NATIONAL FORUM
FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING
AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Guide to Implementing Peer Triads in a PD Open Course

Purpose of this guide

The purpose of this short guide is to provide advice to Facilitators for establishing and supporting peer triads in a PD Open Course and claiming a digital badge.

Peer Triads in the PD Open Courses

The PD open courses use a peer triad system of assessment. A peer triad is a small group of usually three participants who are encouraged to work together to share and discuss their approach to professional development. To gain their digital badge, the members of the triad are required to share how they have met the four badge criteria in terms of evidence; they meet together to showcase and discuss the process they undertook in fulfilling the criteria with their peers. This is done directly through the opencourse.ie Moodle interface for all online courses. It is recommended that anyone who wishes to undertake an open course via the f2f/blended or self-study modes and who wishes to claim a digital badge, should connect with two peers and self-form a triad to complete the assessment process.

Recognised benefits of a Peer Triad approach

- Peer triad members get the opportunity to take responsibility for their professional development.
- By assuming this responsibility for their professional development activities, their motivation and self-directedness can increase.
- Peer triad members often meet new colleagues as a result of the process, thereby extending their T&L network.
- Conversing with a mix of people at different levels of recognition is a valuable reciprocal learning process. Such collaborative reflection can be transformative!
- Conversing with a mix of people who are in different roles means that peer triad members can learn a great deal from other colleagues.
- There is a sense of professional trust associated with the triads; if one member wants to discuss something sensitive, they can do this confident that it will not go further.

Advice on setting up Peer Triads

From experience, we recommend waiting to allocate participants into their peer triad until after the first week of your open course. This will give you time to get to know your participants and observe the interaction that is taking place from the activities and discussions in Week 1 of your course. As a result, you will have a clearer sense of who is engaging and this can inform your decision on the composition of the triads.

Composition of the Triads

Following good practice for small groups, and to enable each triad to have rich discussions on teaching and learning, in each triad it is important to have a gender balance, a mix of participants from different institutions and at different career stages, and where possible to have one participant with an interest/knowledge of learning technology, as this can be useful if the triad are using different tools to communicate.

"The Irish Triad". While three is the usual number of peers participating in a triad, some of the Facilitators who have delivered their course in the online mode, have reported in a recent evaluation of open courses that four participants can also work well together. In taking this authentic experience on board, we are calling this option the Irish Triad!

Role of each Peer Triad Member

The key function of the peer triad is to facilitate the sharing and discussion of evidence towards the achievement of a digital badge.

The three members of the peer triad should meet to agree the timing and approach to the triad interactions and complete the face-to-face or virtual conversations by a date set by the Facilitator. The mode of peer discussion (email, phone, face-to-face, social media) is up to triad members. An initial face-to-face meeting can be beneficial, and this can be recommended for institutions to support in the future.

Zoom/Skype/MS Teams or equivalent can work well on occasions where triad members are based in different locations, and/or it may not be possible to meet.

90 mins is a useful amount of time for a final triad meeting to claim the badge (20-25 mins or so to delve into each individual's sharing of evidence of how they met the 4 badge criteria, with time also allowed for introductions).

Each member of the triad has responsibility for coming to the meeting prepared, taking notes, voluntarily participating, confronting their preparation and their performance, and providing feedback that helps their peers improve. Each individual is in charge of what and how much is shared. Ownership of the standard of work to achieve the badge and reporting resides with each individual. The triad is there to prompt reflection and provide support, and to provide challenge if needed, but the other members are not responsible for the adequacy of a member's PD badge activity or reporting. All content discussed, including that associated with the individual's 'recognition', will remain confidential to the triad.

Following the peer triad discussion associated with evidencing meeting the badge criteria, one member of the triad sends a confirmation email to the Facilitator/issuer that the discussion has been completed satisfactorily.

Supporting the Peer Triads
The Facilitator role is key for increasing the levels of online interaction especially in the early days of the open course, increasing participation rates during the course, and facilitating purposeful, meaningful and timely exchange of ideas online.

At the beginning of the open course, it is important to make explicit the level of expected engagement generally but also specifically within the triads. There is an 'Introduction to Peer Triads' document available which should be shared with your participants at the beginning of your open course which provides participant information on how the triads work.

In each open course, different subjects will have different requirements for discussion and collaboration. Facilitators should strive to develop a sense of community; they should be both responsive and available.

It is beneficial to create a plan for communication in your open course and in the triads. Facilitators should communicate clearly regarding their expectations of the participants, and equally, what participants can expect of them in terms of response times and availability. As with other professional development courses, providing maximum notice of important dates and deadlines is recommended.

Claiming a digital badge

In order to meet the four badge criteria, learners will have invested time and effort to complete the activities (aligned to the criteria of each badge). The peer triad system enables them to showcase/demonstrate the work they have completed to each other and to learn from discussions with their peers who have undertaken this process also.

All PD open courses have four measurable badge criteria for which learners will submit evidence based on activities which have been aligned to these standards. The Facilitator forms the learners into peer triads of three members so that they can discuss and share evidence of how they met the badge criteria. Subsequently, the triads are directed to the relevant page on the open course VLE where they can find information and the relevant form for claiming the badge. That information and the relevant form are also recorded here next.

Claiming a Badge
To claim a National Forum Digital Badge, the peer triad must have completed the following steps:

1. The peer triad must have met, shared and discussed how each member has met the four badge criteria.
2. The peer triad must have agreed a time frame for completion of this work.
3. Evidence of point 1 and 2 above must be added to the triad contract that was initially agreed. This contract should then be uploaded in the open courses section marked '**Triad contract for claiming badges'.**

Each member of the peer triad must confirm that the other two have met the criteria by completing the form included in this booklet as Appendix A. Any member who is not ready to claim their digital badge but is willing to endorse the other two claims must also complete this form.

Appendix A – Form for completion in the Open Course VLE for Claiming a Digital Badge

1. Type member 1's name, email address and institution in the box below.

2. Type member 2's name email address and institution in the box below.

3. Type your name, email address and institution in the box below.

4. How many members of your Triad completed the Triad process.

- 3
- 2
- 1

5. In the event that there are only two members in your final triad, please confirm that you are happy the 3rd member is no longer involved in this process.

- Yes I am happy that the 3rd triad member is no longer involved in the process of claiming a badge.
- No I am not happy with this.

6. Team Member 1 has achieved the following criteria:

- List the 4 badge criteria here
- Has not demonstrated that they have achieved all of the above

7. I confirm that the member 1 of the triad has met the badge criteria

- Yes
- No

8. Team Member 2 has achieved the following criteria:

- List the 4 badge criteria here
- Has not demonstrated that they have achieved all of the above

9. I confirm that the member 2 of the triad has met the badge criteria

- Yes
- No

10. I confirm that I would like to claim my digital badge.

- Yes
- No