Digital Badges at the Georg-August University of Göttingen

Characteristics of a Digital Badge

Digital badges are digital proof of competence in non-formal and informal educational contexts. They allow for the documentation and visibility of engagement and achievements that do not merit ECTS credits, thus complementing curricular offerings. The format of the digital badge differs through an intuitively understandable visualization of competence acquisition from traditional forms of participation certificates. A common standard for digital badges ensures interoperability, validation, and verification of the respective proof of competence.

The awarding of a digital badge is appropriate when students or participants have engaged more deeply in a specific competency area without earning credits. The digital badge documents the acquired additional competencies in areas characteristic of teaching and learning at the University of Göttingen, beneficial for future employers, and can be useful for entering the workforce. Furthermore, digital badges are intended to provide incentives for self-directed learning.

Content and Formal Framework of a Digital Badge

- Digital badges at the University of Göttingen are awarded in alignment with its guiding principles for teaching and learning in the areas of:
  - Internationalisation,
  - Diversity,
  - Digitalisation,
  - Sustainability,
  - Transfer and Engagement,
  - Research-oriented learning and teaching, for achievements and competence acquisition for which students cannot earn ECTS credits.
- A meaningful and concise title must be found for a digital badge, describing the competency area and, if applicable, an appropriate level.
- Digital badges are aimed at students and educators of the University of Göttingen and its partner universities. For each badge, a specific target audience must be defined (who should be able to acquire a badge? Educators and/or students? Parts of a faculty (students of a specific program), an entire faculty (students of offered programs), multiple faculties (e.g., all physics, chemistry, and biology students), or students from all programs (possibly differentiated by bachelor/master)).
- Clearly defined learning objectives and competencies must be formulated, including a short abstract (in German/English) for badge issuance.
- The requirements for obtaining the digital badge must be specified. This includes naming the events that must be attended or other informal learning activities contributing to the achievement of learning objectives, as well as specifying a required study or examination performance. If multiple events must be attended, they must be thematically related.
- Possible examination performances include, for example, a reflection portfolio, an (online) exam, etc.

- To be awarded a digital badge, at least one event must be attended. Possible event formats include workshops, virtual exchange, summer schools, conferences, self-directed courses.
- Completing events, study, and examination achievements to obtain digital badges does not justify enrolment as a student. Those who wish to acquire a badge without being a student at the University of Göttingen will be registered as external auditors.
- Badges can also be obtained within the framework of fee-based study offerings.

Quality Assurance Measures

- Interested providers fill out a form based on this framework and submit it to the Department of Student Affairs for review.
- Programme coordinators regularly report to the faculty council (workload, adjustments, and changes). In the event of a change in responsibility for an offering that includes a digital badge, the Department of Student Affairs is informed.
- Digital badges should be considered in decentralized quality management (e.g., quality circles).

Issuance of a Digital Badge

- The provision and awarding of the digital badge are done through the Open Badge Factory (OBF) platform, which complies with the university's data protection policies. Participants can download their digital badge from OBF after the event and potentially integrate it into online profiles.
- The following (meta-) data must be entered into OBF for a digital badge:
    - Name: Name of the digital badge
    - Description: Brief summary of the content of the learning offering or event(s) and a short description of the responsible institution
    - Tags: Keywording
    - Expiry date: Optional indication of an expiry date
    - Criteria: Specification of the event(s) to be completed and the type of proof of performance, as well as a description of the knowledge, skills, and competencies that participants possess upon successful completion of the event(s).
    - The email addresses of participants must be entered into OBF for the issuance of a digital badge.
- No partial badges are issued, for example, for unfinished badges or completed partial achievements.
- Program coordinators are responsible for ensuring the conditions for badge issuance are met.
- Badges are generally issued in English and German.
- The communication during badge issuance can use the template deposited in OBF or be adapted.
- Providers use the uniform university design for badge issuance.