

# DIGITAL BADGE TAXONOMY

*MADE FOR YOU!*



ALAMO  
COLLEGES  
DISTRICT

# DIGITAL BADGES OVERVIEW

## GOAL

The Alamo Colleges District (ACD) mission is to empower our diverse communities for success by taking “intentional action to support students’ career goals from pre-matriculation through post-graduation” (Aspen Institute, 2019). This taxonomy aims to create a consistent experience for the communities we serve across the Colleges and maximize the visibility of in-demand skills. By aligning digital badges, micro-credentials, and micro-pathways across the district to local careers, job opportunities, and employers, we work to end poverty in San Antonio.<sup>1</sup>

## DEFINITION

Digital badges are digital credentials that people earn by demonstrating a skill. They consist of an image and metadata, are aligned with the Open Badge standard, belong to the earner, and are shareable on social media platforms, resumes, and e-portfolios.

### VALUE PROPOSITION

Digital badges articulate in-demand skills to employers and increase social mobility by positioning students for greater competitiveness in the job market.

The benefits of digital badges include:

- Increasing student engagement by motivating, rewarding, and validating learning
- Increasing students’ awareness of skills gained by connecting content to the workforce
- Making courses more attractive by articulating skills to employers
- Aligning with Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) Marketable Skills Goals
- Creating a digital method for reporting students’ acquisition of skills
- Providing data for identifying and addressing workforce skills gaps

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Hiring practices are changing rapidly. There is a shift to skills-based hiring and using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to scan application materials for keywords. To best prepare our learners for the new hiring landscape, the following three principles inform the creation of all badges in the ACD:



1. Represent in-demand skills.
2. Require skills assessments.
3. Are assessed by credentialed faculty or staff.

### CREDENTIALLED ASSESSORS


Faculty members and trainers will receive specialized training to award digital badges. Assessor Tiers are defined in this section by the training required, the responsible entity for the training, and correspond to the type of evaluation for a particular skill or competency.



- **Tier 1:** Digital badge training that credentials a faculty member or trainer to award badges that represent the THECB Marketable Skills. This tier is specific to each College and facilitated by the Colleges.
- **Tier 2:** Digital badge training that credentials a faculty member or trainer to facilitate a micro-course that awards a digital badge. This tier is not College-specific and is facilitated by Alamo Colleges Online (i.e., Badge Coach).
- **Tier 3:** Digital badge training that credentials an adjunct or full-time faculty member to integrate a digital badge into a credit-bearing course. This tier is not College-specific and is facilitated by Alamo Colleges Online (i.e., Badge Specialist).

# BADGE CLASSIFICATIONS

BADGE CLASSIFICATION	CRITERIA	EVALUATION / ASSESSOR TIER	EXAMPLE BADGE ICON*
<p><b>Subcompetency</b></p>	<p>Demonstrate a subcompetency that is a component of a competency.</p> <p>Measured with a skill assessment designed within the context of a competency badge pathway.</p>	<p>Indirect or direct assessment of a skill.</p> <p>Assessment is completed by a faculty member designated by the College (Tier 1) or a credentialed staff or faculty member (Tier 2 or Tier 3).</p>	
<p><b>Competency</b></p>	<p>Demonstrate a competency that is a component of a larger skill.</p> <p>Measured with skill assessments designed within the context of a digital badge pathway.</p>	<p>Indirect or direct assessment of a skill.</p> <p>Assessment is completed by a faculty member designated by the College (Tier 1) or a credentialed staff or faculty member (Tier 2 or Tier 3).</p>	
<p><b>Marketable Skill</b></p>	<p>Demonstrate a base-level skill that aligns with the core objectives of the Colleges (i.e., THECB).</p> <p>Measured with a skills assessment designed by one of the Colleges.</p>	<p>Indirect or direct assessment of a skill.</p> <p>Assessment is completed by a faculty member designated by the College (Tier 1).</p>	

# BADGE CLASSIFICATIONS | CONTINUED

BADGE CLASSIFICATION	CRITERIA	EVALUATION / ASSESSOR TIER	EXAMPLE BADGE ICON*
<p><b>Skill</b></p>	<p>Demonstrate a base-level marketable or technical skill.</p> <p>Measured with a competency-based skills assessment.</p>	<p>Performance-based assessment with 80% proficiency or higher.</p> <p>Assessment is completed by a credentialed staff or faculty member (Tier 2 or Tier 3).</p>	
<p><b>Ability</b></p>	<p>Demonstrate the desired behavior, ability, or on-the-job training consistently.</p> <p>Measured over time as the culmination of a capstone learning experience - capstone project, internship, apprenticeship, or portfolio and assessed with a competency-based skills assessment.</p>	<p>End-of-series, summative assessment (i.e., final course, project, or skill set) with 80% proficiency or higher.</p> <p>Assessment is completed by a credentialed staff or faculty member (Tier 2 or Tier 3).</p>	
<p><b>Certificate</b></p>	<p>Demonstrate the desired skill(s) by completing a series of required courses and/or activities.</p> <p>Measured by internal stakeholders through processes that are already established by the Colleges and the district (i.e., Level 1 Certificate).</p>	<p>Existing certifications that are approved by the Colleges.</p> <p>Assessment is completed by a credentialed staff or faculty member (Tier 2 or Tier 3).</p>	

BADGE CLASSIFICATION	CRITERIA	EVALUATION / ASSESSOR TIER	EXAMPLE BADGE ICON
<p><b>Articulation</b></p>	<p>Demonstrate skills in non-credit training that is mapped to a for-credit course and approved by the Colleges and the district for use as Credit for Prior Learning (CPL).</p>	<p>Successfully completing a course that is approved to award CPL and has an active Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).</p> <p>Assessment is completed by a credentialed staff or faculty member (Tier 2 or Tier 3).</p>	
<p><b>External Partnership</b></p>	<p>Demonstrate a skill, ability, or certificate in a learning experience that is co-sponsored by the Alamo Colleges District, Colleges and/or their departments, and an employer or education partner (i.e., Goodwill, Travis Early College High School).</p>	<p>Complete the requirements for the appropriate badge type.</p> <p>The icon may be co-branded as long as it meets the requirements and is approved by both parties.</p> <p>Assessment is completed by a credentialed staff or faculty member (Tier 2 or Tier 3).</p>	

\* The example icons serve as representations and may not represent actual badges.



## ORGANIZATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

Canvas Credentials (formerly Badgr Pro) has native tiered levels of [permission requirements](#) called **roles**. Alamo Colleges Online (ACOL) representatives are designated as the **Organizational Administrator** and provide centralized capacity-building support services for all **Issuers**. The goal of a centralized hub for digital badges is to create a consistent experience for learners across the Colleges and the district.

ACOL will create **Issuers** and assign selected staff the role of **Issuer Owner** on behalf of the Colleges. Additional support services include but are not limited to badge-related administration, data tracking, technology support, training, presenting, hosting meetings, creating and maintaining **Issuer** pages, creating and implementing a district-wide badge creation process, providing digital badge consultations, supporting the Digital Badge Community of Practice, and more.

## ISSUERS

### DEFINITION - WHAT IS AN ISSUER?

An **Issuer** is an organization, department, or individual responsible for issuing badges<sup>2</sup>. Internal partners at the Alamo Colleges serve as **Issuers**. Roles and types of **Issuers** are defined below to create a consistent experience for students and other stakeholders and to benefit from the [permission requirements](#) native to Canvas Credentials (formerly Badgr Pro). To see the Alamo Colleges' current **Issuers** in context visit [alamo.badgr.com](https://alamo.badgr.com).

### ROLES - WHAT DOES AN ISSUER DO?

**Issuer Owner** is the second highest level of permissions. It has access to all of the permissions for the **Issuer** including adding/removing staff to the **Issuer**, editing the **Issuer**, editing badges, revoking badges, creating groups, accessing member lists, editing pathways, adding groups to pathways, awarding badges, and bulk award badges. The only restrictions for **Issuer Owners** are that they cannot access or edit other **Issuers** or the organization settings or welcome page.

The roles of **Issuers** vary and will continue to evolve as digital badge opportunities continue to expand. The roles are listed below and align with the [permission requirements](#) set by Canvas Credentials (formerly Badgr Pro).

## TYPES - WHO CAN BE AN ISSUER?

TYPES	DESCRIPTIONS	EXAMPLES	ROLES
<b>Organizations</b>	<p>There are six organizations in the Alamo Colleges District, Northeast Lakeview College, Northwest Vista College, Palo Alto College, St. Philip's College, San Antonio College, and the District Support Operations (DSO).</p> <p>The DSO serves the Colleges and is not a distinct <b>Issuer</b>.</p>	<p><b>The Alamo Colleges</b>, as five independently accredited Colleges, are each unique <b>Issuers</b> of badges for their students and the community.</p>	<p>The Colleges select representative(s) to be designated as the <b>Issuer Owner</b>.</p> <p>Credentialed faculty and staff are designated as <b>Issuer Staff</b>.</p> <p>ACOL representatives are designated as the <b>Organizational Administrator</b>, and provide centralized support services for all <b>Issuers</b>.</p> <p>Refer to the Canvas Credentials <a href="#">support page</a> for details about <b>Issuer</b> permission levels.</p>
<b>Departments</b>	<p>The DSO is comprised of departments. DSO departments that work directly with learners may be <b>Issuers</b> of student badges when an aggregate learning approach serves our learners best.</p> <p>Any College department will use the College as the Issuer.</p>	<p><b>Economic and Workforce Development</b> is an <b>Issuer</b> of badges for participants in their training programs.</p> <p><b>International Programs</b> is an <b>Issuer</b> of a pathway of global competency badges, as an aggregate learning experience for students.</p>	<p>The department <b>Issuers</b> designate credentialed faculty and staff as <b>Issuer Staff</b>.</p> <p>ACOL representatives are designated as the <b>Organizational Administrator</b> and provide centralized support services for all <b>Issuers</b>.</p> <p>Refer to the Canvas Credentials <a href="#">support page</a> for details about <b>Issuer</b> permission levels.</p>

## TYPES - WHO CAN BE AN ISSUER? (CONT.)

TYPES	DESCRIPTIONS	EXAMPLES	ROLES
<p><b>Partners</b></p>	<p>The ACD and the five Colleges have many internal and external partners. Partners may become <b>Issuers</b> when digital badge collaboration serves students, faculty, and/or the partners in a meaningful way that supports the mission of ACD.</p>	<p><i>Internal:</i></p> <p><b>ACOL</b>, as the district Canvas Credentials administrator, is an <b>Issuer</b> of a limited set of faculty/staff badges awarded upon the successful completion of micro-credential-related professional development.</p> <p><i>External:</i></p> <p><b>Bellwether College Consortium</b> hosts a yearly award ceremony that ACD sponsors. A benefit from this partnership is that they are an honorary <b>Issuer</b> of badges to their awardees.</p>	<p><i>Internal:</i></p> <p>ACOL representatives are designated as the <b>Organizational Administrator</b> and provide centralized support services for all <b>Issuers</b>.</p> <p><i>External:</i></p> <p>Business and education partners approved as <b>Issuers</b> are treated as customers and receive support services from ACOL. External partners do not receive access to the ACD Canvas Credentials account.</p>





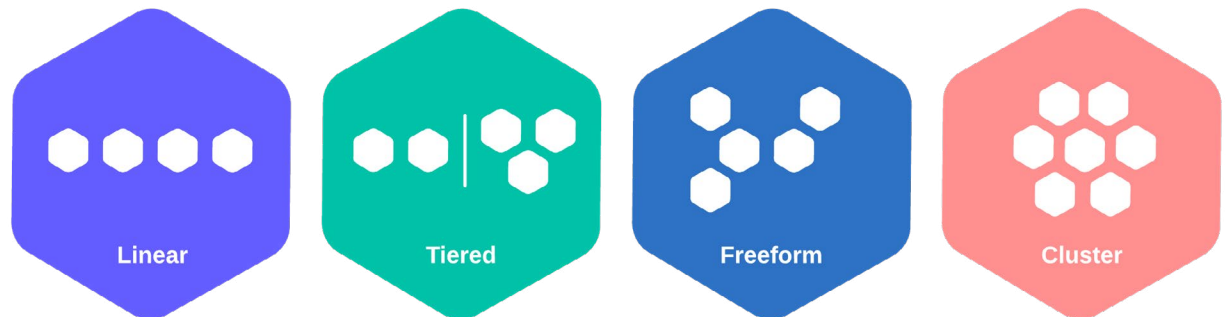
## DIGITAL BADGE PATHWAYS

A learning pathway is the chosen route or roadmap individuals complete as they progress through a range of specific courses, academic programs, and/or learning experiences<sup>3</sup>. A learning pathway may or may not include digital badges. This section focuses on learning pathways that include digital badges.

### DEFINITION - WHAT IS A DIGITAL BADGE PATHWAY?

A digital badge pathway is a sequence of learning experiences that awards stackable digital badges. The Department of Labor considers a credential stackable “when it is part of a sequence of credentials that can be accumulated over time to build up an individual’s qualifications and help them to move along a career pathway or up a career ladder to different and potentially higher-paying jobs”<sup>4</sup>.

The structure of digital badge pathways may take many forms. Badges can be grouped or connected in different ways within the badging platform. For example, badge pathways can be linear, tiered, freeform, or clustered. Digital badge pathways often culminate with an end-of-pathway digital badge.



*Image replicated from [Learning pathways and badge system designs](#), December 12, 2022.*



## CHARACTERISTICS: THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DIGITAL BADGE PATHWAYS

### Digital badge pathways at Alamo Colleges must:

- Be stackable, a part of a sequence.
- Be scalable to ensure the highest return on investment.
- Provide a valuable experience for learners that cannot be replicated without the use of digital badge pathways.
- Facilitate the experience using the enterprise-level software selected for pathways.
- Award in-demand skill badges.
- Avoid duplication of existing badge opportunities across the Colleges or the district.
- Receive approval from appropriate College and/or District leadership and internal stakeholders.

## ICONOGRAPHY: THE DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR BADGE ICONS ON A PATHWAY

### Internal Badges

The iconography of all badges awarded by Alamo Colleges must align with the Badge Classifications. The iconography of a badge does not need to change because it is selected as a component of a pathway. For example, a competency badge may be awarded as an independent achievement, or a sequence of competency badges may culminate with a marketable skill badge.

### External Badges

Any industry-aligned digital badge that is approved by leadership may be a component of an Alamo Colleges digital badge pathway whether or not it was created by Alamo Colleges (i.e., Adobe Photoshop Digital Badge). However, digital badge pathways created by the Alamo Colleges must include at least one badge issued by Alamo Colleges.



## TECHNOLOGICAL GUIDELINES

The badging platform Alamo Colleges District uses is Canvas Credentials (formerly Badgr Pro). To read more information about this platform, view the [technical requirements](#).

Alamo Colleges' digital badges must be [Open Badges](#):

- Use open-source data standards.
- Are portable; they may be shared anywhere.
- Have metadata about the achievement.

## REFERENCE

1. Aspen Institute (2019). [The Workforce Playbook](#).
2. Canvas Credentials (2022). [Creating an Issuer in Badgr](#).
3. Canvas Credentials (2022). [Learning pathways and badge system designs](#).
4. Department of Labor (2022). [Credential Resource Guide](#).

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Reviewed and approved by the following in Summer 2022:

- Vice Presidents for Academic Success
- Digital Badge Community of Practice
- Directors of Marketing and Communication Council