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Broaching Badges for Learning

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PedRIO Research/ Teaching Fellowship Award Scheme: Final Report

The final report should consist of a two-page summary of the project and its findings (using the fields below as a guide).

Along with this form, please also send (where relevant):

- Ethical approval forms **Approval by Education Research Ethics Subcommittee – 28 October 2015 (see Appendix A)**
- Conference papers and/or articles for publication **please see below**
- (If your initial TFAS application was 'approved with conditions') Evidence that these conditions have been met (in 'Other')

Send all forms to: teachingandlearning@plymouth.ac.uk by September 30th 2016

Name of key contact: Prof Neil Witt

Department: Academic Support, Technology & Innovation

Names of other staff involved: Dr Anne McDermott, Emma Purnell,
Mark Eggins, Joan Gavin

Title of project: Broaching Badges for Learning

Type of project: Plymouth University Teaching Fellowship

Keywords: Digital Badges; Open Badges

Aims of project:

1. Carry out a desk study of current best practice/approaches;
2. Identify and investigate relevant institutional issues;
3. Identify Badging opportunities for staff in the DLE
4. Create a Plymouth University approach for presentation to the Teaching and Learning committee.

Background/context to project:

Learning related to Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) is often delivered on demand using a variety of short, non-accredited methods, for example workshops, videos, online courses, self study. This is a pragmatic approach given that the rapid pace of change in TEL means that it is almost impossible for qualifications to stay relevant in terms of content, level or delivery method ([House of Lords Digital Skills Committee \(2014\)](#)). However each piece of learning stands independently and it can be difficult to later remember, let alone demonstrate meaningfully for PDR, CPD or to prospective employers.

A potential solution that is gaining traction as a means of evidencing non-accredited learning is the use of Badges. These can be attached to a piece of learning and are aimed at transcending a single learning context to become transferable, lifelong assets. The Open University [has identified](#) badging as a key trend in accrediting informal learning. Collecting groups of badges have the potential to lead to coherent 'qualifications'. Using badges, however presents issues about quality and portability though initiatives such as [Mozilla's Open Badge](#) scheme are beginning to address these challenges through the embedding metadata into badges that gives information about content, level, issuing authority etc..

The aim of this project was to investigate the use of Digital Badges for staff development related to TEL.

Methods used: (e.g. Survey/ Case Study/ Action Research/ Development)

Outputs/Outcomes	Type	Means and Focus	Audience	Quality Test(s)
1. Review of Open Badge practice	Knowledge built	Desk study of current approaches including: Rigour; validity; evidencing; assessment; issuing authority portability	Primarily for project team	Production of a range of approaches for project team to assess
2. Current student perspective on Badges	Findings	Desk study and student focus group: examining penetration of culture of Badging and Badge portability	Primarily for project team	Ethical approval for focus group Information gathered
3. Synergies with linked Institutional practices/ systems for staff (and the student HEAR)	Findings	Identify and investigate potentially linked areas including DLE, branding ePortfolio, Lynda.com, HEAR, TDF, PDR	Primarily for project team	Mapping of badging standards to relevant university systems and processes
4. Identify Badging opportunities for staff in the DLE	Briefing Report	Use Outputs 1, 2 and 3 to produce a coherent Plymouth University approach Badges for academic and support staff	ASTI	Framework for badge levels, assessment and storage
5. Proposal for a Plymouth University approach to Staff Badging	Briefing Report		Teaching and learning committee	Production of framework/ approach suitable for piloting

Results:

Using the approach outlined in the 'Methods Used' section above the project objectives were met:

1. Carry out a desk study of current best practice/approaches

A literature review and desk study identified the benefits and challenges of national and international Open and Digital Badge practice and technologies, including the investigation of issuing, storage and display service options to ensure longevity. This led to the identification of a range of possible approaches for the project team to assess.

2. Identify and investigate relevant institutional issues

Undertook a review of institutional current and legacy-ware and relevant policies and practice relating to student activities outside of their main programme of study. The project was keen to develop an approach that would safeguard Plymouth's reputation but not stifle the 'informality' of Digital Badges.

3. Identify Badging opportunities for staff in the DLE (amended to include students)

After gaining ethical clearance, feedback from discussions enabled the production of a matrix staff and student activities suitable for site-wide and module Badges.

4. Create a Plymouth University approach for presentation to the Teaching and Learning committee.

Proposed *ecosystem* drawn up for integrating Digital Badging into Plymouth's other non-accredited learning (Plymouth Extra (formerly Co-Curricular), Plymouth Compass, Plymouth Award). Academic Regulation Sub Committee setting up a Task and Finish group for Digital Badges. This is a rapidly developing area at present thus discussions are still ongoing. However developing the use of Digital Badges linked to the HEAR is now incorporated into Section 1 of the 2016/17 University Action Plan.

Associated publications (include details of intended/draft publications):

- Paper in preparation for ALT-J

Dissemination (conferences/ workshops/consultation, Plymouth University conferences and events, etc.):

- The project blog <http://technologyenhancedlearning.net/digbadge/>

- Outputs have been shared nationally and internationally through the team's existing formal and informal networks e.g. the Heads of eLearning Forum, Jiscmail lists, the New Media Consortium
- Witt N.A.J. (2015), Developing Mobile Services for Plymouth University, *Keynote for the Ex-Libris Australia and New Zealand HE Tour*. 29th September – 13th October, Dunedin, Wellington, Auckland, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth.
- Witt, N., McDermott, A., Purnell, E., Eggins, M. & Gavin, J. (2016), Digital Badges of Honour? *Pedagogic Research Institute and Observatory 5th Annual Conference*. Plymouth University, 8 April.
- McDermott, A., Witt, N., Purnell, E., Eggins, M. & Gavin, J. (2016), Digital Badges of Honour? Association for Learning Technology Annual Conference: Connect, Collaborate and Create. University of Warwick, 6-8 October

Total project expenditure:

(If you do not have this information readily available, we can source on your behalf)

Please source this for us.

Are you happy for us to include your project on our website? Yes/No

Please add link to our blog if possible <http://technologyenhancedlearning.net/digbadge/>

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