



## **Proposition of a Learning Passport (O2A1)**

**Recognition and crediting of micro-credentials**



---

## Authors

Mazar, Ildiko; Wiechmann, Svenja

---

## Contributors

Ehrenreich, Jochen

---

## Layout

Tara Drev

---

## Copyright

(C) 2018, OEPASS Consortium

## The Oepass Consortium

Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg Heilbronn  
Stifterverband  
European Distance and e-Learning Network  
Budapest University of Technology and Economics  
Lithuanian Association of Distance and e-Learning  
Knowledge Innovation Centre  
National Distance Education University  
Tampere University of Technology

DHBW	DE
SV	DE
EDEN	UK
BME	HU
LieDm	LT
KIC	MT
UNED	ES
TUT	FI

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	4
1 Introduction .....	4
2 The Learning Passport .....	5
2.1 Why a Learning Passport? .....	5
2.2 1st Draft of the Learning Passport .....	7
3 Conclusion .....	10
Bibliography .....	11
Annex .....	12

# Executive Summary

One of the main objectives of the Erasmus+ funded Open Education Passport (OEPass) project is to enhance transparency of quality credentials by creating a so-called Learning Passport, that documents the course design, learning activities and the assessment processes, that make up a credential.

This report presents the context and the process of drafting the first operational version of the Learning Passport, that aims to facilitate the evaluation and recognition of (micro-)credentials issued by European Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The complete Learning Passport can be found in the Annex.

Key words: credential; learning passport; digitalisation; recognition; OEPass; Erasmus+

## 1 Introduction

The recognition and transfer of individual credits through ECTS was created for an era of physical mobility, and is optimised accordingly. EU recognition instruments, such as the diploma supplement and the EQF, support the award of qualifications in the areas of formal learning, and are supported by recognition procedures for non-formal and informal learning.

While these tools can be used to support open education and virtual mobility, a number of caveats exist to their use, including that:

- little to no guidance exists on how to document virtual mobility/open education experiences for the purposes of credit transfer;
- procedures for recognition of prior learning or of non-formal/informal learning do not scale to the massive numbers of students enrolling in open education programmes such as MOOCs;
- there is no European approach to recognising, transferring or scaling open education modules.

These problems are so pronounced, that many open education providers are creating parallel systems of credentials that are not even described in terms of ECTS – leading to a situation where millions of students per year are enrolling in open courses offered by universities which do not necessarily award valid or recognised forms of credit.

OEPass intends to address these issues by creating a standard format for describing open education and virtual mobility experiences in terms of ECTS which:

- addresses common criticisms (lack of trust) of open education, in particular with respect to student assessment and identity;
- is scalable to hundreds or thousands of students through automatic issuing and verification of certificates;
- can capture a wide range of non-formal and formal open education experiences.

### **Enhance Transparency of Quality Credentials by creating a Learning Passport**

By developing the Learning Passport, OEPass is proposing an instrument, utilising models and solutions already existing in the field, to transparently document important aspects of the learning experience, such as

- course design,
- learning activities undertaken by the learner, and
- assessment activities, which make up a credential.

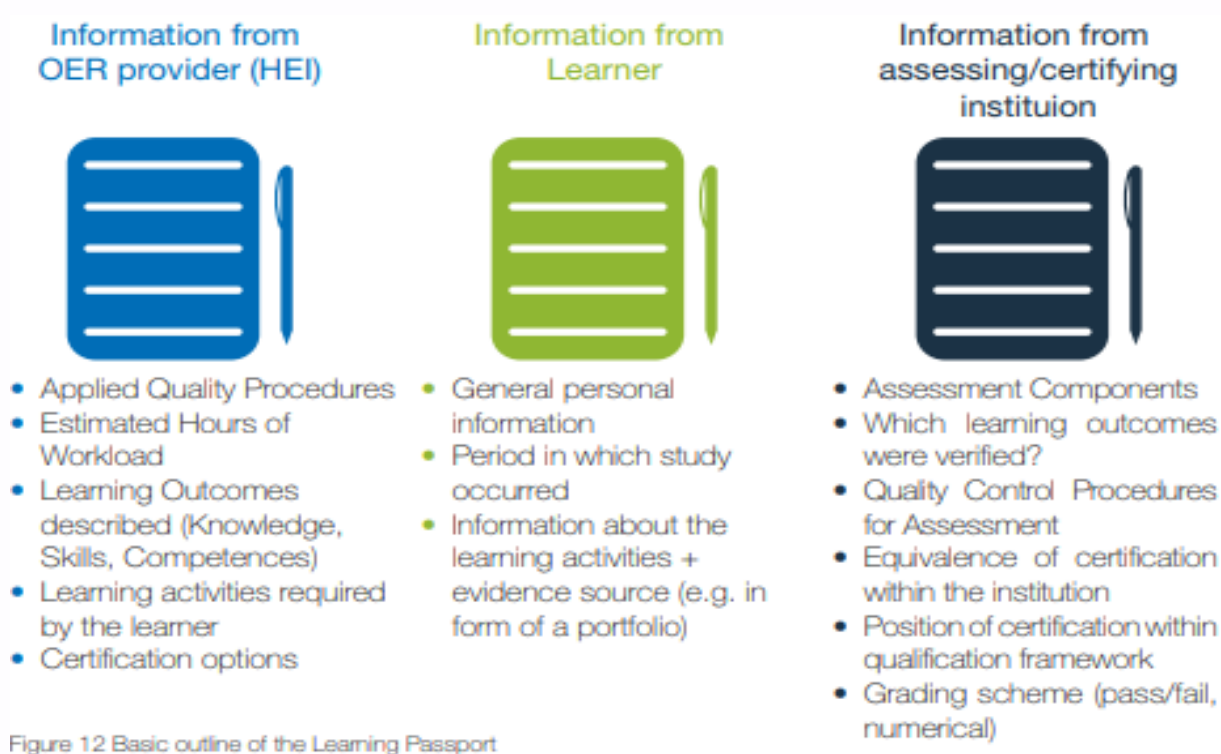
This learning passport is intended to serve as a supplement to the credential and to facilitate its recognition by third parties. To this end, the OEPass partnership has been conducting a two-stage pilot to assess the tool's fitness for both purposes of *documenting* the background information on credentials issues by six Higher Education Institutions (stage 1 – completed), and their *recognition* (stage 2 – in progress at the time of writing this report).

## **2 The Learning Passport**

### **2.1 Why a Learning Passport?**

The purpose of the OEPass Learning Passport is to systematically collect a set of precisely defined data and information about open education experiences which were identified as decisive factors for their recognition. The form's content is closely related to the ESCO classification of European skills, competences, qualifications and occupations.

The Learning Passport is being created by applying a composition formula for gained individual credits or modules, which are modelled on the European Diploma Supplement. The collected information about open education experiences are made up of a number of basic components OEPass identified as essential during desk research and piloting. One way of clustering these pieces of information is by their correspondence to one of three main actors/roles in the overall process of learning provision and assessment, as proposed by the OERTest project (2012) and as it is illustrated in the figure below:



The first cluster is the **information from the OER provider**, so a Higher Education Institution can identify and disclose, for example, the workload of a course in hours, the description of the learning outcomes and the learning activities required to be fulfilled by the learner.

The second one is the **learner information** that includes general personal information (name, date of birth, etc.), the period in which their learning took place and information about the actual learning activities completed by the learner.

The third cluster, the **information from the assessing/certifying institution**, contains components related to the assessment of the learning and describes the quality of the earned credential (e.g. certificate, credit, degree) and the grading scheme (pass/fail/scale) (Camilleri, 2012).

While the OERTest project provided an invaluable model and approach that OEPass could base its Learning Passport development on, we dug deeper into the learning provision and assessment scenarios and discovered alternative information sources and structures of data presentation that resulted in a more sophisticated, yet more user friendly tool. The OEPass Learning Passport, therefore, could be filled in by the institution offering the credential, with readily available information from – but without the active involvement of – the assessing/certifying institution.

The OEPass Learning Passport is consolidated and finalised following two stages of testing, with the aim that

- the passport is easy to fill in and
- the passport facilitates the recognition and transferability of non-traditional learning experiences.

## **2.2 1st Draft of the Learning Passport**

This draft template is intended to test with real education providers as to what extent their existing (micro-)qualifications can be transparently classified for subsequent recognition by third parties (i.e. by Higher Education Institutions and/or prospective employers).

The template was presented to various educational stakeholders and could be completed either by a real or a hypothetical course/learner in mind. The aim was to identify ambiguities and fields that were difficult to fill in, to simplify and clarify the further course of the project (see further reports on the OEPass project). Depending on the course, not all fields are mandatory or applicable, and certain information can only be determined with the help of administrators or the IT department, nevertheless the form provides a useful template for the detailed quality description of a diverse range of credentials.

For the purposes of the OEPass Learning Passport piloting exercise, a credential is defined as a certification of a qualification.



Credential = An educational credential is a documented statement that acknowledges a person's learning outcomes or achievements.

Micro-Credential = Sub-unit of a credential (macro, meso, micro, etc.). "Badges and other forms of micro-credentials provide a way to recognize the acquisition of specific skills, as opposed to traditional degrees and other certifications, which cover full programs of academic study. These alternative kinds of credentials typically point to documentation of the specific skills learned. Micro-credentials are like mini-degrees in which you would complete an activity such as taking an online test, creating a presentation, or writing a report." (Association Trends, 2018; e-SLP project)

Qualification = 'Qualification' means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent authority or body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards. Qualifications from part of the European Qualification Framework. e-SLP defines qualification as "an official completion of a course or programme of courses; any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a higher education programme. A certificate or degree is a qualification."

The (current draft of the) OEPass Learning Passport (see Annex) has altered its structure and composition, compared to its OERTest ancestor, and is divided into five sections, gathering information about:

- the awarding body (1),
- the educational credential (2),
- the credential type (3),
- the holder of the educational credential and their accomplishment (4),
- and evidence (5).

(1) The information identifying the **awarding body** consists of the following fields about the institution issuing the credential:

- full name,
- public key,
- adress,
- official stamp or seal,
- accreditation and homepage.

(2) The information identifying the **education credential** is composed of the following criterias about the educational credential

- title,
- definition,



- learning outcome description,
- subject,
- ways to acquire,
- grading scheme,
- mode of study,
- volume of learning/workload,
- assessment method,
- EQF-level (non-applicable for qualifications which are not part of national qualifications framework),
- NQF level,
- number of credit points,
- accreditation of the credential,
- homepage.

(3) The information identifying the **credential type** is comprised of

- title,
- definition,
- provide value of credit,
- creditsystem issuer,
- potential existence of sub-components.

(4) The information identifying the **holder** of the educational credential and their accomplishment exists of the following fields:

- family name(s), given name(s),
- date of birth,
- student identification number, code or public key,
- grade,
- credits awarded,
- sub-credentials contained,
- unique identifier,
- supplementary evidence.

(5) The last point, **evidence**, consists of the following four information fields:

- release/publication date,
- (potential) update/modification date,
- change note,
- additional note.

# 3 Conclusion

The Learning Passport will be published after being tested through two stages. The first stage (already completed at the time of writing this report) included the piloting with six higher education institutions to exchange information, with the aim of determining the level of ease of completing the passport form with readily available information about programmes and whether the passport provides transparent enough information to facilitate recognition and portability of non-traditional learning experiences. The feedback from the first stage piloting is being fed back to the consortium, who will make changes, improvements and clarifications in line with the input received.

The Learning Passport could cater to a wide range of needs regarding unbundled learning scenarios (Camilleri et al. 2012).

# Bibliography

Association Trends (2018). The Difference Between Macro- and Micro-credentials, Digital Badges, and What They Mean for Your Association. <http://www.associationtrends.com/blog/member-education/the-difference-between-macro-and-micro-credentials-digital-badges-and-what-they-mean-for-your-association/>

Camilleri, A. F., Ferrari, L., Haywood, J., Maina, M., Pérez-Mateo, M., Montes Solado, R., Nourira, C., Sangrà, A., Tannhäuser, A.-C. (2012). Open Learning Recognition: Taking Open Educational Resources a Step Further. (A. F. Camilleri & A.-C. Tannhäuser, Eds.). Belgium: EFQUEL - European Foundation for Quality in e-Learning. Retrieved from <http://openaccess.uoc.edu/webapps/o2/handle/10609/21341>

Gabi Witthaus, Andreia Inamorato dos Santos, Mark Childs, Anne-Christin Tannhäuser, Grainne Conole, Bernard Nkuyubwatsi, Yves Punie (2016) Validation of Non-formal MOOC-based Learning. An Analysis of Assessment and Recognition Practices in Europe (OpenCred) <http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC96968/lfna27660enn.pdf>

The European Recognition Manual for Higher Education Institutions. Practical guidelines for credential evaluators and admissions officers to provide fair and flexible recognition of foreign degrees and studies abroad (2016) <http://eurorecognition.eu/Manual/EAR%20HEI.pdf>

European Diploma Supplement <https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/documents/european-skills-passport/diploma-supplement>

e-SLP project – European Short Learning Programmes: <https://e-slp.eadtu.eu/>.

# Annex

## Learning Passport Template Form

### HOW TO CREATE A LEARNING PASSPORT

As described in the [project work plan](#), the OEPass Learning Passport was created by applying a composition formula for gained individual credits or modules, which are modelled on the European Diploma Supplement. It is important to highlight that when an institution is issuing an individual credential, they record information and data about:

1. the awarding body, that is the institution giving the recognition of the achievement and not necessarily the institution offering the learning experience.
2. the credential, a documented statement that acknowledges a person's learning outcomes or achievements. The term [credential](#) can be used to refer to a [qualification](#), that is an official completion of a course or programme of courses (e.g. any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a higher education programme). The Learning Passport allows the detailed and transparent documentation of sub-units of such credentials, i.e. micro-, meso-, mini-, etc. credentials, that could accumulate into larger credentials or be part of a portfolio. Each credential, therefore, has a thoroughly documented credential type that can be a degree or diploma on the top level of qualifications or ECTS, ECVET on micro-level.
3. the holder of the educational credential and their individual accomplishment (this includes data about the learner's identity and the grade they achieved).
4. the evidence of the achievement, both in terms of administration (i.e. publication date of the credential) and – optionally – outputs of the learning experience, such as published papers, essays, projects, etc., test results or links to public discussion fora.

Anybody is welcome to experiment with the Learning Passport and determine its usefulness by filling in the form below. The OEPass partnership also welcomes feedback on how well the Learning Passport facilitates the recognition and transferability of non-traditional learning experiences.

Email

If you would like to receive a copy of your filled in Learning Passport, please provide the address to which you would like it to be sent. Please note that your address will neither be displayed anywhere on the OEPass website nor be shared by third parties.

## Information identifying the awarding body

Provide the full name of the institution issuing the credential \*

Please note that this is the institution giving the recognition of the achievement and not necessarily the institution offering the learning experience.

### Public key

Public Key the institution uses to identify itself and authenticate the credentials.

### Address of institution

Zip/Postal

City

Country

### Does the institution have a digital version of its official stamp/seal?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

### Accreditation of the institution \*

Information related to the accreditation, quality assurance and regulation of the institution, the date when the accreditation was formally approved, the review- and/or expiry date and

additional information about the accreditation and used standards in the assessment and quality assurance procedure.

See a German example [here](#).

#### **Website/URL**

The evidence (a public web document) of the currency/up-to-dateness of the institution's accreditation. There can be only one particular web page ([Here](#) is a Finnish example from the Tampere University of Technology).

### **Information identifying the educational credential**

#### **The exact and official title of the credential if available \***

#### **Identifier**

This property refers to an (alternative) identifier of a qualification like a national code or any other unique code issued by some agency and/or system. This can be on any level: an international, national, regional, private or institutional level (e.g. the unique and persistent identifier of the qualification within the publishing system).

#### **Short and abstract description of the credential**

#### **Learning outcome description**

Learning outcomes are the specific intellectual and practical skills gained and tested by the successful completion of a unit, course or whole programme of study. They take the form of statements which indicate what a learner should have achieved in respect of both knowledge and skills at the end of a given course or programme.

Definition from [EMPOWER glossary](#).

**Credential type \***

- Bachelor's degree, typically 180-240 ECTS credits (Source: [Bologna Process](#))
- Master's degree, typically 90-120 ECTS credits (Source: [Bologna Process](#))
- Doctoral degree (Source: [Bologna Process](#))
- European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System ([ECTS](#))
- European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training ([ECVET](#))
- Other

**Subject \***

This property can be indicated as free text or - if applicable - by providing the thematic area/subject code ([ISCED-F code](#)) of the learning experience.

**Ways to acquire the credential \***

- Validation of formal learning
- Validation of non-formal learning
- Validation of informal learning

If applicable, tick multiple boxes.

**Grading Scheme \***

- pass or fail
- 0% to 100%
- A+ to F-
- 0 (fail) to 5 (excellent) grade scale
- 1 (excellent) to 5 (fail) grade scale
- 0 (fail) to 10 (excellent) grade scale
- Other, please specify:

**Mode of study \***

- Online
- Face to Face
- Practice
- Workplace
- Informal learning
- Full-time
- Part-time



- Other, please specify:

If applicable, tick multiple boxes.

**Unit of workload**

- Years
- Weeks
- Hours

The workload is the official duration of the learning experience in hours, weeks or years. This volume of learning includes information on any major sub-components i.e. practical training - in real hours (i.e. 60 minutes, as opposed to academic hours that are 45 minutes). Preferably, the workload should be expressed in terms of total student effort required, not just class attendance time.

**Assessment method \***

- No assessment
- Online assessment without ID verification
- Online assessment with ID verification
- Onsite assessment with ID verification
- Other, please specify:

**Level of learning**

- National Qualification Framework (NQF) aligned
- European Qualification Framework (EQF) aligned

Tick both boxes, if applicable, leave blank, if level of learning is not specified.

**Number of Credit Points**

Please specify the number of credit points assigned to the credential, if applicable.

**Accreditation of the credential**

Please provide a link to the evidence of accreditation, or information related to the accreditation, quality assurance and regulation of a credential, such as the agent that was primarily responsible for the accreditation.

### Homepage of credential

Please specify the homepage (a public web document) of a credential. There can be only one homepage corresponding to a specific credential ([here is an illustrative example](#) of a credential issues for a Lithuanian course titled “Innovations in Education”).

### Is the credential stackable?

- ☐ Yes, this credential has / can have smaller building components
- ☐ Yes, this credential can contribute towards a larger credential
- ☐ No, this is a stand-alone credential

## Information identifying the holder of the educational credential and their accomplishment

Would you like to test (with a real or fictional learner) this section of the Learning Passport? \*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

We recommend that you check out what kinds of information and data we identified as necessary to enhance recognisability of your credential.

## Evidence

Please provide a few more administrative details about the credential (the credential that can be issued to a learner, not one that has been already awarded to a person).

### Date of formal publication

The date the credential was published and the meta-data about the credential was made available.

### Update/modification date (if applicable)

Date when the credential was last updated since it was published (please note that this information is not applicable if the credential has not changed).

**Change note**

If applicable, please record information about fine grained changes of the credential.

**Additional note**

Feel free to provide any further information that you consider valuable for decision making about credential recognition.

**Would you like to share your filled in Learning Passport with the OEPass community \***

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

## Description of the project

Online learning or Massive Open Online Coursework provide challenges for universities to accept and acknowledge learning as credited coursework. Awarding credit for different types of educational coursework disrupts higher education's traditional, formal educational processes for financial and educational accountability. The recognition of individual credits through ECTS is optimised to support physical mobility, but while theoretically the same tools can be used for virtual mobility and open education, a number of caveats exist in their use. OEPass is addressing these caveats by creating a standard format for describing open education and virtual mobility experiences in terms of ECTS which:

- Addresses common criticisms, especially a lack of trust, of open education, in particular with respect to student assessment and identity
- Is scalable to hundreds or thousands of students through automatic issuing and verification of certificates
- Can capture a wide range of non-formal and formal open education experiences



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union