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Using badges to recognize engagement -- Part 1

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Using badges to recognize engagement — Part 1

2 June 2020

Digital badges became popular with the rise of noncredit online training opportunities; they were designed to motivate learners to complete work by rewarding them with a digital image of a badge upon completion of some set of activities. Although there are many different ways to implement badges, they can be a great way to encourage engagement or reward particular student behaviors. This post gives two examples of how faculty are using badges this term, and [Part 2 \(<https://www.carleton.edu/ltc/ltc-blog/news/using-badges-to-recognize-engagement-part-2/>\)](https://www.carleton.edu/ltc/ltc-blog/news/using-badges-to-recognize-engagement-part-2/) provides a deeper dive into the implementation of badges in a third course.

Some Carleton faculty members were using badges before the pandemic hit. For a number of years, Chico Zimmerman (Classics) has been inviting students to give each other “[Learning Assists](https://www.carleton.edu/ltc/ltc-blog/news/the-learning-assist/)” (<https://www.carleton.edu/ltc/ltc-blog/news/the-learning-assist/>), and he has used a badge-like framework for awarding those. George Cusack (WAC) adapted Chico’s approach and has been asking his students to submit some reflective written work at the end of each week, along with a “Learning Shout-Out” (LSO) to acknowledge a peer who helped them with their learning. Peter Balaam (English) tried using George’s LSO model this term and found it worked well. Peter explained the practice:

In a bit of reflective writing due on Fridays each week, students indicated to me which of their peers in the class they wanted to offer an LSO for the week just past, an acknowledgment of any way another student had helped them out- by helping them grasp something complicated, asking a good question, being stalwart in Breakout Room discussions or productive in asynchronous organizing for a collaborative essay, whatever it might be. They indicated the LSO they wanted to make to me alone and then over the weekend, I used Moodle’s (still slightly perplexing) Badges function to send honorees their badge with a message that “*Someone in our course gave you for a Learning Shout-Out.*” Recipients get 1 badge per week no matter how many might nominate them in the same week. Eventually, nearly everyone had received a badge. Students seemed to really like it. Badges helped me to encourage reflection, acknowledgment, and gratitude at the heart of course.

Dev Gupta (Political Science) used badges in a low-key way to encourage community-building and to add an element of fun to her course. Dev summarized her approach:

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Students can earn badges for answering course questions that students post on Slack (questions that I normally might answer if others don't get there first), posting funny things to a specific Slack forum (memes related to things we're talking about), and specific discussion forum behaviors (amplifying the points that other students make, for example, or being particularly good at bringing in evidence from texts). I also created one at the beginning for mastery of the syllabus (everyone who got 10/10 on the syllabus quiz got one — but everyone had to take the quiz until they got 10/10 to unlock the next activity, so everyone started the class with at least one badge).

“

[Badges are] just a small add-on that hopefully makes [student] engagement with Moodle a little more fun than it usually would be. I designed the badges to be amusing. That's gone over well with the students who, I find, respond to goofy things pretty well.



Example of one of the meme badges from Dev Gupta's class

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