



E-learning Course

Microcredential Validation

Unit 4.1 Learner Reliability



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Introduction

Module 4 is focused on the process of validating microcredentials. Materials delve into the significance of verifying the quality of microcredentials, the specifics of the process as well as the various different roles involved in it. The module will also go beyond theory and analyse the practical aspect of microcredential validation, putting learners in the position to replicate the process if necessary.

This is the first Unit of the Module:

4.1 Learner Reliability



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Learner Reliability

What does it mean?

Learner Reliability refers to the level to which each learners actions are honest and in accordance to the rules and expectations of an educational program.

An issue that primarily, but not exclusively, shows up in digital education, is that the educational institution can not be entirely sure that a learner is completing assignments and taking assessments unassisted.

Why does it matter?

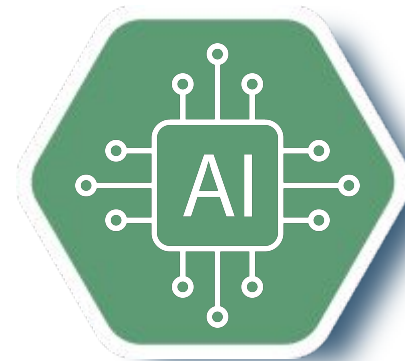
Dishonest Learner behavior directly affects the validity and credibility of awarded credentials. Organisations issuing microcredentials have to take care to ensure the reliability of their learners, so that the credentials accurately reflect the effort put in and the skills obtained. If not, the value of the provided microcredentials for the honest learners can drop significantly.

Dishonest Learner Behaviours



Plagiarism

While referencing other's work is permitted, copying large amounts of text or other outputs without referencing the original creator is not.



Use of Generative AI

Utilising tools to improve the quality of assignments is okay, but turning in assignments written by Generative AI, or using it to get assessment answers is not.



Outsourcing

The learner should always be the one completing the assignments and taking the assessments, but, in online education especially, there are cases of learners having another person doing assignments and taking exams in their place.

Methods of Learner Reliability Verification



Unauthorised Collaboration

Certain assignments and even some assessments can call for collaboration, but that has to be explicitly stated. Learners copying and sharing work or exam answers when meant to be completed individually are violating trust.



Unauthorised Notes

This applies mainly to exams, which can be “open book” assessments in some cases, but if specified by the instructor that access to external resources is not allowed, learners should not be looking at notes or other sources during examinations.

Ensuring Learner Reliability



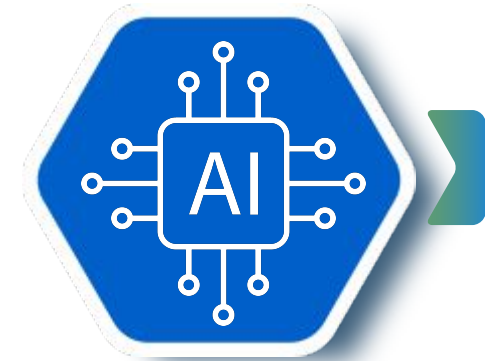
Educators and institutions can take several steps to identify and stop dishonest learner behaviours.

However, it is not possible to completely eliminate them, and a level of trust is necessary.



Plagiarism

Plagiarism detection tools have been around for a while and are considered quite reliable. Their use is widespread amongst universities and other education providers. Plagiarism tools can range from free online detectors, to large scale systems that can be integrated in an LMS.



Use of Generative AI

Generative AI detection tools also exist, but their reliability is not as high due to the technology being very new. If instructors have strong indications of AI use, it is recommended to examine each case separately and verify if the learner's skills and knowledge matches the delivered assignment or exam, instead of relying on detection tools alone.



Outsourcing

For assignments, the only way the educators can ensure reliability is by checking if the learner has a knowledge level that corresponds to the assignment they turned in.

For assessments, examiners can use some identity verification method, such as video and ID before or throughout examination.

Ensuring Learner Reliability



By employing these countermeasures and detection methods, educators can better ensure that learners have earned their microcredentials through their own efforts.



Unauthorised Collaboration

Unauthorised collaboration in the form of copying in assignments and examinations can be detected through spotting extensive similarities in turned-in materials and provided answers.



Unauthorised Notes

For face to face examinations, traditional methods such as present examiners, clear desks and no-phone policies can be enough. For virtual examinations, proctoring tools can be employed to check students' direct environment and browser activity, but these tools have to always be in compliance with GDPR regulations.

Additional Resources

Part	Title	Type	Duration	Link	Description
4.1	Strategies to Address Cheating in Online Courses	Article	15 mins	https://teaching.pitt.edu/resources/strategies-to-address-cheating-in-online-courses/	An article by the University of Pittsburgh on addressing dishonest learner behaviours in Online Courses
4.1	Exploring the Dark Side of Online Distance Learning: Cheating Behaviours, Contributing Factors, and Strategies to Enhance the Integrity of Online Assessment (Suggested sections: Findings and Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations)	Academic Publication	20 mins	https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10805-023-09501-8	An academic publication exploring cheating behaviours, motivation and strategies for addressing them in online learning.
4.2	Why do Students Cheat?	Video	1 min	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5Phrw_aM0eY	A short video by the University of Galway exploring potential motivation for dishonest behaviours from learners.

References

MIT Digital Learning Toolkit

<https://dltoolkit.mit.edu/online-course-design-guide/evaluation/reliability-validity/>

Changes in the reliability and validity of peer assessment across the college years

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339105330_Changes_in_the_reliability_and_validity_of_peer_assessment_across_the_college_years

Cheating in Online Education: Myth vs. Reality

<https://www.onlineeducation.com/features/cheating-in-online-education>

Reliability, validity, and strictness of adult learner online self-rating based on teacher and achievement criteria for different individual characteristics and academic achievement

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0191491X24001172>



You have completed the theoretical part of Unit 1 Module 4



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