

Best practice recommendations- guidelines to support the implementation of digital credentials

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**Digitally Signed Credentials
and Open Badges in VET and HE**

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<https://www.discovet.eu/>

Best practice recommendations- guidelines to support the implementation of digital credentials

Once you are familiar with the basic concepts and tools to support the implementation of open digital credentials¹, you will be asking yourself: How to implement innovative credentials as part of my institutional certification? The following guide will help you to find the answers:

Step 1: Collect rich data about your courses: basic metadata, learning outcomes, assessment, grading scheme, and recognition information. Usually, such information is included as part of the course curriculum design/ programme and publicly available on your institution's website/ learning management system.

Step 2: Determine the type of credentials you want to implement and establish its level of granularity: Programme Level, Module Level, Individual Achievements. Please bear in mind that fully digital-signed credentials are recommended for Programme level, while micro-credentials and or digital badges are more suitable for Module level and individual achievements. In the case of using EDC infrastructure, all possible granularity levels are supported by European Digital credentials for learning.

Step 3: Define Issuing Workflow: Who is responsible for preparing credentials? Who is responsible for adding grading information? Who is responsible for issuing credentials? Answers to previous questions depend on each institution's organigram and the workflow for issuing digital credentials is like the paper-based counterpart but will be supported by the specific supporting software selected for creating/issuing digital credentials.

Step 4: Pilot Digital Credentials: First select a cross-section of courses from across the Institution/Issuing infrastructure. Primary candidates will be those courses promoting transversal competences to different study programmes.

4.1 Train involved academic and non-academic staff in the benefits of using digital credentials and the process of issuing them according to the results of step 2.

4.2 Educate students in the mechanics of earning digital credentials and benefits of owning and sharing such credentials.

4.3 Issue: Once the course is completed proceed issuing digital and paper-based credentials to students.

¹ For more details about the implementation of digital credentials we recommend checking the online course about Open Badges and Digitally Signed Credentials created by the project and available at <https://lms.discovet.eu/?redirect=0>

Step 5: **Validate & Improve:** During this step, you will need to assess the process and results obtained in the previous step. To do so, it will be recommended to

- 5.1 Collect feedback from your main stakeholders: students, employers, academic and non-academic staff who participated in the piloting experience.
- 5.2 Assess Value Added: Make a comparative Costs analysis of the Paper vs. Digital credentials issuing process in addition to a Return of Investment analysis considering the benefits of issuing digital credentials vs. paper-based ones.
- 5.3 Recommend: Considering the results of the added value analysis and all collected feedback, create a set of recommendations for Institutional Policies, Technologies, and Functionalities and the best fit for purpose Data Models to be used.

Step 6: **Integrate recommendations** into your existing quality system considering a set of minimum technical criteria, minimum data format, and lifecycle policies based on the recommendations from the previous step.

Step 7: **Make Credentials Official:** This will require to completion of the process of making an official decision of the University allowing for Digital credential Issues as institutional practice and once such a decision will be taken, as well as an Information document describing Credential Policy should be published using all institutional channels.

Step 8: **Mainstream** (scale your pilot experience):

- 8.1 Establish which Technology Platform will be used based on the results of step 6.
- 8.2 Train staff in benefits and mechanics of digital credentials using the guidelines used in step 4.1 and the recommendations resulting from step 5.3
- 8.3 Educate students in the mechanics and benefits of digital credentials using the guidelines used in step 4.2 and the recommendations resulting from step 5.3
- 8.4 Issue digital and paper-based credentials to students using tools available after completing 7.1.