



SUSTAINABLE LEARNING

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL
LEARNING

SKILLS VALIDATION



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PREPARATION (WHAT DO YOU NEED?)

- Gain insight into soft skills and/or green skills.
- Use or create a rubric with behavioral indicators.
- Develop an observation plan and forms.
- Prepare standardized feedback forms.
- Develop progress-oriented feedback skills and appreciative observation skills
- Provide a safe non-formal learning environment

EXECUTION AND GUIDANCE OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Define learning goals (encourage Youngsters to define their own goals) or start the activity and focus on skills
- Assign activities to demonstrate soft skills
- Use rubrics and structured observation and assessment.

IMPORTANT

Apply formative assessment throughout the process

Focus on Observation, Feedforward and Feedback
Use appreciative observation (focus on strengths and use the observation format)
Provide process-oriented and self-regulation feedback.
Encourage peer feedback

MAKE DEVELOPMENT VISIBLE

- Build a (digital) portfolio with evidence, reflections, and feedback.
- Stimulate self-reflection through questions, logs, and feedback sessions.

BADGE ISSUANCE & USE

Badge is issued digitally with metadata (skill, goals, evidence, issuer).

Learner is guided on how to share and use the badge (e.g., LinkedIn, CV).

BADGE STRUCTURE

Each badge includes:

Name & description of the skill/ability.
Criteria for earning the badge.
Issuer's name/logo.
Learner's name/email.
Optional: EQF level, study load, connection to broader frameworks.

UNDERSTANDING PRIOR LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF THE YOUNGSTER

- Engage in conversation and ask open appreciative and curious questions.
- Collect documentation of previous experiences (e.g., volunteering, projects, work experience).
- Encourage reflection reports and self-assessments.
- Use rubrics to determine the learner's starting point.

DESIGN LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Develop or co-create learning activities (Bloom's Taxonomy can form the basis for developing these)
- Use rubrics when designing learning activities
- Take previous knowledge and experiences into account.
- Offer choice in activities to increase motivation.

FINAL ASSESSMENT & BADGE APPLICATION

- Youngster submits evidence and applies for a badge.
- Assessor evaluates based on rubric and possibly a final interview.
- Badge is awarded or feedback is given at different levels (based on the rubric) for improvement.

THE BADGE!

Choose a Platform

BadgeCraft can be an option!
Based on Open Badges 2.0 (IMS Global).
Free for up to 100 users/year.
Translated into 18+ languages.
Includes Badge Wallet app for learners to upload evidence and manage badges.
Supports flexible badge systems with levels, milestones, and tracking.

BADGE EARNING PROCEDURE





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Badge Earning Procedure (Pilot Phase)

Introduction:

Choose a Badge Platform like BadgeCraft

Learners are introduced to the badge system (in meetings and on paper).

Access: Learners download the Badge Wallet app or use the web version.

QR Code: After completing a learning module, learners receive a QR code linking to the relevant badge collection.

Self-Selection: Learners choose which badges they believe they've earned.

Evidence Submission: Learners upload proof (format to be defined).

Educator Review:

Educator reviews submitted evidence and personal observations.

If sufficient: badge is awarded.

If not: learner receives feedback and can try again.

Learner Ownership: The learner drives the process; the educator facilitates and validates





TUTORIAL FOR USING BADGES AS A WAY TO VALIDATE LEARNING



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HOW TO USE BADGES AS A WAY TO SUPPORT AND VALIDATE THE NON-FORMAL LEARNING OF YOUNGSTERS? Tutorial for designing your own Badge Pilot.

Interested in supporting the development of youngsters through non-formal learning and the use of digital credentials?

*This is a simple **guide to piloting a learning journey for youngsters, using non-formal learning methods and badges** to help recognise and validate their learnings.*

Similar pilot processes have been implemented as a part of the Sustainable Learning project within formal educational institutions as well as youth organisations.

Adapt it to your own needs and feel free to use this tutorial and our materials as a source of inspiration!



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PHASE 1: PREPARATION. Things to figure out before you start

→ **GETTING TO KNOW BADGES.**

What are they, how do they work, what are the benefits of using them for youngsters & for your organisation.

- *What are Open Badges & how to use them?*
- *Who is your target group? How could they benefit from working with badges?*
- *How could your organisation benefit from working with Badges?*

→ **TARGET GROUP & SKILLS TO BE DEVELOPED**

- *What kind of skills can the youngsters develop as a part of your (learning) activities? What are their possible & expected learning outcomes?*
- *What kind of badges can represent these skills?*
- **TIP:** *Use the personal & green skill badges developed by the Sustainable Learning team or create your own.*



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PHASE 1: PREPARATION. Things to figure out before you start

- *What are the indicators for different skill levels (beginner, intermediate, advanced)? Make sure your team of educators have a common understanding of these indicators and standards.*
- **TIP:** Create your own skill assessment rubrics or use the rubrics developed by the Sustainable Learning team.

→ THE PROCESS & PLAN

- *What kind of learning opportunities do the youngsters need in order to develop these skills? Are they additionally planned activities or can the skills be developed as a part of their existing daily work/activities within the organisation?*
- **TIP:** For supporting the development of specific personal & green skills, take a look at the Toolbox of non-formal learning activities developed by the Sustainable Learning team.



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PHASE 1: PREPARATION. Things to figure out before you start

- *How can you make sure to support the development of these skills prior and during the badge process? Eg. prior (peer-to-peer) training meetings, mentoring & feedback meetings with educators etc. Be sure to use and share the resources and skills already present within your team!*

The division of roles & responsibilities:

What kind of time & contribution is needed of each educator?

Who will be facilitating the learning activities and reflection meetings?

Who will be evaluating the evidence that volunteers provide for the badges?



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PHASE 1: PREPARATION. Things to figure out before you start

TIP: Create an initial plan and schedule for the whole Badge pilot/learning journey of the youngsters, including all the learning activities, meetings with the youngsters and within the group of educators.

This will help you get an idea of the time it will actually take. Of course, adjustments might occur, but it's important for everyone to be aware of the time and task commitment beforehand.

→ FINALISING THE COLLECTION OF BADGES

- Choose the final collection of badges that your youngsters will be able to work on.
- **TIP:** In this case, less could be more. Instead of having a wide selection, you might first want to focus on the quality & tangibility of all the badges you present.
- Set up your activity on a platform which allows to create, manage and show recognition with digital Open Badges. For example Badgecraft

TIP: Take a look at the guiding materials for setting up a Learning Activity on Badgecraft.



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PHASE 1: PREPARATION. Things to figure out before you start

MAKE SURE THAT..

- Each badge has transparent criteria and evidence requirements
- Each badge is clearly linked to the planned activities (actually tangible within the learning journey)

TIP: Take a look at the Open Badges developed by the Sustainable Learning team



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PHASE 2: GETTING STARTED WITH THE YOUNGSTERS

→ **Organise 1 or 2 introduction sessions with the youngsters and educators involved, where you introduce..**

- *What is non-formal learning, what are soft & hard skills*
- *The badge system: what are open badges, how they can be used & why is it useful for the youngsters*
- *How the process will work in your organisation: which are the different steps along the way, until the youngsters obtain their badges.*
- *The collection of available badges, allowing the youngsters to start making their first selection of interest. Coaching them in the selection if needed, making sure the badges they choose are skills that the learners would also benefit from in the future & skills where there is actually room for growth & development in their case.*
- **TIP:** *Our recommendation is for each youngster to choose one or two skills to work on simultaneously, to keep focus.*



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PHASE 3: THE LEARNING JOURNEY OF YOUNGSTERS

1. Co-creating learning plans

Once the youngsters have confirmed the skills & badges they wish to work on, design a reflection session where with the support of their peers & educators, the youngsters can..

→ **Evaluate their current skill level.**

Take each criteria of the skill & evaluate yourself from 1-10 (How well/much do I do it already?) Which aspects of the skill need my focus the most?

→ **Visualise their end goal.** *Bringing concrete examples of situations where they might be able to demonstrate this skill. What will it look & feel like in my case? What in my habits/behaviour/knowledge/reactions will have changed?*

→ **Define their own learning opportunities.** *In which tasks/everyday situations can this skill be developed?*

→ **Come up with concrete action steps & deadlines**

Which concrete steps can I take to reach this learning goal? Write at least 3-5 per skill. By when & how will I take these steps?



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PHASE 3: THE LEARNING JOURNEY OF YOUNGSTERS

2. Participating in various learning opportunities

→ Carrying out non-formal learning activities with the youngsters, where they can develop their skills. Can be organised by the educators or as peer-to-peer learning activities, with the support of the educators in designing and carrying out the activities if needed.

TIPS:

- Take a look at the Toolbox with activities developed by the Sustainable Learning team.
- Make sure each learning activity has clear learning outcomes that are connected to the skills you aim to develop, use the skills rubrics when creating the activities
- Make sure to leave time for debriefing and reflection in each learning activity, so the youngsters can instantly analyse their learnings from the activity and connect it with their badge process.
- Make sure the youngsters are a part of designing/choosing the activities, so the process is still theirs!



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PHASE 3: THE LEARNING JOURNEY OF YOUNGSTERS

3. Regular learning reflection meetings & badge process

Make sure to organise regular reflection meetings with the youngsters, during the learning journey and in between different learning activities.

PS: the learning journey can include intentionally designed learning activities as well as other learning opportunities that are a part of the everyday reality of the youngsters within your organisation (volunteering work/other classes or courses - all of the learning experiences can be taken into consideration!).

Here are possible discussion prompts for the meetings:

- What kind of progress have I noticed towards my learning goals?*
- What are the main obstacles I'm facing? What kind of resources can help me overcome those obstacles?*
- What kind of shifts have I noticed in my knowledge, attitude, habits or mindset as a learner?*
- Peer reflections: changes/progress that we've noticed in each other.*



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PHASE 3: THE LEARNING JOURNEY OF YOUNGSTERS

In general, make sure all the youngsters have a chance to share + write down every small progress as well as the challenges they are facing. Discuss with the youngsters the possibilities of overcoming/coping with the challenges.

During the first meetings, make sure also to:

- *Introduce BadgeCraft (or other platform where you set up the badges), have the youngsters sign up and join your Learning Activity on the platform*
- *Introduce the essence and collection of evidence*
- *Set up a digital space where the youngsters can collect their evidence and track their progress. For example a Google Drive folder for each youngster.*

TIPS:

- *Form small groups with learners who are working on the same badge, so they can reflect & collect evidence together!*
- *MAKE DEVELOPMENT VISIBLE: make sure the youngsters have a digital space where to collect their evidence & write down their observations regarding their progress & challenges.*



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PHASE 3: THE LEARNING JOURNEY OF YOUNGSTERS

For example a Google Drive folder. This can be already set up when creating their learning plans, so all the documents are stored in one place and can be modified during the reflection sessions.

→ One option to keep track of their own learning is to keep working on their Learning Plan document, where for each skill they can note down steps they have taken & the impact it had.



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PHASE 4: COLLECTION AND VALIDATION OF EVIDENCE

Informing & instructing the youngsters about evidence collection

- *Make sure the youngsters collect their evidence during the whole learning journey*
- *The evidence can be collected & submitted in the form of photos, short videos, voice recordings, or written reflections - anything that demonstrates the development and demonstration of the skill by the young person.*
- *Once the youngster feels they have collected enough evidence to meet the criteria of the badge (can also check confirm with the rubric), they can submit the evidence on BadgeCraft.*

Assessing the submitted evidence

- *Make sure to clarify beforehand in your organisation who actually is the assessor of the evidence.*
- *Assess the evidence based on the badge criteria & the skills grid. Besides the evidence submitted by the youngster, you can additionally use your own observations as an educator and gather feedback from other educators/peers.*



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PHASE 4: COLLECTION AND VALIDATION OF EVIDENCE

→ *If the submitted evidence is sufficient, you can grant the badge on BadgeCraft!*

→ *If the submitted evidence is insufficient, you can ask for the youngster for further evidence or improvements.*

PS: For improvements, make sure to give clear feedback on what the youngster still needs to develop & support them in defining next possible steps of action.

PHASE 5: RECEIVING THE BADGES

When granting the badges, make sure to once again inform the youngsters where and how to use the badges.

TIPS:

→ *Make sure to celebrate the accomplishments - perhaps organise a fun badge ceremony with the youngsters? How would they like to celebrate the progress they've made?*



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PHASE 6: EVALUATION AND FUTURE PLANS

Once you have finalised your first badge-journey with the youngsters, it is important to evaluate the process with all parties involved.

Evaluation with the youngsters

As the youngsters are the core of these activities, it is crucial to get their feedback.

Organise a small evaluation meeting with the youngsters involved in the learning process & badge pilot. In the meeting, you could focus on the following questions:

- *How did you feel about this type of learning process in general?*
- *What worked well for you in the process & in the way it was built up?*
- *What could have been done differently, to better support your learning?*



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PHASE 6: EVALUATION AND FUTURE PLANS

And a few questions on a sliding scale (for example on Menti.com or on a physical scale from 1-5):

- Did this process support you in becoming a more aware & self-directed as a learner, taking ownership of your own learning? (Not at all - a lot)
- How much do you feel you really learned/grew in the process? (Not at all - a lot)
- How likely are you to use these badges outside of our organisation? (Not at all - will use for sure)

Evaluation with the team of educators involved

Once you have gathered feedback from the youngsters, it is time to have an evaluation meeting with the group of educators involved in the non-formal learning process & piloting the badges. In the meeting, you could focus on the following questions:

Evaluating the process

- *How did you feel about building up & leading this type of a learning process in general?*
- *What worked well for you in the process & in the way it was built up?*



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PHASE 6: EVALUATION AND FUTURE PLANS

→ *What was challenging, what could have been done differently?*

TIP: *Make sure to also look into topics such as clarity of roles & responsibilities in the process, expected and actual time commitment etc.*

Potential follow-up:

→ *What kind of potential do we see in applying similar non-formal approaches and the use of badges as a way to validate learning in the future?*

→ *Would we like to continue working with badges? If yes, how can it be integrated into our work in long term?*

