



TUS

**Technological University of the Shannon:
Midlands Midwest**

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne:
Lár Tíre Iarthar Láir

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TUS Digital Badge Policy 2024 – 2029



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1 Introduction

The TUS Digital Badge Policy is intended to provide a strategic and structured approach to the development and approval of Digital Badges in the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS). The policy is informed by the expertise and experience within the university and by models of excellent practice. The policy was developed to meet the needs of a contemporary university, committed to offering opportunities to have different types of non-accredited learning formally recognised by the university.

The TUS Digital Badge serves a wide remit of strategic activity in TUS with the policy aligning with each of the key strategic priorities, as outlined in the TUS Strategic Plan 2023-2026, namely:

- Education: Provide a relevant high-quality education offering, focused on interdisciplinarity, delivered in both traditional and flexible ways to cater to a diverse cohort of students, across multi-campus locations.
- Research: Deliver impactful applied research, growing the research community, engaging in next generation thinking and tackling issues at a regional, national, and global level.
- People and Organisation: Operate as an integrated organisation, where everyone's potential can be realised, and where all individuals are provided with equal opportunities.
- Connecting Communities: Build and enhance relationships and partnerships to drive the sustainable development of our region and make an impact nationally and internationally (TUS, 2023, p.7).

2 Purpose of the Policy

This policy provides for the effective and sustainable implementation of TUS Digital Badges underpinned by the university's quality standards. It is developed to meet the demands of both internal and external stakeholders seeking recognition from the university for non-accredited learning.

3 Context

Digital Badges endorsed by TUS and issued using the TUS corporate identity will be developed to offer opportunities for engaging and motivating learners.

Authentic and relevant assessment of achievement will be incorporated into the TUS Digital Badge and will be designed to allow the sharing of accomplishments, as aligned to the mission and strategic vision of the university. Implementation of TUS Digital Badges shall be founded on coherent governance and operational processes and procedures from the development to the issuance of a digital badge. These shall clearly define the requisite roles and responsibilities for the implementation of digital badges in TUS and assign processes to appropriate personnel under an agreed implementation plan.

The TUS Digital Badge will:

- align with the TUS Strategic Plan 2023-2026, in addition to the TUS Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, Educational Philosophy, Graduate Attributes Framework and Curriculum Design Principles. TUS Digital Badges should enhance the educational experience of learners and be delivered in partnership with staff and/or external stakeholders such as civic society, industry collaborators/benefactors, as appropriate.
- provide an evidenced-based approach to non-accredited learning and accomplishments.
- communicate the value of competences and/or accomplishments achieved in addition to accredited learning.

4 Definitions

The definitions of the key terms used for the purpose of the enabling the TUS Digital Badge Policy are listed below:

TUS Digital Badge

A TUS Digital Badge is a validated means for the university to recognise non-accredited learning. A digital badge is awarded by the university once an earner demonstrates competence against pre-agreed criteria.

Digital Badge Proposer

A nominated person within an academic unit or functional area of TUS with an appropriate level of authority and responsibility, determined by the Dean of Faculty or Head of Department / Function who seeks approval for a TUS Digital Badge.

Digital Badge Owner

The Digital Badge Owner is a named person within the academic unit or functional area who may initially apply for, as the Digital Badge Proposer, and/or thereafter develop, deliver, and enable the recognition of the successful completion of the digital badge by the enrolled learner(s) via the provision of the related TUS Digital Badge.

Digital Badge Committee

The Digital Badge Committee (DBC) in TUS has responsibility for the overall governance and strategic development of TUS Digital Badges issued by the university. The Digital Badge Committee also serves to approve proposals for new TUS Digital Badges to be issued in line with TUS Quality Assurance guidelines.

Digital Badge Earner

The learners who have enrolled, completed, and has received recognition of the learning through an approved digital badge.

5 Scope of the Policy

The policy document provides the guiding principles for developing and awarding all TUS Digital Badges (DB), which are formally recognised by the university and bear TUS branding. This policy outlines TUS statement of intent regarding the relevance and usage of DBs and their implementation procedure, as outlined in this document.

TUS Digital Badges may be awarded in recognition of the knowledge, competences and skills achieved in any aspect of non-accredited learning. Recognised non-accredited learning may include co-curricular and extracurricular activities, in addition to work-orientated competences. Therefore, the scope includes the achievement and recognition of non-accredited learning outside of but complementary to the ECTS credit system completed by students, staff, and external stakeholders.

It does not include formal recognition of learning through the award of credits or ECTS on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The position of digital badges in an outline of accredited and non-accredited forms of recognised learning are outlined in **Table 1**.

Table 1: TUS Recognised Award Delineation

		Delineation	Level on NFQ	Credit Bearing	ECTS Credits	Type of Recognition	Learner Workload (hours)
Major awards		• PhD • Masters • Postgraduate Diploma • Higher Diploma • Bachelor's Degrees • Higher Certificate	6-10	Yes	≥ 60	Award on NFQ	≥ 1200
Minor, supplemental, and special purpose awards. See QQI Definitions		• Certificates • Diplomas	6-9	Yes	Variable Credits	Award on NFQ	Variable depending on credits
Single module certification	Module	Module	6-9	Yes	Variable Credits	ECT Credits Gained	Variable depending on credits
Micro credential	Micro credential	Micro credential	6-9	Yes	Credits ≥ 1 & ≤ 9	Certificate Completion	≥ 20 and ≤ 200
Digital Badge	Non-credit bearing	Non-credit bearing	Not on NFQ	No	0	Digital Badge	Variable (in line with norm hours and there is learning which has been evidenced)
Non-credit-bearing, non-assessed, non-accredited provision	Personal and/or Professional Development Courses	Personal and/or Professional Development Courses	Not on NFQ	No	0	None	N/A (i.e., while learning may have occurred this is not evidenced)

6 TUS Digital Badge Committee (DBC)

The TUS Digital Badge Committee (DBC) shall be formally established and will be responsible for the oversight, approval process, and implementation of policies and procedures related to the issuing of TUS Digital Badges, in addition to the assurance of quality, standards, and compliance with relevant data protection legislation.

The purpose of the DBC is to:

- to review and approve applications in line with the TUS Digital Badge Policy
- to oversee the implementation of the policy for TUS Digital Badges.
- to inform the overall strategic development of TUS Digital Badges.

7 Management of TUS Digital Badges

A summary outline of the stages in the management of digital badges is outlined in **Figure 1**.

7.1 Stage 1: Development of TUS Digital Badges

- A call for Digital Badge applications will be scheduled twice in the academic year, or at such frequency as required.
- Digital Badge may be defined by a Faculty or Functional Area or the Student Union (the Digital Badge Proposer).
- The proposer submits a Digital Badge application to the DBC.
- Proposals for a new digital badge will be submitted for review to the DBC using the standard Digital Badge Application Form (See: ***Appendix I: Digital Badge Application Form***)

7.2 Stage 2: Approval of a TUS Digital Badge

Applications are approved based on defined assessment criteria and supported by a scoring rubric. (See ***Appendix II: Digital Badge Assessment Criteria and Scoring Rubric***).

The DBC will:

- review Digital Badge applications using the Digital Badge Assessment Criteria (See: **Appendix II**).
- score the application reflective of the above (See: **Appendix II**).

In the context of the review, the DBC will either:

- approve
 - seek further information on or
 - reject the Digital Badge application¹.
-
- communicate the outcome to the applicant.
 - record the outcome of the review and report, in a summative report of all digital badge applications reviewed by the DBC in the reporting period, the review outcomes to the relevant Subcommittee of Academic Council.²
 - retain the right to revoke a TUS Digital Badge if just cause is established by the university.

7.3 Stage 3: Reporting

- The DBC will report, in a summative report of all digital badge applications reviewed by the DBC in the reporting period, the review outcomes to the relevant Subcommittee of Academic Council.

¹ Issues, appeals and complaints will be directed to the Chair of the Digital Badge Committee.

² Cognisant of the standing orders of Academic Council and the Terms of Reference of the Academic Council Subcommittees, the Registrar will determine the relevant subcommittee to which the summary review report of the DBS is submitted.

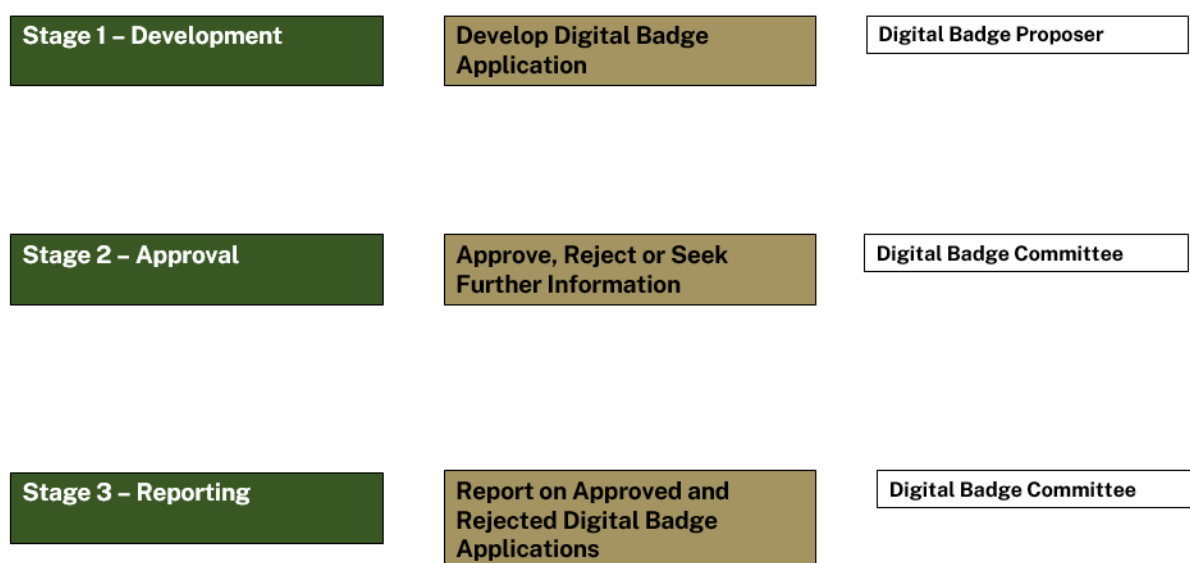


Figure 1: Management of Digital Badges

8 Digital Badge Committee Membership

Membership of the Digital Badge Committee shall normally consist of:

- Chair
- Nominees from each academic Faculty within TUS
- Nominee from CPID
- Nominee from the Quality Office
- Nominee from the TUS Library.

Additional members may be co-opted as required.

9 TUS Digital Badge Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities are outlined in the following section.

9.1 Digital Badge Owner

The Digital Badge Owner is a named person within the academic unit or functional

area who may initially apply for, as the Digital Badge Nominator, and/or thereafter develop, deliver, and enable the recognition of the successful completion of the digital badge by the enrolled learner(s) via the provision of the related TUS Digital Badge.

The Digital Badge Owner(s) is a staff member who is responsible for:

- completing the TUS Digital Badge Application and having it endorsed by the relevant Dean of Faculty, Head of Department or Functional Area.
- submitting the endorsed application to the DBC.
- overseeing the delivery and administration of the Digital Badge learning content, activity, and evidence that learner criteria have been met.
- ensuring the provision of a TUS Digital Badge to the enrolled learner³.

A summary of the core functions completed by the Digital Badge Owner(s) is outlined in **Figure 2**.

9.2 Digital Badge Logo Designer

TUS Marketing and Communications will be responsible for the design of the TUS Digital Badges logos in accordance with the University's Corporate Identity Guidelines.

³ All administrative arrangements that support the recording and issuing of the TUS Digital Badges will be confirmed through the other work designated under the agreed TOR of the Digital Badge Policy working group. This work will be outlined through an additional operational addendum to this policy when the systems and other administrative arrangements to manage such administration of digital badges is fully reviewed and documented. This addendum will be included in the policy and notified for approval to the Quality Sub-Committee of Academic Council once completed.

TUS TUS DIGITAL BADGE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

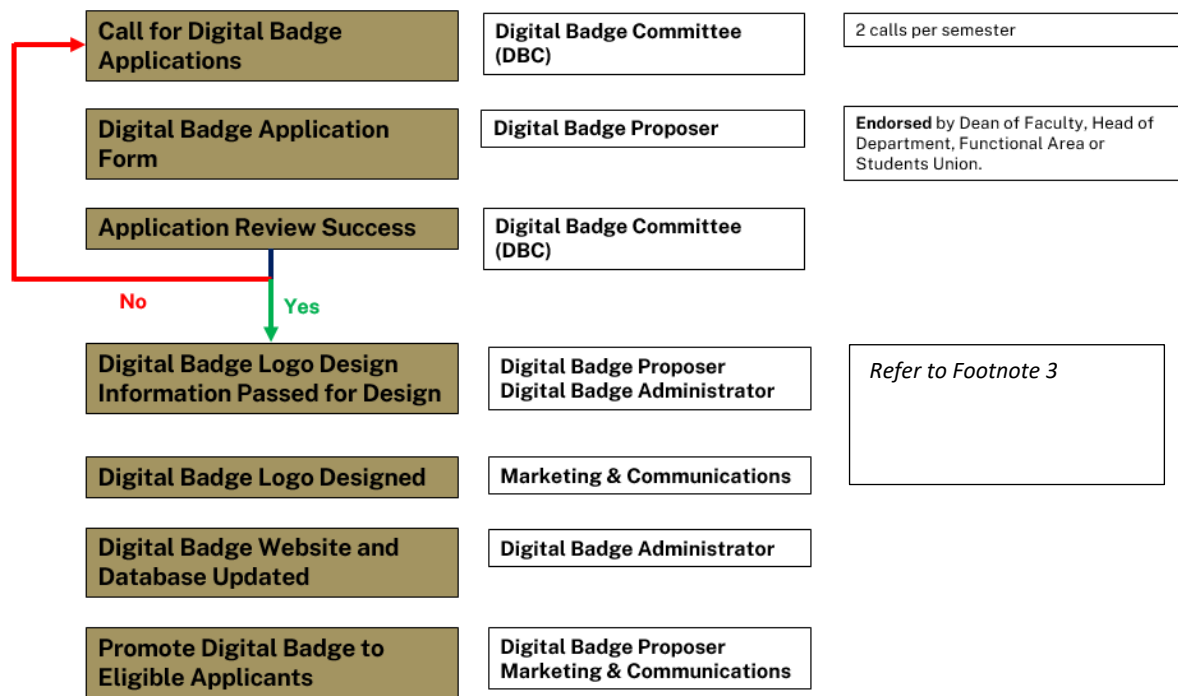


Figure 2: TUS Digital Badge Development Process

10 Information for TUS Digital Badge Earners

TUS Digital Badge Earners are required to complete an application form for validation to be issued their digital badge via a nominated platform (Refer to Appendix III). A Badge Earner's email address is required to accept and validate their digital badge. Badge Earners personal data will be stored and used in accordance with the relevant TUS policies⁴.

A summary of this application process is outlined in **Figure 3**.

⁴ This outline information is subject to revision as per the outline in Note 3.



TUSTUS DIGITAL BADGE EARNER APPLICATION PROCESS

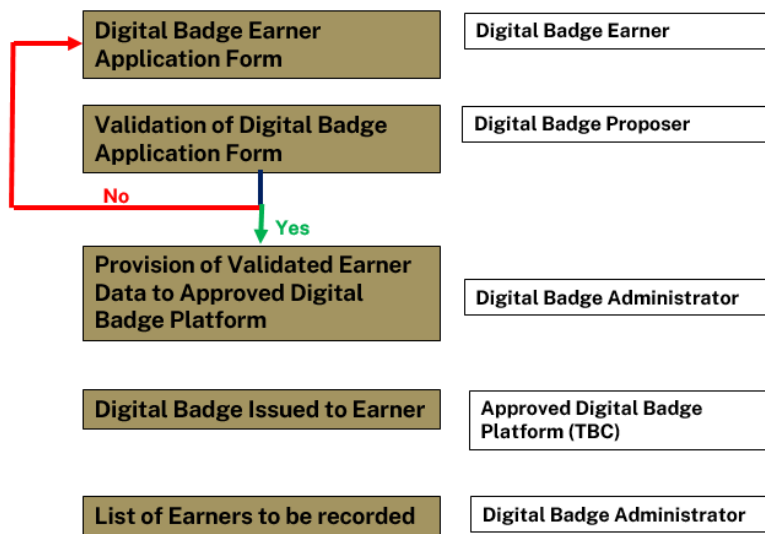


Figure 3: TUS Digital Badge Earner Application Process

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12 Appendices

12.1 Appendix I: Digital Badge Application Form (To be completed by the Digital Badge Proposer)

PART 1: DIGITAL BADGE PROPOSER DETAILS	
Badge Name Max 128 characters	This should be short, concise, and descriptive
Faculty/Department/Functional Area/Students' Union	
Proposer Name:	
Proposer Contact number:	
Proposer Email:	
Proposer Signature:	
Authorisation:	☐ I have authorised the development and delivery of the digital badge as described herein. ☐ I understand my role and responsibility as Digital Badge Proposer ☐ This badge is being delivered at no additional cost to the Badge Earner or for monetary gain to the Badge Issuer
Submission Date	
Signature of Endorsement (Required from Dean of Faculty/Head of Department/Functional Area)	Dean of Faculty, Head of Department or Functional Area Signature: _____ Date: _____
External Agreements (If Applicable)	Outline agreements in place in relation to endorsement of this badge with external stakeholders.

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PART 2: DIGITAL BADGE DETAILS	
Target Earners	Who is the Digital Badge for?
Short Description (max 1000 characters)	Please give a short overview of the badge, mentioning its purpose and audience. Please note this description will be available to view online if the badge is issued.
Brief Rationale (max 50 words)	Outline what is the identified need, enhanced the user experience or unique value add opportunity that this badge is responding to.
Badge Achievement Criteria	1.
	2.
	3.
	4.
Duration	What is the proposed duration of the digital badge?
How many hours of effort are associated with earning this badge?	Between 15-20 hours learner effort recommended.
Learner Pathways	Does this badge link to any existing badges, or do you have plans for other badges to link/relate to this badge to create a learning 'pathway'?

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT & INTEGRATION

Integration	Are there other similar TUS Digital Badges already available? If so, how would the development of this badge be sufficiently distinct, integrated, or complementary?
Alignment to TUS Values	Which of the following TUS Strategic Themes does your badge promote? ▪ Education ▪ Research and Innovation ▪ Sustainability ▪ Engagement ▪ Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion ▪ Internationalisation
Badge Tags	Please list any keywords (min. 4) you would like associated with the badge. These keywords can help with discoverability. #Badge Earner # Badge Issuer # Key word # Skill

PART 3: DELIVERING DIGITAL BADGE CONTENT AND ACTIVITY	
Badge Content and Learner Activities	Describe the badge content and activity to be delivered
Delivery Method	What delivery channels and methods will be used? (on-line, face to face, blended, practical experience)
Assessment and Evaluation	Explain how you will assess / evaluate whether the earner has met the required criteria.
Evidence	Describe how you will authenticate criteria. What will be recorded as evidence that the badge has been earned and the criteria met?
Resources and Timeframe	Describe who will deliver the badge content and materials and the expected timeframe - demonstrating that appropriate access, availability, and resources are committed for successful delivery.

DIGITAL BADGE DESIGN	
Text	Please identify the title, text and any other information required for the badge design.

PROPOSED DIGITAL BADGE COMMUNICATIONS	
Promotions	Outline how you will promote the badge? Where does a user find out about this Digital Badge?
Information	Please outline how you will ensure earners are provided with the relevant information needed considering: • How earners apply / selected to participate. • Informing them of delivery timeframe and Expectations. • Providing learning supports, tools, resources. • Advising and recording requirements for assessment and evidence. • Advising on and collecting personal data for internal records and digital administration.

FOR USE BY DIGITAL BADGE COMMITTEE ONLY			
Development Template Version Approved		XXXX Meeting Date Approved	
Badge File Reference			
Assessment Score <i>(Based on Assessment Criteria and Scoring Rubric)</i>			
Assessed by			

12.2 APPENDIX II: TUS DIGITAL BADGE DESIGN, ASSESSMENT CRITERIA AND SCORING RUBRIC

Criteria (All criteria must be achieved)	Achieved	Not Achieved
Clear Ownership and Accountability		
Badge name and badge issuer are clear.		
Appropriate level badge contact.		
Endorsements are clear and appropriate agreements in place.		
Aligned to TUS's Strategic Vision, Goals and Values:		
Rationale - badge responds to an identified need, enhances the user experience, or provides a unique value add opportunity.		
Target earners clearly identified and strong focus on the earner experience and value to badge earner.		
Description is appropriate for on-line publication and suitable for external audiences wishing to verify information about the badge.		
Badge has considered the wider eco-system of badges, demonstrating integration, avoidance of duplication and potential learning pathways.		
Badge duration is appropriate.		
Four badge criteria are identified that are measurable statements that specify what learners will know or be able to do as a result of participating in the badge content and activity.		
Badge has been 'mapped' to appropriate values and knowledge and skills zone.		
Four badge tags identified.		
Reflects relevant and Robust Learning and Achievement		
Robust content and activity demonstrated. (Between 15-20 hours learner effort).		
Clear plan for assessment and evidence that criteria has been met including at least one artefact to be produced by badge earner.		
Badge is available and accessible.		
Demonstrates commitment to resources required for delivery.		
Communicates credibility and value of accomplishment		

Information for badge design and tags provided.		
Demonstrates how the badge will be promoted / take up encouraged.		
Demonstrates good communication, information provision and engagement with badge earners.		

12.3 APPENDIX III: TUS DIGITAL BADGE EARNER APPLICATION AND CONSENT FORM

I wish to apply to have a TUS Digital Badge issued to me. I consent to have my name and email addressed used for this purpose.	
TUS Digital Badge Earners name:	
TUS Digital Badge Earners Email Address:	
Name of TUS Digital Badge to be issued:	
Signature:	Signature: Date: