

# Badge Design Tips for Instructors

## 1. Link badge requirements to course goals

- a. All badges have specific requirements which must be fulfilled before they are earned.
- b. Ensure that students are required to exhibit beneficial behaviors or demonstrate applicable masteries in order to fulfill badge requirements. In this way, the badge cannot be earned unless the student improves.
- c. Tying course goals to badge requirements ensures that badges directly support instructor objectives.

## 2. Decide if badges should be skill-based

- a. Badges can be awarded for any number of reasons. Be wary of badges that are handed out for participation, or for completing an objective that all students will complete. These types of badges may support goal-setting, but they are likely to have adverse effects on motivation.
- b. Motivation is partially dependent on the development of a sense of competence and autonomy. Badges that are awarded for demonstrating exceptional performance draw focus to the earner's superior knowledge or ability, enhancing competence. Badges that are awarded for completing mundane or otherwise required tasks may undermine the earner's sense of competence or autonomy.

## 3. Decide if badges should be *expected* or *unexpected*

- a. *Expected badges* are badges that are visible before earning. They allow a student to know exactly how to acquire each badge. Expected badges can be useful when they are implemented to facilitate goal-setting. This function is best performed when students have a difficult time setting their own goals and would benefit from guidance. However, care should be taken. If expected badges are used as reward mechanisms, they can decrease intrinsic motivation.
- b. *Unexpected badges* are badges that are invisible until earned. The student does not know the requirements of earning a badge until it is earned. While this is not helpful in setting specific goals, it is useful when the badge is implemented to improve motivation. Research shows that these unexpected badges can positively affect intrinsic motivation.

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- c. To decide - First evaluate your reasons for including a badging system. Then, evaluate the purpose of each individual badge. It is perfectly acceptable to have some badges which are expected and some which are unexpected.

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