

## Open Badge Network

### 07A1 Open Badges and Quality Management

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## Executive Summary

### Who is this document for?

This discussion paper focuses on quality assurance for Open Badge initiatives and will be particularly relevant to any person or organisation planning to issue badges. The paper will also inform the Open Badge Network's quality assurance processes.

### What methodology was used to develop the paper?

In the production of this discussion paper we analysed existing implementations of Open Badge initiatives and gathered data via a survey completed by members of the Open Badges community. The survey was promoted to the diverse range of organisations and sectors who access the Open Badge Network and partners' communication channels, such as social media feeds, blogs and networks.

### What does this document cover?

This document presents data gathered from the Quality Survey and provides recommendations for quality assurance of Open Badge initiatives. We outline our methodology, introduce Personas and a role-based approach to quality and present the findings from the survey in relation to the different stages of an Open Badge initiative: initial design; implementation; delivery and review. Under each section, we provide some over-arching recommendations influenced by the survey data.

A Quality Canvas will also be produced to accompany this paper. The research that informs this paper will be combined with existing research into designing badges of value, that has been realised through the development of the [Digitalme Badge Design Canvas](#). Downloaded more than 9000 times and translated into 5 languages, the Design Canvas helps users to consider a role-based approach to designing badges of value. The new Quality Canvas will provide a tool to help badge issuers incorporate quality assurance processes into their Open Badge initiatives.

### How can this document be used?

We hope this discussion paper and the Quality Canvas, will provide useful tools for anyone considering setting up their own Open Badge initiative. The paper will provide background information and recommendations to consider for the different stages of an Open Badge initiative. The Quality Canvas will provide an easy to use tool, that can be completed to step through the key elements to consider in order to ensure the quality of your Open Badge initiative.



## An introduction to the paper and outline of our methodology

How do we ensure quality in Open Badge initiatives? Quality has an objective and a subjective dimension. A person's perception of quality in terms of badges will depend on a variety of factors, such as his or her function in the Open Badge development process (from design to delivery), context and the person's role when engaging with badges.

Given the importance of understanding all key badge stakeholders' quality requirements, we structured the first stage of gathering data for this discussion paper in the form of a Quality Survey to capture people's approaches and views on what constitutes quality when issuing, earning and viewing badges.

In this paper, we present the findings from the Quality Survey within a role based context, and in relation to the different stages of an Open Badge initiative: initial design; implementation; delivery and review. Under each section, we provide some over-arching recommendations influenced by the survey data.

We will also use the survey data to create a version of the [Digitalme Badge Design Canvas](#) focusing on Quality. The Quality Canvas will have a similar structure to the Design Canvas but allow users to explore high level quality considerations. The Quality Canvas will sit alongside the existing Canvas, allowing users to consider quality of a badge initiative at a strategic level before moving onto considering quality / value of a specific badge using the Design Canvas.

## The Quality Survey

The objective for the Quality Survey was to gather community input on what constitutes quality from the perspective of badge issuers, earners and viewers. The survey was made available at the following link on the 4th of February 2016 and data presented here was gathered on the 9th August 2016. The survey was disseminated via the Open Badge Network portal, twitter and via invitations to complete:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/OBN-QualityOpenBadges>

The survey included a mix of fixed and open ended questions, informed by existing experience and research into Open Badges and quality. We believed a survey provided an intuitive method of gaining input from the community and that it should include a mix of fixed multi-choice and open ended questions. This would enable consistency of answers but also provide the flexibility for contributors to add their own viewpoints, not captured in the fixed choice questions. Open Badge Network partners were invited to collaborate on the authoring of the survey questions to ensure the questions were informed by the expertise of the partners and their research into quality.



## Personas

### Taking a role based approach to quality

Personas allow users to look at a subject through the lens of a particular role. The user is asked to consider questions from the perspective of that role, and answer on that basis. Given there are different ways of interacting with Open Badges, we asked for input to the survey based on different roles someone might assume while engaging with badges. Someone who is viewing a badge may have certain views relating to quality, whereas someone who is earning a badge, may have other views, for example.

For this reason we assumed a role-based Persona / pathway format where we invited people contributing to the survey and ultimately this discussion paper to:

1. Choose a badge related role (badge issuer, earner or viewer)
2. Consider their badge related pathway
3. List key badge related criteria for quality based on their role and pathway

We believed this structure would allow those engaging with the discussion paper to base their considerations of quality in a realistic context and in a way which was personalised and pertinent to them.

Respondents answered some initial general questions, including those to help them identify the role they would like to take and then were presented with the relevant section of the survey for the role they assumed.



## Considering quality - general results from the quality survey

Date created: February 4th, 2016

Date data presented here was gathered: August 9th 2016

39 total responses, 25 complete responses

The main sector represented by respondents was education.

### OBN - Open Badges and Quality Management (O7A1)

Sector: (please choose the sector descriptor that is most relevant)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Employer	10.0%	3
Education	60.0%	18
Charity or other not-for-profit	6.7%	2
Informal learning provider	3.3%	1
Government	3.3%	1
Other (please specify)	16.7%	5
answered question		30
skipped question		9

Other sectors noted under Other: Research institute; IT provider; Badging platform; Adult learning; IT provider.

Respondents were asked their experience level with badges. The majority stated they knew what badges were and had experience of badge systems (48.3%), 37.9% said they were new to badges and 13.8% responded that they were an experienced user and / or consumer of badges.

Q6: What is your experience level with badges?

### OBN - Open Badges and Quality Management (O7A1)

What is your experience level with badges?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I am new to the idea of badges	37.9%	11
I know what badges are and have experience of using badge system(s)	48.3%	14
I am an experienced user and/or consumer of badges	13.8%	4
answered question		29
skipped question		10



The following questions were used to aid Persona selection, (issuer, earner or viewer), by helping respondents define their badge goals and choose what aspect of the badge ecosystem were interested in.

Q7: What is the long-term goal you are trying to achieve with badges? (Tick all that apply)

### OBN - Open Badges and Quality Management (O7A1)

What is the long-term goal you are trying to achieve with badges? (Tick all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Earn and display badges to make me stand out to employers or in an admissions process for a course or apprenticeship	48.3%	14
Search badge pathways to give me ideas for jobs or experiences I would enjoy and could be good at	24.1%	7
Issue badges to ensure my staff have the right skills	37.9%	11
Issue badges to improve my students' employability chances	34.5%	10
Issue badges to give recognition for achievements in a community	48.3%	14
Issue badges to give recognition for non-formal learning	69.0%	20
View badges of prospective employees to ensure I get the best person for the job	20.7%	6
View badges of prospective students as part of the admissions process	31.0%	9
Other (please specify)		4
	answered question	29
	skipped question	10





Q8: What aspects of the Open Badge ecosystem are you interested in to reach your goal (tick all that apply)?

### OBN - Open Badges and Quality Management (O7A1)

What aspects of the Open Badge ecosystem are you interested in to reach your goal (tick all that apply)?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Viewing badges to earn	46.4%	13
Working towards a career	32.1%	9
Unlocking opportunities with badges	57.1%	16
Creating badges	57.1%	16
Creating badge pathways	67.9%	19
Issuing badges	57.1%	16
Displaying badges	46.4%	13
Using badges to support the discovery of intrinsic motivators	46.4%	13
Viewing badge earners	32.1%	9
Using badges in the recruitment process	28.6%	8
Building capability through badges	57.1%	16
Using badges to retain employees	28.6%	8
Tracking badge use and statistics	28.6%	8
Return on investment of implementing badges	7.1%	2
Other (please specify)		1
	answered question	28
	skipped question	11

Respondents were then prompted to assume a Persona and answer the questions from that perspective. The majority of respondents answered from the perspective of an issuer (61.3%).

Q9. What role would you like to assume?

1. **Badge issuer** - you will be taken to questions relating to being a badge issuer. (Response percent: 61.3%. Response count: 19)
2. **Badge earner** - you will be taken to questions relating to being a badge earner. (Response percent: 25.8%. Response count: 8)
3. **Badge viewer** - you will be taken to questions relating to being a badge viewer (Response percent: 12.9%. Response count: 4)

(Answered question: 31. Skipped question: 8)



## Initial design

### Relevant survey data findings and related recommendations

#### Recommended considerations:

As with any project, when starting an Open Badge initiative it is important to be clear about the long-term goals you are trying to achieve. Part of deciding this will include understanding what aspects of the Open Badge ecosystem you are interested in to reach your goal. Given the multiplicity of opportunities for using badges to achieve different aims, it is recommended that you clarify how you want to use badges from the start.

Quality Survey findings relating to initial design are presented below.

#### Community feedback: Quality from an issuer, earner and viewer perspective

All respondents were provided with options to choose from in terms of their long-term goal for badges. The highest response was to issue badges to give recognition for non-formal learning.

Q7: What is the long-term goal you are trying to achieve with badges? (Tick all that apply)

(The most popular options are highlighted in yellow.)

OBN - Open Badges and Quality Management (O7A1)		
What is the long-term goal you are trying to achieve with badges? (Tick all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Earn and display badges to make me stand out to employers or in an admissions process for a course or apprenticeship	48.3%	14
Search badge pathways to give me ideas for jobs or experiences I would enjoy and could be good at	24.1%	7
Issue badges to ensure my staff have the right skills	37.9%	11
Issue badges to improve my students' employability chances	34.5%	10
Issue badges to give recognition for achievements in a community	48.3%	14
Issue badges to give recognition for non-formal learning	69.0%	20
View badges of prospective employees to ensure I get the best person for the job	20.7%	6
View badges of prospective students as part of the admissions process	31.0%	9
Other (please specify)		4
	answered question	29
	skipped question	10

Other:



1. “Create learning pathways for staff who are learning about mLiteracy
2. Issue badges to give recognition for formal learning at a master degree level
3. Engage learners and make them more enthusiastic, embracing of learning process
4. Making visible student progression on a student-led course”

In terms of the varied opportunities provided by the Open Badge ecosystem, respondents were most interested in creating badge pathways, earners were most interested in unlocking opportunities with badges and viewers wanted to build capability through badges.

Q8: What aspects of the Open Badge ecosystem are you interested in to reach your goal (tick all that apply)?

#### OBN - Open Badges and Quality Management (O7A1)

What aspects of the Open Badge ecosystem are you interested in to reach your goal (tick all that apply)?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Viewing badges to earn	46.4%	13
Working towards a career	32.1%	9
Unlocking opportunities with badges	57.1%	16
Creating badges	57.1%	16
Creating badge pathways	67.9%	19
Issuing badges	57.1%	16
Displaying badges	46.4%	13
Using badges to support the discovery of intrinsic motivators	46.4%	13
Viewing badge earners	32.1%	9
Using badges in the recruitment process	28.6%	8
Building capability through badges	57.1%	16
Using badges to retain employees	28.6%	8
Tracking badge use and statistics	28.6%	8
Return on investment of implementing badges	7.1%	2
Other (please specify)		1
	answered question	28
	skipped question	11

Other: Develop alternative models of assessment to include skills and attributes

Issuer roles were specifically asked what they thought were valid uses of badges so that we could gain a sense of the kind of strategic outcomes issuers are interested in. Joint most popular

responses were: to use badges to help earners develop skills awareness and discover their intrinsic motivators; using badges to empower people to forge their own skills paths.

Q21: What do you think are valid uses of badges? (Tick all that apply)

OBN - Open Badges and Quality Management (O7A1)		
What do you think are valid uses of badges? (Tick all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Badges as extrinsic motivators, e.g. as something to attain to improve chances of employability, a higher paid job etc	66.7%	10
Badges as a means of discovering intrinsic motivators, e.g. as a way of recognising what someone already does, is good at and therefore is motivated to do	86.7%	13
Badges to ensure conformance with certain standards	73.3%	11
Badges to empower people to forge their own skill paths	86.7%	13
Other (please specify)		1
	answered question	15
	skipped question	24

Other: Badges as rewards for endeavour

These responses raise an interesting point, that those engaging with badges are looking beyond badges as just records of achievement and seeing the opportunities they offer in helping earners build internal recognition and agency in forging learning pathways. These have obvious benefits to badge viewers as well, such as employers or course admissions departments, in employing or admitting motivated people, who understand what they enjoy and are good at.

### Recommendations:

- Be clear about your long term goal for badges
- Understand what opportunities you want to enable through the badge ecosystem, for yourself, your badge earners and the viewers of your awarded badges
- Align your badge goal to the opportunities you want to enable and your desired strategic outcomes for badges
- Once you are clear on the above, consider how you will implement these, bearing in mind quality considerations presented in the next section.



## Implementation

### Relevant survey data findings and related recommendations

#### Recommended considerations

After developing the initial design of your Open Badge initiative, there are a number of considerations to take into account when implementing your initiative. Understanding perceptions of quality from the perspective of earners and viewers will help you to make decisions that will enhance interactions with your project. Consider:

- What constitutes quality in the design of your badges?
- What do badge earners look for in terms of quality when deciding to earn a badge?
- Will your badges form part of a wider scheme or pathway? Would badges being part of a wider scheme rather than standalone, imply an element of quality?
- Will you develop and follow Quality Assurance processes and expect these to be followed by those creating badges across your organisation? What will the key components of your Quality Assurance process be?

#### Community feedback: Quality from an issuer perspective

Overwhelmingly, respondents did consider quality when creating and issuing a badge.

Q16: Do you think about the quality of a badge when you create and issue a badge?

#### OBN - Open Badges and Quality Management (O7A1)

Do you think about the quality of a badge when you create and issue a badge?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	88.2%	15
No	0.0%	0
Don't know	11.8%	2
answered question		17
skipped question		22

When creating badges, 82.4% of respondents were concerned with ensuring appropriate evidence type and interpreted relevance of evidence as being the most important quality consideration: “I choose an evidence type that is relevant to the context, such as asking earners to submit a reflective piece or demonstrate their applied skills via a video etc”. Other highest rated quality considerations related to understanding the intended audience for the badge and being able to indicate the level of the badge, such as showing if it is part of a larger badge scheme or competency framework.

Q17: What do you think is important for building quality into a badge when you create it? (Tick all that apply)

### OBN - Open Badges and Quality Management (O7A1)

What do you think is important for building quality into a badge when you create it? (Tick all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I think about the intended audience for the badge	70.6%	12
I think about the value proposition for the earner of the badge	58.8%	10
I think about the value proposition for the issuer of the badge	58.8%	10
I think about the value proposition for the consumer of the badge	47.1%	8
I think about the most relevant type of assessment methodology for my badge, eg formative, summative, work-based, open assessment etc	64.7%	11
I choose an evidence type that is relevant to the context, such as asking earners to submit a reflective piece or demonstrate their applied skills via a video etc	82.4%	14
I create or source openly licensed high quality content to describe the criteria for the badge, such as good quality videos, images, well written content	41.2%	7
I ask others to check the content and assessment for the badge to ensure the criteria is clear and the assessment will assess what I want it to	52.9%	9
I should be able to indicate the level of the badge, e.g. if it is part of a larger badge scheme or competency framework	70.6%	12
I create a brand for the badge so that badge viewers will relate the badge to me or my organisation as an issuer	41.2%	7
I think about who should be named as the issuer for the badge, the organisation I work for or a department or person within it	52.9%	9
When I design the badge, I think about how other badges I create in future might relate to it	58.8%	10
I should be able to specify what evidence should be provided in order to earn the badge	64.7%	11
Other or additional information (please specify)		2
	answered question	17
	skipped question	22

Other or additional information:



1. "I think about the academic level of the evidence that is provided. I think about evidence that recognizes affective quality of the badge earner, such as 'value orientation' or 'being open minded'"
2. Design must engage and stimulate. Would students want to wear the badge? Would adults take pride in earning the badge and showing it off?"

The author was interested to note that the value proposition options were not rated higher in terms of ensuring quality in the creation of a badge, although this may have been picked up in the catch-all, high rated response, "I think about the intended audience for the badge". Being clear about the role-based value proposition has been a key element for developing successful badge projects for Digitalme - considering the value of the badge from an earner, issuer and viewer perspective. Understanding value from these perspectives, enables the issuer to build in those considerations from the start of the design process, and can help them to refine things like how granular the badge is, whether it will be part of a group of badges, if more badges are required to build up to a meta badge, if the evidence would be right for the intended audience of both earner and viewer etc.

Although a role-based value proposition may not always be the primary focus when developing a badge scheme, we can see from survey responses that gaining access to opportunities, building confidence and feeling empowered to forge skills paths are key goals. This suggests that although a badge could be considered high quality, if the value of the badge isn't clear to all badge stakeholders, this will diminish its value.

Gaining an insight into the processes respondents might use to build quality in to their badges prompted a question about quality assurance processes. The majority (60%) thought having quality assurance processes in place when creating badges was vital for quality, however 20% didn't think these were necessary and 20% weren't sure.

Q18: Do you think having quality assurance processes in place for your badges are vital to create badges that are considered of quality?

#### OBN - Open Badges and Quality Management (O7A1)

Do you think having quality assurance processes in place for your badges are vital to create badges that are considered of quality?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	60.0%	9
No	20.0%	3
Don't know	20.0%	3
If you answered yes, what would the vital components of a quality assurance process be?		5
	answered question	15
	skipped question	24

Those who answered yes, were asked to elaborate on the vital components of a QA process:

1. "Critical readers from outside your dept



2. The badge is relevant, has meaning, has value to the earner and the viewer.
3. a clear relation between the badge and the competence, skills, etc. that are rewarded with this badge and the context that they are shown in (for example, specific dialogue skills in a teaching environment)
4. Criteria of assessment and the nature of the evidence required.
5. Guaranteeing the lifespan and functionality of the issuing platform . Ensuring that the earning criteria and the kind of evidence which is required make sense with respect to the competences etc the badge is meant to certify.”

Could we infer from the fact that not all respondents answered positively in terms of having quality assurance procedures in place, that people have different concepts of quality assurance but also that badge initiatives may require different approaches to quality assurance? We believe the overall outputs of the survey show that most agree that some level of process is important to ensure validity, consistency and for the reputation of a badge scheme to be upheld, so perhaps quality assurance processes should be designed on a sliding scale, ensuring that the process is appropriate for the particular badge initiative’s setting. Some may need to be in-depth while others could be light touch, depending on considerations such as: if they include high stakes assessment; the value proposition to the earner (which may be to use badges for developing skills awareness and understanding of intrinsic motivation, rather than to necessarily share with prospective employers).

A common concern that has been raised about badges is the idea of ‘carpet badging’. This is the concept of badging everything and anything without consideration of the value of the badge or context for issuing it. To gain a sense of whether consideration of progression routes could help issuers avoid carpet badging, we asked if badges needed to be part of a wider scheme to be considered of quality. The majority thought they should be (46.7%) but over half didn’t think so or didn’t know. Perhaps what can be deduced from this is that respondents believe a standalone badge could still be of quality but that consideration of the wider context such as being part of a badge scheme, will on the whole, enhance badge quality.





Q19: Do you think badges need to be part of a wider badge scheme to be considered of quality?

#### OBN - Open Badges and Quality Management (O7A1)

Do you think badges need to be part of a wider badge scheme to be considered of quality?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	46.7%	7
No	26.7%	4
Don't know	26.7%	4
Additional information		3
	answered question	15
	skipped question	24

Additional information:

1. "This will make developing a badge system really complicated. In order to reach internationally recognized badges it is unavoidable to develop such a scheme though
2. I think transparency of the assessment criteria and process is key. Personally, being an open badge is important
3. Not mandatory, but I think it helps for recognition."

#### Community feedback: Quality from an earner perspective

To create badges of quality, understanding the earner perspective, should help to create badges that will be valued and taken up by earners.

All earner role respondents answered that they thought about quality when taking a badge.

Q10: Do you think about the quality of a badge when you take a badge?

#### OBN - Open Badges and Quality Management (O7A1)

Do you think about the quality of a badge when you take a badge?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100.0%	8
No	0.0%	0
Don't know	0.0%	0
	answered question	8
	skipped question	31



When asked what makes a good quality badge, the majority (87.5%) answered that the badge issuer must be a well-established organisation, which suggests that earners rely on existing trust networks when deciding if a badge is of quality. This perhaps creates challenges for new issuers gaining traction for their badges, however, other Open Badge Network research into supporting uptake of badges across geographical territories, [Guidelines for Badges in Territories \(O4A3\)](#), suggests that building networks around badge initiatives can help create overlapping and meaningful connections between badge earners, issuers and viewers. These can help badge earners and viewers get to know and trust the quality of badges being created by badge issuers and issuers to understand the opportunities they can open up for badge earners via their badges, among other benefits.

Once a prospective badge earner gets past the stage of evaluating the issuer, the second most popular indicator of quality was that the badge content was well presented. Joint third choices were the issuer being an organisation or individual they had heard of (see above) and that the badge would help them show they have learned something.

Q11: What makes a good quality badge? (Tick all that apply)

OBN - Open Badges and Quality Management (O7A1)		
What makes a good quality badge? (Tick all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
The badge must unlock an opportunity	25.0%	2
The badge issuer must be an organisation or someone I've heard of	50.0%	4
The badge issuer must be a well-established organisation	87.5%	7
The badge content must be well presented	75.0%	6
The badge helps me show I have learned something	50.0%	4
The badge shows I have participated in something, such as a professional development event	0.0%	0
The badge has challenging tasks associated with it	37.5%	3
If the badge contains evidence, the evidence must be visible to anyone viewing the badge	25.0%	2
The badge indicates the level of the badge, e.g. if it is part of a larger badge scheme or competency framework	37.5%	3
The quality of a badge depends on the context in which I use it	37.5%	3
Other or additional information (please specify)		2
	answered question	8
	skipped question	31

### Community feedback: Quality from a viewer perspective

Clearly badge earners will want their badges to be considered high quality by those viewing them, be that for the purposes of recruitment, course admissions or their own skills awareness.



Hence understanding the badge viewer perspective can be useful when creating badges of quality.

Only one respondent to the Quality Survey answered from the perspective of a badge viewer. When asked if they thought about the quality of a badge when they viewed it (Q23) and about how quality is built into the badge ecosystem (Q24), they answered yes.

Badges viewers were asked about quality criteria in terms of how much they would trust a badge and were asked to rank options from highest level of importance to lowest (1-8). The top three criteria for trusting a badge focus on being aware of the quality assurance procedures that had been implemented by the issuer, if the badge earner had received endorsements for their badge evidence from appropriately qualified people and if the badge indicated a level of competency.

Q25: Please rank in order how much you would trust a badge was of quality:

1. I would trust a badge if I was aware of the badge quality assurance procedures implemented by the issuer and believed them to be sound
2. I would trust a badge if the badge earner had received endorsements on their evidence from people working or teaching in that field
3. I would trust a badge if I could quickly ascertain the level of competency the badge indicated
4. I would trust a badge if it contained evidence that I could review
5. I would trust a badge if I knew other organisations were using them in their recruitment or retainment processes
6. I would trust a badge if it was recommended by someone I know
7. I would trust a badge if it had been issued by an organisation I had heard of
8. I would trust a badge if it came from a formal education institution

(Answered question: 1. Skipped question: 38)

Viewers were asked if badges should align to competency frameworks (Q26). They responded they should and commented: "They should have a capacity to align, but I wouldn't make it a requirement - so many badges don't represent competency; even in elements of competency."

When asked if badges should be mapped to a particular competency framework (Q27), they did not suggest a specific framework but did comment: "It would help me as a viewer to understand the value of a badge."



## Recommendations for quality when implementing an Open Badge initiative:

Once you have thought through the initial design for your badge initiative, considering how your badge goal aligns to the opportunities you want to enable and your desired strategic outcomes for badges, consider quality in terms of the intended audience of your badge. The value or 'worth' of a badge will be defined and created by all those who engage with it. Understanding why someone would want to earn or issue your badge or why a viewer would recognise and trust your badge will help to inform the process of designing, implementing and delivering badges of value. Consider the following:

- Be clear about the intended audiences for your badge
- Develop a role-based value proposition - be clear about why those engaging with your badge would want to earn, issue or view it
- Help your intended earners to know and trust the intended issuing organisation (the badge issuers may not be the same as the badge creators)
- Develop networks around your badge scheme
  - It can be helpful to include the issuing organisation, prospective earners and viewers of the badge in this. Networks can provide benefits such as helping earners explore who will be interested in accepting their badge and viewers to gain insight into the issuing organisation and badges they may wish to accept in recruitment or admissions processes for example. The Open Badge Network's resource, [Guidelines for Badges in Territories \(O4A3\)](#), provides guidance on how to develop networks to support the uptake of badges across a geographical territory.
- Ensure the type of evidence earners must provide is appropriate for what you want to assess, that badge content is well presented and that the badge will show the recipient has learned something. Aim to indicate the level of the badge and if it aligns with a competency framework
  - An output of the Open Badge Network is a Competency Repository that will aid in the mapping to, and sharing of, competency definitions. This work will be made available under the [Infrastructure](#) outputs (O2A3)
- Put quality assurance processes in place around the creation, assessing, awarding and management of your badges

## Other resources for designing badges that are of quality

Review the considerations for designing badges of value in the [O1A1-Open Badge Network Framework](#)



## Designing a badge scheme

There are many things to consider when designing a badge scheme. The simple course linked to below, will take you through the process of considering how to implement badges in your context, how to design a badge of value and how to start issuing badges. It includes the Digitalme Badge Design Canvas, which was created to support organisations through this process, to help them interrogate the quality of their badge idea, and create a practical roadmap for implementation.

- DigitalMe Academy: <https://www.openbadgeacademy.com/digitalme>
- You can download the Badge Design Canvas [here](#)

The following tools will also help you create the visual design for your badge. Responses from the respondent assuming the badge viewer role in the Quality Survey suggest that indicating the level of competency, whether or not it aligns to a competency framework, if it has gone through a quality assurance process and if it contains endorsement would help build trust. You can help viewers quickly ascertain these elements by visually representing them in the badge image, for example via symbols indicating level within a wider scheme, ticks or other markers to show it has been quality assured:

- [makebadg.es](http://makebadg.es)
- <https://www.openbadges.me/>

## Delivery and review

### Relevant survey data findings and related recommendations

#### Recommended considerations:

When choosing delivery mechanisms for an Open Badge initiative, consider what constitutes quality in terms of the tools and functionality required for issuing, earning and viewing badges. Reviewing a badge initiative from these role based perspectives, can also help to identify what aspects could be improved to create a better experience for the issuer, earner or consumer of the badge. Consider:

- What tools and functionality do you need to create and issue your badges bearing in mind the quality elements you want to build in
- What do badge earners look for in terms of quality when earning, displaying and sharing their badges?
- What do badge consumers look for in terms of quality when viewing a badge?



### Community feedback: Quality relating to issuing badges

Issuers were asked to consider the components of a high quality badge system for issuing badges. The highest rated components are highlighted in yellow in the table below. The most popular feature of a badge system was for earners to be able to upload and store evidence in the system. This was followed by verification of earners and issuers; and for badges to be created in, issued and tracked from the same system.

Q20: What are the necessary components of a high quality badge system for issuing badges? (Tick all that apply)

#### OBN - Open Badges and Quality Management (O7A1)

What are the necessary components of a high quality badge system for issuing badges? (Tick all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
It must allow me to create, issue and track my badges in the one system	68.8%	11
It must allow issuer verification, i.e. it must be possible to verify that badge issuers are who they say they are	68.8%	11
It must include authentication of the badge earners, i.e. it must be possible to verify that badge earners are who they say they are	68.8%	11
It must allow badge earners to upload and store evidence to the system	75.0%	12
It must allow badge earners to create collections of badges	56.3%	9
It must allow the badge earners to share their badges to social media and professional profiles such as LinkedIn	62.5%	10
It must allow badge earners to gain endorsements on their badge evidence	37.5%	6
It must allow users to connect with other badge earners or badge viewers	43.8%	7
It must allow me to give feedback on draft evidence that has been submitted	62.5%	10
It must include features for high stakes assessment	25.0%	4
It must include plagiarism detection of evidence	31.3%	5
It must allow me to communicate with the person who is working towards a badge	50.0%	8
Other or additional information (please specify)		2
	answered question	16
	skipped question	23



### Community feedback: Quality relating to earning badges and viewing badges

Earners were provided with criteria for how they might consider quality when earning a badge. The majority responded that they benchmark their work against others in order to improve their badge evidence suggesting that systems that enable open visibility of badge evidence would be appealing to potential earners.

Q12: Do you consider quality when you are earning a badge? For example, do you think about quality of the evidence you might provide? (Tick all that apply)

OBN - Open Badges and Quality Management (O7A1)		
Do you consider quality when you are earning a badge? For example, do you think about quality of the evidence you might provide? (Tick all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I undertake research to identify other high quality examples to aim for	37.5%	3
I seek clarification of anything I don't understand	25.0%	2
I create drafts of my work and seek feedback	25.0%	2
I reflect on feedback and incorporate it into my evidence before submission	12.5%	1
I benchmark my work against others' work in order to improve my badge evidence	62.5%	5
Other (please specify)		0
	answered question	8
	skipped question	31

When asked the necessary components of a high quality badge system, the most popular element was to be able to search for and find badges. This suggests earners would prefer systems that enable them to take control of their learning pathways by being able to find badges themselves rather than solely having badges prescribed to them. Other elements considered important were that the system allow them to: view evidence others had submitted to help them clarify performance criteria; communicate with the person they would be earning the badge from; earn and display badges in the same system; store badge evidence in the same system.



Q13: What are necessary components of a high quality badge system for earning badges? (Tick all that apply)

OBN - Open Badges and Quality Management (O7A1)		
What are necessary components of a high quality badge system for earning badges? (Tick all that apply)		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
It must allow me to earn and display badges in the same system	62.5%	5
It must allow me to search for and find badges	75.0%	6
It must allow me to connect with other badge earners	37.5%	3
It must allow me to store my badge evidence in the same system	62.5%	5
It must me to submit draft evidence	50.0%	4
It must allow the badge issuer to give feedback on draft evidence I have submitted	50.0%	4
It must include features for high stakes assessment, such as authentication of me as a user or plagiarism detection	25.0%	2
It must allow me to view the evidence other people have submitted to learn what is expected for badge evidence	62.5%	5
It must allow me to communicate with the person I am earning the badge from	62.5%	5
Other or additional information (please specify)		1
	answered question	8
	skipped question	31

Respondents answered that the most important components of a high quality badge system for displaying badges are that it allows them to set the visibility of their badges (eg hide or show them) and that it should allow them to share their badges to social media and professional profiles such as LinkedIn.

Additional comments provided by badge earners were: “When I earn a badge I would like to know how many people have already earned it, and what do they think of the badge in terms of its usefulness in their career, social life, education, etc. (depending on the badge)”; “export functionality, PDF creation for paper-based job applications”. So other mechanisms for trusting a badge included reviews of the badge, perhaps in a similar way to how Trip Advisor reviews may help people to decide if they wish to stay at a particular hotel. As the Open Badges movement supports the transition to digital ways of sharing credentials, the other comment for the ability to export badges and create pdfs for paper based applications may lessen but in the meantime, HR systems and job application sites do not support machine readable badge scanning and make it difficult for earners to share their badges in job applications sites.





Q14: What are the necessary components of a high quality badge system for displaying badges?  
(Tick all that apply)

### OBN - Open Badges and Quality Management (O7A1)

What are the necessary components of a high quality badge system for displaying badges? (Tick all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
It must allow me to display the badge evidence in the same system	62.5%	5
It must allow me to set the visibility of my badges, e.g. hide or show them	75.0%	6
It must allow me to create collections of badges	62.5%	5
It must allow me to share my badges to social media and professional profiles such as LinkedIn	75.0%	6
It must allow me to gain endorsements on my badge evidence	50.0%	4
It must allow me to connect with other badge earners or badge viewers	37.5%	3
Other or additional information (please specify)		0
answered question		8
skipped question		31

### Recommendations:

When considering quality in terms of delivering and reviewing your badge initiative, as well as considering what will help you to create and issue badges, bear in mind key criteria that earners and viewers look for. Open Badge delivery systems have a variety of built-in features and it is worth testing them to check if they include the key elements you are looking for. A list of [Open Badge tools](#) and their features can be found on the Open Badge Network portal.

- Select a delivery platform that includes the elements you need. These might include:
  - The ability for earners to upload and store evidence in the system (reducing the chance of broken links to evidence)
  - The ability to create, issue and track badges in the same system
  - Earner verification
- Select a delivery platform that includes the elements you believe your badge earners and viewers will appreciate. These might include:
  - Issuer and earner verification
  - Enabling earners to view the badge evidence of others (so that they can understand what is required of them for the badge task and to benchmark and improve their own work)
  - The ability for earners to communicate with the badge issuer
  - The ability for earners to set the visibility of their badges and share them to social media and professional profiles



- The ability to leave endorsements on badge evidence

## Summary

This paper focuses on Open Badge initiatives that will issue badges and suggests that in order to issue badges of quality, it is important to understand quality not only from an issuer perspective but also the quality considerations of those who will be interacting with the badges - badge earners and viewers.

The Quality Survey that informs this paper, took a role based approach to defining quality in Open Badges from the perspective of badge issuers, earners and viewers. We have presented the findings from the Quality Survey and implications for quality and Open Badges in terms of the core stages of an Open Badge initiative: initial design; implementation; delivery and review. Here we summarise the findings from the survey and provide recommendations for supporting quality in Open Badge initiatives.

## General findings

The majority of survey respondents assumed the badge issuer role and stated they were from the education sector (60%). While it was not specified that this mean formal education a review of those who provided job roles, organisation and email addresses suggests that the majority were. The implications of this is that it is likely the respondents are well versed in teaching, learning and assessment practices although just under half said they know what badges are and have experience in using them.

When asked about their long term goals for badges, most respondents were interested in issuing badges to give recognition for non-formal learning (69%). Second to that, they also wished to issue badges to give recognition for achievements in a community. Given that education was the largest sector represented, this raises some interesting questions about how formal education interfaces with non-formal learning and the idea of community, be that their own organisational community, a wider community of stakeholders or communities they might engage with through MOOCs for example and how they might use badges to recognise contributions from these different but potentially overlapping spheres.

The second highest assumed role in the Quality Survey was that of badge earner. Their highest rated long term goal was to “earn and display badges to make me stand out to employers or in an admissions process for a course or apprenticeship”. This perhaps confirms the understanding of many, that badges are viewed as playing a key ‘value-added’ role in supporting transitions into employment or onto further learning opportunities. Given that the majority of respondents were from education, it is perhaps not surprising that the goal of most interest to viewers, was to use badges as part of the admissions process for a course.

Respondents were asked about their interest in the badge ecosystem. We know badges can be used in a variety of contexts and for different purposes so we asked respondents to clarify their area of interest to help them decide which Persona role they would assume when considering quality. The majority were interested in creating badge pathways (67.9%), followed by unlocking opportunities with badges, creating badges, issuing badges and building capability through badges. Again, the concept of badges forming a type of learning currency through supporting transitions is suggested by the interest in creating pathways and unlocking opportunities. These pathways might be into employment, into or onward from formal education, professional



development pathways and more. Building capability will have relevance across the spectrum of sectors represented, ranging from social and economic contexts for government and the third sector; professional capacity in industry; and scaffolding learning in education.

### Initial design

When starting any initiative it is important to be clear about what you are trying to achieve. Given the many ways Open Badges can support learning and opportunities stemming from that, it is important to understand why you want to use badges and how you want to use them.

Top priorities for issuer role respondents were recognition for non-formal learning and achievements in a community, followed by issuing badges to ensure staff have the right skills and to improve students' employability chances. Again capability building and transitions into employment, were key concerns.

Once you have decided upon why you want to use badges, consider how will you use them and interrogate if these feel like valid uses of badges for what you are trying to achieve. For survey respondents, creating badge pathways was key and another stated option was to develop alternative models of assessment to include skills and attributes. Aligning how you want to use badges with the strategic outcome you wish to enable, can help to surface key reasons for engaging with badges and help to ensure you have thought through why your badge initiative will be of value. Desired strategic outcomes for badges will depend on context and reason but for survey respondents, the most important uses included: Badges as a means of discovering intrinsic motivators, e.g. as a way of recognising what someone already does, is good at and therefore is motivated to do; Badges to empower people to forge their own skill paths.

To support a clear foundation for your badge initiative:

- Be clear about your long term goal for badges
- Understand what opportunities you want to enable through the badge ecosystem, for yourself, your badge earners and the viewers of your awarded badges
- Align your badge goal to the opportunities you want to enable and your desired strategic outcomes for badges
- Once you are clear on the above, consider how you will implement these, bearing in mind quality considerations for implementation.

### Implementation

When moving onto the implementation stage of your badge initiative, there are a number of considerations to take into account.

#### Considerations:

- What will constitute quality in the design of your badges?
- What do badge earners look for in terms of quality when deciding to earn a badge?
- Will your badges form part of a wider scheme or pathway? Would badges being part of a wider scheme rather than standalone, imply an element of quality (the implication being that more



thought might have been put into a scheme of interconnected badges than put into a single badge)?

- Will you develop and follow Quality Assurance processes and expect these to be followed by those creating badges across your organisation? What will form the essential components of your Quality Assurance process?

### Designing quality into your badges

When creating a badge, respondents rated the most important aspect of quality as “I choose an evidence type that is relevant to the context, such as asking earners to submit a reflective piece or demonstrate their applied skills via a video etc” (82.4%). This was followed by “I think about the intended audience for the badge” and “I should be able to indicate the level of the badge, e.g. if it is part of a larger badge scheme or competency framework”.

Interestingly, respondents considering the badge earner view of quality, chose “The badge issuer must be a well-established organisation” as their top indicator of quality, while third choice was, “The badge issuer must be an organisation or someone I've heard of”. Being ‘well-established’ is not something all badge issuers can control, however, developing networks around your badge project can aid in the process of making connections between earners, issuers and prospective viewers such as employers.

Other key considerations for badge quality were “The badge content must be well presented” and “The badge helps me show I have learned something”.

### Recommendations:

- Be clear about the intended audiences for your badge
- Develop a role-based value proposition - be clear about why those engaging with your badge would want to earn, issue or view it
- Ensure your intended earners know the intended issuing organisation (this may or may not be the same as the badge creators)
- Develop networks around your badge scheme
  - It can be helpful to include the issuing organisation, prospective earners and viewers of the badge in this. Networks can provide benefits such as helping earners explore who will be interested in accepting their badge and viewers to gain insight into the issuing organisation and badges they may wish to accept in recruitment or admissions processes for example. The Open Badge Network’s resource, [Guidelines for Badges in Territories \(O4A3\)](#), provides guidance on how to develop networks to support the uptake of badges across a geographical territory.
- Ensure the type of evidence earners must provide is appropriate for what you want to assess, that badge content is well presented and that the badge will show the recipient has learned something. Aim to indicate the level of the badge and if it aligns with a competency framework



- An output of the Open Badge Network is a Competency Repository that will aid in the mapping to and sharing of competency definitions. This work will be made available under the [Infrastructure](#) outputs (O2A3)
- Put quality assurance processes in place around the creation, assessing, awarding and management of your badges

Creating a badge where the intended audience is clear, that has relevant evidence, allows earners to show they have learned something, has well presented content and that indicates the level of the badge can be enabled via effective badge design. The following resources provide support for this.

- Considerations for designing badges of value is being developed as an Open Badge Network resource and will be accessible from the [Open Badge Network Framework \(O1A1\)](#).
- The Digitalme Badge Design Canvas was created to support organisations work through considerations when designing badges, from interrogating the quality of the badge idea, deciding on evidence type and whether the badge forms part of a wider scheme of badges or competency framework. You can download the Badge Design Canvas [here](#). While the Canvas can be worked through in any order, a good starting point is to be clear about the value proposition for your badge:
  - Why would someone would want to earn your badge?
  - What is the value to you in issuing your badge?
  - Why would a badge a consumer recognise and trust your badge?
- This simple course will take you through the process of considering how to implement badges in your context, how to design a badge of value (using the Badge Design Canvas) and how to start issuing badges.
  - DigitalMe Academy: <https://www.openbadgeacademy.com/digitalme>

The following tools will also help you create the visual design for your badge. Responses from the respondent assuming the badge viewer role in the Quality Survey suggest that indicating the level of competency, whether or not it aligns to a competency framework, if it has gone through a quality assurance process and if it contains endorsement would help build trust. It might be worth considering how these elements could be represented, for example via symbols indicating level within a wider scheme, ticks or other markers to show it has been quality assured etc:

- [makebadg.es](http://makebadg.es)
- <https://www.openbadges.me/>

## Delivery

The requirements for the delivery of your Open Badge initiative will be informed by your initial plans and needs identified during the implementation stage.

When choosing delivery mechanisms, consider what you need in terms of the tools and functionality required for creating and issuing your badges and what constitutes quality in terms



of earning and viewing badges. Reviewing a badge initiative from these role based perspectives, can also help to identify what aspects could be improved to create a better experience for the issuer, earner or consumers of your badges in future.

Checklist of things to take into account:

- What tools and functionality do you need to create and issue your badges bearing in mind the quality elements you want to build in
- What do badge earners look for in terms of quality when earning, displaying and sharing their badges?
- What do badge consumers look for in terms of quality when viewing a badge?

The highest rated aspect for indicating quality within a system for issuing badges was the ability to store evidence in the same location as the badge (75%) - something that would guard against broken links or evidence being removed from third party sites. Issuers were also keen that it must: “allow me to create, issue and track my badges in the one system”; “allow issuer verification, i.e. it must be possible to verify that badge issuers are who they say they are”; “include authentication of the badge earners, i.e. it must be possible to verify that badge earners are who they say they are”.

For earners it was most important that they could search for and find badges (75%). Discussions around discoverability of badges have been held in the Open Badges community for a number of years, including investigations into badge-based learning pathways and quizzes to suggest badges (the [Mozilla Discover Open Badges](#) proof-of-concept project), taxonomies and folksonomies among others. Some systems do enable badge tagging but agreement has not been reached, to date, on universally consistent use of tags or meanings of keywords. The findings from the Quality Survey suggests this is an area where some form of consensus could be useful, however.

Earners also wanted to be able to: “store my badge evidence in the same system”; “earn and display badges in the same system”; “view the evidence other people have submitted to learn what is expected for badge evidence”; “communicate with the person I am earning the badge from”. Systems that enable the above are likely to appeal to earners and may help them to improve the quality of their badge evidence through the ability to clarify performance criteria and to benchmark their work against others by viewing their badge evidence. This aligns with principles of effective practice and suggested lifelong learning benefits of peer review, such as those developed by Professor Emeritus of Higher Education, David Nicol. Nicol’s research shows that helping learners understand performance criteria and enabling them to compare their work to that of others, will help them to develop evaluative judgements about their own work, thereby helping them to improve. [Principles of effective assessment practice](#) can be found in Professor Nicol’s work on the [Re-Engineering Assessment Practices project](#) and [design considerations for peer review](#) in the [PEER project](#).

In terms of displaying and sharing badges, the joint highest criteria was that it allow: “me to set the visibility of my badges, e.g. hide or show them”; “to share my badges to social media and professional profiles such as LinkedIn”. This element of user control was key to the original ideals of the Open Badges standard as initiated by Mozilla and which are outlined in a post by one of the founders of the standard, Carla Casilli, in her post [Open Badges: understanding the history and value of the backpack](#).





The respondent assuming the badge viewer role in the Quality Survey answered that they would trust a badge if: “I was aware of the badge quality assurance procedures implemented by the issuer and believed them to be sound”; “the badge earner had received endorsements on their evidence from people working or teaching in that field”; “I could quickly ascertain the level of competency the badge indicated”. Quality Assurance procedures for badges was a priority for issuers with 60% of respondents answering that they would like this to be in place. Again, when asked: “Do you think badges need to be part of a wider badge scheme to be considered of quality?”, the majority answered yes (46.7%).

When considering quality in terms of delivering and reviewing your badge initiative, as well as considering what will help you to create and issue badges, bear in mind key criteria earners and viewers look for. Open Badge delivery systems have a variety of built-in features and it is worth testing them to check if they include the key elements you are looking for. A list of [Open Badge tools](#) and their features can be found on the Open Badge Network portal.

- Select a delivery platform that includes the elements you need. These might include:
  - The ability for earners to upload and store evidence in the system (reducing the chance of broken links to evidence)
  - The ability to create, issue and track badges in the same system
  - Earner verification
- Select a delivery platform that includes the elements you believe your badge earners and viewers will appreciate. These might include:
  - Issuer and earner verification
  - Enabling earners to search for and find badges
  - Enabling earners to view the badge evidence of others (so that they can understand what is required of them for the badge task and to benchmark and improve their own work)
  - The ability for earners to set the visibility of their badges and share them to social media and professional profiles
  - The ability to leave endorsements on badge evidence
  - Ability for the badge earner to communicate with the person they are earning the badge from

## Personas revisited - role based considerations

The Quality Survey took a role based approach, to enable respondents to consider quality through the lens of particular roles that interact with Open Badges - badge issuers, badge earners and badge viewers. Quality means different things to these different roles as they engage with badges and the badge ecosystem in different ways, although quality criteria will overlap. Amongst other things, issuers will consider quality in terms of the quality of the badges they create, quality in terms of assessment practices they apply and the systems they use to create badges, whereas earners will consider quality in terms of the reputation of the issuer of a



badge they wish to take, the evidence they submit, and viewers will also consider how much they trust the issuer, quality of earner evidence and so on.

The following summary provides the top quality criteria as specified by respondents assuming the roles of issuers, earners and viewers.

### Key desired strategic outcomes for badges

All respondents were asked what they saw as valid uses of badges, in order to unearth the overarching strategic outcomes they would like to see from the use of badges. The joint top choices were:

- Badges as a means of discovering intrinsic motivators, e.g. as a way of recognising what someone already does, is good at and therefore is motivated to do
- Badges to empower people to forge their own skill paths

### Issuers

61.3% of respondents assumed the issuer role. Issuers were most interested in issuing badges to give recognition for non-formal learning. In terms of the opportunities provided by the badge ecosystem, they wanted to create badge pathways.

Most of the respondents stated they think about quality when they create and issue a badge, while 11.8% stated they did not know if they did.

To support quality, issuers want:

1. To be able to choose an evidence type that is relevant to the context, such as asking earners to submit a reflective piece or demonstrate their applied skills via a video etc
2. To have quality assurance processes in place
3. To develop badges as part of a wider badge scheme
4. To use a badge issuing system that enables earners to upload and store their evidence in the system (thereby reducing the chance of broken links with evidence held in 3rd party systems)

### Earners

25.8% of respondents took on the earner role, the second choice out of the three Persona options. They were most interested in earning and displaying badges to make them stand out to employers or in an admissions process for a course or apprenticeship, and wanted to unlock opportunities with badges.

All think about quality when they take a badge.

To support quality, earners want:

1. The badge issuer to be a well established organisation  
(See recommendations for implementation on how developing networks around badge schemes might help in this regard)





2. To be able to benchmark their work against others' work in order to improve their badge evidence
3. A system for earning badges that allows them to search for and find badges
4. A system for displaying badges that allows them to set the visibility of their badges, e.g. hide or show them
5. A system for displaying badges that allows them to share their badges to social media and professional profiles such as LinkedIn

### Viewers

12.9% of respondents assumed the viewer role. Viewers were most interested in viewing badges of prospective students as part of a course admissions process and building capability through badges. Please note that the viewer only section was not completed by all who started and submitted responses. The data presented below represents only one respondent's views.

The respondent confirmed they consider quality when they view badges and how quality is built into the badge ecosystem.

The viewer stated they would trust a badge if:

1. They were aware of the badge quality assurance procedures implemented by the issuer and believed them to be sound
2. The badge earner had received endorsements on their evidence from people working or teaching in that field
3. They could quickly ascertain the level of competency the badge indicated

They believed:

4. Badges should be aligned to competency frameworks
5. Badges should map to a particular framework (When asked to state which competency framework, they didn't specify a particular framework but responded "It would help me as a viewer to understand the value of a badge.")

### Conclusion

People engaging with Open Badges have differing requirements when it comes to quality and it is important to reflect these considerations in the design, implementation and delivery of an Open Badge initiative. This paper has presented the findings of a survey investigating quality considerations from members of the Open Badges community and called on the experience of founding members of the Open Badge Network, who are established members of the badges community.

Overall, survey respondents were interested in non-formal learning and using badges to help learners discover their intrinsic motivators and forge their own skills paths.



Responses from those assuming the issuer role suggest they want systems that will provide flexibility in how they create their badges, particularly with regards the types of badge evidence they can set, and for earners to be able to store their evidence in the system. They also believe their badges would benefit from quality assurance processes and being part of a wider scheme.

The responses by earners suggest they are interested in the opportunities enabled by receiving a badge from an organisation they know and trust, and how to ensure the quality of their own badge evidence. They also want to be able to control how they find, access, manage and share their badges.

Viewers would like quick ways to ascertain the value of a badge in terms of the rigour applied to the creation of the badge and skill level it represents. Relevant endorsements would also help them to form value judgements about a badge earner's competency.

### Limitations

The findings presented in this paper have an education focus as the majority of survey respondents came from that sector. It is possible that if other sectors were more represented, e.g. third sector or industry, a different view on quality and Open Badges might emerge.

Although answers relating to high stakes assessment were provided in question answer options, these didn't feature highly in considerations for survey respondents, for whom the primary focus was issuing badge for non-formal learning. However, high stakes assessment will be important to many, and is likely to become more so as Open Badges become more mainstream and start to enter the high stakes assessment sphere.

Another consideration in relation to high stakes assessment, is visibility of badge evidence. The survey respondents made clear that they would find being able to see others' badge evidence useful, to enable them to benchmark their work and clarify the performance criteria for a badge. While Digitalme would generally advocate open sharing of badge evidence, from our experience we understand that some badge issuers wish to lock down evidence to protect intellectual property, personal data, etc. Perhaps, therefore, we need to consider data privacy in context when making decisions about visibility of badge evidence.

For high stakes badges, of interest may be the Quality Assurance guidance provided in the [European Guidelines for Validating Non-Formal and Informal Learning](#)<sup>1</sup> produced by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop). These guidelines provide a comprehensive resource for those considering a systematic approach to validating non-formal and informal learning for high stakes purposes in a way that would map across EU Member States. Badges are mentioned in the section on Open Educational Resources (OERs).

### Opportunities

While the Quality Survey explored how quality might relate to a number of aspects of Open Badges, the answers for valid uses of badges prompts further though. The majority of survey respondents wanted to use badges as a means of discovering intrinsic motivators, e.g. as a way of recognising what someone already does, is good at and therefore is motivated to do, and

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<sup>1</sup> Cedefop (2015). European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop reference series; No 104. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2801/008370>



badges to empower people to forge their own skill paths. This perhaps highlights that those engaging with badges are looking beyond badges as just records of achievement and seeing the opportunities they provide for supporting skills awareness and personalisation of learning pathways.

This suggests that the quality of the badge is one part but for badges to be part of a useful and high quality proposition, consideration needs to be given to the desired strategic outcomes for using badges. These may not be about opening up employment opportunities but empowering people to build their confidence and gain insight into their intrinsic motivations so they have agency to embark on their own, individually appropriate paths.

We would suggest that more research is needed and that work that has commenced into the use of terminology around badges; the discovery of badges; and how to share recognition of skills across borders, will be helpful. It seems continuing effort is required to build trust in the Open Badge ecosystem and enable wide-scale uptake but a focus on quality and being clear about the opportunities badges can open up, could help that to happen.



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