties, where applicable also as PDF for print out.

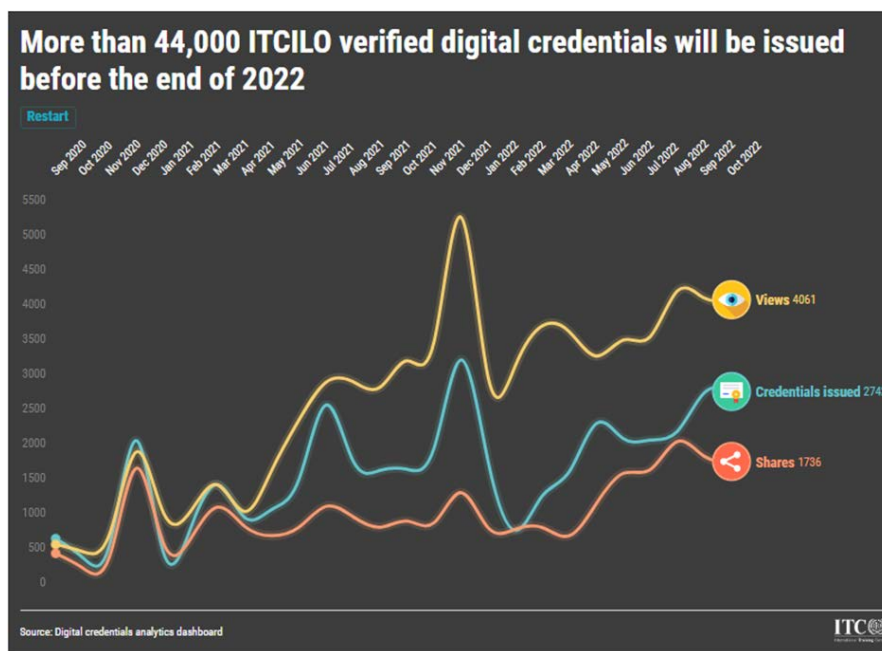
<sup>72</sup> See original TOR in Dropbox folder: 2023\_ITCILO\_Digital\_Badges-Resources  
[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/yreui4jmntt1rk0/AADkA\\_CO-YLqC-ZAWShIFuQaa?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/yreui4jmntt1rk0/AADkA_CO-YLqC-ZAWShIFuQaa?dl=0)

From a sustainability standpoint, the introduction of digital credentials eliminated printing and mailing costs, reduced paper use, and streamlined logistical processes. Now the Centre has a lifelong digital archive of all participants' digital credentials. Moreover, organizations and recruiters can verify the authenticity of digital credentials issued by the ITCILO with a single click.

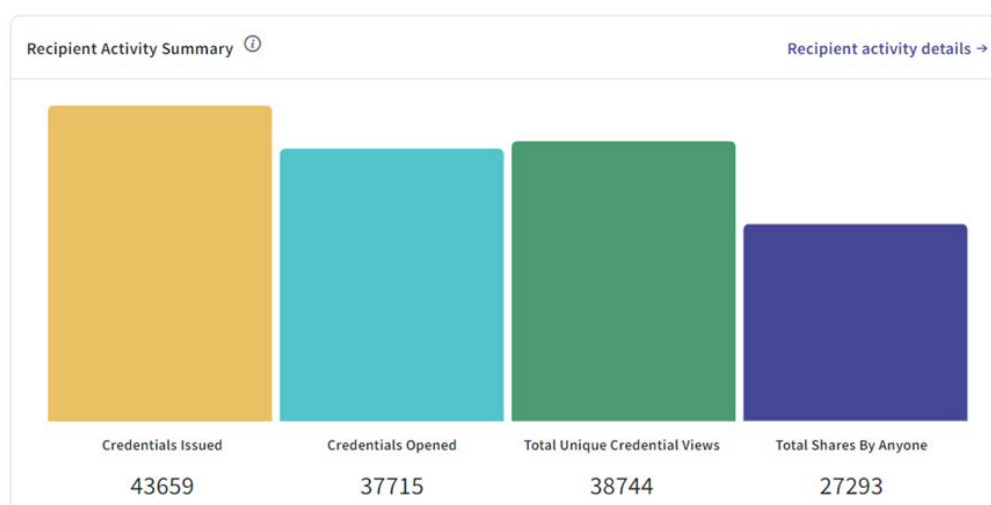
The Centre's digital credentials use block chain technology to protect participants' data and prevent fraud. Once a credential is recorded on the block chain, it cannot be altered or faked.

In addition, they are easily stackable along multi-step learning journeys that may cut across several tiers hence supporting life-long learning,

This evolution was strongly welcomed by participants and proved to reduce quality assurance costs for ITCILO. Additionally, the staff of the Centre can skip time-consuming administrative work and focus on more innovative, big-picture ideas. ITCILO therefore went on to roll out digital certificates throughout its training portfolio and to phase out printed documents. By the end of 2022, more than 44,000 digital credentials will be issued to more than 32,000 recipients and shared more than 27,000 times, further increasing the visibility of the Centre.



Not only do digital credentials act as a very powerful promotional tool for the Centre's training offers, their portability and the way in which they are being shared by recipients provide detailed information about participants preferences and helps create a networking space in which potential participants can communicate with the Centre's training teams. Additionally, they act as a [direct channel by which participants provide immediate feedback](#) on their learning and training experiences with the Centre.



The most recent analytics figures show that 66% of the recipients **actively engage** with their digital credentials. Engagement in this context would refer to sharing a credential, adding it to their LinkedIn profiles or email signatures, downloading a PDF, or adding evidence.

The recognition of learning outcomes by awarding digital credentials is an important building block of the Centre's quality management system for learning services. Digital certification also constitutes an important building block of the brand-support strategy of a learning-service provider since it allows interested parties to "click through" to the source of certification for more information. Each digital certificate serves as a customer record in the data lake of a digital monitoring and evaluation system.

For more information about ITCILO's Digital Credentials:

<https://www.itcilo.org/digital-credentials>

<https://www.itcilo.org/stories/introducing-itcilos-new-digital-credentials>

### Current status of digital credentials in the Centre

Currently, digital credentials (digital certificates and digital badges) are mainly used for rewarding participants in the Centre's **Training activities**.

The official circular on **Three-Tier Training Certification Framework** (See Annex) was issued by the ITCILO's Director of Training in August 2019 and is still being followed for all training activities of the Centre as the standard framework for certification of training participants.

For training courses, participants who fulfill preset completion criteria, receive either a digital certificate only or a digital certificate accompanied with a badge.

Example: <https://credentials.itcilo.org/2f73abbc-b94f-4240-a581-7f4cb236a8e7#gs.iipkyz>

Following the clear guidance of the circular, staff in charge of training activities are able to **decide whether to issue** certificates of participation, certificates of achievement, or diplomas for their courses. However, the decision on whether to issue a digital badge to accompany the certificate is liberally left for the team in charge of the training activity. Different teams and different activity managers have different views, ideas and perspectives, which led to inconsistencies in the use of digital badges.

The ITCILO has **standard designs** for its certificates and digital badges. The designs are available in most of the languages in which the Centre provides training.

While the **content** of digital certificates follow pre-determined ITCILO standards, the content of digital badges is ad-hoc and the only clear guidance in place is to use a short phrase (max. 3 short words) and to write it in a way that describes an achievement that resulted from the training activity. The following are some examples of relatively well-written badge content:



Since the introduction of digital credentials in the Centre, **training** activities benefited the most from its advantages. Because of the pre-existence of a clear framework, it was easy to adopt digital credentials – digital certificates in specific - in the context of training activities.

However, the potential of digital badges **outside the scope of training** has not gone unnoticed by the Centre. Interesting global practices demonstrated a significant potential of the use of digital badges to promote and increase the visibility of **non-training activities** especially in the field of organizing big events and meetings. The use of digital badges whether before (promotion) or after (visibility) the event is widely used.

Example: <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6875400070607585280/>

In many cases, pre-event badges were used as entry passes to the event, and post-event badges were used as awards.

An [article](#) published by Accredible - the current third party service provider of the Centre's digital credentials - on the issuance of digital credentials for event attendees recommends the use of digital badges as a sustainable solution that provides the freedom of design and easy to track analytics that show how and where event badges are being shared.

To consolidate and further expand on its current use of digital credentials, the ITCILO seeks expert advice on establishing a standard approach for the use of **digital badges** within the scope of both its training and non-training services.

Note: Digital certificates are outside the scope of this assignment.

Purpose of the assignment

The **overall objective** of the assignment is to contribute towards the pursuit of the mission of the Centre to provide people across the world of work with access to digitally enhanced solutions to successfully manage their Future Work transitions.

The **immediate objective** of the assignment is to strengthen the capacity of the Office of the Director of Training to deliver outcomes one (outreach) and two (impact) of the 2022-23 Programme & Budget of the Centre.

## Deliverables

The main deliverable of the assignment is a report that

- describes global good practice in the use of digital badges individually or to complement digital certificates in training and non-training activities
- proposes a standard approach for the use of digital badges within the scope of both training and non-training services tailored to the context of work performed by the Centre

## Zero draft table of contents of the report

Table of Contents

Introduction

Executive summary

List of tables and abbreviations

Part I: The current use of digital badges in the Centre - Baseline assessment

Part II: Global good practice in the use of digital badges

Part III: The way forward

- Summary and conclusions
- Recommendations

Annexes

## Implementation timeline

The start date of the assignment is 28 November 2022. The end date of the assignment is 15 December 2022.

The consultant is expected to submit a report outline by 30 November and a first draft report by 8 December 2022. The final draft report is due by 15 December 2022.

## About Accredible

### Notes from Help

- **Certified Professional Directory**

<https://help.accreditable.com/how-do-i-setup-my-directory-profile>

A searchable hub or “mini LinkedIn” of certified professionals dedicated to credential recipients of your. The Professional Profile can display:

- Current and historical employment information
- If employment is being sought
- Certifications and credential wallet
- Location and contact information

- **Mobile Digital Wallet**

<https://help.accreditable.com/how-do-i-add-credentials-to-my-mobile-digital-wallet>

Verify professional credentials from a mobile device on a job site or to prove association membership.

- **Embed a Credential in an Email Signature**

<https://help.accreditable.com/embedding-your-credential-email-signature>

Embed a Digital Open Badge into an email signature so others can view the live credential.

- **Add Evidence to a Credential**

<https://help.accreditable.com/how-do-i-add-evidence-to-my-credential>

Support the credential by adding evidence items that show why it was awarded, such as:

- Assignments and work completed
- Video demonstrations
- References from colleagues

### Notes from the Guide

P3:

Digital badges are just one subset of digital credentials

Digital credentials are digital forms of any type of physical credential

P4:

Focus = digital credentials as they apply to some form of learning or achievement. This includes higher education, continuing education / executive education, MOOCs, associations, online learning, training programs, certifications, bootcamps, awarding bodies, and more.

P5:

#### Categories of Digital Credentials

1. Test-based Digital Credentials (ie decoupled, proctored exam)
2. Digital Certificates (course, seminar, membership) look like paper equivalent
3. Digital Badges (more ambiguous - high/low stakes. More unique look.

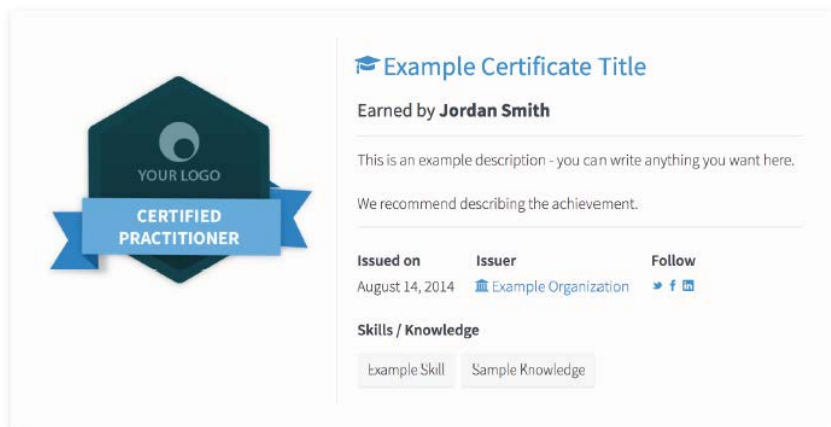
P 6:

“...it’s imperative that the badge includes information on who earned the badge, what the badge represents, how it was earned, when they earned it, who issued it, and whenever possible, evidence examples of the work that went into earning the badge.”

P8:

#### The Anatomy of a Digital Badge

... meta-data to communicate details of the badge to anyone wishing to verify it, or learn more about the context of the achievement it signifies.



Example badge (Issued using Accredible) with meta-data shown. The badge image shown here will contain copy of all the information on display (issue date, badge name, etc) that can be retrieved later, even without visiting the webpage. | source: Accredible

P9

#### Required metadata:

##### Badge Name

- Badge Criteria (Often written in the description section)
- Badge URL
- Issue Date
- Issuer (an account or record associated with the organization issuing the badge - at least their name)
- Recipient (an email or user account associated with the badge owner)

##### Optional metadata

- Alignment (Standards adhered to)
- Additional Information about the Issuer
- Expiration Date
- Evidence URL



- Revocation / Revocation reason
- Tags

P10/11

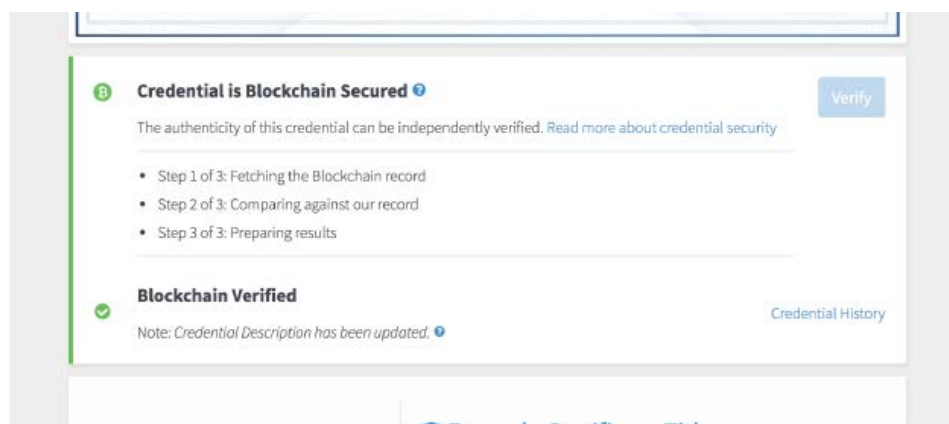
Functions of badges

1. Motivate Participation
2. Motivate Collaboration
3. For Recognition and Assessment
4. Act as Alternative Credentials
5. Represent Competencies

P13

Third party verifiers can see the various meta-data associated with the badge to determine if it is valid. Again, these data include things like:

- What the badge is called
- The name of the organization that issued the badge
- What the badge represents
- What an individual had to do to earn the badge
- The name of the person who earned the badge
- When the badge was issued and if it expires



Example of Accredible's new ability to verify the legitimacy of badges or certificates using the Blockchain. | Source: Accredible

P 14:

Criticism of Digital Badges

Gamification, “meaningless badges”, “low stakes”, badge inflation, etc.

P15:

“...there will be an increasing need for verifiable digital badges and digital credentials in the coming years.”

Look for three things from badges in the not-so-distant future:

1. Badges will continue to gain popularity as a way to signify learning achievement

2. The need to verify the legitimacy of badges will increase as more organizations enter the market and offer their own online courses
3. More and more employers will rely on badges and other forms of digital credentials when making hiring decisions

## Notes from the blog

### Membership

2019 blog post: "[A Model for Membership Organizations to use Both Digital Badges and Certificates](#)":

It makes sense to use certificates (rather than badges) to recognize member achievement because:

- *Achieving the certification requires considerable effort over a period of time, and for the majority of users, a certificate with their name on it is perceived as more appropriate recognition than a badge*
- *Traditionally this kind of achievement would have been recognized with a paper certificate and so there is better continuity when switching to this format*
- *Many members wish to download and print their certificate for display, or to show to clients as evidence of their qualifications*
- *Additional evidence such as work samples, transcripts, references etc can be attached*
- *Details of the recipient, the course, the dates, etc can be displayed on the certificate*

*So how about badges? Most membership organizations engage with a variety of other people, be they members or not. They could be volunteers, employees, presidents, people who develop exam material, or volunteer board members. In other words they are people engaged in more specific service roles. For these people, badges makes more sense because:*

- *They are a great way to recognize the contribution of these individuals*
- *There is unlikely to have been anything in place beforehand, so there are no expectations to be maintained*
- *They are less formal than a certificate*

*In using both, the distinction between the formal training and certification programs, and the less formal (but still important) recognition of contributions is maintained.*

Blog post 2022: What Are Digital Membership Cards For Associations? <https://www.accreditable.com/blog/what-are-digital-membership-cards-for-associations>

Digital membership cards are easily downloadable online identification that helps associations verify membership. Going digital provides an additional benefit to members, as they can access digital membership cards via their smartphone digital wallets.

## Events

2021 blog post: Should I Issue Digital Badges to Event Attendees?

<https://www.accreditable.com/blog/should-i-issue-digital-badges-to-event-attendees>

Feature-rich digital badges are used to represent attendance, participation, or achievement. For attendees, they provide reusable proof of having attended a conference or event and can be added to LinkedIn or shared to social media. For event organizers, digital badges are a cost-effective, accessible record of attendance that boosts marketing efforts and encourages engagement.

Digital badges provide sustainable event badges with freedom of design and easy to track analytics that show how and where event badges are being shared.

### **Multi-Day Attendance**

Stackable digital badges can be awarded for each day of attendance, culminating in a digital certificate that represents achievement or experience gained.

### **Level of Engagement**

Similar to awarding attendees for each day of attendance, digital badges can be used to reward engagement. As attendees visit booths and stands, they are awarded digital badges and as the number of engagement badges increases, they get closer to gaining their digital certificate. Alternatively, this information can be added to their digital event badge metadata, showing the areas where attendees showed greatest interest.

Organizers that want to see the knowledge gained through their event applied can offer the opportunity for attendees to gain a digital badge after the event has taken place. This can be requested as a written statement or documented evidence of how an attendee has applied their new insights to their role or responsibilities.

### **Access to Training**

Digital badges awarded for attendance can be used to promote access to training. Discounts can be offered to candidates that hold digital event badges or restricted to only those that have attended the event, using their digital badge as proof. This can be added as another step in the progressive pathway, in which candidates must attend the event and pass the training to achieve the full digital certificate.

### **Streamline Check-In**

Used with touchless entry points, attendees can simply scan their smartphone, enter their information, and receive their digital event badge for entry to their Digital Wallet Card. This helps

reduce name changes and reprints that aren't always easily accessible onsite and prevent the last minute scramble from having misplaced an entry pass or find it in a cluttered email inbox.

## Organic Marketing

One of the most powerful methods of marketing is word-of-mouth. Digital badges encourage engagement with one-click social sharing where they are seen by peers, friends, and family. Online visibility receives a boost but most importantly, the event is more visible to the target audience including others working in the industry or with an interest in networking or professional development. Organizers then use the engagement analytics to track the most popular social platforms where badges are shared and estimate the marketing value of views and clicks.

### “Format agnostic credentials”

Blog post 2022: The Benefits of a Format Agnostic Digital Credentialing Solution

<https://www.accreditable.com/blog/the-benefit-of-a-format-agnostic-digital-credentialing-solution>

## What is a format agnostic digital credentialing solution?

There are a number of providers in the digital credentialing space, some offer only digital certificates, some provide only digital badges, others focus on one type but can support the other with limited capacity. Accredible is one of the only true format agnostic digital credentialing solutions that provides issuers the freedom to deliver both feature-rich digital certificates and open-badge compliant digital badges. Combined with our pricing model of per unique recipient, rather than per credential, this enables issuers to offer their candidates both an embed-friendly digital badge and a print-ready digital certificate at the cost of one issuer credit.

## Why choose a format agnostic digital credentialing solution?

There are many reasons why an individual is issued a reward or has an achievement recognized. It might be because they have successfully reached and passed their internal training, or they have gained new skills through managing a project. **Not every achievement is suitably represented by a digital certificate.** Traditionally certificates are used for recognizing learning efforts over a longer period of time, for a complex topic, or for completing a series of modules. This is where **digital badges** become extremely useful. They **can be used for rewarding achievements that deserve recognition, but require less effort or time.** By choosing a digital credentialing solution that provides format agnostic issuance, organizations benefit from versatile credentials that can be used across a variety of situations.

### **Versatile Digital Credentials**

Rather than be restricted to issuing digital certificates OR digital badges, issuers have the freedom to issue a badge, a certificate, and both together once a candidate has met the goal criteria. For example, an organization that uses digital credentials to reward their employees for internal training may choose to issue **digital badges for each of the modules. Upon completing the training, they issue both a digital badge and digital certificate (which appear together on the dedicated credential page)**. The employee can embed their digital badge to their email signature to showcase their knowledge, while sharing the more formal digital certificate to their social networks or online profiles.

### **Gamify the Learning Journey**

Gamification is the introduction of game-like mechanics into non-game settings. Gamification is beneficial as it helps to keep candidates motivated and incentivizes them to reach the end of a program. Digital credentials support gamification through the regular issuance of digital awards throughout a learner's journey. Using digital credentials in place of pictorial awards (like those used in the Audible app) provides more contextual information for what the award represents through detailed information, learner evidence, and skill tags on the credential page. This provides increased value for the recipient and helps to encourage them to continue earning digital badges.

### **Build Stacked Credentials**

Format agnostic digital credentials enable issuers to use digital badges to represent individual levels, while issuing digital certificates for candidates that complete all levels within a given topic.


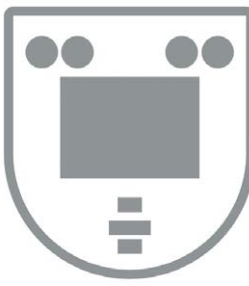

### **Increase Visibility of Programs and Brand**

A format agnostic digital credentialing solution combined with per unique-recipient pricing enables issuers to provide a greater number of valuable credentials to their recipients at no additional cost. This increases the share rate of credentials and positively impacts online visibility, supporting issuer marketing efforts and helping to drive traffic to enrollment pages.

## Badge Design case study: atingi eAcademy

### Types of Badges

In the atingi example, three different types of badges were identified:

Unitary	Compound	Special award
A unitary badge is earned by <b>successfully completing a single course</b> of study on a well-defined topic or an independent competency assessment (decoupled from a course).	Unitary badges can stack into a compound badge. So, the badge is earned by <b>successfully completing several courses or a certification</b> leading to expertise in a subject area. This is a milestone badge for either a pre-defined or emerging learning pathway.	A special award badge can be issued to an individual in recognition of his/her contribution, or for valued competencies of the industry/sector, the workplace, or even within the eAcademy and its community of learners, mentors, assessors etc.
		
<p>LONG OVAL shape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single course completion (ML, Mcert, MgC)</li> <li>• Elemental achievement</li> <li>• Ability to display what competency is addressed by the unit of learning</li> </ul>	<p>ROUNDED SHIELD shape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pathway/cluster completion</li> <li>• Aggregated/stacked achievement</li> <li>• Ability to display the levels of proficiency and performance</li> </ul>	<p>TEARDROP shape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal, informal recognition</li> <li>• Holistic professional development</li> <li>• Flexible way to recognise valued workplace competencies and achievements beyond formal curriculum</li> </ul>

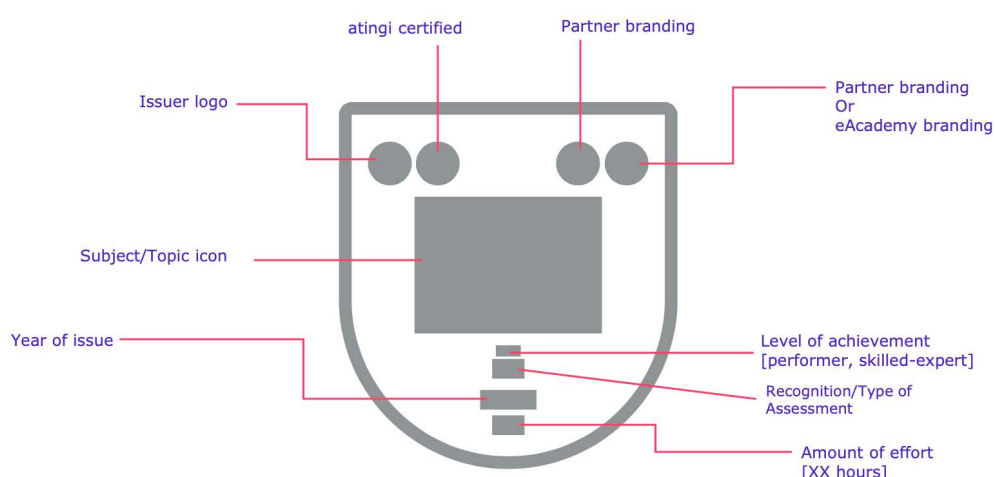
### Displayed information

In the atingi model, none of the badges use text to communicate ideas such as topic – as such, at no time will a course title appear within the badge canvas. The name of the badge does accompany the badge image in most display contexts<sup>73</sup>. The badge image is a combined product of an individual's interaction with a training product or service offered by atingi and its partners. For the eAcademy there are 7+/- 2 visual elements.

<sup>73</sup> Other frameworks are similar to ITCILO in allowing for limited text labels in the badge image, but the Open Badge standard only allows for a single badge image, creating issues for multilingual badges, which can be mitigated in various ways.

They are as follows:




Element	Description
<b>Logo of Issuer of record</b>	The logo of the entity issuing the digital credential, and with whom the records reside.
<b>Certified</b>	Indicator symbol used for Quality Assurance, or by External reviewers.
<b>Logo of Partner/s</b>	Multiple partner logos involved in the course offering at the primary level.
<b>eAcademy</b>	Where applicable, the logo of the eAcademy as course provider.
<b>Subject</b>	A representative icon of the topic area.
<b>Achievement level</b>	A star rating scale designed to show progression from novice to performer/practitioner to expert.
<b>Recognition</b>	A representative icon for how KSA has been awarded.
<b>Learning effort</b>	The volume of learning; a number showing notional learning hours including actual assessment, minus admin/logistics; estimated duration of course of study.
<b>Year of issue</b>	Year in which the badge was earned by holder.



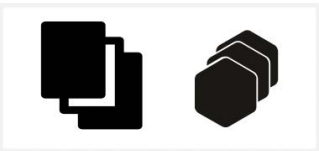

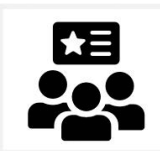
## Iconography for recognition and achievement

As the information in the badges is not displayed in text form, the development of a standardized iconography was required. These icons may be used to immediately convey answers to some of the questions below:




- How was the learner assessed?
- Under what conditions has this badge been awarded?
- How has this competency been evaluated?
- What is the level of proficiency gained/recognized with this badge?

Examples for icons mainly used on unitary badges		
		
Self study	Observation Industry/peer	Assessment [Summative]

Examples for icons mainly used on compound badges		
		
Multi-course Milestone Learning Pathway	Professional Certification Learning Pathway	Professional Membership

Proficiency Levels		
		
Novice or entry-level	Performer or practitioner level	Expert level

## Colour guide

Colours are used on **unitary badges to indicate the category of competence** that the award belongs to. These categories are based on the eAcademy Competency Framework and consist of:

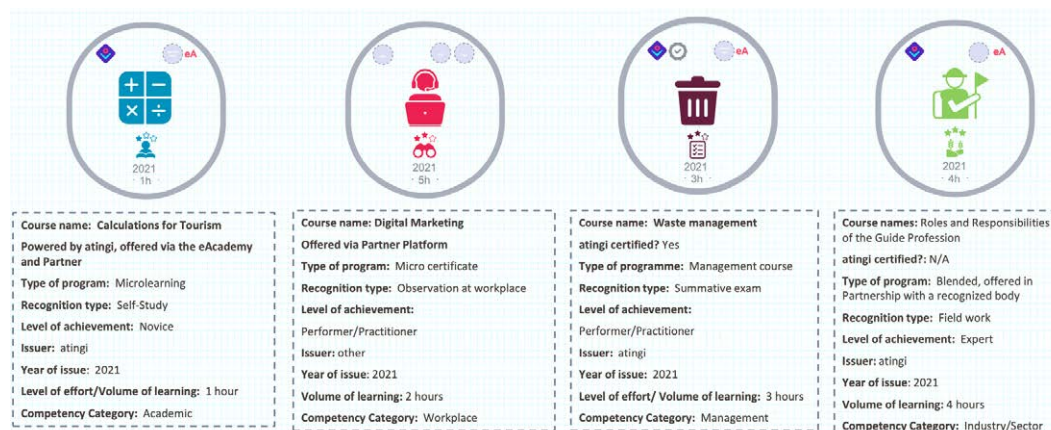
- Academic Competencies
- Personal Effectiveness Competencies
- Workplace Competencies
- Industry/Sector Competencies
- Management Competencies

The visual Badge Guidebook features descriptions and examples for these categories and assigns the following colours to them:

				
Management Competencies	Workplace Competencies	Industry/Sector Competencies	Personal Effectiveness Competencies	Academic Competencies

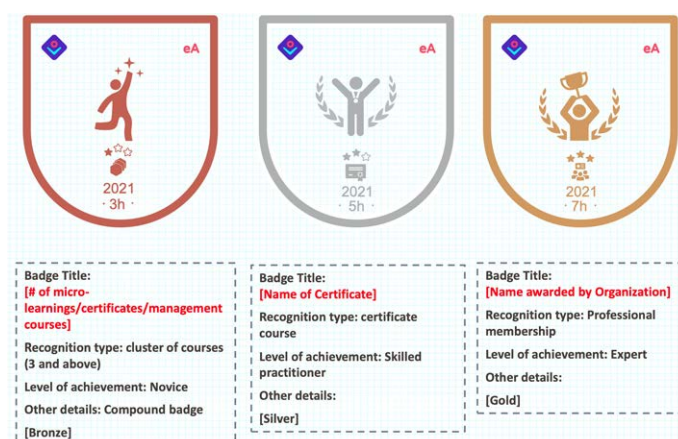


Here are some examples:



Colours are also used however on **compound badges**. Here they are used for the entire badge and **indicate the level of recognition along a learning pathway** on a three-colour scale (bronze, silver and gold).

Here are some examples:



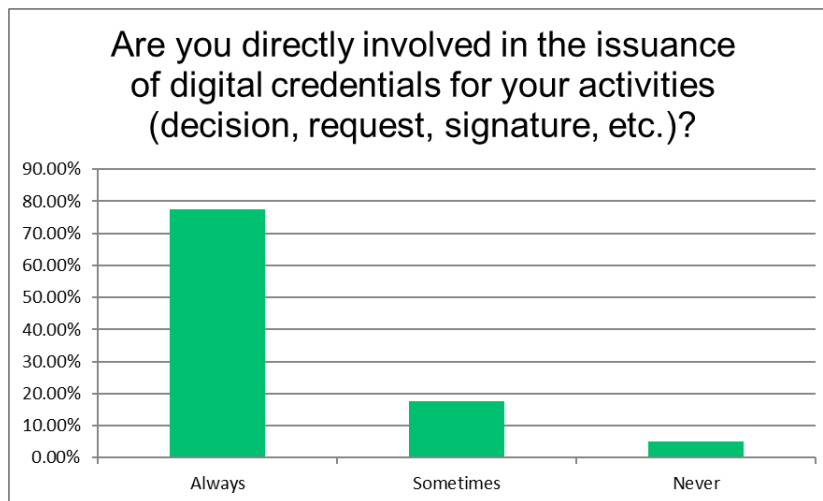
Special award badges may have some further colours (easily distinguishable from the other badge types) as in the following examples:



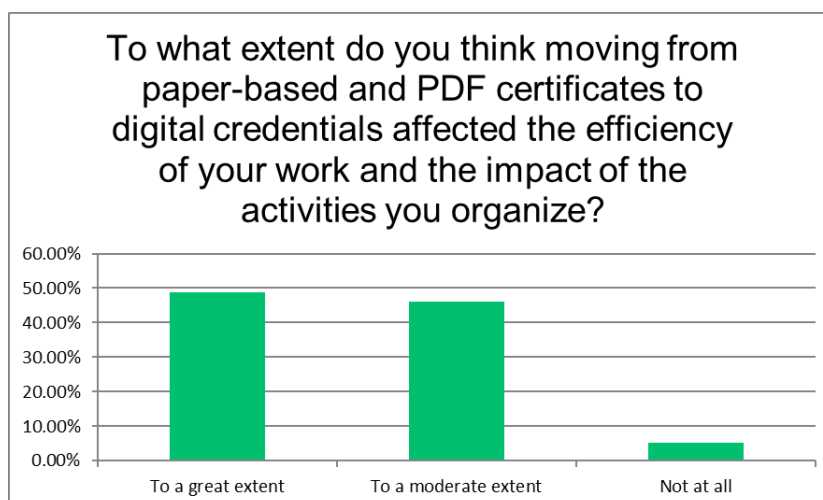
Have a look at the [atingi eAcademy Tourism and Hospitality one-pager](#) for a slight variation of the above examples!

## Survey - Details<sup>74</sup>

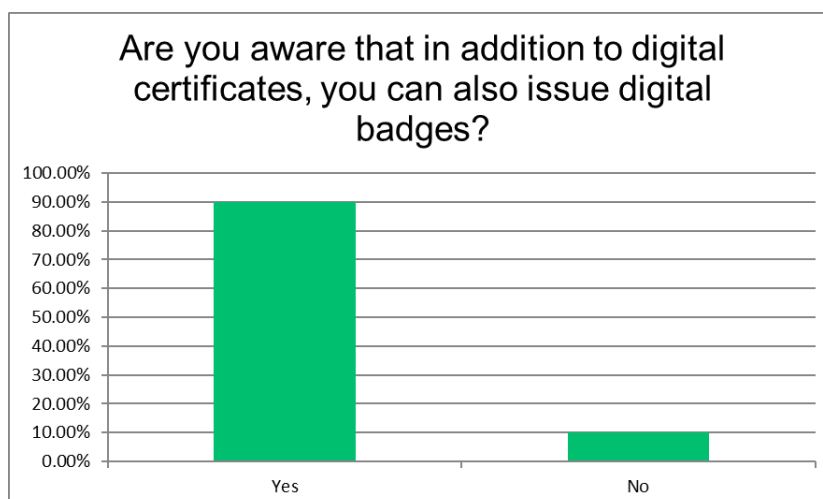
- Responses = 41
- Activity managers: 39%, Assistants: 61%



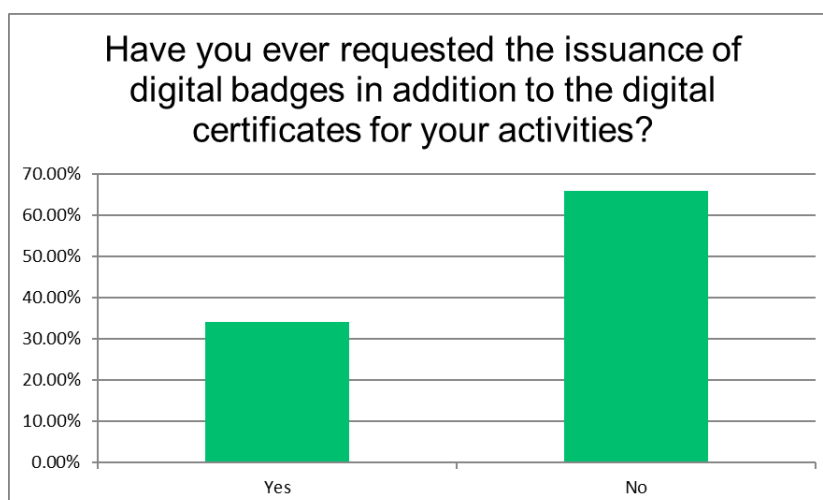
<sup>74</sup> See spreadsheet report in Dropbox folder: 2023\_ITCILO\_Digital\_Badges-Resources  
[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/yreui4jmntt1rk0/AADkA\\_CO-YLqC-ZAWShIFuQaa?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/yreui4jmntt1rk0/AADkA_CO-YLqC-ZAWShIFuQaa?dl=0)



- Awareness of ability to issue badges: 90%



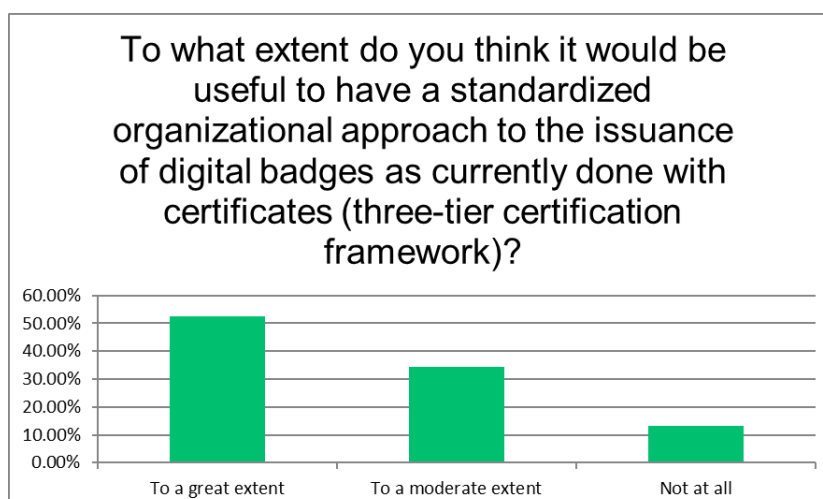
- Have issued badges: 34%



- Opinion re value add of issuing badges (full answers: 11. Bolding added)
  - more recognition and digital engagement
  - good for **social media, networking for participants and marketing for the Centre** to give more visibility to participants
  - People are more satisfied
  - **Digital badges incentivized short-term goals and micro-credentials for shorter learning journeys**
  - use the digital badges in social media, for example LinkedIn
  - **A short, clear, immediate “slogan”**
  - 3 thoughts:
    - a huge jump in enthusiasm for training
    - an increased rate of **course completion**
    - **interest from people outside the organization** when shared via social media (e.g. LinkedIn) and electronic signature in e-mails
  - They like them very much and add them to their signature. The only time we did not issue them, they asked for them so we issued them afterward. I find them a great promotional tool.
  - Participants like it and request it.
  - **looks good, immediately underlines key topic**
  
- Opinion re value vs confusion  
(Full answers: 23    Value=10    Nuanced/neutral=9    Confusion=2)
  - I don't know whether they add value
  - **it depends on how it is managed**
  - Don't know
  - Just value, participants love to attach their credentials
  - add value
  - I have been made aware of the fact that digital badges, in a way, assign a “title” to the participant, such as: “[subject] expert” or “[subject] professional”. For the time being, my impression has been that the **digital badges are better suited for lengthier courses, or for those at the end of which participants obtain a fully-fledged diploma, rather than a certificate of participation or achievement.** I am, however, open to the idea of incorporating them into my courses in the near future.
  - **not really, it is very clear**
  - “yes they add value”
  - We have not used them
  - Some understand and other not
  - It depends on the target audience(s) and on the type of activity. **Some skill-based activities may be more suitable to the awarding of colored “belts” (Digital/learning**

**design? Project management? Negotiation skills? OSH?) whereas other topics are more formal/political: in this case a more formal recognition such as a certificate is still the best option and the addition of badges may be confusing.**

- It will add value.
- I believe they add value and encourage participants in their journey to receiving a full certificate.
- I think, digital badges add value and not confuse the participants.
- No feedback from participants
- At all. **Digital badges add value to certificates of participation/achievement and is a way to further showcase new skills**
- They add value
- They add value. For a course we had forgotten to request for it, participants asked for it right away.
- Badges are probably good tool to recognize specific competencies/skills acquired throughout the learning process within a training activity. For simply completing the course is more appropriate delivering a certificate.
- I think they add value but they also might confuse participants. If well explained at the very beginning of courses I think it is a good idea.
- No
- Usefulness of a standardized approach to the issuance of digital badges (87% positive)
  - 53% To a great extent
  - 34% To a moderate extent
  - 13% Not at all

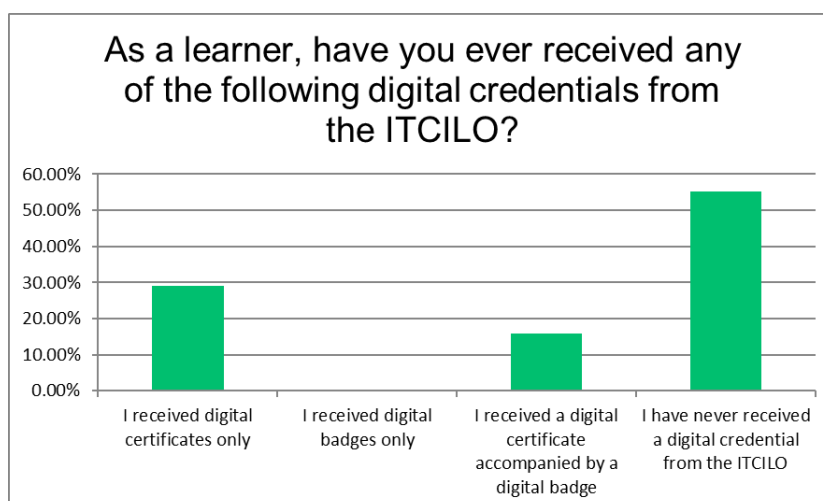


- Issued credentials for non-training activity?
  - 78% No
  - 22% Certificates only: 22
  - 0% Certificates and badges
  - 0% Badges only



- Opinion: value of issuing ONLY badges for events and other less formal reasons?  
(Full answers: 16    Yes=5    Nuanced/neutral/unknown=10    No=1)
  - We should conduct a survey among the participants as the potential recipients of the badges
  - There would definitely be a value to this, as it would motivate attendants to be fully present and actively participate in the event. It would certainly be beneficial to those who need to take time off of work or their studies, and need to have with them “proof” of having attended the event (be it for their academic supervisors, or line managers).
  - “it would be good. It would be useful also to have badges for motivation and completion of sections of activities - gamification. However, it would be useful to have some **guidelines on the different tools/badges and credentials that we could use, both for internal use (motivation and gamification) and outside use (badge for participants to share along the credentials).**”
  - do not know - we have not fully understood the correct use of the badges
  - I don't know.
  - Might be a good idea so that people have a kind of “certification” of attendance
  - I would in favour of a form of after-event recognition because this stimulates participation (vs registration to the event only) and it represents an opportunity to open a communication channel with stakeholders. However, I would not opt for a “badge” as it seems to me too similar to private sector loyalty campaigns.
  - “It would mean recognition of participation. Further, it would mean pax participation in non-training events is valued by the ITICLO.”

- I think digital badges would be a perfect fit for events, but could also work for shorter trainings offered within a larger training.
  - Activity manager should decide if digital badges should be issued, not activity assistant
  - don't know
  - I think it would be a good solution to certify participants' attendance at a conference, or event.
  - I believe that digital badges should be a "plus" to the certificate, not the other way around.
  - clearer learning path compare to the participation in non-training activity
  - environmental impact
  - I don't think a digital badge alone adds value. It should always being accompanied by a digital certificate.
- Received digital certificates?
    - 55% Never
    - 29% Certificate only
    - 16% Certificate and badge



- Further comments  
(Full answers: 11    Pro=    Nuanced/neutral/unknown=    Con=)
  - I welcome digital certificates and look forward to learning more about digital badges
  - I would be interested in exploring the possibility for the ITCILO courses I manage (and, later on, for all ITCILO courses) to obtain **“Continuing Professional Development (CPD)” accreditation**. I've been made aware that, across the UK and Europe, tertiary education institutions tend to be more prone to spread the word about CPD-Accredited courses.
  - **The ITC is not ready for Digital Badges + Some of our Activity Managers even request to go on with Paper Certificates** after several years the ITC has introduced the Digital credentials....+ **there is not an institutional use of the Social Media, even at higher level some of the Senior Management are not even on LinkedIn** + I am not sure that

Digital Badges are really taken into account by HR departments but surely can be nice to share on LinkedIn or other SM

- I think we should simplify the system to request digital certificates to ICTS.
- Digital credentials, in general, are an excellent tool because they allow participants to share their awards in a digital format as well as potential employers to validate the source of the award itself. I am not so keen on badges because, as indicated in a previous answer, they sound “cheap”, business-oriented and not in line with the “academic” image of the Centre (although some training institutions might be using them). Moreover, the limited space available on the badges may lead to the creation of “strange” titles (I saw a few of them who were, in my modest opinion, not in line with the Centre’s image). In a nutshell, I would definitely maintain the current certification standards (putting a special emphasis on the Diplomas), consider an ad-hoc recognition for large events (both online and in person) and give more time for reflection about the badges option.
- Participants value ITCILO credentials greatly. They feel proud. They feel they have accomplished something. This, in turn, makes us feel proud.
- It would perhaps be useful to have an archive of course requests to be able to quickly copy-paste standard information from certain courses. It happens that I may be in charge of a course, but the year before, a colleague was in charge of it and did not save the request sent to credentials, and therefore one has to start from scratch to fill in the various fields. Personally, for all the courses I have attended, I have saved the managers’ e-mails under the course folder, so that anyone who comes back the following year can already find a sort of draft e-mail to send to credentials for the creation of the certificate.
- Make them more visible on social media
- I think the process to request digital credentials and seek approval from the manager should be automated and centralized in a digital system/workflow, such as OSS with fewer email exchanges.
- Clearer recognition of the learner’s path compared to participation in non-training activity
- I suggest that we can issue different badges for the same certificates, i.e that all participants do not receive the same badge but that it is tailored according to their training path.



## Interviews - Details

### Group 1: PRO 2022-12-14

#### Participants:

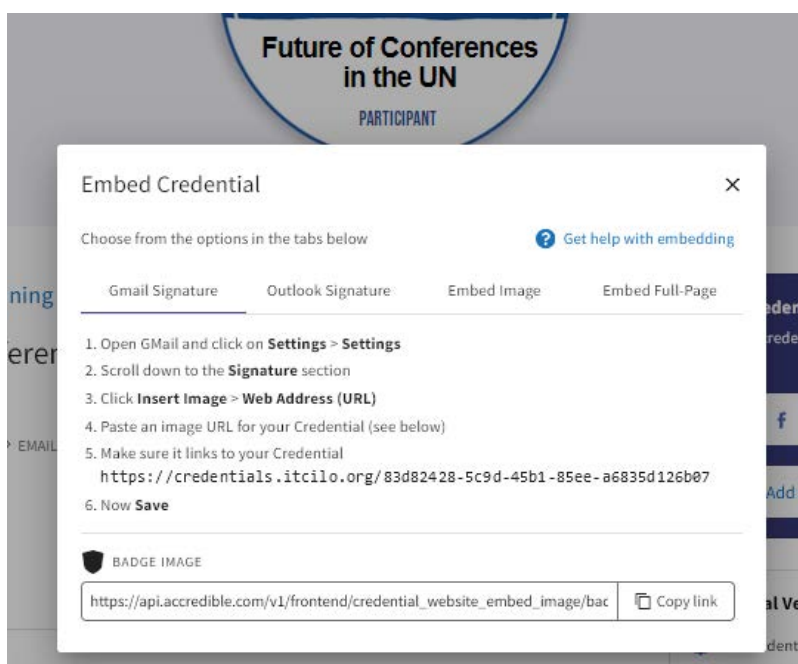
- Sandro Pettineo: Programme Officer (employers activities programme)
- Rachida Zingara: Programme Assistant (employers activities programme)
- Marco Cunetto: Programme Officer (employers activities programme)
- Giulia Bertolino: Junior Project Secretary (organizational development and project services programme)

#### Questions:

- What is a digital badge compared to a digital certificate? Commonalities and differences?
  - Ease of sharing: LinkedIn, (email signature) > this can strengthen the credibility in the market/Company and employer's organizations
  - Proxy, simple visualization, visual impact: visualize quickly the (wealth of) skills of the participants
  - Repeat sharing, "badge of honour" detail of profile
  - Visualize quickly the wealth of skills
  - (share badge collections?)
  - Certificate: used more for recruitment
  - Badge: Social media, network, marketing...not full certificate "shorthand"
  - "... perfect token, not that detailed > signaling, that you have achieved a result; sort of proxy to share, or appealing; BUT in contrast to certificate not "that official"
  - To different purposes:
    - Certificates: advance motivation for course registration: earn the certificate to support job applications, because more official
    - Badges: More shareable; better for social media, Marketing, ... Sharing, Mails > most people don't read the whole certificate > Badge straightforward, focus on key-message
  - Like a stamp that can be shared over time in email signatures, etc.
  - Increases Centre visibility
  - Badges can influence others "see my new skill"
  - 3 keywords in badge image: a way to be more specific..
  - Engagement of learner... journey badges, pathway markers
  - What is shared? Just one badge/a collection of badges?
  - in one project (organizational development and project services programme), three badges are awarded for different stage. Once participants are awarded the higher Badge, they can replace the other/lower ones

- Is a certificate more valuable than a badge? Why?
  - Certificate: job application, more institutional
  - The only institutionally valid form of recognition
  - More detailed on the image itself, explain the skills
  - Badges are used in a different way: more in the direction of skills
  - Badges are like a “plus”
  - Recognize trainers: EOS Trainer, etc. (certification “title”)
  
- What’s the difference between a 1-hr Certificate of Participation and a 1-hr participation badge?
  - Could use more differentiation (also re Participation/Achievement)
  - NB: pre/post test for Certificate of Participation
  - Badge for non-training event – **can’t certify KSAs, but a signal**
  - Some Trainings don’t qualify for certificates > in such cases maybe badges could be used? e.g., self-paced training < 1 hour “learning pill” (? but learners may want certificate...)
  - Networking, partnering, especially on LinkedIn
  
- How can digital badges add value as companions to digital certificates?
  - NA, but see above
  
- How can digital badges deliver value by themselves?
  - Community of Practice (CoP)
  - Ways to motivate participants... (most active, etc.)
  - NB: issued solely by managers (not peers)
  
- What are some limitations of badges compared to certificates?
  - Lack of ability to express sufficient detail in image...
  - Not as official, institutional
  - Badge is proxy for networking, marketing
  
- What do your learners think?
  - Why learners like badges: they can reshare them on a regular/continual basis, personal profile (e.g. in email); badges are less formal and more relaxed than showing a certificate
  - Motivational purpose, gamification
  - Gamification part is a good way > but: opinions differ between badges that are used within a course (gamification) and badges awarded at the end of a course (recognition)
  - Learners can demonstrate that they are upskilling, motivated, lifelong learners (LLL)
  - Researcher ad hoc: How do learners know a badge is available?
    - They learn during a course or program (Third time: M1, M2, ...M3)
    - Told them why in course.. Repeating an earlier opinion, “It’s like a pin, or button.”

- How could digital badges cause confusion? How can we prevent confusion?
  - No confusion yet (in this group), understood as pin, an additive “goody”
- What are some principles for when/when not to issue a digital badge?
  - At the moment no rules, up to activity manager
  - Some “unnecessary”
  - It has to be clear internally, what the function of certificates/badges is! If this is not clear within the organization, then there will be confusion among the participants!
    - Rules should be defined
    - Some trainers are not aware that the decision is up to them
    - **Badges are more social**
  - Share certificate on LinkedIn, then badge (ghost share, embed in badge)
  - Example: a participant first shared her certificate and then shortly after the badge
    - Sharing a certificate: linked back to the credential > Certificate and Badge
    - Badge: often shared as an image (ghost-share)
    - Eiman: When a badge is shared, it's often shared as a picture > no linking back to the hosting credential > ghost share
    - Need to verify if email signature is link...



- Badge title should talk about the attributes of the holder, not the course, e.g. evidence based advocacy > evidence based advocate is a better “title”/name
- How could digital badges be used for activities not currently recognized? (menu below, see highlights for endorsement from group):

- STANDARD COURSES (including Master Programmes)
- TAILORED TRAINING ACTIVITIES
  - Events? (from Accredible +)
    - Speakers?
    - Participants?
    - Entry ID?
    - Reflective participant feedback?
    - Objectives/pathways at event?
  - Membership? (from Accredible)
- OTHER (suggested by researchers)
  - AWARDS?
  - VOLUNTEERING?
  - EXPERTISE?
  - MENTORING?
    - **Mentoring/coaching.. more like a badge**
  - INTERESTS, GOALS...
    - **Could be interesting, part of CoP maybe**
  - CHANGE MANAGEMENT?
  - TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER?
  - PROJECT/INITIATIVE (“Mission”) RECOGNITION?
  - ADVOCACY RECOGNITION?
  - ORGANIZATION BADGES?
    - **Not on radar, lots of work!**
    - **Maybe for org transformation, Centre as management consultancy)**
- Should digital badges have an explicit taxonomy, or framework? (e.g. formal/informal)
  - Yes... what purpose they serve, what message they provide ... colour, size, etc.
  - Motivation, gamification, journey, e.g. 5 micro badges – super badge, but colour and size of badge should be very different (from more formal types)
  - Achievements, completions
- Should such a taxonomy be visible, or should all ILO badges look the same?
  - Yes: depending on what purpose they have and what message they transport
  - - Different colors, sizes > different Levels of Badges
    - cf.: Badges inside a course (to motivate the participants, ...) vs. Badges as a certificate
    - To clarify: Why are there some badges with a red label?
- From the survey...Can it make sense to have assessed badges stacking into, e.g. a Certificate of Achievement? Pros and cons of that approach?

- Yes
- Looking forward, how could learners extract more value from digital credentials after they receive them?
  - Learner Profile on eCampus can hold collection
  - Accredible wallet is a collection (Researcher observation: all credentials/transcript, no curation, ordering)
  - Groups(?) in Accredible
- Can Activity Managers/Assistants support learners to achieve this? What support would they need to help learners?
  - NA

## Group 2: CON/NEVER ISSUED DIGITAL BADGES 2022-12-15

### Participants:

- Charles Crevier (CC): Manager, Social Protection, Governance and Tripartism (SPGT)
- Constanza De Toma (CDT): Programme Officer, SPGT

### More about SPGT

Social Protection, Governance and Tripartism Programme:

- Two diplomas
- ~4200 participants per year > 12 000 learning hours in total (all courses together)
- ~20 free courses
- ~2000 participants
- New diploma in development
- The question is, how to implement badges in the diploma (if so) > danger, to get a very confusing system.

Participants can track their progress through eCampus:

- Can see/show, how many courses they completed
- Weekly assignments, final presentation, final technical note
- Through the courses, the participants can track/see how many points they got > transparent
- At the end, when finalized the assessment: if more than 60 (out of 100) hours:
  - Certificate of achievement
  - 50-60 hours: certificate of participation > not valuable for diploma
- Diploma: 3 courses and a capstone project

Technical issue/problem: some have two profiles on eCampus > hard to identify, which courses have been completed > has to be checked manually

## Interview questions

- What is a digital badge compared to a digital certificate? Commonalities and differences?
  - Hard to answer, they don't use badges
  - Need clarity, recognition to explain to external stakeholders, even colleagues, currently even just the Certificate framework
  - NB: ITCILO credentials are NOT academic credentials(ie for ECTS credit)
  - Badges are short trainings, micro learning, fragmented/aggregate
  - But this breaks the principle of the larger credential framework: notion of a backbone, or arc of learning
  - Confuses message
  - Some to use badges: engagement, personalized pathways, learning paths
  - Participants can display with very little investment, often inappropriately: that they are "expert" in a particular area, etc.
  - Researcher ad hoc: Micro-credential? A meaningful term?
    - A direction they didn't want to go.. too small
    - But context matters.. Not a term that's heard much at the Centre or its partners
    - Before going deeper into the discussion: it has to be clarified that there is one unified strategy across the house!
  - "I wonder if it can support self-paced learning? Badges as participation." (Researcher comment: or completion)
  - SP Program has different types of training: blended, residential, totally online now 50/50, seems a good mix
  - The core unit: learning hours
  - Analyst track:
    - 1 residential Academy, learning deliverables include policy note(s)
    - 3 courses other are online for 7 weeks, with weekly assignments
- Is a certificate more valuable than a badge? Why?
  - Yes. More clarity, based on an agreed discipline (framework)
- What's the difference between a 1-hr Certificate of Participation and a 1-hr participation badge?
  - Certificate of Participation for less than 60% vouches for course participation when achievement not shown ("2nd best")
  - Not for events so far, maybe consider?
  - Badges maybe for other types of courses...? E.g. free-standing, not part of a track
  - Self-paced courses, so as not to confuse...?
  - Tailor-made courses (in field) → Certificate of Participation.. outside the diploma journey
  - Badges shouldn't be part of a learning track
  - Confusion, unless as self-paced or enhancement after

- Researcher ad hoc: what if they do more than the minimum requirement of courses for Analyst?  
→ then they can go for the Manager Diploma
- How can digital badges add value as companions to digital certificates?  
Would like to get some input/ideas on how to use badges (in a general way)
  - Researcher displayed:
    - Recognition in a Flexible Taxonomy
    - Taxonomy: Inter-American Development Bank  
*See Annexes / Supporting Visuals for Interviews*
  - More confusion?
  - It's a decision if you either use certificates OR badges
  - Community of Practice has some appeal... maybe develop alumni, practitioners of Centre learning:  
“... so don't include badges in diplomas but maybe use badges beyond the diplomas, for example, to show, that you are engaged”
  - Mixing certificates and badges BEFORE you achieve your certificate would lead to confusion
  - Possibly a different kind of knowledge acquisition, or expertise
- How can digital badges deliver value by themselves?
  - Potentially in self-paced courses
  - As mentioned before: No overlapping with certificates
  - But maybe for CoP, after the diplomas/certificates
  - Badges maybe to show/mark “another kind” of knowledge/engagement!
- What are some limitations of badges compared to certificates?
  - Partially a technical question and a meaning question
    - Badges carry the risk that someone is seen as an “expert” even though there is no real expertise
  - As long as there is no overlap, badges could be useful/appreciated
  - At the moment badges are added to/mixed with credentials/diplomas and are not “separated” from diplomas
  - There are first tries to implement badges for e.g. participating in an event
- What do your learners think?
  - Defer to the survey, but opinion: people want to feel proud, reassured by certificate, “next to university degree”, vs “volleyball + ITCILO together” e.g. professions have clear certification pathways → Centre is moving to certifications for SP Analyst, etc.  
vs: “treats” for showing up at conferences should not put in a CV
- How could digital badges cause confusion? How can we prevent confusion?
  - The most important thing is to have a clear boundary between the existing certification system and a (potential) badging system > there definitely should be no overlapping

- What are some principles for when/when not to issue a digital badge?
  - Most important principle again: respect and have clear boundaries between the existing system and and badges!
    - There must be a clear definition of use > Use badges or certificates ALONE, no mixture
    - Avoid confusion between the different credentials
    - Have a clear and transparent strategy (also in communication to the public)
  - At the moment there is a huge gap between the different programs/certificates (concerning learning hours) > maybe there should be smaller programs/certifications like e.g. “mini-certificates” in the future to fill the gap?
    - The question is: should the gap be filled up with badges? Or other certificates?
  
- How could digital badges be used for activities not currently recognized?
  - Further description, suggestions:
  - STANDARD COURSES (including Master Programmes)
  - TAILORED TRAINING ACTIVITIES
    - Events? (from Accredible +)
      - Speakers?  
***“Like the idea of badges for speakers”***
      - Participants?  
**Could be a nice thing, is an interesting idea: At the moment for events, they use certificates of participation > which also could cause confusion**  
***Yes, could solve issues checking attendance***
    - Entry ID?
    - Reflective participant feedback?
    - Objectives/pathways at event?
  - Membership? (from Accredible)
  - Maybe in the direction of CoP
  - (in the chat) “Badges for ITC-ILO, ILO colleagues & partners too”
- OTHER (suggested by researchers)
  - AWARDS?  
*Badges for recognizing achievement > for things, that are not “just” learning things but social things/competencies*
  - VOLUNTEERING?
  - EXPERTISE?
  - MENTORING?  
*for coaches and tutors*
  - INTERESTS, GOALS...  
*Potentially..*



*BUT: dismiss the idea to integrate badges into the certification process*

*There should be no mixture with certification system and no co-existence with certificates/diploma*

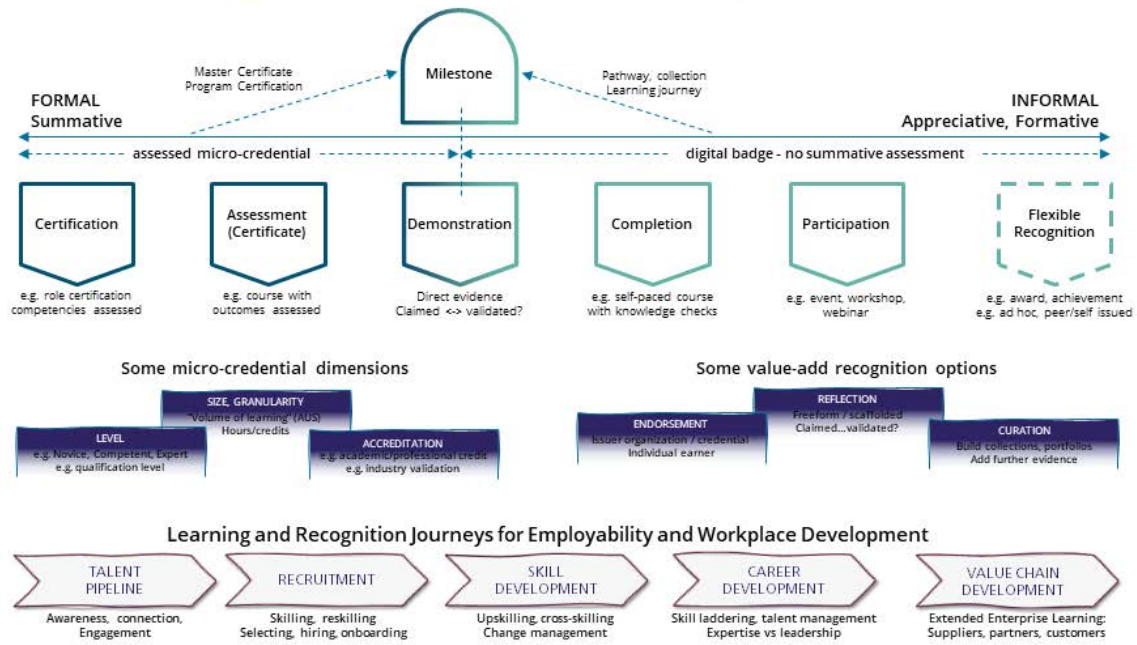
- CHANGE MANAGEMENT?
  - TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER?
  - *Yes, makerspaces, VR workshops, etc.*
  - PROJECT/INITIATIVE (“Mission”) RECOGNITION?
  - ADVOCACY RECOGNITION?
  - ORGANIZATION BADGES?
- ITC Director is keen on developing space for non-training, with good data to show more diverse learning with impact, certify/recognize what is happening
  - But: standardized approach is tough, low volume, emergent concepts, too soon to solidify
  - ISSA certification<sup>75</sup>, tough to time get off org certification off the ground
  - Researcher ad hoc: plans to formalize Diploma/Achievement?
    - →11 Masters at ITC (Turin, Vienna PSE partnerships)
  - Technically ILO programmes are stronger, more focused, more robust than university programmes. Universities have a much wider reach and smaller, more stretched teams. Unis can be good for less specialized areas, but it’s ironic that universitiess would certify the really focused, niche programs of the Centre
  - Credit programs take a long time to develop. ITC non-credit = more agile
  - ISSA/ISO standards can be applied for, lots of work for minimal return...most of the value is in alignment, building internal credibility over time.. ITC can self-assert certifications, (backed by evidence of quality).
  - ISO is not as big a draw.. It can be **about brand more than accreditation** (e.g. World Bank vs UWinnipeg)
  - **Ban co-issue, carve out a space for badges only...**
  - **Clear subset, non-formal / informal value**
  - **Need processes, guidance on systematization, implementation**
  - Researcher comment: endorsement as a key factor, see e.g. > HPass (?)
    - *Use standards*
    - *Endorsement as a key milestone in the reorganization journey*
    - *Having partners which support the credential system helps*
    - *See e.g. HPass standards certification - signals really clearly, what you are*
  - Should digital badges have an explicit taxonomy, or framework? (e.g. formal/informal)
    - Yes, what they said, **publicly shared..... For both badges and certificates** (ie publish Framework circular, create a published framework for badges)
  - Should such a taxonomy be visible, or should all ILO badges look the same?

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.itcilo.org/resources/issailo-guidelines-knowledge-sharing-and-innovation>

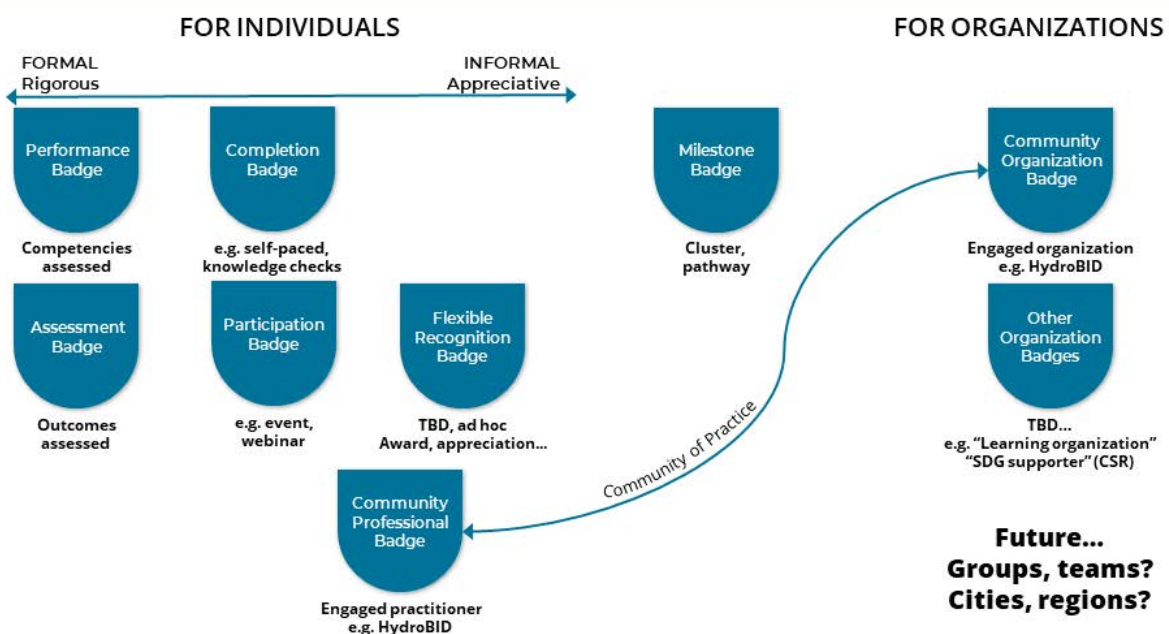
- Yes, but happy to leave the details to those who want to develop them...
- From the survey...Can it make sense to have assessed badges stacking into, e.g. a Certificate of Achievement? Pros and cons of that approach?
  - Or smaller Certs of Achievement...
  - Stackable certificates, not stackable badges....
  - If badges are used > they have to fit into the system > there has to be a taxonomy / clear clarification about the different layers of certification!
- Looking forward, how could learners extract more value from digital credentials after they receive them?
  - Emails, LinkedIn...+ ?
  - Cert Part : with I play volleyball, nice post in social media, but also share with managers, demonstrate LLL, connection to the world.... Minor, not crucial
  - Cert Achievement: more powerful.... named roles for course
  - Diploma:
  - .. **Some potential for confusion between Achievement/Diploma**
  - **Recommend a public page showing Framework, for alignment**
  - Retrospective recognition of career H+V movement, building professional reputation
- Can Activity Managers/Assistants support learners to achieve this? What support would they need to help learners?
  - Guidance necessary to help managers help learners... curation, etc.
  - Where to show? Start on eCampus, but when fully digital, now centralizing Achievements on Accredible...good if they are only in one location, to help learners focus their digital profiles..
  - Also, be careful to distinguish the two categories...avoid confusion of badges
  - General trend is to move in the direction of “digital portfolio”

## Supporting Visuals for Interviews

### Spectrum of Recognition in a Flexible Taxonomy for Careers



### Taxonomy: Inter-American Development Bank



# INFO

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION  
PLEASE CONTACT**

**International Training Centre of the ILO**  
Viale Maestri del Lavoro, 10  
10127 Turin - Italy

[communications@itcilo.org](mailto:communications@itcilo.org)  
[www.itcilo.org](http://www.itcilo.org)