



21C Credentials: Good practice guide

Excellent 21C credentials:

1. Clearly communicate achievement of appropriate outcomes and standards with sufficient granularity to predict future performance

- *Use design thinking:* Use the credential to solve a learning challenge, based on user feedback. Doing 'badges for the sake of badges' is unlikely to be worth your time, or anyone else's. Test your ideas on a skeptical colleague - if you can convince them, you probably have a viable idea.
- *Exceed expectations:* Set the intended outcomes to match user expectations, especially employers – and test that those expectations are met or exceeded over time.
- *Language counts:* 'badges' can sound trivial. Prefer terms that focus on credentials that warrant learning. Use the term 'badging' only when referring to technology.
- *Simplify, simplify, simplify:* Be disciplined: in a sentence or two, explain who does what, when, why and how this credential will improve someone's life. Be clear, concise and consistent in the messaging. Be prepared to explain it repeatedly – one minute concept movies are very useful.
- *Be serious, look serious:* If you want credentials to be taken seriously, design them to look serious. Bear in mind that presenting mature learners with poorly imaged credentials is not likely to enthuse them, particularly when the credentials are visible to others, such as professional bodies and employers.

2. Are based on judgments of rich evidence created in response to authentic assessments in a range of complex, ill-defined tasks

- *True tasks:* Ensure assessments challenge learners to produce artifacts that evidence their skills in a range of complex, ill-defined issues that simulate those they will encounter as graduates. Life is not a multiple-choice quiz.
- *Repurpose:* if you are implementing credentials in a unit, consider removing or replacing an assessment task. This signals to students that the credential is important to you, and to the institution.
- *Make evidence the learner's responsibility:* require rich evidence to be available to assessors and potential employers as appropriate.
- *Curation is key:* Set the standard and the timeframe, require learners to select

21C Credentials (tiny.cc/21Ccredentials)



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and assemble the evidence. Assessors, like employers, want to see the selected highlights, or improvement over time.

3. Maximise assessment integrity, appropriately verifying the identity and the contribution of the learner

- *Jailbreak your credential* – regularly - then fix the gap, ensuring your credential cannot be attained fraudulently without great difficulty.
- *Who's who*: Verify learner identity in multiple ways and at unpredictable times
- *Go bespoke*: Design assessments that make plagiarism or impersonation difficult and expensive.

4. Balance time and money invested by the learner with benefits realised during and after conferral (credit or entry to a higher credential, enhanced status or career advantage)

- *Price-check!* Set the credential price (time and money) with care, and based on market research.
- *Value proposition*: communicate the lasting benefits of the credentials based on evidence.

5. Are sustainable, based on sound business models, crisp and consistent value propositions, and compliance with regulatory frameworks

- *Do the math*: Calculate the costs (time and money) of delivering the credential versus the likely revenue, and check the credential is competitive. Carefully check the implications of lost revenue against credit granted.
- *Stackable is good*: Ensure your credential can 'roll up' to higher credentials, or professional status. But beware of creating an ecosystem that is so complex that no one can understand it – keep it simple. Eligibility for credit regulated by a qualifications framework is likely to assist.
- *Make the technology disappear*: Solve this problem last, not first. Select a simple, seamless and sustainable technology solution.
- *Play by the rules*: If your credentials are at institution level, make sure you abide by policies associated with use of logos, crests and other branding, and that the academic area responsible for awards, prizes and credentials is aware of and ready to assist you in archiving the awards. Check carefully about awarding credit towards regulated courses.

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