

# Badge of honour? An exploration of the use of digital badges to support a partnership approach to faculty development

Angelica Riskey, University of Limerick  
Dara Cassidy Royal College of Surgeons  
Gearoid O'Suilleabhain, Cork Institute of Technology

Australasian Journal of Educational Technology, 36(5), 18–29. <https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.6112>



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA-NC](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

## **ABSTRACT**

This article describes a professional development initiative facilitated through a transformational partnership model. In this context, we discuss our experience of piloting an online continuing professional development course in the area of online teaching, which offered a digital badge for successful participants. The course was the result of a partnership between three Irish higher education institutions and a national agency that had initiated a nation-wide scheme to create and disseminate a range of open access collaborative professional development courses to promote the professionalisation of teaching and learning, with a specific digital badge being available for each course. We investigated the interplay between the digital badge issued for the course we piloted, and other potential intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. Digital badges appear to be a weak motivating factor in initial enrolment and engagement, although for some participants, they did motivate continued engagement and completion. We discuss implications in relation to internal and external drivers and motivations around professional development. We also offer reflections on the larger context in which badges might be used or valued by course participants in their professional environments.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

- For digital badges to motivate learning, educational developers and institutions need to associate them with intrinsically meaningful rewards.
- Partnership between higher education institutes and non-accrediting bodies can drive the development and wider acceptance and use of digital badges as a tangible and agreed currency of learner and learning achievement.
- Learners benefit most from digital badges when they are linked to and facilitate the development of personal identities associated with disciplinary and professional communities.