Digital Credentials Procedure

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Effective from 15 October 2026

Read this if:
You are a member of staff responsible for developing, approving, issuing, or overseeing digital credentials, either credit or non-credit bearing, or if you are a current or prospective earner of a digital credential who needs to understand the requirements, processes, and governance of digital credentials at the University.

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Definitions

Key terms

Digital credential: An electronic artefact that recognises a learner's achievement of specific skills, knowledge, or learning activities. It includes required metadata and can be shared online to demonstrate the accomplishment. This may include digital badges, micro-credentials, or certificates of recognition, whether credit or non-credit bearing

Credential Earner: The person who receives a digital credential.

Credential Owner: The Department/School/Faculty/ Directorate that owns the activity the digital credential is for.

Credential Issuer: The person authorised to issue a digital credential.

Digital badge: A digital badge is an electronic award that recognises a skill, achievement, or learning activity. It includes key details about what has been completed and can be shared online to show the accomplishments of the Badge Earner.

Certificate of Recognition: A certificate of recognition is an electronic certificate that recognises a skill, achievement, or learning activity not associated with a Degree Award. It includes key details about what has been completed and can be shared online to show the accomplishments of the Credential Earner.

Metadata: The attributes that must be included in all digital credentials issued by The University of Manchester. For example, the name of the programme/course/learning activity and the learning outcomes of the programme/course/learning activity.

Lifetime Credential: A digital credential that represents skills or achievements that do not require regular renewal and therefore have no expiration date.

Collaborative Provision: All arrangements in which the University makes an award (solely or jointly) or gives credit towards an award on the basis of education provided by another institution or institution in the UK or overseas.

Micro-credential: A short, focused qualification that certifies specific knowledge, skills, or competencies gained through a defined learning activity. Micro-credentials are designed to be flexible, accessible, and stackable, allowing learners to develop targeted expertise that may contribute to broader qualifications or professional development pathways.

Acronyms

TLSC: Teaching, Learning, and Students Committee

MDCSG: Manchester Doctoral College Strategy Group

RSSG: Research Staff Strategy Group

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

1.1.1 This document sets out the procedures for issuing digital credentials at the University. It explains the steps and requirements for proposing a new digital credential, such as a certificate of recognition or a digital badge, or a new digital credential category and outlines the associated approval processes. It also describes how digital credentials are issued, provides key information for earners of digital credentials, and explains how digital credentials are reviewed, and withdrawn.

1.2 Scope

1.2.1 This procedure applies to all digital credentials issued in the name of the University.

1.2.2 This procedure is not applicable to the conferment of degree awards which follow the arrangements outlined in General Regulation XI.

1.3 Applicability

1.3.1 This procedure applies to all staff involved in proposing, approving, issuing or reviewing digital credentials. It is also applicable to earners, or potential earners, of digital credentials.

2.0 The Procedure

2.1 Information for Credential Earners

2.1.1 Once a digital credential has been approved, its metadata cannot be altered by the Credential Earner, or any third party.

2.1.2 The University will provide potential Credential Earners with clear information in advance regarding the purpose of each credential, the criteria that must be met to earn it, and its period of validity to allow them to make informed decisions about attempting to earn a digital credential.

2.1.3 Personal data pertaining to digital credentials will be stored in accordance with GDPR requirements, and earners of digital credentials will be informed about how their data is stored and used.

2.1.4 Credential Earners must provide a valid email address to enable verification of the digital credential. They are responsible for keeping this information up to date and informing the University of any changes for the duration of the credential's validity. For digital badges, Credential Earner information is held in the Digital Badge system, further privacy information is available here: Parchment Digital Badges Website Privacy Policy | Instructure | Policy.

2.1.5 The University reserves the right to revoke a digital credential in line with Ordinance XXXVIII if displayed inappropriately as part of an online profile. The University will take action against any individual wrongly displaying a plagiarised digital credential or a digital credential that has not been legitimately earned.

2.1.6 When digital badges are shared online, they are clickable, and link back to a webpage with the metadata on the badge including the issuer, a general description, the specific criteria that the earner met to be issued the badge and importantly the earner who was issued the badge. This metadata makes the badge secure from plagiarism/duplication.

2.1.7 Credential Earners, or potential Credential Earners can raise a complaint through the University's Complaints Procedure if:

a) they are unhappy with the service provided by, or on behalf of, the University, or;
b) they have not been issued with a credential they believe they are entitled to.

2.2 Approval Process for New Digital Credentials

2.2.1 All digital credentials must be approved by the Digital Credentials Group before they can be issued to Credential Earners. The Digital Credential Group are responsible for providing oversight of all digital credentials issued by the University and for ensuring that they conform to the University's strategy and meet the criteria for approval set out in the Digital Credentials Policy.

2.2.2 Colleagues wishing to request a new digital credential must complete the Digital Credential Approval Form in Appendix I of this procedure (a copy is available to download and edit here: Digital Credentials Approval Form).

2.2.3 For Digital Badges, a standard digital badge design has been approved by the Central University Marketing team. Any exceptions to the branding must be approved by the Central Marketing team as part of the application process and detailed in the Digital Credentials Approval Form.

2.2.4 Certificates of recognition will follow the standard certificate templates in Appendix II. Any exceptions to this must be approved by the Central Marketing team as part of the application process and detailed in the Digital Credentials Approval Form.

2.2.5 The proposer of a new digital credential must obtain approval by the relevant Head of School (or nominee) and Faculty Vice-Dean, or equivalent for proposals outside of the School and Faculty structure, before the application can be submitted to the relevant body/Committee (see 2.3.2 and Digital Credential approval process in Appendix III) for consideration.

2.2.6 The relevant body/Committee (see 2.3.2) will review all digital credential applications against the assessment criteria and will either:

a) Recommend to the Digital Credentials Group that the application is approved
b) Request additional information from the proposer
c) Reject the application. Where an application has been rejected, proposers may direct an appeal against the decision to the Chair of the relevant committee.

2.2.7 If the relevant body/Committee (see 2.3.2) is satisfied that the new digital credential is required, the request will be submitted to the Digital Credential Group for approval.

2.2.8 When a new digital credential is approved, the Chair of the relevant body/Committee (see 2.3.2) will arrange for it to be added to the Central Register (see Section 2.8).

2.3 Approval Process for New Digital Credential Categories

2.3.1 All digital credentials issued by the University must fall under one of the approved categories outlined in the Digital Credentials Policy. Staff wishing to propose a new category must follow the submission process outlined in this procedure.

2.3.2 Before submitting a request for a new digital credential category, proposers must read the Digital Credentials Policy to confirm that a new category is required. Requests for new categories must be submitted in writing to the relevant body/Committee:

a) TLSC for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught digital credentials
b) MDCSG for PGR digital credentials
c) RSSG for digital credentials aimed at research staff
d) Talent Development for staff digital credentials
f) Education Development for Certificates of Recognition
e) If the request originates from outside of a School and Faculty structure, support from the relevant Department and Directorate will need to be obtained before submitting a request. Colleagues should approach the Digital Credentials Group in the first instance for advice on the appropriate approval route.

2.3.3 If the relevant body/Committee (see 2.3.2) recommends the creation of a new digital credential category, the request will be submitted to The Digital Credentials Group for approval.

2.4 Collaboration and Joint Credentials

2.4.1 Before submitting a request for a digital credential that will be offered jointly with an external organisation, proposers must first obtain permission to collaborate with that organisation to ensure that appropriate due diligence has been conducted. For digital credentials delivered as part of a micro-credential, proposers must follow the micro-credential approval process before submitting an application. For credentials delivered through collaborative provision, the Guidance and Procedures for the Quality Assurance of Taught Collaborative Provision must be followed.

2.4.2 The Digital Credentials Group are responsible for ensuring digital credentials issued in collaboration with external organisations are aligned to the strategic priorities outlined in the University's 2035 strategy: From Manchester for the world. Digital credentials will only be offered in collaboration with organisations that reflect our values of knowledge, wisdom and humanity.

2.5 Digital Credential Duration and Expiry

2.5.1 All digital credentials will have a period of validity, which will be captured as part of the approval process (see also 2.1.1). The credential will be valid from the point at which it is issued to the Credential Earner and will expire once the period of validity has elapsed.

2.5.2 Credential Earners wishing to refresh an expiring credential will need to complete further study to re-earn the credential. Details of the re-earning requirements will be provided as part of the approval process and made available to Credential Earners.

2.5.3 Lifetime Credentials have an indefinite period of validity, meaning once they are issued to the Credential Earner they will not expire. The Digital Credentials Group will determine whether a credential meets the criteria for lifetime validity as set out in the Digital Credentials Policy.

2.6 Withdrawal of Digital Credentials

2.6.1 Requests to withdraw a digital credential from approval must be submitted in writing to the relevant body/Committee (see 2.3.2) accompanied by the rationale for withdrawal, for example, closure of the programme/course/activity, replacement with another credential etc. The Chair of the relevant Committee will notify the Digital Credentials Group within 14 working days of the withdrawal.

2.6.2 Digital credentials issued by the University will remain valid until their expiration date, even if the University has withdrawn the digital credential or credential category in the meantime.

2.6.3 Only the Digital Credentials Group may withdraw a digital credential category from approval. In the event of a digital credential category being withdrawn, the Chair of the Digital Credentials group will notify the relevant body/Committee (see 2.3.2) and all affected Credential Owners and outline arrangements for managing the withdrawal.

2.6.4 The Chair of the Digital Credentials Group is responsible for updating the Central Digital Credential Register when a digital credential or credential category is withdrawn.

2.6.5 The University reserves the right to revoke a digital credential in line with Ordinance XXXVIII if displayed inappropriately as part of an online profile. The University will take action against any individual wrongly displaying a plagiarised digital credential or a digital credential that has not been legitimately earned.

2.7 Central Register of Digital Credentials and Categories

2.7.1 The University will maintain a system of record of all digital credentials and categories which will be aligned with the University's approved digital credentialing system. This will include all credential metadata, the Credential Owner and status of the credential. The Chair of the Digital Credentials Group will be responsible for maintaining the register.

2.8 Annual Quality Review

2.8.1 The Digital Credentials Group is responsible for maintaining oversight of all digital credentials issued by the University and will conduct an annual review of the portfolio to ensure that digital credentials and categories remain aligned to the University strategy.

2.8.2 Each relevant body/Committee (see 2.3.2) is responsible for maintaining oversight of all digital credentials issued for their area to enable them to make informed recommendations to the Digital Credentials Group about approval and withdrawal.

2.8.3 The Chair of each relevant body/Committee (see 2.3.2) will submit an annual report to the Digital Credentials Group, detailing the number of individual digital credentials issued for which they are responsible, and the overall number of credentials issued in a particular category.

3.0 Monitoring Compliance

3.0.1 Adherence to this document is expected and should be monitored by Heads of Schools (or their delegates) as part of a wider quality assurance process which supports the Annual Academic Assurance Process including Schools, Faculties, Teaching Learning and Students Committee, Manchester Doctoral College Strategy Group, Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) for Teaching, Learning and Students, AQSC for Research, and Senate.

4.0 Supporting documents and sources of support

- Digital Credentials Policy (The University of Manchester)
- Parchment Digital Badges Website Privacy Policy | Instructure | Policy
- Micro-credentials Guidance (The University of Manchester)

Appendix I New Digital Credentials Request Form

This form is for staff members to request a new digital credential. Before completing this form, please ensure you have read and understand the Digital Credentials Policy and Procedure. A copy of this form is available to download and edit here: https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=81252

A: Proposer Information		
Q1	Please enter your full name	
Q2	Please enter your University email address	

B: Type of Credential		
Q3	Please select the type of digital credential being requested	☐ Certificate of Recognition ☐ Digital Badge ☐ Both: Digital Badge and Certificate of Recognition

C: General information		
Q4	Please select the category of your new digital credential	☐ Achievement – credentials recognise the achievement of specific skills or knowledge through the completion of formal learning. ☐ Professional development - credentials recognise the learning activities people engage in to develop or maintain their skills and knowledge. ☐ Co-curricular experiences - credentials recognise defined experiences completed by a learner during their learner journey at the University. ☐ Curricular experiences – credentials recognise the successful completion of defined programme requirements. ☐ Milestone - credentials recognise the achievement of a significant milestone within a learner's qualification.
Q5	Proposed digital credential title	

Q6	Please explain the rationale for the new digital credential *Include how this aligns with the University's 2035 strategy: From Manchester for the world*	
Q7	Please detail the criteria for award of the new digital credential	
Q8	Does the digital credential conform with the Open Badges Standards?	☐ Yes [Logic: proceed to Q8] ☐ No [Logic: error message, credentials must conform to Open Badge Standards, end form].
Q9	Does the digital credential design and branding conform to the Central Marketing Template?	☐ Yes [Logic, proceed to Q9] ☐ No, but exceptions have been approved by Central Marketing team ☐ No, exceptions have not been approved by Central Marketing team [Logic, error message: branding must be approved by Central Marketing team, end form]
Q10	Please state any technical requirements for the new digital credential	

D: Metadata		
In this section, please fill out the required metadata for the new digital credential		
Q11	Name of the programme	
Q12	Duration/Learning hours	
Q13	Mode of delivery	☐ Full time ☐ Part time ☐ Other
Q14	Location	☐ On campus ☐ Blended learning (online and on campus) ☐ Online
Q15	Description of the programme	
Q16	Learning Outcomes	
Q17	Achievement measure/assessment (including outputs)	
Q18	Audience	
Q19	Quality Assurance mechanism	
Q20	Partners/ Client	

Q21	Length of credential from date of issue	

E: Credential Issuer		
Q22	Please state the full name(s) of the Credential Issuer	
Q23	Please state the University email address of the Credential Issuer(s)	
Q24	How will the new digital credential be issued?	☐ It will be issued automatically ☐ The Credential Issuers(s) will sign off and issue each credential individually Any additional details:

SECTIONS F, G AND H

For School and Faculty based proposals, complete Sections F and G. For proposals outside of the School and Faculty Structure, proceed to Section H.

F: School and Faculty Approval		
Head of School (or nominee)	☐ Approved ☐ Not Approved	
	Signature	
	Date	
	Further comments	
Faculty Vice-Dean (or nominee)	☐ Approved ☐ Not Approved	
	Signature	
	Date	
	Further comments	

G: Committee Approval		
Chair of Relevant Committee • Taught digital credentials: TLSC • PGR digital credentials: MDCSG • Staff digital credentials: Talent Development	☐ Recommend Approval ☐ Not Approved	
	Signature	
	Date	
	Further comments	

• Digital credentials aimed at research staff: RSSG • Education Development for Certificates of Recognition		

H: Department and Directorate Approval (For proposals outside of the School/Faculty Structure only)		
Head of Department (or nominee)	☐ Approved ☐ Not Approved	
	Signature	
	Date	
	Further comments	
Director of relevant Directorate (or nominee)	☐ Approved ☐ Not Approved	
	Signature	
	Date	
	Further comments	

I: Digital Credentials Group Approval		
Chair of Digital Credentials Group	☐ Approved ☐ Not Approved	
	Signature	
	Date	
	Further comments	

Appendix II- Certificate of Recognition Templates

Standard University digital credential certificate

University logo and name

In accordance with the University quality assurance processes,
the University has this day issued recognition of the following activity

[ACTIVITY TITLE]

after X hours of learning / number of credits

To

[LEARNER NAME]

Who has met the requirements in line with the agreed learning outcomes

Date of issue

University digital signature

Digital credential certificate with a partner organisation

University logo and name

Partner logo and name

In partnership with [partner name], the University of Manchester has this day
issued recognition of the following activity

[ACTIVITY TITLE]

after X hours of learning / number of credits

To

[LEARNER NAME]

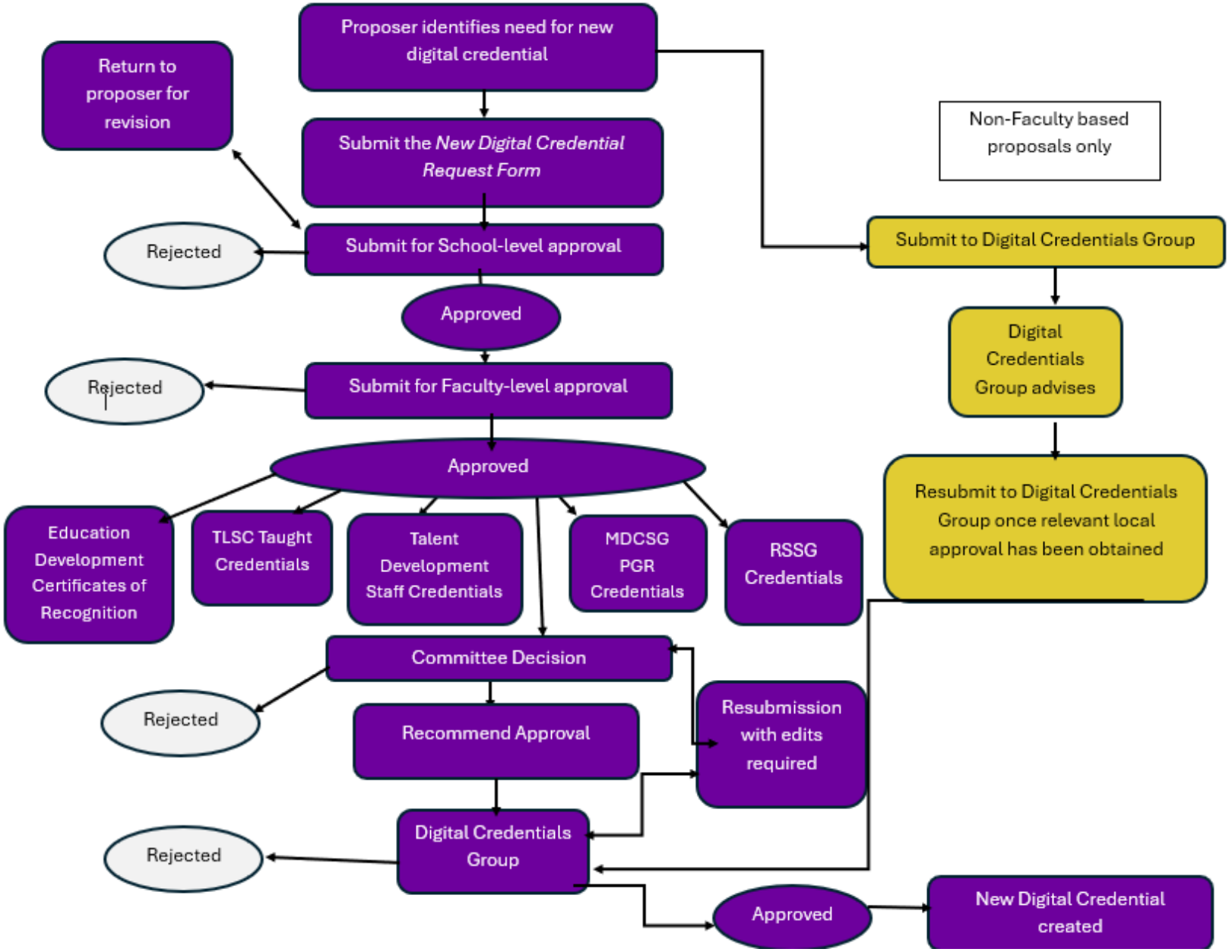
Who has met the requirements in line with the agreed learning outcomes

Date of issue

University digital signature

Partner digital signature

Appendix III Digital Credentials Approval Process



Version amendment history box and Document control box

Version amendment history: Digital Credentials Procedure		
Version	**Date**	**Reason for change**
1.0	October 2026	Approval of new procedure by Senate.
1.1	Add date	" "

Document control box	
Policy / Procedure title:	Digital Credentials Procedure
Date approved:	14/10/2026
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Version:	V1.0
Supersedes:	N/A
Previous review dates:	N/A
Next review date:	October 2027
Related Statutes, Ordinances, General Regulations	Ordinance XXXVIII
Related Policies:	Digital Credentials Policy
Related Procedures and Guidance:	N/A
B Conditions Met:	B1; B2; B4; B5
Policy owner:	Head of Student and Academic Services (SAS)
Lead contact:	Teaching-policy@manchester.ac.uk