



## Digital credentialing in a MOOC: Swinburne University of Technology

CASE STUDY: Curate, Credential and Carry Forward Digital Learning Evidence: [tiny.cc/cccdle](http://tiny.cc/cccdle)

**Context:** The Carpe Diem Massive Open Online Course (CD MOOC) was designed and delivered in 2014 by a team of academics and learning technologists based in the Learning Transformations Unit, Swinburne University of Technology. Our expectation was that the CD MOOC would attract educators interested in developing skills in the learning design process based on the six stages of Gilly Salmon's Carpe Diem methodology which include *Write a Blueprint*, *Make a Storyboard*, *Build a Prototype Online*, *Check Reality*, *Review and Adjust*, and *Planning your Next Steps* (Salmon, 2014; Salmon & Wright, 2014). The CD MOOC incorporated digital badges for reward, recognition and motivation of participants. The badges also enhanced the knowledge verification process: participants were required to earn five intermediary badges aligned with the Carpe Diem stages before they would become eligible for the CD MOOC completion award – a Mozilla Open Badge ([openbadges.org](http://openbadges.org)).

### [1] What are we doing?

We introduced badges into the CD MOOC as a motivational element for participants, our additional goal being to trial the design and delivery of a series of digital badges to add to the wider body of knowledge on digital credentialing. A range of stakeholders, internal and external to Swinburne, were invited to test the badges prior to their implementation. Their feedback enabled us to improve and fine-tune our badging initiative. Our original goal of using digital badges to motivate the CD MOOC participants expanded to include skilling participants in the use badges for their own practice. Most participants had teaching duties of their own, and the feedback we received from them demonstrated their interest in using badges to enhance their teaching practice.

### [2] How are we doing it?

The badges were designed with Photoshop ([photoshop.com](http://photoshop.com)) and Adobe InDesign ([adobe.com](http://adobe.com)). Visually, badges reflected the essence of the Carpe Diem's stages. Throughout the steps of the CD badge design and implementation, colleagues and stakeholders were asked to provide feedback on such aspects as the look and feel of badges, their user-friendliness and accessibility. This process allowed us to test our assumptions about badges and, as a result, badge design and creation went through several iterations before being launched with the CD MOOC. CourseSites (a free Blackboard-operated platform) was selected to host the CD MOOC. This choice was because Blackboard is Swinburne's Learning Management System (LMS), and because of CourseSites' capacity to issue internal


badges and compatibility with Mozilla Open Badges exportable to Mozilla Backpack ([backpack.openbadges.org](http://backpack.openbadges.org)). Once exported, open badges can be immediately displayed on a range of online spaces, such as LinkedIn or blogs. The badges in the CD MOOC were awarded for skills acquired at each of the stages of the Carpe Diem process, with the final open badge being issued as a Mozilla Open Badge. Badges for 'Look and Feel' and 'Storyboard' awarded in weeks 2 and 3 of the CD MOOC respectively were issued upon submission of work. This process did not require moderators to check the content of submissions. Submission for badges for 'E-tivity creation' and 'Reality Checker' input, however, were checked by moderators using a rubric. This process meant participants' knowledge of the central Carpe Diem tenets was validated, and the final Carpe Diem badge could serve as a digital credential upon the completion of the CD MOOC. Partnership with Blackboard and our ongoing work with Mozilla Open Badges Organization were essential for project success.

### [3] Who is involved?

The CD MOOC was designed primarily for an audience of educators with specific interest in learning and instructional design. Based on this assumption, we predicted that our cohort was likely to have specific motivations and expectations about the CD MOOC experience. Surveys and interviews confirmed that the majority of participants were mature-age academics engaged in teaching activities, and that they were taking part in the CD MOOC primarily for professional development purposes. Following the CD MOOC's completion, we collected



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participant feedback via surveys (N=155) and interviews (N=29) randomly selected from the survey sample. Our findings demonstrated that most participants were positive about earning badges, exhibiting curiosity, and even becoming competitive when it came to collecting badges (Lokuge Dona, Gregory, Salmon, & Pechenkina, 2014; Salmon, Gregory, Lokuge Dona, & Ross, 2015). A significant segment of participants stated they were considering the use of badges with their students. In terms of motivation, however, we have found that while badges did serve as an extrinsic motivator, their main role was to strengthen participants' existing intrinsic motivations to do the CD MOOC.

#### [4] Why are we doing it?

Aside from our goal to motivate and credential participants, we aimed to create an opportunity for educators to experience badges as their students would. By doing so, we introduced the concept of badges to the educators' teaching repertoire.

#### [5] What are the challenges?

Initial technical challenges in design and implementation occurred during the alignment of Mozilla Open Badge platform with the CourseSites' internal badges system. Changes in Mozilla's Application Programming Interface complicated the use of CourseSites's own Open Badges and required rounds of testing and adjustments on our part. We built our expertise in digital badging by perusing free online materials such as meta-data template (badgealliance.org) and badge design standards available via Badge Alliance, CourseSites and Mozilla Open Badges websites. The issue of time-consuming knowledge and skill validation for large numbers of participants in a MOOC, especially since the CD MOOC employed a 'light touch' moderation (Salmon, 2011), presented another challenge. Input from the CD MOOC moderators helped overcome the validation conundrum, though the process requires further streamlining. Finally, the feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive. However not everyone engaged with badges at the same level. Those participants who did not find themselves

motivated by badges tended to explain this by a generational gap as they would consider using badges with their students. Furthermore, a number of participants suggested that the introduction of a Group Badge might foster group-based collaborations and potentially alleviate the negative effects of attrition.

#### [6] Where is it heading?

In surveys and interviews some CD MOOC participants expressed their interest in introducing badges into their own teaching practice. The evidence of this currently taking place is scarce and we will continue working to encourage educators to use badges to support student learning and bolster student motivation. If more badging initiatives are to take place in Swinburne our role is to centralise such efforts to eventually build an institutional badging system where badges function within a broader system of meaning. That way, badge-earning efforts acquire meaning grounded in a University-wide framework. This centralisation process will serve as the first step in our efforts to contribute into the digital badging field of inquiry on a national level.

#### Resources

Lokuge Dona, K, Gregory, J, Salmon, G & Pechenkina, E 2014, 'Badges in the Carpe Diem MOOC', In B. Hegarty, J. McDonald & S.-K. Loke (Eds.), *Rhetoric and Reality: Critical perspectives on educational technology. Proceedings ascilite Dunedin 2014* (pp. 120–128).

Salmon, G 2011, *E-moderating: The key to teaching and learning online* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Salmon, G 2014, *Carpe Diem – a team based approach to learning design*. [www.gillysalmon.com/carpe-diem.html](http://www.gillysalmon.com/carpe-diem.html)

Salmon, G, Gregory, J, Lokuge Dona, K & Ross, B 2015, 'Experiential online development for educators: The example of the Carpe Diem MOOC' *British Journal of Educational Technology*

Salmon, G & Wright, P 2014, 'Transforming future teaching through 'Carpe Diem' learning design', *Education Sciences*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 52–63.

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